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Twenty Years of Amos Research

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Abstract

This article is a selective survey of the last twenty years of Amos research, which has witnessed robust discussion in multiple directions. It groups these trends into five very broad areas: (1) the possibility of positing an eighth-century setting for the prophet and the historical reliability of the book, (2) work on the redaction of the book and potential connections to the history of the composition of the Book of the Twelve, (3) theological themes of particular contemporary interest, (4) recent insights into the translation techniques of LXX Amos, and (5) the reception of Amos across the centuries, with a special focus on the views of women and minority and global communities. There is a range of scholarly positions in several of these areas and new questions being asked, all of which portends continued vitality in Amos research in the foreseeable future.

Keywords

Amos, prophetic persona, sociological approaches, composition theories, redaction criticism, Book of the Twelve, Septuagint, reception, minority readings

Surveys of Amos Research

Amos studies have been well served since the survey article by Melugin in 1998 (cf. Rösel 1998) by three book-length introductory studies. Carroll R.'s *Amos—The Prophet and His Oracles* (2002; cf. 2011) is divided into two parts. Part One contains three essays. The initial essay covers the history of Amos research from Wellhausen until 1990 under the categories of the person of the prophet, form and tradition critical approaches, and research that focuses on what has been commonly labeled 'behind' (compositional history, archaeological backgrounds, social science approaches), 'within' (literary studies), and 'in front of' the text (its impact, especially from the Majority World and from women and

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minority perspectives). The second essay reviews publications from 1990 until 2002 and then suggests trajectories for future study in those same categories. The last essay ('Reading Amos from the Margins') provides examples of situated readings, including African American, Hispanic, feminist, womanist, and ecological, as well as several from Africa and Latin America. Part Two consists of detailed bibliographies of commentaries and monographs, lists of publications on specific topics and every verse, and doctoral dissertations on this prophetic book from 1985 to 2000.

Barton's *The Theology of the Book of Amos* (2012) surveys in seven chapters the state of more recent Amos research. Barton's work is thorough, yet not overly technical, and is written in an accessible style. Chapter one looks at the spectrum of scholarly views regarding the composition of Amos, from those who assign almost all of the book in some fashion to the hand of the prophet to others who argue that it is the result of a redactional process or entirely a postexilic product. This chapter closes with a brief treatment of theories that relate the redaction of Amos to the growth of the Book of Twelve but is not persuaded by claims that the Minor Prophets were redacted together. Chapters two through five look at, in turn, the theology of the prophet's context, the beliefs of Amos and his associates, the theological emphases of the various redactional stages and those of the canonical form. Chapter six surveys how Amos was appropriated in later prophetic books, by Qumran and the early church, and at certain moments in church history until liberation theology today. The final chapter considers how the book's theology intersects with modern convictions about God and life. In several instances, Barton finds the biblical text problematic. These include such matters as the exclusive relationship of the deity with a particular people, the direct involvement of God in history and nature, and Amos's picture of eschatological hope. The volume closes with a topical bibliography.

The introductory guide by Houston (2017) is more detailed and far-ranging in its analysis than Barton's (2012). Part One consists of five chapters. The first presents the genres and literary features of Amos, while the second discusses structural matters. The third chapter contends that the book was designed to confront Israel with the inevitability of judgment. Accordingly, Houston says, the short passage of hope in 9.11-15 cannot be part of that original prophetic word. In addition, he believes that the all-inclusive national judgment is morally unacceptable, because it further victimizes the victims of the elites' injustices (what Houston elsewhere calls the 'paradox of Amos' [2008: 71-73]). Chapter four explores the ethical vision of Amos vis-à-vis Israel and the surrounding nations and argues that it is grounded in a sort of natural law, not in the formal sense but in terms of universally accepted moral norms. In chapter five's exposition of the book's theology, particularly its understanding of the person of YHWH, Houston again decries its announcement of indiscriminate judgment. Part Two opens with chapter six and an effort to identify the sociohistorical context of the

prophetic message. Chapter seven surveys the compositional history of the book and contends that it is the product of redaction, but Houston does not provide specificity to this general stance. Chapter eight, which makes up Part Three, reviews the reception of Amos across the centuries. Each of the eight chapters ends with suggestions for further reading, and the volume closes with a twelve-page bibliography.

This essay will highlight a number of studies, but the volume of articles and monographs on Amos that have appeared in the last twenty years requires that this survey be selective. It is divided into five parts, each of which is an important area in Amos research.

Amos: Eighth-Century Prophet or Literary Persona?

The past twenty years have witnessed a growing divide between scholars who argue for the credibility of the biographical material in the book of Amos (1.1; 7.1-17) and other historical referents that would locate the prophet in the northern kingdom in the mid-eighth century BCE during the reign of Jeroboam II, and those who do not hold that basic assumption.

Tucker (2006) uses the image of the courtroom to weigh the textual evidence for ascertaining the book's historical setting. He discusses the contextual allusions in the superscription (1.1) and the Oracles against the Nations (1.3–2.16, OAN), the references to Jeroboam II in 7.9-10 ('the most substantial evidence for the date of the prophet') and the sanctuaries at Bethel and Gilgal, and the non-mention of the Assyrians and Babylonians (suggesting that the prophet predated their incursions) as establishing the setting for the prophet's ministry. The biographical passage of 7.10-17, in Tucker's mind, also reflects circumstances within the time frame traditionally assigned to Amos. This historical framework, however, does not dissuade Tucker from agreeing with critics that several passages are redactional additions (1.1-2; 2.4-5; 7.10-14; 9.11-15; the hymnic passages: 4.13; 5.8-9; 9.5-6).

Several recent commentaries set the background of the prophet and his ministry within the reign of Jeroboam II. Sweeney believes that Amos was a sheepherder and dresser of sycamore trees from Judah, who had come north to pay tribute at Bethel, the location of Israel's primary sanctuary (2000: 191-95). This was a duty incumbent upon those from the southern kingdom, he contends, which at the time would have been subservient to Israel. This injustice (along with many others) explains the prophet's announcement of Israel's defeat, the destruction of its temples, and the restoration of Davidic rule. Smith (2001: 205-11) and Lessing (2009: 17-21) agree on the time frame, but without Sweeney's direct identification of the prophet with the polity of the southern kingdom. The most extensive background study in a commentary is found in Carroll R. (forthcoming). There I discuss in detail the military and political state of the Assyrian

and Aramean kingdoms in the mid-eighth century. Both were in a weakened state, which allowed for Israel's expansion. Under Adad-nirari III's three sons—Shalmaneser IV, Aššur-dan III, and Aššur-nirari V—Assyria did not cast its shadow over the region for decades (782–745 BCE). This was due to internal challenges and pressure from the kingdom of Urartu to the north. It is not surprising, therefore, that Assyria is not mentioned in the book (although some suggest an emendation at 3.9) and the coming invader is never named (3.11; 6.14)—quite a different case than the books that reflect experience with that empire (Isaiah, Hosea, Micah, Zephaniah, Nahum)! While it is common to read that the book of Amos depicts a secure society in which elites prospered, I argue that the conflicts of the OAN and the litany of disasters in 4.6-11 suggest otherwise. Good fortune and national victories probably came earlier in Jeroboam II's tenure. Now, the socioeconomic fabric was beginning to unravel, and Israel's military prowess was waning. Defeat and exile would come just a few decades after that monarch's death. There also is evidence for a powerful earthquake around 760 BCE (Austin, Franz, and Frost 2000; cf. Roberts 2018; Dell 2011), most likely the one of 1.1. In sum, the traditional date for the prophet's ministry (ca. 760–750 BCE) is quite plausible. A few scholars, who also maintain an eighth-century setting, place Amos a bit later, because of what they believe are allusions to the policies of the Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser III (Haran 2008; Strijdom 2011). This viewpoint, however, is not persuasive on my reading of the evidence.

Support for a mid-eighth century setting for the message of the prophet and for significant portions of the book comes from several quarters. Hutton (2014) contends that it is possible to relate the violence that is condemned in the OAN to conflicts arising from efforts to control key trade routes (such as the King's Highway) and economic traffic at that time. Barstad (2007) suggests that the OAN allude to a regional alliance against Assyria in the early eighth century, which the prophet proclaimed was doomed to fail. Maeir (2004)'s important excavations at Tell es-Sâfī (biblical Gath) reveal that the debilitated condition of Calneh, Hamath, and Gath that is presupposed in 6.2 can be dated before the eighth century and need not be traced to Assyria's incursions into Syro-Palestine decades after the prophet's ministry. Arguments that this verse signals a later provenance have become tenuous.

Social science approaches provide new insights into the text's descriptions of the plight of the oppressed and the prophetic diatribes against injustice. They help modern readers get a sense of the kinds of socioeconomic and political mechanisms that were employed by elites for personal and societal gain. Scholars working in this area may not agree on how much of the book of Amos should be assigned to the eighth century, but all give credence to its picture of Israelite society in that era. In keeping with his earlier publications, Chaney identifies the most significant culprit of poverty as the rise of 'agricultural intensification' (2014a). This process would have manifested itself in various independent

variables, he says, as the political economies of the northern and southern kingdoms participated in international trade with the export of a few commodities and the import of luxury items, military hardware, and lumber. The drive to export certain crops and products—specifically wheat, olive oil, and wine—led to regional agricultural specialization (cf. 2 Chron. 26.10), such as of vineyards and olive orchards, and to innovations in olive oil production. These changes adversely impacted the peasantry by disrupting their traditional practices of subsistence farming and put families at risk. In times of weak crop yields, which could occur for any number of reasons, the growing command economy would have led unfortunate farmers to debt accumulation, even debt slavery, and to the loss of their land with the concomitant development of large estates. At the same time, there would have been an increase in absentee landlordism, as land owners and landlords migrated from rural areas to urban centers, where consumption and power were concentrated. These realities are on display, Chaney (2014b) claims, in Amos 2.6-8, 13-16. Premnath (2003) takes a similar tack, but in greater detail. He too discusses land accumulation (latifundialization), economic and political expansion, regional crop specialization, technological advances, increased urbanization, population growth, militarization, and consumption by elites. Premnath correlates several of these changes to passages in the book (2.6b-8; 3.9-11, 15; 4.1-3; 5.7, 10-12; 6.1-3, 4-7; 7.1; 8.4-6).

Houston presents a different sociocultural paradigm than Chaney's and Premnath's rural focus and their hypothesis of land accumulation as the key factor behind socioeconomic inequality in eighth-century Israel (and Judah). He surveys current approaches and then turns to the patronage system for his explicatory model (2008: 18-51; 2017: 62-65). In the vertical social arrangements of patronage, there is a reciprocal relationship between patron and client that carries mutual expectations. Ideally, the patron protects those in a subordinate position from exploitation by others and provides for them in times of need. In Amos's day, however, those in privileged positions were taking advantage of the poor in relationship to their debts and in legal proceedings. Houston also questions the common assumption that the primary victims of oppression in ancient Israel were peasants. Building off the work of Israeli archaeologist A. Faust (2012), he argues that the poverty that the prophets targeted was in the cities not the countryside (Houston 2010). The homes and layout of villages suggest more egalitarian and cooperative communities in rural areas than what is found in urban settings, which exhibit pronounced social stratification. The injustices that are singled out 'at the gate' (5.10, 12, 15), 'in its midst' (3.9), and in the market place (8.4-6) probably have Samaria in view. Houston complicates and broadens our understanding of the scope and mechanics of oppression in the eighth century.

A stellar example of the contribution of material remains is Strawn's (2016) study of leonine imagery in eighth-century seals, scarabs, and pithoi. In this diverse iconography, lions appear as guardians in connection with royalty or

the deity; they often are depicted as roaring and sometimes as aggressive. After an introductory orientation to the field, Strawn turns to Amos and demonstrates how these artifacts help readers visualize the book's oracles. Three different terms for lions (*kəpîr*, *'aryēh*, *'ărî*) are utilized in five verses (1.2; 3.4, 8, 12; 5.19). Leonine imagery is common in the prophetic literature and occurs at significant points in Amos. YHWH, the Divine Lion of 1.2, can be connected to the roar of the prophetic word in 3.8 and to the predatory imagery in 3.12 and 5.19 that underscores the seriousness of the coming judgment. Besides illuminating the interpretation of certain passages, the archaeological data are relevant for discussions regarding composition. Strawn argues, for example, that because 'such [leonine] imagery has been found in the south, in Jerusalem and at Ramat Raḥel, in the general time frame typically ascribed to Amos himself', the burden of proof for the originality of 1.2 now lies with those who deny its authenticity. Paas's work sets the creation theology of Amos (and other eighth-century prophets) against the ancient Near East background and finds that the hymnic passages of 4.13; 5.8-9; and 9.5-6 (as well as 7.1, 4) reflect a long pre-history of creation thought in that sociocultural context and fit well within an eighth-century milieu (2003: 183-326). This position contradicts a critical stance that dates these passages, as creation texts, necessarily late.

Another cultural item that can locate the prophetic message in the eighth century is the *marzēaḥ* feast (McLaughlin 2001: 80-128; cf. Miralles Maciá 2007: 23-39, 48-50). Scholars have identified several passages in the book with the *marzēaḥ* (2.7b-8; 4.1; 6.4-7), but only 6.4-7 can be identified confidently as such. The term actually appears in 6.7 (*mirzaḥ sərûḥîm*, 'the *marzēaḥ* of the loungers'). Debates center around whether this was a funerary banquet to commemorate the dead and to what degree a religious component (whether Yahwistic or syncretistic) was attached to these gatherings. The occurrence in 6.6 of *mizraq* ('bowl'), a word occurring only in religious contexts (e.g., Exod. 27.3; 38.3; Num. 4.14; 1 Kgs 7.40, 45, 50), instead of the more common *kôs* ('cup'), could imply a cultic setting (Greer 2007). In terms of the drinking at these feasts, is the prophet suggesting that immorality was the issue or does the censure focus on the gluttonous unconcern of the well-to-do towards the deprivation suffered by others ('the ruin of Joseph', 6.6; 4.6-9) and their obliviousness to the coming judgment? The latter is the clearest lesson to be drawn from the passage. A related matter, for which there is no consensus, concerns where these feasts may have been celebrated, such as in private homes, banquet halls, or cultic centers, and whether these structures may have been designed specifically for the *marzēaḥ*.

Steiner's (2003) monograph also situates the prophet contextually and historically. Its purpose is to decipher the meaning of the descriptors for the prophet especially in 7.14, but also in 1.1. Steiner's is an ambitious project: 'I shall delve deeply into the practice of sycomore horticulture, sycomore silviculture and animal husbandry. I shall attempt to resolve the lexicographic controversies using the

resources of Akkadian, Mishnaic Hebrew, Yemeni Arabic, etc.' (2003: 3). In the introduction he explains that he uses the term 'sycomore' instead of 'sycamore', as the former refers technically to the *Ficus sycomorus*, a species imported into the region during the Iron Age, most likely from what is known as Yemen. Successive chapters explore the history of interpretation of the enigmatic phrase *bôlēs šiqmîm* in 7.14, the etymology and meaning of *bôlēs*, the evidence for the origins of the sycomore in ancient Israel, and the meaning of the labels for Amos in 1.1 and 7.14. Steiner concludes that the terms *bôlēs* (a reference to the process of preparing and harvesting the figs) and *šiqmâ* ('sycamore'), as did the trees themselves, originated in Yemen. He summarizes the prophet's profession as that of a self-employed herdsman, who would have sold animals potentially to the temple for sacrifices and to other markets. Amos and other cattle and sheep breeders from the Tekoa area probably rented land with sycomore trees (probably in the Jericho Valley) during the winter months. These trees would have provided figs for fodder and shelter for the animals.

In contrast to those studies that substantiate in various ways an eighth-century setting for the entire book or at least its core message, a recent trend in Amos research (and in Hebrew Bible studies more broadly) is to question the historical reliability of the book. The working assumption is that the textual data will not be accepted as reliable unless proven otherwise. Brettler states,

> I do not understand why we should presume that all of Amos is by Amos unless we can adduce very strong evidence to the contrary. Every oracle or phrase in the book of Amos should have the initial status of 'possibly belonging to Amos', and it is our job as scholars to adduce evidence of different types that suggests, with different degrees of probability, that it either is or is not original to the prophet (2006: 106).

This task includes the evaluation of texts and of background data. For example, Gertz (2010) recognizes that the common practice of deporting defeated foes goes back to the Middle-Assyrian period (fourteenth to the tenth centuries BCE) or further, but he differentiates deportation from exile, which he believes requires a theological understanding of history. This shift in conceptualization, he contends, occurred in the late Babylonian period. In Amos, deportation is announced in 4.1-3; 5.5, 27 and 6.7, but he claims that a deuteronomistic understanding of exile is evident in 7.10-17 and 9.14. This distinction, though, seems artificial, since war in the ancient Near East always was inseparable from the interventions of the gods in history. Kratz (2003) grounds his critical study of Amos in comparisons with Mesopotamian prophetic literature from Mari and the Neo-Assyrian period. His argument is that prophets in that context warned elites but did not decree judgment on national institutions and on their people. That the book of Amos does, creates what he calls in the opening section of his essay '*das Problem des historischen Amos*' ('the problem of the historical Amos'; 2003:

54). Accordingly, Kratz limits the words of the prophet to verses in which elites are warned (3.12; 4.1; 5.2, 3, 7, 18-20; 6.1a, 3-6a, 13). In his scheme, the biographical information, the OAN, and the visions of chapters 7–9 are inauthentic. He believes that the rest of the book, with its predictions of catastrophe and restoration, was added after the fall of Samaria and after Jerusalem's demise. His approach begs the question why Israel's prophets and prophetic literature must be so culturally constrained. In addition, in response, Scherer (2005) and Blum (2008) argue that there actually are precedents for messages of judgment in ancient Near Eastern prophecy, such as in the Balaam Inscription from Deir ʻAlla, which is from the ninth or eighth century BCE.

Some commentators who date the final redaction, if not the production of the entire book, to the Persian period doubt its value for eighth-century realities. This is not always the case, as some do connect parts of the book to an historical Amos and grant it some credence. Nevertheless, if the book is taken as a literary work crafted at a chronological distance from the time of the putative prophet, then it is not surprising that data in 1.1 and 7.10-17, for instance, are perceived as inventions of its redactors. It is not that there is no interest in historical inquiry. Rather, that interest is redirected toward reconstructing the setting for the hypothetical scribal circles and the literati that would have produced it (Linville 2008: 13-37; cf. Linville 2000; Coggins 2000: 76-77). According to this perspective, earlier Jewish religious texts were adapted, or even created, to provide a history for the people and to express the theological–ideological and contextual convictions of these scribal groups and their patrons. In the prophetic figures of the past, like Amos, and from whatever from them may have been transmitted over the centuries, these scribes found authoritative support for their agenda.

Bulkeley (2015) suggests 'prophetic fiction' as a helpful label to describe the genre. Historical referents serve to situate the prophet in a past of desolation and defeat known to that later audience. The book's message is directed at this subsequent community, the descendants of those who had suffered that loss long ago. In his recent commentary, Eidevall (2017) notes that the prophet does not appear in any other biblical passages or extrabiblical documents. This absence leads him to declare, 'In my opinion, it is time to call off the quest for the historical Amos, for pragmatic and methodological reasons'. Eidevall says, 'Rather than denying the existence of such a historical person, I am suggesting that any reconstruction of Amos's biography would by necessity be too speculative to serve as a basis for scholarly interpretation' (2017: 7). And again, 'on closer examination, this colorful historical reconstruction [of Amos in Israel in the first half of the eighth century] turns out to be nothing more than a relatively plausible scenario, based on a weak foundation'—a bit of an overstatement in light of the amount of data supporting sociohistorical and cultural connections into the eighth century.

Davies (2009) takes a rather idiosyncratic view of the *raison d'être* for the book of Amos. His premise is that the setting for its production is the second half

of the fifth century BCE at the earliest, when Jerusalem became the undisputed center of Jewish religion, as well as the capital of Judah/Yehud. This explains, in his mind, the mention of Jerusalem and Judah (1.2; 2.4-5; 9.11), the meaning of certain details (e.g., what he thinks is the proper referent behind 'Jacob'), and the censure of the sanctuaries at Bethel, Gilgal, and Beersheba. Most likely, Davies believes, a collection of sayings attributed to the name 'Amos' that had been housed at Bethel was appropriated and expanded to confirm the legitimacy of the temple in Jerusalem.

Composition of the Book of Amos

Disputes over the composition of this prophetic book continue to be a staple of Amos research. There are scholars who contend for the book to be substantially rooted in the eighth century, while others propose various redactional schemes. In addition to the commentaries, helpful surveys of this research are available in various monographs (e.g., Hadjiev 2009: 1-40; Radine 2010: 7-45; Hamborg 2012: 23-44; cf. Möller 2003a) and in the introductions to Amos (Barton 2012: 1-51; Houston 2017: 67-80).

Without denying the possibility of some redactional intervention, Möller (2003b) traces almost all of the material in the book to the prophet. His title, *A Prophet in Debate*, communicates his appreciation of what the biblical text offers: a presentation of the conflict of the eighth-century prophet in Israel that was produced to confront an audience in preexilic Judah not too long after the end of his ministry. The goal is not to recover an oral stage, but to engage rightly the written legacy that is the book (Möller's work is limited to Amos 1–4; yet see Möller 2000). That is, one must differentiate the rhetorical situation of Amos from that of the book. He employs rhetorical criticism and speech-act theory and interprets the book as designed to convince its audience through specific literary strategies: 'the book is thus best understood as an attempt to persuade its readers to learn from the failure of the prophet's audience to respond appropriately to his message' and so avoid Israel's fate (Möller 2003b: 122).

Sweeney (2000) does not provide a separate discussion of the composition of Amos. Matters related to dating verses arise within the flow of the commentary, and Sweeney usually defends their authenticity. There is, however, an extended treatment of the development of the Book of the Twelve and of the Four, Hosea–Amos–Micah–Zephaniah (Sweeney 2000: xv-xxxix). Garrett's commentary (2008) is part of the Baylor Handbook on the Hebrew Bible series. In accordance with the format of that series, it comments on the organization of the book of Amos, discusses its structure and syntax, and analyzes every word of the Masoretic Text. Garrett very rarely delves into historical or cultural background issues, but it is apparent that his working assumption is that the book of Amos originated with the prophet.

Lessing's case for the canonical form begins by voicing disagreement with the presuppositions and methodologies of form and redaction criticism (2009: 21-41). Lessing presents his version of rhetorical criticism, which would be sensitive to the literary structure and to the stylistic and persuasive features of the received text within its historical setting. He finds other stances speculative and unverifiable. Discontinuities in the biblical text, which some regard as proof of redaction, are understood as expected irregularities of oral delivery and the author's particular style. 'One must ask whether form and redaction critics have discovered a past reality or whether they have created one', Lessing comments. 'They propose that discontinuities and alleged contradictions in the text were introduced by later authors or editors, based on the critics' own stylistic preconceptions from the modern Western world' (2009: 39).

In Carroll R. (forthcoming), I argue for assigning most of the book to the eighth-century prophet, but my argument proceeds differently. Studies of ancient Near Eastern prophecy strongly suggest that prophecies often were written down shortly after their delivery. Amos, as a person of means, would have been able to hire a scribe to transcribe his message. What is more, the book's literary quality intimates that it was a written work from the beginning. There is no reason to doubt that the literary and theological richness of the text goes back to the prophet himself, unless one presupposes arbitrarily a narrow bandwidth for the prophet's literary sensitivities and theological acumen. The vague oracles of judgment with their stereotypical language and anonymous invader strongly imply that they predate the Assyrian incursions (Isaiah 1–39, Hosea, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, and Jonah explicitly name Assyria). Amos's words are too general to be anything more than an inexplicit announcement of a calamity from God's hand that lay sometime in the future. This is not a text that looks back at a historical event with knowledge of how that conflict unfolded. Likewise, 9.11-15 are impressionistic: they express hope for rebuilding and a time of peaceful farming with a bountiful harvest after the want they were experiencing (4.6-9; 6.6) and the war and displacement that were coming. The message is quite general: there are no fortresses or temple and nothing more than the desire for a Davidic king instead of the house of Omri that had led Israel to disaster. This brief expression of longing for the reversal of the present is not the product of a developed postexilic theology of return. The fact, too, that allusions to Judah and Jerusalem are so few (1.2; 2.4-5; 6.1; 9.11) renders less than convincing the notion that Amos was designed for a Judahite audience (whether preexilic or postexilic). The book would have to be the work of a very subtle redactor. It is expected that someone from the southern kingdom would speak of YHWH's roar from Jerusalem (1.2) and the Davidic line (9.11). These two verses bracket the book with pronouncements that Israel's religious and political establishments were illegitimate, a core conviction that permeates the text. These and other observations, coupled with the explanation of the historical backdrop, are the foundations for my position

on the authenticity of the book. The superscription (1.1) and the biographical encounter of 7.10-17 do not come from Amos, but the intertextual connections of 7.10-17 give reason to assume that this passage comes from those around him. I take as a given that the book would be appropriated by later audiences as an enduring prophetic word. I do not find convincing that on several occasions the message was reshaped for subsequent audiences.

Those who offer redactional schemes for the book's composition operate from a different perspective. The conviction that the authoritative prophetic text was redacted (by correction, supplementation, or rearrangement) for new situations motivates redaction-critical hypotheses (*Fortschreibung*). The textual phenomena simply are understood differently. I will mention only a few sources among the many in Amos research.

Wood (2002) disagrees with the common critical view that the book is a record of oral performances that were written down and then redacted. She argues that its earliest iteration was a written work performed before a live audience, probably a Judean *marzēaḥ* feast. The prophet originally composed seven distinct poems that were connected by the themes of the Day of YHWH and the fall of the northern kingdom. Subsequently, an editor enhanced and reorganized these poems to create a ten-part work. Woods sees the songs of the poet Amos as analogous to the tragic poetry of the Greek symposium of the seventh and sixth centuries. About fifty years after the fall of Jerusalem, a reviser transformed the prophetic drama into a book in dialogue with the Deuteronomistic History and other prophetic texts. Wood weaves critical ideas regarding dating and other matters into her project. (For another approach to Amos as drama through performance criticism, see Doan and Giles 2005).

Hadjiev (2004, 2009) proposes that two collections of oracles lie behind the book as we now have it. The first, the 'Repentance Scroll', arose within the Amos tradition and predates Israel's demise. It was an independent composition comprising 4.1–6.7, structured chiastically. It was directed at the northern kingdom and was characterized by its call for repentance. In a subsequent step in Judah after Israel's fall in 722 BCE, the rest of chapters 3–6 were added to yield the first edition of Amos. The exhortation to repent was now overshadowed by inevitable judgment. A second collection of oracles, the 'Polemical Scroll', was grounded in Amos's disputes with his opponents and also predates the Assyrian invasion. It included five of the OAN, which were modeled on the five visions of chapters 7–9. The two compilations were combined in the seventh century to produce the 'Liturgical Redaction'. Several passages (e.g., 1.9-12; 2.4-6; 8.3-14; 9.7-15) were added in the exilic period in Judah (there probably was nothing added in the postexilic period). Hadjiev clearly sets out his criteria for making his decisions on redaction. Among the nine he lists are literary breaks, the presence of later vocabulary and theological ideas, thematic contradictions, atypical style, and competing literary structures (2009: 25-40).

Radine (2010) contends that Amos was a literary work from its inception, which he claims has much in common with Assyrian literary-predictive texts and ancient city laments. The first version, which was aimed at those who had fled the northern kingdom because of the Assyrian onslaught, was produced not long after Israel's defeat as propaganda by the Judahite monarchy to legitimize itself as God's true kingdom. Israel, on the other hand, had received the judgment it deserved. This early composition consisted of 1.1-2; 2.6–7.9; 8.1–9.10 (with some exceptions). He relates the OAN to the Babylonian incursions into the region and sets their production within the exile, the biographical vignette of 7.10-17 to what he believes was a rivalry between Jerusalem and Bethel in the sixth and fifth centuries, and 9.11-15 (with its connections to Zechariah) to the scribal compilation of the Book of the Twelve. Hamborg's (2012) monograph, a revision of his doctoral thesis, leans on the earlier work of Wolff (1977) and Jeremias (1998). He postulates four steps in the redaction of the book: a composition soon after 722, a late preexilic stage from the late seventh century, as well as redactions from the exilic and postexilic periods. Using 2.6-8 as a test case, Hamborg carefully argues that each redactional layer demonstrates social concern and has a theological contribution to make towards that end.

Eidevall (2017) postulates a three-stage redaction. The initial version was crafted after the fall of Israel but contains oracles from before the Assyrian invasion (perhaps delivered in Judah). Its purpose was to explain the northern kingdom's destruction. The second phase came after 587 to rationalize Judah's defeat. The third, a Persian-period stage, added cosmological elements to earlier passages (such as the hymnic 4.13; 5.8-9; 9.5-6) and expanded the eschatological hope of 9.11, 14-15 with 9.12-13. Eidevall follows certain Continental scholars, such as Steins (2004, 2010) and Becker (2001) in dating chapters seven to nine to the exilic or postexilic era, when the people wrestled with the destruction of Jerusalem. Consequently, the visions and 7.10-17 no longer provide a window into the ministry of the prophet (contrast this stance with Riede's detailed study [2008]). From the perspective of that later period, the final shape of the book now stresses divine mercy, forgiveness, and reconciliation as fundamental to its trajectory and meaning. Amos no longer is primarily a book of death (Eidevall 2017: 191-93). Although Eidevall understands Amos as completed in the Persian period, he does not interpret the entire book in that light. This is in contrast to Linville (2008), who sees it as wholly composed at that time and reads it consistently as such. Highlighting its lexical polysemy, Linville argues that the book communicates in its language and imagery the disruption in creation and the cosmos brought on by sin and judgment and the progression toward cosmic restoration. As have others, Hadjiev (2009: 11-17) and Barton (2012: 30-32) observe that unrelenting announcements of judgment, critique of the cult, and the presence of a king and an army, among other matters, do not reflect a postexilic

context, making it difficult to sustain that the entire book was produced in that setting.

Finally, mention should be made of the composition history of Amos within the broader redactional horizon of the Book of the Twelve. A key figure here in this regard is Schart (2007, 2010, 2016). He hypothesizes a six-stage redaction of Amos, which is coordinated with his suggestion for the process of compiling the Twelve. Schart proposes a first version of Amos (an edition of chapters three to six) that was supplemented by five of the OAN and the five visions of chapters seven to nine (phase two). At that point, this edition of Amos was coupled with a version of Hosea, a work that was edited and made part of a deuteronomistic corpus (Amos + Hosea, Micah, Zephaniah), which is now labeled the Book of the Four (stage three). Next, the doxologies were inserted, and Nahum and Habakkuk were added to that collection (stage four). A salvific redaction (9.11-15*) was coordinated with Haggai-Zechariah (phase five), and a subsequent eschatological stratum followed with Joel and Obadiah (stage six). Jonah and Malachi later filled out the Twelve. Research continues on the redaction of the Book of the Twelve, as well as of the Four. These alone of the twelve books have historical superscriptions (Hos. 1:1; Amos 1:1; Mic. 1:1; Zeph. 1:1). They share themes (with differences), like the Day of YHWH, a call to return, and announcements of judgment and hope (Albertz 2003; Schart 2007, 2010, 2016). Disagreements among these scholars concern, for example, the role of the Four vis-à-vis the Deuteronomistic History, the nature of the deuteronomistic redaction (Wöhrle 2008; Radine 2012), and the trajectory of the redaction of the Four. In addition, whether or not the Twelve were read together as a single corpus (or is this a modern strategy?) is debated. That each has a superscription suggests that they are to be taken as discrete works. There does seem, however, to be some level of intentionality in their grouping, and this research will continue to try to decipher what purposes might lie behind that interdependence.

Brief Comments on the Theology of Amos

Barton (2012) offers a helpful taxonomy of the theology of the book of Amos. He distinguishes between what would have been the beliefs of the people of the historical prophet's context from those of the prophet himself and his circle, the theology of the redactional additions, and the theology of the canonical book. Even if one might not agree with his redaction-critical suggestions, this breakdown can serve as a heuristic tool in the analysis of scholarly hypotheses.

Two topics have received especially increased attention in the contemporary context. The first is creation in relationship with ecological concerns. Global crises have spurred scholars to revisit prophetic texts and probe the role of creation in the life of Israel and the workings of God. Fretheim's work is foundational in regards to creation's importance for the oracles of judgment and salvation in

the prophetic literature, in which Amos has a significant profile (2005: 157-98). His treatise ends with a call to embrace creation care as vocation and to appreciate the non-humans' vocation as divine agents and the need humans have of the nonhuman to understand and praise the Creator (2005: 269-84). Marlowe's monograph (2009) explores creation texts in the eighth-century prophets in more depth, and is a good introduction in general to ecological hermeneutics and biblical research dedicated to ecological ethics. In her treatment of Amos, she highlights the extensive cooperation of the creation with God in the indictment against Israel, the judgments, and the restoration (pp. 120-57).

Another issue in Amos that has generated discussion recently is the violence of God that is expressed in his judgments upon the nations, Israel, and Judah. Houston applauds the book's condemnation and judgment of the perpetrators of injustice and the prophetic indictment of the state of ancient Israel, but he finds the scope of destruction in which even the oppressed suffer and die 'morally questionable' (2017: 48; cf. 2017: 45-48; 2008: 71-73). His disquiet is an instance of debates about the violence of God in the Hebrew Bible that are occurring within the guild and in the wider public. In Carroll R. (2015), I made an initial foray into the discussion (cf. Timmer 2014). I offer four observations to try to begin to nuance the discussion in constructive directions: (1) studies of ancient warfare texts reveal that they are often laced with hyperbole, a fact that should caution modern readers not to interpret prophetic passages overly literally; (2) a careful reading of Amos underscores the patience of God in holding off judgment, as well as the reality that it is human violence that begets violence as a consequence; his judgments are not irrational or uncontrolled; (3) YHWH does not delight in judging, but painfully laments that action; and (4) the decreed judgments are a profound ideological critique of Israel's reigning ideology and a step toward the ultimate goal of restoration.

The Ancient Versions

A fruitful area of research that has not received the level of attention in commentaries and introductory textbooks it deserves is the witness of the ancient versions, especially the Septuagint of Amos (LXX-Amos). In the past, it was common for differences between the Masoretic Text (MT) and the LXX to be understood as reflecting another *Vorlage* for the Greek translation. This view often generated conjectured emendations that attempted to retrovert the Greek text to a possible Hebrew original. Recent studies in LXX-Amos and other books of the Hebrew Bible, however, are discovering that many discrepancies can be explained on the basis of factors related to the socioreligious setting and perspective of the translator(s). This newer appreciation of more engaged translators of the LXX and its implications vis-à-vis textual variants is readily apparent when one compares the apparatus of the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (*BHS*)

to the apparatus and comments in the *Biblia Hebraica Quinta* (Gelston 2010). Suggested emendations are kept to a minimum, and many of the proposals in *BHS* either are ignored or expressly denied.

An important voice in this fresh approach to LXX-Amos is Glenny. His 2009 study, a revision of his doctoral dissertation, is a detailed investigation of the translation technique (Part One) and possible theology (Part Two) of the translator. The scholarly consensus has been that the Hebrew *Vorlage* of LXX-Amos was close to the consonantal text of the MT (more technically, proto-MT), as it closely follows the word order of the MT and appears to try to communicate consistently its sense. Discrepancies—such as omissions, additions, modifications in verbal forms, and the occasional misunderstandings of the Hebrew—regularly seem to be motivated by stylistic criteria, by an effort to offer a more understandable rendering of the Hebrew, or perhaps even to conform to Greek rhetorical conventions. In a number of instances, where the translator wrestled with rare or unknown words, he employed a variety of techniques to make sense of the passage (e.g., manipulating consonants, paraphrase, drawing connections to the broader context within Amos or even to outside the book). Even in cases where it has been argued that supposed misreadings may find their explanation in problematic handwriting in the translator's Hebrew text (Gelston 2002), Glenny ascertains diverse intentional devices in his renderings (2007; 2009, *passim*). It was at some of these troublesome junctures that the translator of LXX-Amos inserted his theological concerns. Certain textual data suggest anti-Syrian (e.g., 3.12; 4.5; 8.14; 9.7) and anti-Baal polemics (e.g., 4.13; 7.9). There are slight changes in the descriptions of God, too, such as softening the notion of God as warrior by translating *pantokratōr* ('Almighty') for *ṣəbāʾôt* ('hosts'), which occurs ten times in Amos. His eschatological perspectives are evident, for example, at 7.1 with the mention of Gog (cf. Ezek. 38–39), the inclusion of Gentiles in Israel's vision of restoration in 9.12, and the mention of Messiah in 4.13. In a number of instances, Glenny disagrees with Gelston's suggestion that some of the textual differences can be explained by misreadings of the Hebrew by the translator because of similarities between some Hebrew letters or because of a smudged manuscript (Gelston 2002). Glenny contends that the translator would have been a Jew living in Egypt, probably Alexandria, in the mid-second century BCE; he probably also translated all of the Minor Prophets. Glenny followed up this monograph with a full-length commentary on LXX-Amos (2013). While clearly dependent on the earlier work, per the strictures of the series in which it appears, this volume is based on Vaticanus instead of the eclectic LXX text edited by J. Ziegler (1943), which had been the basis of the earlier work.

Theocharous's published doctoral dissertation (2012) also explores the translation techniques of the translator of the Septuagint Book of the Twelve (LXX-TP). She, too, works with the assumption that one translator is responsible for rendering the Minor Prophets into Greek. Theocharous painstakingly applies

the insights of intertextual studies to investigate to what degree the translator may have been influenced by linguistic and thematic resonances within the MT, the LXX, Jewish tradition, and the broader Greek milieu. She begins by testing Tov's (1981) thesis that the Greek Pentateuch impacted in large measure the translator of LXX-TP, but she does not find it persuasive. Several chapters explore the evidence for 'standard translations' (i.e., 'pre-existing, familiar, formulaic expressions' [2012: 67] drawn from the translator's religious tradition), Hebrew catchwords that would have triggered links to other passages (1.3, 11, 15; 4.2; 6.4, 6), and connections to other passages apparently produced not by lexical echoes but potential thematic or theological parallels (4.5; 5.24; 7.1). Theocharous's detailed study further develops the program of discerning the complex methodology of the translator of LXX-TP by displaying his deep commitment to the task of communicating the divine word and the rich background that informed that enterprise. She differs from Glenny in not suggesting the same level of coherence for the translator's theological perspective and in associating some of his techniques with those utilized at Qumran ('we can no longer treat the LXX as solely an Alexandrian phenomenon' [2012: 19]). Mention should be made of the contribution by Park (2001). While not a monograph dedicated to LXX-Amos, as it looks at the reception of the prophetic book (in particular 5.25-27 and 9.11-15) more broadly, this work does survey the variations from the MT (2001: 138-77) and provides a helpful table that presents the differences between the Septuagint editions of Ziegler, Rahlfs, and Swete (2001: 139-42). Verwijs (2016) explores the translation method employed in Syriac versions. Hers is a meticulous comparison of the techniques of the translator of a Hebrew *Vorlage* of the OAN to Syriac (the Peshitta, probably from the first or second centuries CE) with those of the translator of the Greek of the fifth column of Origen's Hexapla into Syriac (the Syro-Hexapla from around 615 CE).

Reception and Contemporary Contextualization

Amos has a long history of appropriation across the millennia for which the three book-length introductions mentioned above provide examples (Carroll R. 2002: 53-72; Barton 2012: 161-80; Houston 2017: 83-96; also note Various Authors 2009). To begin with, there are multiple connections to other prophetic texts. Recently, scholars have explored the intertextual echoes between the visions of Amos 7–9 and material in Jeremiah (see especially Pschibille 2001) and Ezekiel 8–11 (Poser 2016). Schart (2004) observes the similarities between Jer. 1.11-12; 1.13-19; 24.1-10 and Amos 7.7-8 and 8.1-2 (cf. Pschibille 2001: 13-78). As in the visions in Amos, in Jeremiah 1 YHWH poses a question to the prophet that prompts a dialogue, and Jer. 24.1-10 concerns a basket of fruit. Interestingly, YHWH commands Jeremiah no longer to intercede for Jerusalem and Judah

(7.16; 11.14; 14.11; 15.1, 6; cf. 14.11-12), whereas Amos stops pleading of his own accord (Amos 7.1-6).

Appeals to the book of Amos occur throughout Jewish tradition. For example, 5.26-27 and 9.11 are expounded in the Amos-Numbers Midrash of the Damascus Scroll (CD 7.13b-8.1a) and the Florilegium (4QFlor 1.1-13) from Qumran. Coincidentally, 5.25-27 and 9.11-12 are the two passages cited in the New Testament (Acts 7.42-43 and 15.16-17, respectively). The faith communities of both the Qumran material and the New Testament applied the prophetic text directly to their situations. The references to Amos in the Talmud and Midrashim have been collected by Neusner (2007), and recently Harris (2018) translated into English the commentary on Amos by the twelfth-century Rabbi Eliezer of Beaugency.

Amos has always been associated with matters of justice. An impressive case from centuries ago is the Lenten sermon series on Amos and Zechariah preached in February–March 1496 by Savonarola in Florence, Italy (Mein 2011; cf. Barton 2012: 172-74; Houston 2017: 87-89). This Dominican friar 'was gripped by a passionate conviction of his own prophetic vocation, and an increasing sense that the time had come for both the scourge and the new age which would follow it' (Mein 2011: 123). France invaded Italy in late 1494, and the sociopolitical situation in Florence was unstable. Believing this a propitious time for political and moral reform, Savonarola launched the series. He preached against political and religious tyranny and connected the sins decried in Amos to issues, individuals, institutions (including the Roman Catholic Church and the pope), and the civil authorities of his day. Eventually arrested, Savonarola was executed in March 1498.

More recent appropriations of Amos come from feminist, Majority World, and ethnic minority voices. Feminist commentators have made significant contributions to prophetic studies. Working from a hermeneutics of suspicion, some postulate that the book concentrates its social concern on free citizens, probably males, who were in danger of losing their property. Erickson voices the opinion of many, when she says, 'Surely women would have suffered from poverty just as men in their households, but in general Amos does not recognize the particular forms a woman's economic plight would take' (2012: 313; cf. Wacker 2012: 397). Even the prediction of a woman thrust into prostitution is said to come from the husband's point of view (7.17). This critique loses some force in light of 2.7, where it is possible that the young woman who is being exploited is of the families that have fallen into debt slavery in 2.6. In addition, the violated pregnant women of 1.13 and the fallen virgin image in 5.2 reflect the helplessness of female victims in the cauldron of war, and 5.16-17 could refer to professional mourners (cf. 8.3), who in the ancient world were predominantly women (e.g., Jer. 9.17, 20 [MT 9.16, 19]). Some feminists also take umbrage at the characterization of the wealthy women as the 'cows of Bashan' (4.1), but others recognize

that the point of the metaphor is to compare their prosperity to the lush region in Transjordan that was famous for its cattle (Erickson 2012: 315; Wacker 2012: 400). Nevertheless, the book of Amos is questioned, because the violence of divine judgment potentially 'could be used to condone or even promote abusive behavior as a legitimate means to ensure faithfulness or love' (Erickson 2012: 315). This charge might be difficult to substantiate in that Amos, unlike other prophetic books such as Hosea, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, does not appeal to marital imagery. To claim that Amos's divine war imagery leads some to justify spousal abuse, therefore, could be difficult.

Couey (2017) is critical of Amos and other prophetic books for four reasons. First, he believes their theology of divine causation (e.g., 3.3-8) is potentially harmful: 'Such texts might be taken to imply that all disabilities are directly caused by God, or even that all disabilities are divine punishments for sin' (2017: 267). Second, he decries that divine and prophetic commands to hear unfairly exclude certain disabled persons (e.g., 7.16; 8.11). Third, the oppression condemned in Amos does not mention injustices suffered by the disabled, which 'constitutes a deficiency in the moral discourse' (2017: 269). Last, disability sometimes is utilized in the prophets as a trope for judgment. These are interesting and important observations but a bit unfair to the biblical text. On the one hand, the possibility that the text could be facilely referenced as the reason for disabilities does not mean that it was intended to be, or legitimately could be; to condemn the book of Amos for hypothetical potential misuse is unreasonable. On the other hand, the prophetic message may not be as comprehensive as one might like, but the brevity and general nature of prophetic censure, however frustrating to the modern reader, are characteristic of the genre. It is impossible to ascertain the prophet Amos's or the book's attitudes toward the disabled.

People in diverse parts of the globe appeal to the book of Amos. Sometimes these appropriations are enlightening, as they can open up new vistas and raise fresh, challenging questions. The contribution by Bitrus, a Nigerian, in the *Africa Bible Commentary* (2006), however, contains almost no contextualized reflections. His discussion is akin to that found in standard works that do not associate textual details with contemporary socioeconomic, political, and religious problems. Only twice does Bitrus mention the African context: he cites a Hausa proverb in relationship to 3.7 and crooked practices in local markets that would be similar to what is denounced in 8.6. Robertson's commentary on Amos in *The Africana Bible* (2010) could not be more different. He unequivocally states, 'Contextual theological reflection is a particular commitment to the context of the poor and marginalized people… Within this context, liberation and justice is the starting point for action and reflection' (2010: 173). Robertson does not comment on every passage, but he connects the few that he does mention to modern African and African American life. For instance, the hymns in the book of Amos are an occasion to speak of the power of African American spirituals; the

oppression of the vulnerable as a violation of the created order is compared to the cosmology of Botswana; and the independent, powerful voice of the prophet that is rejected by the religious establishment echoes the social exclusion of African American religious history. Robertson also states that the linking of justice to the cult in 5.24, which Martin Luther King, Jr cited in his famous Washington speech of 1963, is fundamental to African American Christianity. It is also important to be alert about the impact of racial prejudice in biblical studies. A case in point from Amos is the mention of Cush in 9.7. Some commentators (Holter 2015) and Study Bible notes (see Koffi 2005) have made the comparison with Israel a disparaging one based on skin color, which misrepresents the text's meaning.

In the *Global Bible Commentary*, Ngan (2004), who originally is from Hong Kong, China, employs the prophet's condemnatory words to admonish Asian American Christians not to be blind to the needs of others. Her message is directed to, on the one hand, Asian Americans in general, who are a privileged minority—socially, economically, and educationally. On the other hand, she warns well-connected, successful Asian Americans to not exploit the less fortunate of their own communities in their drive to assimilate to and prosper within the majority culture.

In a series of publications, I correlate the message of this prophetic book to the realities of Latin America. Amos 9.11-15 could stand like a beacon of hope in Guatemala after the end of the thirty-six-year civil war in 1996 (Carroll R. 1999). Scholars may debate the authenticity of these verses, but literarily they reverse the book's themes of judgment: instead of war and destruction, exile, hunger, and thirst, the passage depicts a time of peace, the rebuilding of ruins, a return to the land, and abundant food and drink. With the signing of the peace accords, Guatemala stood in that space between 9.10 and 9.11—between desolation and expectation: looking back at the suffering, but peering forward to a different tomorrow. One of the lessons of the conflicts in the Central American isthmus was that social change was not enough; what was needed was a different moral climate, a culture of peace and justice shaped along the lines of virtue ethics to nurture a different kind of people and context (Carroll R. 2001). One of the intractable problems in Latin America has been the wedding of religion to ideologies (whether of the Left or Right). A careful reading of the book of Amos demonstrates that the prophet debunked Israel's social and military pretense and refuted the national ideology, whose deity was one of blessing and victory (Carroll R. 2008). The cult that legitimated and celebrated this god was unacceptable (Carroll R. 2005). Its central temple at Bethel was to be destroyed (3.14; 8.3; 9.1), and its priest exiled (7.16-17). What Amaziah saw as treason (7.10-13) actually was a divine word of judgment. In a recent Spanish-language commentary, I contextualize Amos's denunciation of violence, both military and socioeconomic, and corruption to Latin America (Carroll R. 2018). I also

appropriate the prophetic critique of religion to decry the historic link in Latin America between religion and politics, the inefficacy of its religiosity in a context of rampant inequality, and the sensationalism of some Christian groups. I say of 9.11-15, '*es una esperanza concreta para un pueblo y un mundo sufriente*' ('It is a concrete hope for a suffering people and world'; Carroll R. 2018: 1109).

Efforts to coordinate Amos with matters of justice are not limited to women, minority, or global scholars. In his volume in the NIVAC series, Smith (2001) consistently refers to national sociopolitical, cultural, and moral issues, as well as international problems. In this series's format, the treatment of biblical texts is divided into three parts. In the first ('Original Meaning') are found discussions of backgrounds and traditional exegesis. The second ('Bridging Contexts') discerns principles arising from the text that transcend their original setting, while the third ('Contemporary Significance') interfaces the text with the contemporary world. It is in these last two parts that Smith engages modern life. For example, Smith draws from the OAN the lessons of holding nations accountable for the misuse of power and denouncing the indiscriminate violence of war, and thinks about how best to communicate effectively this sort of message today (2001: 244-52). In a brief piece, Schlimm (2006) discusses how war crimes denounced in the OAN are also condemned in the Geneva Conventions for humanitarian treatment in war. The biblical text, he says, can be a teaching tool to help students question ideologies that condone violence and understand that nations will be held accountable for atrocities.

Conclusions

It is difficult to summarize the research done on the book of Amos over the last twenty years. The range of topics of debate is broad, and the sheer variety of hypotheses in these multiple areas with their level of detail make any attempt at a survey a daunting task. This article has grouped these scholarly discussions into five categories to facilitate a general acquaintance with recent trends. It is clear that there are deep disagreements over the nature of the prophetic literature in relationship to its historical reliability, provenance, and composition. The relevance of archaeological findings and social science approaches can inform these discussions in many ways, but even here there are different interpretations of the data and their intersection with historicity debates. The breadth of avenues for scholarly labor, as well as the arguments internal to those interests, portend a robust future for Amos research. This prophetic book also continues to speak into communities of faith and in contexts of injustice, a dimension that should prod scholarship not to divorce itself from social realities.

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