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## THE PROPHET'S PLUMBLINE

"Thus he shewed me: and behold, the Lord stood upon a wall made by a plumbline, with a plumbline in his hand."

Amos 7:7.

Some scholars think Amos is the oldest book in the Bible. It surely was written a long time ago. Yet the prophecies in this book are as accurate as any prophecies in history. How could a man in the dim, dim ages of the past see so far into the future?

Oliver Windel Holmes divides the whole human race into three classes. The first class is the one-story men. They cannot see very far behind or before them. They are men of little stature. They live in a world that is rapidly changing, changes so vast and sweeping they leave one breathless, who has the stature to see their meaning and the impact they have on all life. But to the one-story man the world is not changing at all. Yesterday, today and tomorrow are the same to him. The world is just as it has always been and will continue just as it is.

I have a friend who makes a prediction about every political campaign, every movement that threatens to change his way of life, every new machine or new medicine. He misses every time. The reason is that he always bets on things staying just as they are. He is a strong believer in the status-quo. He lives in such a low valley he cannot see over the hills behind or before.

Two-story men can see behind them. They know that things are not as they have always been. They see changes,

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changes that have swept away men's pet prejudices, changes that have carried away nations and empires that failed to see the need of change. He can see that kings, powers and principalities have been swept away because they got in the way of mighty forces that were sweeping men onward. He knows that ideas and institutions that men once thought were fixed and immovable as the very hills have passed away. He knows that nations that once thought they were the favored sons of heaven, the very elect of God, the chosen people, have been rejected; while nations that were once weak and despised have come forward to claim the scepter and the crown.

But the two-story man sees the world as a finished palace. He sees no need for any changes. More than half a century ago a Commissioner of Patents in the United States Patent Office resigned. He gave as his reason that everything had been invented that could be invented!

The two-story man sees no more work for the idealist or the reformer. He is satisfied with things as they are. If there is injustice, he ignores it, or tries to justify it. If there is oppression, it not his affair. If there is misery, it touches him not, unless he is one of the miserable. His ideals, his standards of honesty are no higher than the customs of the time in which he lives.

The tree-story man is a man of vision. He sees the mighty changes that have swept the world onward in the past. He has an insight keen enough to evaluate these changes. But he knows greater changes are yet to come. He stands where he can see mighty changes in the making. He knows the world is

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not finished. The man of vision sees many imperfections in things as they are, he sees the need of reforms and improvements. He knows that human society, the church, the state can be improved. His ideals of honesty, his ideals of purity, his ideals of justice are far in advance of the customs of the time in ~~wh~~ich he lives. Amos was a three-story man. He measured his idels by God's plumbline.

If we could look ahead as we look behind our fortune would be made. But a man whose aim is only making money is usually a one-story man. A three-story man's vision is too great, his horizon too wide to be bounded by the dollar mark. He has greater things to accomplish than to make a fortune.

But there are some rules of finance that have proven good in all the ages. If you want to keep your money put it on God and the right. This rule is as good for the small investor as it is for the millionaire. Some great fortunes have been made by following this rule. Nathan Rothschild became head of the ~~greatest~~ <sup>greatest</sup> financial house in Europe because he backed England against Napoleon. He told his brothers that England was fighting to preserve human liberty, and the Jews would be heavy losers if it was lost. If they backed Napoleon, and he won, they would have nothing anyway. If they backed England and lost they would only be losing what Napoleon would get anyway. He risked his all on the right and saved his money.

If two mighty forces are about to meet in mortal combat, and you must choose between them, choose the right. If neither is right, choose the one that is nearest right. There is no party, government or nation in this world that is perfect. When a party in power, an institution that is

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strongly established, an administration is threatened by a new movement, before deciding which to choose, examine narrowly the justice, the truth, the right of both. If the old is founded on tyranny, oppression, cruelty or injustice, it will fall, no matter how strongly established it is. Remember that those who back an unjust cause go down with it. Take warning from our own fathers who backed slavery.

When Hitler was rising to power I heard some men discussing the value of his bonds. One said, "If you want to make some easy money, back Hitler. His stock is low now, but he will soon have all of Europe in the palm of his hand. Buy his bonds now and make your fortune." That man lost his shirt. He deserved to lose it. A man who would voluntarily back Hitler with his money is no better than Hitler. A man who voluntarily backs men like Napoleon and Hitler is a tyrant at heart and deserves to lose.

When a movement that is new is opposed by selfish men with entrenched privileges, by men with dishonest gains to lose, remember that mighty empires have gone down <sup>before</sup> weak and feeble forces backed by the right. Remember also that those who stand in the way of progress of the race are swept on with the causes they backed.

Buy stock in a business that gives men an honest deal. Shady businesses are always poor risks. The safest business is one that is making something that men need, and will continue to need. A crooked business may pay while the sun shines and times are good. But an honest business is the only one that will weather the storms.

Mississippi Bubble, 111

Remember that schemes like the Mississippi Bubble, the Florida land boom, and all get-rich-quick schemes are poor risks. They are houses built on the sand.

**prediction**

A favorite prediction of prophets and would-be-prophets from the dawn of Christianity to now is that the end of time is close at hand. The early Christians thought that Christ would return to earth in great power and glory in that generation. So far every man or group of men who has set a day or a period for the end of time has been put to shame. Time went on and they were prepared for something else. To all such predictions I can only say that this physical universe is made of very durable materials. It has already lasted eons and eons of ages. It is built to last as many more if God wills. Every individual life is to these countless ages as the tick of a watch. Death to every mortal is the end of time and the beginning of eternity. If there had been anything to gain for Christianity in knowing the day or the hour of the end of time God would not have left the question in such doubt. The only preparation we can make for the end of time is the same we should make for death. The best preparation we can make for death is to live, live with every fiber and nerve of body and spirit a quiver to the great mystery of life and the wonders and greatness of God's love, mercy and goodness, live with every faculty of body and mind alert to all of life's problems, live as cheerfully and abundantly as circumstances will permit. Let self die and Christ live in you, and you will be ready when death comes.