91. With what did he charge the nobility?

The nobles were the rich capitalists of the country, in whose hands there rested the economic and, in large part, the political destiny of the nation. Some of them had summer homes in Damascus and winter houses in Samaria. These were elaborate affairs, with rich furnishings and extravagant budgets. With multitudes of the plain people living in the most abject poverty, such ostentation was a gross sin, and Amos condemned it in unsparing terms (3:9, 11, 15; 5:5).

92. With what did he charge the women?

Their excessive demands upon their husbands had driven the men to further and more heartless oppression of the poor. In the region east of the Jordan there was a cattle-grazing country called Bashan, where stock was fattened for the market. The well-fed women in the congregation of worshipers reminded Amos of the sleek cattle of Bashan, and he launched out at them in a vitriolic attack that has no equal in the Old Testament (4:1-3).

93. With what did Amos charge the professional prophets?

Many of them were attached to Jeroboam's court as seers and magicians. It was their business to counsel the king and nobles on matters of public policy. What Amos had to say that day at the shrine was in direct contradiction to everything they had been saying, and if Amos were right then their whole profession was discredited. It was a serious situation for them in which their whole living was involved.

94. With what did he charge the merchants?

Keep in mind the fact that these were the speculators who manipulated the market and piled up the quick and easy fortunes. They were so intent upon making money that they chafed under the small restraints imposed upon them by the holidays connected with the religious feasts (8:5). They were so land greedy that they lusted for the dust that a poor country farmer poured on his head as a token of mourning in the presence of death (2:7); their business methods were so vicious that they employed a wide variety of subterfuges to cheat and rob the helpless poor (8:5-6).

95. What did Amos have to say to Amaziah?

In the midst of his speech he was interrupted by the priest in charge of the shrine, who charged him with being one of the professional prophets trying to terrify the audience into paying him a bribe. It is not difficult to imagine the fat cleric, livid with rage, ordering him back to his own country of Judah, where the people would be glad to pay him for speaking fierce denunciations of Israel (7:12).

Amos hotly denied the accusation that he was one of the despised "sons of the prophets" and proclaimed the fact that he owed his message

and his call directly to Yahweh himself. With terrible sternness he announced to Amaziah that he should suffer unendurable tragedy because of his failure to recognize the message as being from Yahweh, and because of his moral failure in leading the people astray. The protection of the king would be of no avail (7:14-17).

96. What did he have to say to the king?

Jeroboam II, king of Israel, was in the midst of a reign that was, in many respects, one of the most brilliant the little kingdom had ever known; but underneath its splendor Amos saw the exploited poor, the defenseless realm, and the betrayed kingdom. For much of the terrible doom descending upon the nation he held Jeroboam responsible (7:9) and freely predicted his death by the sword. This word against the royal house gave Amaziah his opportunity to interrupt the prophet.

97. Did Amos see no hope?

He declared boldly that their shrines and services were helpless to save them (5:21-23) and that guilt was widespread. But he was also of the opinion that there might be a pious minority, and upon such he pinned whatever hope he had (5:14-15). It would be a small, chewed-up remnant, to be sure; but it might survive (3:12).

98. Had the nation had any warning?

Though no other voice had been raised in warning, Amos pointed out that the nation had suffered drought, famine, blight, mildew, plague, and earthquakes (4:6-12), all of which should have been a sufficient warning. But so sure was he of the final fate that at one point in his address he dropped into a dirge, as if he were attending the funeral of the kingdom and were singing its death song (5:1-3).

99. What happened as a result of his speech?

Amaziah took the situation in hand, ordered him to keep silence, dispatched messengers to the king notifying him that treason had been uttered at the shrine, and apparently the prophet was hustled out of town. It is seldom true that a government founded on oppression dares to permit the full luxury of free speech, free press, or free assemblies.

100. Did Amos accept his banishment?

Denied the privilege of speaking to the people, Amos seems to have returned to his home and committed his message to writing. It was probably circulated as a piece of undercover literature, being passed from hand to hand surreptitiously as a revolutionary document. This, of course, is nothing more than a surmise, for there is no word in the Old Testament which throws light on the matter. But at any rate Amos, in putting his convictions into writing, earned the high distinction of being the first man to write a complete book of the Bible.