I. EVALUATION OF THIS EXAMINATION. The examination consists of three sections, designed to be completed over five days. All three sections must be answered. Section I has four required responses, one of which will instruct the candidate to choose between an option "A" or "B." A single evaluation of either "Satisfactory" (S) or "Unsatisfactory" (U) must be given on the examination as a whole. If any required response is omitted from a section, then the examination must receive an overall evaluation of "Unsatisfactory."

Each examination will be evaluated independently by two readers. If both overall evaluations are "S," the conveners will record a final evaluation of "Satisfactory." If both readers evaluate the exam overall as "U," the exam receives a final evaluation of "Unsatisfactory." If the two readers disagree in their overall evaluations, the exam will be given to a third reader. The conveners will record the final evaluation based on the two concurring overall evaluations.

II. TIDS EVALUATION SHEET GOES TO THE CANDIDATE. Each reader's comments should represent his or her considered appraisal of the paper. These comments are read by the candidate and the candidate's Committee on Preparation for Ministry.

OVERALL EVALUATION

Dana Fruits
Reader's Name (print) Reader's Signature

NOTE: COMMENTS INCLUDE A MESSAGE FOR COMMITTEE ON PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY (CHECK IF APPLICABLE).

Section I: Language, Historical Situation, Scriptural and Theological Context [600 words/response]

1. Language of the Text

First Required Response This response was adequate in explaining the different translations. There was, however, no footnote for the BDB citation.

Second Required Response The response asked for was to 'conclude' whether the passage forms a coherent unit or not. While discussion was given both in support of it being a coherent unit as well as not; there was no conclusion given.

2. Historical Situation - Third Required Response This response was a good discussion of the history and 'the day of the LORD.'
3. Scriptural and Theological Context—Fourth Required Response (A)
This offers an adequate response to the relation between the Exodus and the Amos passage. It would have been stronger to stop with number 8. Number nine references Jeroboam, in 1 Kings 12:28, but this is not Jeroboam II.

Section II: Presenting a Faithful Interpretation

1. Focus Statement [50 words]
This is a clear focus statement based on the material presented.

2. Supporting the interpretation [1200 words] This response very clearly supported the focus statement and was a clear interpretation of the passage. (Even without the New Testament reference!)

Section IIf: Application [2 pages]
Satisfactory sermon outline, ... again, ... even without the New Testament reference.

Summary Statement (why exam is satisfactory or unsatisfactory) This paper receives an overall satisfactory evaluation. Discussion were clear and coherent and faithful to the text.
Comments for CPM:
I. EVALUATION OF TmS EXAMINATION. The examination consists of three sections, designed to be completed over five days. All three sections must be answered. Section I has four required responses, one of which will instruct the candidate to choose between an option "A" or "B." A single evaluation of either "Satisfactory" (S) or "Unsatisfactory" (U) must be given on the examination as a whole. If any required response is omitted from a section, then the examination must receive an overall evaluation of "Unsatisfactory."

Each examination will be evaluated independently by two readers. If both overall evaluations are "S," the conveners will record a final evaluation of "Satisfactory." If both readers evaluate the exam overall as "U," the exam receives a final evaluation of "Unsatisfactory." If the two readers disagree in their overall evaluations, the exam will be given to a third reader. The conveners will record the final evaluation based on the two concurring overall evaluations.

II. TmS EVALUATION SHEET GOES TO THE CANDIDATE. Each reader's comments should represent his or her considered appraisal of the paper. These comments read by the candidate and the candidate's Committee on Preparation for Ministry.

OVERALL EVALUATION

Jane McElweeSmith
Reader's Name (print)

NOTE: COMMENTS INCLUDE A MESSAGE FOR COMMITTEE ON PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY (CHECK IF APPLICABLE).

Section I: Language, Historical Situation, Scriptural and Theological Context [600 words/response]

1. Language of the Text

First Required Response
This response is adequate. Rather than to focus on the "Day of the Lord" and its meaning, focusing upon the question at hand and deeper issues in the Hebrew grammar would have been appreciated.

Second Required Response
This response, while it does answer the question in a sense, is not a coherent argument and contains very little of the material evidence requested.

2. Historical Situation - Third Required Response
This response is adequate.
This answer is acceptable and raises some interesting points.

Section IT: Presenting a Faithful Interpretation

1. Focus Statement [50 words]

This statement is an acceptable rendering of the text, although heavy on sin rather than justice, which would seem to be more in keeping with the text.

2. Supporting the Interpretation [1200 words]

The interpretation given in the focus statement is supported here. Interesting points about covenant.

Section III: Application [2 pages]

This application is adequate. Although, this response begs the question Is this passage being applied to its own time or to the contemporary context. Also, while the connection to Paul's concept of sinfulness is rendered acceptably, why were many passages in the gospels that refer to God's people doing works of justice, which seem more in keeping with the deeper themes of Amos, even those themes raised by this response, overlooked? It is an acceptable practice to draw in Christian themes, but always be careful to not do any damage to the original text.

Summary Statement (why exam is satisfactory or unsatisfactory)

This exam adequately fulfills its requirements.

Comments for CPM:
Section I: First Required Response: Translation

Amos is a gifted and powerful prophet, who delivers an unwelcome message from God in surprising ways. One rhetorical technique Amos uses effectively is reversing the expectations of his audience. In chapter 5, verse 18, Amos addresses the Day of the LORD. Amos says "Woe to you who desire the Day of the LORD." His audience clearly thinks that the Day of the LORD is a good thing. They understand it as a day when the enemies of Israel are defeated. God's presence with Israel means vindication for Israel and is a cause for celebration. Amos, however, says the Day of the LORD is not going to be good for Israel. Then he asks his audience a question. The question is phrased differently, depending on the translation of the Bible that you use. For example: The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) says, "Why do you want the day of the Lord?" The New American Bible says "What will this day of the LORD mean for you?" The King James Version says, "For what good is the day of the LORD to you?"

Translating Hebrew is as much art as it is science. Words can carry several different meanings. For example, in this phrase the preposition "le" is used. "Le" can mean "to," or "towards," or "in regard to," or "belonging to," or more. A translator determines the best translation based on the text and the words it is used in combination with.

In addition, it is not uncommon to have a sentence with no verb in Hebrew. Often the verb "to be" can be assumed in such a case, but often the verb (or verbs) in the preceding
sentence influence the meaning as well. The sentence we are examining is a sentence with no verb.

Woodenly, this sentence could be translated into what (is) this (Day of the LORD) to you?" The nuances of language, the poetry of Amos, and the complexities of grammar demand something more. In addition to looking at the preceding sentence a translator can also look at other places in the Bible this phrase has been used. In this case, the phrase to-what-is-this has been used in Genesis, Isaiah, and Jeremiah with a "to what purpose" sense.

A translator also can turn to resources like the Brown Driver Briggs (BDB) lexicon, the standard for Hebrew translation. BDB specifically cites this passage in Amos and suggests the best translation is "to what purpose?" BOB also notes that the phrase is used to introduce in a rhetorical fashion why something should or should not be done.

The NRSV uses that "why?" and looks to the verb "desire" in the preceding sentence. The verb for desire is a strong verb and it carries a negative connotation - craving something that isn't good. The result for NRSV: "why do you want?" The New American Bible leans toward the "to what purpose" interpretation and adds the word "mean" resulting in "what will this mean?" as their interpretation. The King James translation looks at the larger context of the passage and the idea that the people expect the day of the LORD to be "good" so they write, "For what good is the Day..."

Although each interpretation allows Amos to continue with his revelation of doom, the NRSV strengthens the connection between Israel's desire for the Day of the LORD and the consequences they will face. The impact of reversal is more powerful when linked to the true desire of the people, and not just to their expectations.
Section I: Second Required Response: Is Amos 5:16-20 a coherent unit of text?

Commentators take different approaches to the book of Amos. Some see a collection of brief sayings. Others see great artistry and unity in its compilation. When approaching these five verses, many divide this unit, suggesting verses 16-17 finish a lament, and verse 18 begins a new word on the Day of the LORD. Others suggest the Day of the LORD expounds upon the lament in verses 16-17, and evolves directly from the preceding verse. They identify a unifying theme: the inevitability and overwhelming extent of death and mourning due Israel.

This selection from the scriptures is found in the middle of the book of Amos. The Anchor Bible calls this section "The Book of Woes." It includes the sayings of Amos - either a collection or an artistic unity depending on one's viewpoint. The first section of Amos consists primarily of oracles against the nations (chapters 1-3), and the last section of the book (chapters 7-9) consists primarily of visions - two other common vehicles for prophecy.

The New International Bible suggests one common thread that runs through the sayings of Amos is the announcement of divine judgment combined with a reason, a description of Israel's sins. This pattern is evident in chapter five.

Chapter 5 begins with a command to Israel to hear a lament for widespread death, exile and nothingness, Judgment) which results from Israel's forsaking of God, and is exhibited in injustice in her courts, injustice in the market, and rampant greed (rationale - especially in verses 12 & 13). Then this passage affirms:

1 Wicke, "Two Perspectives" pg. 92
2 Mays, "Amos" pgs 97-104
3 Paul, Fortress Press, pg 182
4 Freedman, Anchor Bible pg 520
5 Gowan, New Interpreter's Bible, pg 343
the sovereignty of God in verse 16,

widespread and overwhelming death resulting from God's passing through the midst of Israel in verses 16 & 17, (The "therefore" that begins this passage on judgment seems to tie it to the accusations made in verses 12 & 13.)

the affirmation that God's presence with Israel (in the midst in verse 17) brings judgment in verse 18,

the logical conclusion that if the Day of the Lord is inescapable doom for Israel, Israel should not desire the Day of the Lord. (verses 18-20)

There is a weaving back and forth of themes in this passage. God is sovereign (16) and there is no escaping God (19-20). The extent of mourning will be unprecedented (16-17), and absolute gloom (20). God's presence will bring punishment (17, 18).

Although the Day of the Lord introduces a new idea and a new rhetorical device, many see a logical progression from the preceding verses. Calvin elaborates on the message of Amos tying the subunits into a cohesive whole. He begins in verse 16 with the sovereignty and power of God. Verse 17 says God will pass through Israel spreading devastation, just like God did to Egypt. Verse 18 says the people misunderstand salvation. They thought God's covenantal relationship meant God would keep them safe because they had followed the rules. They thought circumcision saved them, not God. Verses 19 and 20 address their false sense of security. They are not saved by circumcision; only God can save them and their turn from God is evident in their public life.7

Calvin, "Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets" pg. 278
Calvin, "Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets" pg 285
The introduction of a new idea into the text does not seem to indicate a break with the previous train of thought. The vocabulary throughout this text is consistent in the unprecedented extent of and the inevitability of death and mourning due to Israel.

Section I: Third Required Response: Historical Situation

Amos prophesied in the 8th century BCE. He prophesied during the reigns of Jeroboam and Uzziah, probably between 760 and 750 BCE. This would have been after Jeroboam’s military success, before Uzziah’s son becomes regent, and before Tiglath Pilser III rose in Assyria, making Assyria a threat to the security of Israel. We also can date Amos’ prophecy because it was two years before an earthquake of significance which occurred shortly after this time.

It was an era of peace and prosperity for Israel. Israel was profiting from international trade in commodities like oil and wine. Traders accumulated wealth and used it to buy up food in the countryside and resell it to a captive audience in the city, multiplying their profit. With the growth of cities and the accumulation of wealth there was more inequity in income. In the tenth century, houses in the region were fairly uniform in size. By the eight century, there were large expensive houses, and small huddled structures.” Those with wealth lived in luxury, and indulged themselves with fine linens, expensive ornaments and perfume.

8 Mays, “Amos” pg 2
9 Gowan, “New Interpreter’s Bible”, pg 343
10 Stuart, “Word Biblical Commentary” pg 284
11 Stuart, “Word Biblical Commentary” pg 283
12 Mays, “Amos” pg 2
13 Premnath, “Amos and Hosea”, pg 127
Stuart suggests religion was enthusiastically practiced at this time, but fidelity to the covenant was a sham. People were orthodox in worship, but disobedient in personal and social behavior. They practiced form rather than content. They performed rituals but did not obey laws which required fairness in the marketplace (no weighing of scales...) and justice in the legal system. When judges can be bribed by the wealthy, the poor have no recourse. 14

Amos makes the first reference in scripture to the Day of the LORD, but it seems to be a familiar concept to the people of Israel. There are several possible origins for the Day of the LORD. It may have been borrowed from other religious traditions. It may have been a New Year's festival celebrating Yahweh's victory over chaos. 15 It may have developed out of tradition of theophany - an appearance of Yahweh, particularly when Yahweh has acted decisively for Israel. Sometexts which describe the Day include stories of military defeat of the enemies of Israel. Sometexts indicate a sense of future victory as well. It is a day when God will act decisively on Israel's behalf. 16

Israel seems confident that the Day of the LORD is a good thing for her. Because the nation is well off economically and experiencing a period of peace, Israel seems confident that she has earned God's favor, and has no reason to understand God will do anything other than protect her.

Amos uses the Day of the Lord to challenge Israel's understanding that she is living faithfully and that she deserves and will keep God's blessing and protection. Rather, Israel is unfaithful and will not escape God's judgment, and will have to die to her way of being.

14 Stuart, "Word Biblical Commentary" pg 284
15 Mays, "Amos" pg.104
16 Paul, Fortress, pg 184
The context of this passage contributes greatly to several important understandings:

- Economic well-being is not a sign of God’s favor
- Living according to divine standards has less to do with performing ritual and more to do with a community that reflects compassion for the poor, fairness in the marketplace, justice in the courts. It is characterized by obedience to God and regard for those with whom one lives in community
- God is not bound and limited by our rituals
- God acts in new ways to reveal God’s intentions for us

Section I: Fourth Required Response: The Exodus Tradition

In Amos 5:17 God says "I will passthrough the midst of you" (NRSV). The same Hebrew construction occurs in Exodus 12:12 when God says God will passthrough the land of Egypt. Verse 12:12 continues with God saying, "I will strike down every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both human beings and animals; on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD." (NRSV) The Exodus tradition greatly enriches our understanding of what God is about to do.

1. God’s presence in the midst of people is not good news. God’s presence illuminates the judgment and death people deserve for acting counter to God’s intentions for life. When Egypt stands in the way of God, God strikes them down. God will strike down Israel for standing in the way too.
2. Death is sometimes necessary for new life. Death for Egypt meant new life for Israel. This is both scary and hopeful. For Israel it has to bring fear. God will bring death to them, just as God brought death to Egypt. The only good news is the very subtle message that with death comes new life. But Amos does not hold out hope that the nation of Israel as it currently exists will experience new life.

3. God cares deeply about the oppression and suffering powerless people experience. The prophets point to God’s covenantal agreement with us. God promises to be faithful to God’s people, and God’s people promise to love God and to love and care for each other. This is made concrete in the 10 Commandments and the laws God gives Israel after freeing her from oppression in Egypt. One main theme that runs through these instructions is providing for the poor, the orphan, the widow, and the sojourner. There is to be no stealing, no cheating, no lying to gain advantage over neighbors, and no benefit at the expense of others. God gives Israel these rules because once they were oppressed, and they know better. They are not to oppress each other or the weak among them. In Amos’ time this is a problem.

4. Acting right one time does not guarantee us for all time. Earlier in history, Egypt recognized Joseph’s gifts and acted to preserve Israel during famine. That didn’t mean Egypt could later in history recklessly oppress God’s people. There is no immunity based on our past actions.

5. Covenant is God’s intention to redeem creation (as God did in Egypt), and it is counterintuitive to expect that God would ever affirm negative, harmful behavior. Covenant does not inhibit God’s sovereignty or restrict God’s ability to work for right relationship with and among humankind.
7. Sovereignty means there is no escape from God's judgment. Even Pharaoh's son will experience death. Amos 5:19 tells us death is inevitable.

8. God frees Israel for a purpose. There are chosen to be a light to the nations. As they worship and live in response to God, they will exhibit who God is, bringing all people to awe and wonder before God. Amos tells us the people are not living as God's chosen people and do not exhibit honesty, compassion, fairness, justice, or true worship.

9. Jeroboam himself knows that the exodus event is foundational for the life of Israel. In 1 Kings 12:28 Jeroboam refers to Israel's redemption from Egypt as the basis for his rule. He uses the covenant for his purpose - and deviates from true worship of God.

Conclusion: Exodus clarifies God's plans and the death that awaits God's enemies.

Section II: Faithful Interpretation

1. Focus Statement:

Covenantal relationship with God is demonstrated by worship made manifest in everyday life. God's presence in Israel's midst illuminates who Israel is: sinful people who cannot escape judgment. God cares, and will address Israel's sinful nature in a new and unexpected way, putting her sinful ways to death.

2. Supporting the Interpretation:
The prophets make it clear that what Israel does matters to God. The Greeks used to think human beings could not hurt God. They thought part of God's sovereignty included not being moved or touched by what people do. The prophets tell another story. They use powerful language to say not just that God cares, but God's deep and abiding concern leads to strong and sometimes unexpected action to pursue God's intention for our lives.

In this passage Amos brings an unwelcome and unexpected message from God. Israel will die. Those who heard Amos must have had great difficulty with this message. Israel is experiencing peace and prosperity and her security is not yet threatened by the Assyrians. There is no reason to believe death and destruction are imminent. Israel understands herself to be under God's divine protection. Brueggemann suggests that a prophet's call is to challenge the institutional mindset of the time. Amos does this.

If we place this passage in the larger prophetic tradition, we can see that in the past God has punished Israel for disobedience. Now God is doing something new and something that turns Israel's understanding of God upside down. God is withdrawing protection of Israel as a nation. It challenges Israel's understanding of what God's special relationship with Israel means.

Israel lives in a covenantal relationship with God. God has promised to be her God and she has promised to be God's people. Because God freed Israel from Egypt, led her into the Promised Land, has established her as a kingdom, and she is prospering, Israel is confident that

17 Gowan, "Theology of the Prophetic Books" pg. 25
18 Brueggemann, "The Prophetic Imagination" pg 41
19 Gowan, "Theology of the Prophetic Books" pg. 34
she has earned God's favor. Her people celebrate in the temple on a regular basis the good life they are living.

However, as Israel has prospered, she has also drifted from those very practices that identify her as God's people. There is no justice in the marketplace. The poor have no recourse when they are taken advantage of because the courts are corrupt. The wealthy live in luxury, while they ignore the plight of the poor. What Israel proclaims in the temple is not reflected in her daily life.

This passage is enriched by reading it as part of the book of Amos. Because of the "therefore" at the beginning of verse 16, there is a direct connection between the death and mourning Amos describes and the wrongs identified in verses 12 and 13. God's judgment comes on Israel for her disobedience.

Amos' audience has misunderstood their covenantal relationship with God. God has promised to be their God and they know that God is faithful. God will not break covenant. Amos has to remind Israel that she demonstrates her identification with God by the way she lives. God cannot be pacified or manipulated by participation in festivals and worship. God only recognizes a willing heart that practices what is preached. Israel has broken the covenant, and God must take action to address her sinful ways.

Amos has a new message from God for Israel. Earlier prophets had called Israel to obedience. They reminded Israel to follow the Law of Moses, and to repent with hope for forgiveness. Amos says there is no reprieve. There is only death. Later prophets see the possibility of resurrection for Israel. They either had hindsight or additional insight from God, allowing them to speak of death as part of a resurrection story.
Amos, however, has no hope of escape. Death and mourning will be widespread. It will reach even into vineyards, places of celebration. Professional mourners will be so overworked, they will have to call on others to join them in their work. There is no escape, nothing that can change Israel's fate. She thinks she is safe because her home is with God, but even the covenant cannot protect her. She can flee, but it is God's presence in her midst that brings death, and it is the covenant itself that declares her guilt.

In recent history, God's presence seems to have been a good thing for Israel. God's presence meant defeat of Israel's enemies. Seas part, walls fall down, large armies flee, and warriors tremble. Now God's wrath will be turned on Israel. Amos reminds people that Israel's status, rather than ensuring her safety, makes her accountable to God. Amos links both the scope of death and mourning that awaits Israel, and the judgment Israel faces, to God's covenantal relationship with Israel. By referring to God's presence "in the midst" of Israel, Amos reminds Israel of the consequences of God's presence in the midst of Egypt. At that point in history, God passes over Israel, but passing through the midst of Egypt, God takes the first born. Not even Pharaoh's family is exempt from death. Egypt reminds Israel of the inevitability and the horror of death. Egypt also reminds Israel that her covenantal relationship calls her to faithful response to God's saving actions, and she is accountable for her failure in that response.

Israel must come to a new understanding of what God's promises are. God by nature is faithful. But God's agreement must not be to the political entity that is Israel. It is to

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20 Moller "Hear This Word Against You", pg 50S
something different. In Chapter 5, there is a faint hope held out that God is faithful to a remnant (verse 15).

The message of death for Israel is a difficult message, yet it parallels the great teachings of God. Our ways are not God's ways. The power of earthly desires and earthly ways of thinking must regularly be put to death for the building of the realm of God to take place. Amos makes it clear God's protection is not what Israel understood it to be. Israel had to die to an old way of being in order to fill its God-given purpose of being a light to the nations.

Brueggemann suggests prophetic tradition speaks metaphorically as well as concretely about the death that hovers over us and forces us to confront horrors we would rather avoid. Amos exemplifies this. However, the possibility that God's protection can be understood in a new way is implied, however indirectly. Dying to an old way of being makes room for a new way of being.

In the New Testament, Paul must answer a similar question. How do God's people live in response to God's saving activity in our lives? For what purpose does God save people? Paul's accusers say Paul's message of grace gives people permission to sin freely. If nothing can separate people from the love of God, people are free to do as they like. But Paul's response is that God intends for people to live in freedom from sin rather than freedom to sin. Paul and Amos teach that God draws people into relationship for a purpose. The power of sin is greatly decreased when people live into their God-given identity, and they become powerful testimony to God's ability to redeem life and create abundant life. This only happens, however, when sin is put to death, and that death is painful and costly.

21 Brueggemann, "The Prophetic Imagination" pg. 45
Section III: Sermon Outline

1  God Cares
   a. Sovereignty does not mean God is untouched/God cares like parent
   b. Powerful language indicator of depth of concern

2  God has new message
   a. Prophets call people to repent and change ways
   b. Israel in covenantal relationship
      i. Israel serves God, God claims Israel
      ii. God does not break promises
   c. God's protection for nation removed
      i. Death comes
      ii. There is no escape
         1. Widespread
         2. In very place Israel feels safe
      iii. Is consequence of Israel's action
         1. Connected to her desire for Day of the LORD
         2. Connected to her response to God
   d. Is surprise
      i. Era of prosperity
      ii. Faithful in ritual

3  What does God want/why is God angry
a. Worship reflected in daily life

b. Justice in courts, fairness in market, compassion for needy

4 What does covenant mean

a. Based on God's actions in past

b. God acts to correct human behavior

c. God acts in new ways, is not limited by human understanding

5 What does God's presence mean

a. Dangerous to those who stand in God's way

b. Illuminates guilt

6 What does death mean for Israel

a. Mourning

b. Necessary for new life

7 Parallels in New Testament Paul

a. Similar questions on God's promises

b. Sin

   i. Power of Sin

   ii. Need to die to old self

c. Call to be a light to nations - Exodustradition
Biblilography


