

WHAT EVER GOT INTO AMOS?

How can you tell a true prophet from a nut-case? The King's prophet, Amaziah, says to Amos, "*Get out you silly dreamer...*" The king only wants "patriotic" prophets, paid to say what the king wants to hear.

Amos answers, "*I am neither a prophet nor a prophet's son—I am a shepherd and I tend sycamore trees. It was the Lord who said to me, Go and prophesy...*"

We like it when someone stands up to establishment "patriotic prophets" whether political or ecclesiastical. Yay, Amos!

But ask any preacher who has spent a minimum of seven years preparing to stand in a pulpit and carry the title of "Reverend" and wear clergy robes how he or she feels about those who, without any preparation or qualification can get "ordained" via internet for \$25 and claim to be "Reverends."

Religions argue and fight claiming that their prophets have the true pipeline to whatever they claim is their supernatural self-revealer.

I know preachers are not supposed to raise questions about biblical material, but I think it fair to ask how we know that some supernatural spiritual entity is speaking to someone. We who focus on the Hebrew-Christian faith stories tend to forget that maybe whatever God there might be—by whatever name—probably could be present to others than just Israelites.

For instance, what about the people who lived on my part of Puget Sound in 750 BC? There have been people in that part of the world for maybe 10,000 or more years. They experienced the wonder of birth, their dependence on plants and game and food from the water. They experienced death and grief and questions about what might come after.

Anthropologists teach that they had a spiritual partnership with nature. In some ways their "religion" might be called superstitious. In other ways it might be called authentically spiritual. They believed everything had spirit. The religion would be called "Animism"...the spirit in inanimate things. I used to think that was non-sense but have later amended my youthful certainties about such things.

I see all life on this planet as inter-related. If the supernatural "God" is involved it would have to be that this factor would somehow be a part of everything, and everything a part of "God," (or whatever you choose to name it). If this way of thinking has to have a name it would be "Panentheism."

I must confess that when I was asked to write a piece for a book on "the meaning of life," I got my thoughts while talking with the oysters on our beach! My grandson, Max, just called from the cabin to report that a bag of oysters from our beach had broken loose and washed up on a neighbor's beach 300 feet away! He returned them to our beach in case I have anything more to discuss about the meaning of life!

Back to the place of Amos in all of this. He was, in fact, part of a great spiritual growth period.

"During the greatest of all religious eras (roughly between 800 and 500 BC) India, China, Persia and Israel were all injecting into human thought what was then a new force. Without question, this force has been one of the most powerful influences in human life." (World Bible, p. 3)

Yes, the wars, then and still, usually involved religion. There was always a prophet to urge the king promising that "*God is on our side.*" Kings with advisors like that usually go to war.

And yes, these religions produced sacred books that are read to this day by millions with great devotion.

But yes, once again, "the force" or "God" or as I like to say, "the Operating System" is as likely to draw in the most unlikely among us to remind the rest of us that humans cannot survive on this planet without living harmoniously with the natural world and one another.

You don't have to learn this from anyone's scriptures. This is written within humans. Those who keep reminding us of these truths are not nut-cases. They are the "silly dreamers" we should follow.

Art Morgan, March 28, 2017