

Three stages: precritical naivete, critical thinking, postcritical affirmation (53-57)

Western ways of thinking are very much shaped by the identification of truth with factuality. (55)

Because modern critical thinking is corrosive of conventional religious beliefs, some Christians reject applying it to the Bible and Christianity. The result is fundamentalism and much of conservative Christianity. (55)

I am able to see the truth of the Bible and Christianity, without imagining that it's all literally and absolutely true or that it's the only truth. (57)

. . . the question of fairness. Was it fair that only Christians could go to heaven? What about people who had never heard of Jesus or Christianity? . . . "Abraham Lincoln was never baptized—does that mean he couldn't be saved?" (59-60)

In the Old Testament, which is more than two-thirds [sic] of the Christian Bible, belief in an afterlife is basically absent. (60)

. . . the great figures of the Old Testament-- . . .—did not believe in life after death. And yet they were passionate about God and salvation. (61)

Jesus's message was not about "how to get to heaven." It was about "the kingdom of God," the central theme of his message in the synoptic gospels. . . . The kingdom is not about heaven. It's for the earth, as the best-known prayer in the world affirms: "Your kingdom come *on earth*." (62)

When the afterlife is emphasized . . .

- it turns Christianity into a religion of requirements and rewards

- it creates a contractual understanding of the Christian life

- it undermines the definition of grace

- it turns Christianity into a religion of self-preservation

- it divides people into the "saved" and the "unsaved" . . . only the right kind of Christians can be saved

it focuses attention on the next life to the detriment of attention to this life. (63-65)

The meanings of salvation and being saved are rescue and deliverance: to be rescued, delivered from a negative condition of life to a new and positive way of life. (65)

Salvation as

Liberation from Bondage (66)

Return from Exile (67)

Life to the Dead (71)

Food and Drink (71)

Being Saved from Sin (72)

But *believing* something to be true has nothing to do with whether it is true. (72)

. . . “it”—Christianity and salvation—is about transformation this side of death. (75)

Salvation is about liberation, reconnection, seeing anew, acceptance, and the satisfaction of our deepest yearnings. (75)

## **Amos**

Shepherd-prophet from the Northern Kingdom. Note how he starts prophecy by condemning all the peoples surrounding Israel—Edom, Moab, even Judah. All that condemnation of enemies would make Israelite listeners very happy. Finally, he turns on Israel herself, who has been privileged to be Yahweh’s chosen. How much worse, then, that she has ignored the law, forgotten the commandments, continued to heap the altars with offerings when no longer in covenant with God. Then Amos tells all that will happen to her and why—as Borg says, Israel has widened the gap between rich and poor and exploited the poor. At the end, after Yahweh oversees her destruction (Assyria will subsume these tribes into herself so that they are no longer a separate people of Yahweh), there is some hope of rebuilding. But there is no hope for Israel as she is now. Note all the metaphors.

