

Closing for Monday, November 7, 2016

I found Spong's chapters on Paul (31-41) refreshing to read. I felt a grace and love in Spong's analysis of Paul's character and that he might have in fact been a gay man. Paul was dealing with being a devout Jew, a Roman citizen, having feelings and desires in direct contrast with his faith, then finding redemption in the teachings of the man named Jesus, who's followers he so zealously persecuted up until his conversion. He then tirelessly began to spread this message of Jesus to his fellow Jews and eventually the Gentiles. He also grappled with the conflict between His fellow apostles, the Jews and the Gentiles, the earliest churches that were founded in Jerusalem and Asia Minor and Rome itself. This was high drama indeed.

I also found the explanation of Paul's possible personal anguish and fallibilities, brought a new light to his very human side. This made him, for me, no less remarkable, and much more understandable.

Spong's explanation of how Paul differentiated between the resurrection of Christ as opposed to Jesus rising from the dead gave for me a better feeling about my own beliefs around this subject. I take a quote from the book page 261...

"It is not for this life that we have hope, was Paul's message. Resurrection was the transformation of who Jesus was into a realm or into a state of consciousness beyond the boundaries of time and space. This is why Paul goes to such lengths to make a distinction between our natural bodies and something he calls "a spiritual body" (1 Cor. 15:44)

I also found the importance of Spong's chronological dating of texts and Gospels, and appreciated the timeline handout that Ken Kitteridge created. This shows how the story of Jesus' life developed, changed, and was embellished over time.

So to add something entirely different to the mix; this is a book written by a Yogi from India named Parmahansa Yogananda. He too had a vision, somewhat like Paul's.

It was to come to the West and introduce Meditation to the Western Mind. No small feat either. In his book, Man's Eternal Quest, he mentions The Bible a lot and also Jesus. I will end with a quote from the book (page 297)...

"I am glad that Christianity was not called "Jesusism," because Christianity is a much broader word. There is a difference of meaning between Jesus and Christ. Jesus is the name of a little human body in which the vast Christ Consciousness was born. Although the Christ Consciousness manifested in the body of Jesus, it cannot be limited to one human form. It would be a metaphysical error to say that the Omni present Christ Consciousness is circumscribed by the body of anyone human being."

Warmly, Joan Gray