

THE GREAT SPIRITUAL MIGRATION - NOTES

Introduction

Page 2, middle. It is interesting and perhaps obscurely promising that he puts into our mind comparing Christianity to a brand.

Page 2 bottom, I am *really* intrigued as to whether he's going to touch on my own "product life-cycle theory" I have about religions. Hinted at already.

Page 3, an aspect I seldom, if ever, think of---that Jesus' suffering, torture and death was as an avatar of the Holy One and that God shared in these tribulations.

Page 3, middle, my "methodology for organizing human behaviour" again

Page 3, bottom, as a spiritual lighthouse or lodestone maybe?

Page 4, top, another of my recurring themes, that of religion and its followers in a parasite-host relationship and sometimes religion is the parasite and sometimes the host.

"to us, he is the best thing about Christianity"—that is rather a sweeping statement that I'm not sure *all* Christians would agree with

Page 4, middle, it is interesting to have him make his malfunctioning statement at a time when it can be equally applied to democracy right now.

4-5, these are sad things to hear, but I hope he also heard some inspiring things that he will touch on.

5, numerical decline—I *might* argue that, at least in North America and Europe, in the non-fundamentalist sector, the decline is across all organized religions as a whole

5, bottom—oh, sorry! He says it! Thus the "cost" of stream-of-consciousness writing on my part (grin!)

5 bottom—in the negative light I look at this aspect of humanity now, I *might* say that Christianity has become "politicized"---strengthening my view of the parallel track democracy has taken/is taking. When a substantial portion of a population (if not the majority) become *takers*, the givers usually can't do enough to counterbalance that. To wit, my demi-famous quote about fundamentalists---"instead of saying 'here's a problem, let's fix it', they say 'YOU'RE the problem, we'll fix YOU' "

6, middle---OK, I think I may have had this in mind subconsciously for a while, but he has (done a great job and) brought it to the surface. Not that our religion is without its faults, but I think in this espousal of Christianity, there is a kind of a trap for Christianity. There is too much dependence on the teachings of *one* man (or two, if you count Paul), and further, one who is 2,000 years out of touch with today's society. Yes, there have been some further "prophets"—Thomas Aquinas, St. Augustine, Martin Luther in his own way, Calvin, and maybe even John Paul II and Francis. But not enough. Judaism has been a constantly "live and changing" religion perhaps *because* its centre was taken away from us and as a result the rabbinic tradition developed. In its own way, a Jewish community gave ultimate recognizance to meritocracy, where someone from any background who studied and learned and taught became revered. This historically communal thirst to constantly question, argue, teach, learn and understand is very possibly for me the greatest difference that sets our religions apart

from each other. Does that make any sense? I will think about it some more as I continue reading. To that point, THIS group here, the St. David's reading and study group, is exceptional. One can hope that it will become less unusual, but right now that is a difficult hope to harbour strongly.

Maybe here's a challenge, then. Once every two sessions, i.e. once a year, each member should seek to bring a stranger into our midst to learn and study for a term. I came in long ago based on open, respectful and dynamic dialogue between Deb and me on religion and faith. I haven't regretted a minute of my time...really! Don't more people deserve to have that same "chance"? The rest of the populace are, um, vampires? Only in the sense of they will stay away until they are invited in. A most interesting thing is that I'd have *never* presumed to throw down the gauntlet this way a few years ago. It's your own fault---you all have made me feel so welcome and included that I feel comfortable doing so today!

8, top---it's an intriguing way of putting it. Usually the question is "can a Christian be saved" (wink)

9, words do have meaning beyond their literal meaning, all too often.

9, bottom, again, this is a sweeping statement that I don't necessarily agree with. I, of course, haven't gone through conversion in the Jewish faith but I don't think the process has anything to do with repentance or remorse, and I'm not sure that is true of the modern meaning in at least some denominations of "conversion". And yet, he drops a nugget in at the end here---tying Christianity to life and living instead of to death and salvation.

11, middle, the siege mentality of religion.

12, so in the product life cycle concept, where Christianity has (arguably) passed through its main period of violence occurring 1100-1200 years out from its inception (the crusades)---- what has Christianity *learned*?

13, middle "a religion will be what its adherents make of it". Yes, that's half of it, half of the parasite-host symbiosis. I will give the admission that this is the more common formulation--- adherents as the parasites, religion as the host.

13, bottom, a curiously Hindu/Buddhist viewpoint

15, hmm, yes, the statement that I think my friend, Ronald (Papa) Blake, would most relate to.

1. I think I'm most taken by his inference that Jesus was God's avatar and that God too suffered, was tortured and died. I *definitely* want to talk about whether others of you think that Jesus is the best thing about Christianity
2. I do---one who is openly agnostic, and who is also one of my closest friends. I've never inquired why...I may do so someday. Another good friend who parted ways with "traditional" Christian faith, went on her own faith journey and has now come back to it in what he might typify as a converted form. She's written her own book which I have had the privilege of reviewing and commenting on.
3. My good friend Heather's world-wise statement---"yes but no but yes". I both agree and disagree. Taken as a broad whole, I would *tend* to agree. Where I disagree is where it applies to each of us individually and where there are many exceptions and places and people you can find who embody what the founders intended. And even

more, again, it is not mete to ask the question when so much temporal context has changed.

4. Sorry, can't answer this one, just don't have enough knowledge
5. I did in my notes above. I do not fully agree with some of what he's stated as the characteristics. I do agree with some of the others, particularly that it has to involve a (potentially painful) change in a person's fundamental orientation on their religion... and maybe their faith
6. I don't *think* so. I have been brought up not to and I desperately want to believe I'm as open-minded as it gets.
7. Yeah, that caught me of course. Come back to parasite-host.

Chapter 1

26-27, the rabbinic tradition, which began after the destruction of the 2nd temple, that really was our religion's reformation. Once again, I draw down to my "product life cycle" analogy. We may be a *little* further along, maybe 2100 years after the foundation of our religion, but a "more modern" religion, built upon its forbears, *should* get to that point faster in its life cycle.

Right, so let's get to that. Premise---Christianity is a more rapidly evolving religion than Judaism (and if I extend the argument, Islam is a more rapidly evolving religion than Christianity) because it doesn't have to spend time "learning" what its forbear religions had to learn. In the Product Life Cycle thematic, is Christianity's "half-life" less, then, than Judaism or Buddhism, e.g.? Not only that. The external "stressors" on Christianity at this stage of its development are far more complex and extreme than prior religions faced. One could premise that since the Reformation, Christianity has been in a constant state of upheaval as a religion and has not been able to put down roots in a global all-encompassing sense. Yes, lots of narrow-focus examples---Jesuits, Mennonites, Evangelical—but they are microcosmic communities discrete from a bigger whole. In Christianity (perhaps from the Thirty Years' War onward), the whole has never been able to be the sum of its parts. That may be a subtle but fundamental difference with Judaism....we can have intellectual disagreements, but---until now---the vast majority of its adherents have implicitly understood that the whole is the sum of all the different parts and there has been a sense of acceptance and resonance (there's that word from my to-be-presented opening again) of those parts into the whole. One could also premise that any attempt at setting a defined creed will have a shorter and shorter shelf life as we continue our march into the Age of Information.

Our "second reformation"? I would call that Zionism---when, as a culture and a people, we bisected between respect for and adherence to religion and traditions and the fight, yearning and desire to re-establish the homeland of Israel. Those goals have come into some conflict through the years and they present today both the greatest opportunity for fusion and the greatest opportunity for division in our culture, with the lines being Israeli Jews and diaspora Jews. "Together but apart" is the kind of language that permeates discussion nowadays. The Birthright program, as a specific example, seeks to enhance the "together" part, but the crucial question for this generation and the next, I think, is marrying what diaspora Jews want from Judaism and Israel with what Israeli Jews want from those things.

Give you a lovely example from my recent trip and discussion with our guide, Yonatan. It has come to the level of "tradition" that, at Yom Kippur, we diaspora Jews buy Israel Bonds---I did it myself this year. It is a way for us to financially support the country of Israel and started, of course, when the country was in dire need of financial assistance through the Yom Kippur War and afterwards. Know what Yonatan said? "It's very nice of you, but WE DON'T NEED YOUR MONEY. Israel is doing very, very well for itself economically." The economic self-

sufficiency of the country is a source of pride, and not just to him---it is something very tangible and appreciable through the populace at large. This, this standing on its own two feet, *may* be something that is intrinsically difficult as a concept for some diaspora Jews to come to terms with. In an obscure way, it takes away part of their purpose in being Jewish. How do we reformulate that and refocus (yup, using Deb's 2019 term of choice) that? Good question.

28-29, what I've set out above parallels his discourse.

29, bottom---indeed. If you want a different ending, write a different story

30, in our fall study of how the Jewish religion is intertwining with modern-day Israel, Rabbi Daneel Hartman made a wonderful distinction between "the religion of belonging" and "the religion of becoming" (I think that's how he put it)

31, it's become polluted? Hmmm, an interesting idea...

1. Not sure what to pinpoint---maybe the fact that beliefs are a false flag?
2. Agree that this is what it means for a great many people. May disagree that it's what it *should* mean
3. Hard to cast my mind back and quantify. I think I've slowly slithered at times 😊
4. Hum! That's a good one. Well, if I was to try to tackle it, focusing on stories, you do two things---you turn your mind to the whole context instead of a kernel of "learning" or "wisdom". And you tend, at least subconsciously, to focus on the storyteller and *how* he or she is saying something. Focusing on beliefs, you narrow the field of vision. And....you inevitably transmute it (sometimes pervert it) for your own uses.
5. I'll skip this one, but I'd be interested if anyone took a run at this. Actually, I need to see what the author of the Twible did with this one
6. Skip, sorry, no time! I'll try to come back to it
7. Abso-friggin-lutely. If I've talked about the parasite-host relationship of religion and its followers, beliefs---and how they get manipulated or used---or themselves manipulate or use---is at the heart of all that.

Action---takes me to something espoused in the Celestine Prophecy---to be aware of the energy of beauty around you.

CHAPTER 2

34, bottom, that's not to say, I hope, that we should ignore science. There is a concurrency of methodology and hallmarks that bring science---the religion of knowledge---and religion---the science of faith---close to each other.

35, top, maybe the best summary I've seen.

35, middle, again, a significant departure here with Judaism---see Appendix 1---Rashi, Maimonides, Baal Shem Tov, etc. Our religion is a history of examining and re-examining passages and giving them new interpretations contextual with the world the commentator lived in. In a way, Judaism went through several ages---the Age of Creation, the Age of

Religion, the Age of Prophets, the Age of Kings and Scribes, the Age of Rabbis, the Age of Commentators.

36, he's wordy about saying it this way. Science embraces humility and the core concept "I don't know everything and never will". And yes---I think my *faith* involves that concept too...very, very much

36, middle---one cannot help but (as the lawyer in the room) draw the comparison to res judicata---if something has been ruled on by the highest court, it can almost never be overruled.

37, top, marvelous paragraph!

37, middle, it's a different way of expressing a notion of mine of leadership—that leadership is engendered respect in those led which brings receptiveness to your ideas and vision, which brings response to their ideas and vision, which brings rewards (I've always called it the RRRR model of leadership)

37, bottom, he's identified the challenge in this approach on the previous page—that an individual's view can matter to a religion. That's a hard one for religion to come to grips with

38-39. He was given the gift to *choose*. Because if you haven't—and don't—question, then you haven't chosen. You've had someone or something choose for you.

OK, we're diving in. I should maybe re-read Immortal Diamond with the gloss of applying its thoughts to fundamentalism (and I hate connotating a word where it is given a negative view). He talks about truth. Well, "what is truth"? and "when is truth actually true?"

This is going to dovetail very nicely with his thoughts in chapter 1. And I want to spit this out first---the next remarks will read as being denigrating. I *don't* intend them that way. I am typing them out of a genuine attempt to understand, a flawed attempt because I haven't myself been in this position.

My understanding of fundamentalism is that it demands of its adherents a rigid observance of its codes, beliefs, visions, goals and policies. To do that and stay sane, an adherent must do what? They must surrender free will. I will argue that since they have *sacrificed*--there's *that* word---their most precious possession, they will do anything to keep their chosen "ism" alive and well, because it is the thing that has the most of that person bound up in it now, the thing that has cost them the most. And though it's a negative commandment, covetuousness is part of human nature. A fundamentalist relates to his or her "ism" more closely because they have given up more to do so than the rest of us. I know this is an awful thing to read---because I'm skirting closely to aligning it with demonic possession. But there's something to this I can't let go of. Our Toronto book club, we took a look at Conversations on Consciousness a time ago (and maybe it's a book that Book Study should think about). There were more than a few views in that book who twined free will very closely to the concept of a soul. Wait...I'm not done. Do such people subconsciously ask themselves whether they've ended up giving up their free will not of their own free will? And does a hardening effect stem from a latent bitterness at having made this surrender?

Maybe there is some good that can come out of this "bad" sketch---if each of us can find a right and good set of ideas or process of belief or something....something worth making such a sacrifice...well, maybe that would be OK. But better? Transmuting the whole idea.

From a sacrifice to a wellspring. You don't surrender your free will. You share it. Or in the business vernacular, you license it for use.

39 bottom, see current film Boy Erased with Lucas Hedges, Joel Edgerton, Russell Crowe and Nicole Kidman, which tackles this quite well.

40, top, he was doing more than that. He was practising compassion---per Book of Joy.

40, middle, for me this represents a slightly flawed thinking process, because I don't equate faith as a 100% expression/function/derivation of religion.

41, top, and here I feel he's too hard on himself. It happened at the speed it needed to. Or, putting it another way from another saying of mine—don't finish the journey and then look back and not be able to see the road that got you there.

41, bottom—hum now—Christianity has to have faith in itself? What a neat idea!

41, bottom, “an engine of human cultural evolution”—that's actually pretty close to my definition

43, will look at my Love Wheel again to see if all these are captured (wink)

43-44, the viewpoint of respect needing to be earned vs. respect being given as a starting point. Perhaps if it needs to be earned it will never really work because that formulation tinges it by necessity with the giver's worldview.

44 bottom---checkmate? Will he call us to use Paul as the example of the change he is espousing? Very curious to find out!

45, bottom, but he leaves the question—can you have a lot of faith with a lot of beliefs?

46, his thematic—demolishing to rebuild better, rather than patching here and there

1. The inferred idea that Christianity has to have faith in itself
2. To question and to not know everything. I could say more, but that's the base
3. I think more about “incorrigibility”---obdurate and unchanging. Corrigibility is fine and mostly good—just be sure you don't always throw the bathwater out with the baby. SOME traditional views may have a place in your personal faith formulation. I don't *completely* agree with the Dalai Lama's statement because that statement is *still* commanding someone to do something, and therefore detracting from their free will to come to their own conclusions.
4. I am outside the Christian faith and so can't respond on a Christian basis. It has been at least frowned upon in our religion too. I have pretty much never paid that a lot of heed. I have been proud and happy to have a number of LGBT friends. That said, I recognize that a gay dance bar is not my preferred location to relax. That may simply be because I have more to learn.
5. Of his words, “compassion”, “friendship” and “humanity”. He leaves out an *absolutely critical* word. TRUST.
6. Oy veh! I will try. Beliefs *can* be some puzzle pieces that you use to help construct your faith. They can help you understand it, grow it, change it even. Faith? Oh boy. This is definitely subject to revision. It is the medium by which my soul and my mind connect to my purpose and God's purpose for me in the world in which I live. It is my soul's nourishment and lifeblood of how I live.

7. I guess John 4:7-8, 12 is one I would like to spend more time with

CHAPTER 3

50, perhaps they made that move to complete the break with his pastorate, to really start afresh

51, middle, I harbour no small concern that my very close friends, Dave and Andrea, are in this boat in respect of the church they currently attend

51, bottom, so I will tell all of you that, even from a different faith, and separate and apart from the fact that my best friend calls it her spiritual home, I at once felt comfortable at St. David's and that sense has never left me over the many visits I've been able to make since. That isn't something you can bottle. It just grows naturally out of the communal vision—and, perhaps, careful and thoughtful leadership. Our synagogue, though the largest Conservative place of worship in North America, is going through a very similar struggle with its constituency.

52-53, what he says may be so, about something deep and powerful going on, yet even *this* exposition is pitched as a bit of a sales pitch... "we think this world is tired of..." it embodies the ongoing "battle" of attracting and keeping a stable and stabilized...um...workforce/customer base (another allusion to the upcoming opening---grin!)

That said, I really like their last 2 sentences. Those are attractive statements.

53, bottom, in the end of that first part of his answer he's intimating that the church of the future may not exist, 'cause expression of Christianity may not be in the form of a church.

54, top---ah, now. A studio of love. Where artists can paint their own pictures, eh? OK, let's follow along

54, this is a truly brave challenge and gauntlet he throws down. I offer only this caution--- you have to make allowance for the economic and other realities of the world that impinge.

55, middle, there is, perhaps a reason for that. From ancient times, there was all too rarely a set of biological, ecological and cultural circumstances that would allow love to be the primary vocation or drive for a society. Cynical? Maybe. I'd welcome discussion and dispute on that. But in setting up what Christianity stood for and has stood for, it was functioning in the adaptive way that our religion has done. Here's something else. In humanspeak, love is (at least for me) very intricately corded together with family. Church is about *community*. That is a very different concept and a very different animal and, by definition, involves the inclusion of disparity of goals and aspirations and disparity of views and, by extension, at least some conflict.

If you're going to head this way, best get yourself a definition of "love" that you're comfortable with. Mine has been stable for some time—when someone else's happiness is essential to your own and when someone else's sadness or loss breaks your heart. But I might have an alternate now. Love is when someone or something adds life to your life.

56, middle, this can be upbringing too. I grew up with the United Nations for friends. My ball hockey buds? An Armenian kid. An Anglican boy. A Greek guy. A Muslim dude. A Latvian boy. A black kid. I never *thought* of prejudice because they were all my friends, and all the

parents saw to it that this was the case as well. I am only today understanding how lucky I really was.

56, bottom. Love thyself, for it is necessary in order to live. Love others, for it is necessary in order to live.

57, Hillel said the same thing. And the concept, in essence---you need to love your neighbour as the key to unlock the door into loving God.

58, nice list! And totally agree. Off Paul Tough's book, "How Children Succeed", it's one of his formative theses---that kids are not anywhere being taught any of the soft skills they need in life---empathy. Perseverance. Flexibility. Love.

59, I have a few of those friends. Again, very lucky am I

60, this is frankly much harder for me. It is where any selfishness and hedonism in my nature---and I *am* a hedonistic sybarite when it comes down to it---clashes with my general ability to love. On that journey, I have a long way to go yet. Ah well, nobody's perfect, right??

61, as we know from our previous study, "happy" and "ecstatic" are 2 different things!

62-64. Yup. Most important word in the English language? "Hello". You can go on unnumbered journeys with "hello". Yup---like it. Yup---my confession at Yom Kippur is still "for the sin I have committed" but I take time now to pair it with the more optimistic "I wish I was better at...". Yup---like it. Yup---we sort of do that now as a family at as many Friday night dinners that we try to have together as possible. OK---like that challenge, something I could think of doing as an adjunct to my Chronicles/diary updates. Yup---per Book of Joy. Not-quite-yup. I *would* want songs to not *all* be about love. One has to have the less and the regrets to remain appreciative of the love and the more. Yup---go right ahead, I think it would make churches very attractive-looking! Yup---for us, they really are. The primary holidays of Rosh Hashanah and Passover have as their fulcrum our lunch and dinner at my Uncle Murray's---occasions that overflow with love of two families together.

65---ooo! I didn't know that! Nice. And really love the image.

What he's talking about in the broadest sense is a migration to the Jewish way of observance (again, only my own experience and opinion), which is more centred on the individual's choices and needs and goals.

65 bottom. I assure you, our synagogue is asking those same questions

1. Definitely the reorientation of a church to the espousal of love
2. I think that's actually the wrong question. I would ask "what would it feel like". It is the feel of the thing you have to capture---a non-judgmental warmth and ease and almost-respite from the busy world. That can be someone's home or a county fair or even in an automobile ride. I guess it would ask of its members "how can we help?"
3. The last one---we must embrace the awesome role we are invited to play in it. Because it validates that we do have a role to play, it squares it as a privilege to do so and it leaves it as a choice that we can make

4. In the very act of prediction, you lock out alternative possibilities and narrow the spectrum and potential. Frank Herbert really does a marvelous job of this in the Dune series.
5. Sigh. I don't **think** so, but what I will say is this---we are more **diligent** about teaching math than we are about teaching love. A lot of people simply don't have the tools.
6. For the reasons I've expressed in my page 57 comments, I agree
7. Ahhhh me. My amazing parents. The question touches so close to home right now with mom's cancer. Love and respect have been the foundation stones of our family and mom has been the mortar in that foundation. Dad has been the bricks. The **nature** of their love allowed for love to be the primary ingredient in my life. It was unconditional and fervent in every way possible.

Tell you all a little story that Deb knows about. Many, many years ago I was out on the golf course with dad. We were paired with another twosome, one of whom was a nurse. I was setting up for, I think, my second shot. And I got creamed by a drive. You can still see the dimple marks of the ball on my forehead if you look. I still remember the sequence of events. I heard something buzz-brush the bill of my cap. Then this awful sound. Then I remember saying out loud---amusingly enough---"holy Jesus". And then I decided to look up at the sky and collapse. I was actually fine and the nurse was beside me in a second to do the touch-feel-smell test. And when I got up, the world was literally upside-down, so I know what a concussion involves. But I did have to get up. Because I heard my dad shout my name from across the fairway. And the quantum of fearful love in that shout? It FRIGHTENED me. It scared me how much he loved me. The scared part has gone away. The how much he loves me part has not.

CHAPTER 4

Page 71, bottom, said somewhat similar, from the Chronicles:

"truth is a drug". "The truth will set you free". Uh huh. Catchy phrases. Some "truth" in those phrases. But maybe not the whole truth. How about adding "drugs are dangerous. Freedom is dangerous"? I've been reading a terrific book by Stanley Bing called "Throwing the Elephant---Zen and the Art of Managing Up". It's about understanding and controlling your boss. And I have laughed my ass off. Because everything he says in there is so unabashedly true. How about the funnier movies? Never mind funny. How about the documentary movies of things that you know happened but weren't ready to face. Tears? See, truth IS like a drug. It's expensive. It's <rare>. It's harmful, in some ways. It plays with your mind. And the truth DOES set you free....or, maybe, it intensifies the emotions that you experience when confronted with it---or, for that matter, when dispensing it! But there is equal validity to Nicholson's famous phrase, "You can't Handle the Truth". Yeah, most of us, I don't think we can, at least not in continuous, large doses. Truth is hard, it often involves admission of our own guilt, or weakness or inadequacy or mistakes, and it comes (like when I dissertized on ambition) with a known cost to the dispenser and receiver of truth. And it darned well is dangerous. Both from the point of view of what people do when their emotional responses are intensified and from the point of view that a) new and conflicting information often gets conveyed as a result, and a confused human is not a stable human and b) having heard a truth, a common result of that is that a decision is taken, and it can often be a decision taken without properly integrating the truth into the context that

you've been living in up to that point. So, very like ambition, it'd be good if people were aware and conscious of the ripple effect. And used truth wisely. Don't go around being a compulsive liar, by any means, but it's too easy to use or say the truth and not think about what you're doing when you do so."

72-73, prophetic words back then, perhaps, with where the U.S. is now---and maybe no small parts of our country too. Chrystia Freeland was in to speak at our Synagogue at a delayed speaking engagement. She stated boldly that Canada is the only liberal democracy left on the planet. I thought at the time she was spouting nonsense. I've cast my mind around since then. And she may be frighteningly correct.

75, good presentation and narrative

76, top. Ouch!

76, middle, I want to say—because I really haven't had the chance to before---that I am very much aware that the "6 million" figure is an overestimate, and that I am very much aware of the countless Poles, Christian and academic objectors, resistance collaborators, Romas and gypsies and "non-pure" humans that perished as well. I'm equally aware that this number pales to those killed by the Russians in Stalin's time and by the Chinese, both in WWII and beyond, and what is happening in parts of Africa now. We are maybe going back to a review of Rabbi Sacks' book, but genocide is a human disease, not a religious one. Religion just provides the excuse and the vehicle.

77, fair to say that, for Christianity, this period was probably the apogee of church *as* state. This part of things, I'm not sure I remember Rabbi Sacks addressing it directly

79-80, a chilling version of some of what I'll talk about in the forthcoming opening.

80, and remember, 15 million people *back then* would have been an extremely high number proportionate to overall population density.

81, there are more than a few sections of the Old Testament that also speak of condonement of this type of behaviour. Perhaps Judaism simply never accreted the power needed to act on those passages.

82, and why? Because it had become *habitual behaviour*. The noble "call" of the Crusades centuries before. Christianity, yes, very unfortunately used strife and violence as key building blocks---at least so it was used by those who had the power to choose how to use it. So the behaviour became---well? Doctrine. It really did. Habitual unthinking condonement, arguably in the face of what would be normal human empathic behaviour.

It may be that, yet again coming back to the Product Life Cycle theory, a *religion* cannot tap into its empathic roots and means until it reaches a certain product maturity stage.

83, at the same time, question the fairness of laying all of this at the feet of a guilty Christian faith. I'm not so sure that is completely merited.

83, bottom, I've seen some of the signs preserved for slave sale in the Museum of African American History. I included those pictures in a photo project our photo club did on "scary and horror" theme. It definitely got to me

87, difficult story. How many of us have one of these?

88, I haven't seen the term "geocide" before, but it is very a propos

1. Encapsulated in the top of 76, Christianity must face and acknowledge its dark past if it is to see a bright future
2. Only differentiation I might make is loaded bomb instead of loaded gun. A bomb causes more damage and sometimes people don't know they're carrying it.
3. Probably the words about South America---I had not realized it was quite that wantonly cruel and brutal and sadistic
4. About as aware as the rest of us are about atrocities that go on somewhere else. We have very little desire—or courage, me included, to look the bad parts of humanity in the face. Period
5. I don't know the answer to her last question. I'm not sure how you get a country to change its mindset for the better, at least not without natural or human catastrophe intervening. Almost exactly the same argument could be made for ignoring the environment and natural habitat that so many ignore today.
6. Sort of connected them just now above, but just as easy to say---if one can cease caring about another man, the (*arguably, very arguably*) most evolved life form on the planet, how much easier to bring yourself to be uncaring about the "lesser flora and fauna". I think what he's getting at with part 2 of his question is that the flawed view is that God is there for me—for the individual—and not, as far as the individual's worldview is concerned, there for any other reason, purpose or thing.
7. Um, I will take the fifth on this one and let others answer!

CHAPTER 5

90, bottom, in other words, embrace the less-ness

92, top, I'm not sure the Quran demands this either

92, bottom, hmm, God as supplicant for his people

93, middle, "we are not demoting God to a lower, weaker level; we are rising to a higher and deeper understanding..." I really like how he puts that

94, middle, I *am* curious that he posits this as a linear binary thing. Can God not be both violent and non-violent at times?

95 bottom, hmm--*I* never did that. But then I never consumed cheerios---perhaps a deprived childhood?

95-98, was it kismet that we read Book of Job just before this one? The chapters/seven steps there are closely aligned in these pages

102, see this link: <https://jps.org/for-you-were-strangers-in-the-land-of-egypt/> which kicks off with six references in the old testament where we are admonished about this---for you were strangers in the land of Egypt

103, the tree analogy is a nice and useful one

103 bottom- 104, some of these questions have the flavour of the topics in a book Deb and I have looked at, Plato at the Googleplex

105, perhaps this is the piece I've been looking for to add to my opening, a piece where I wanted to think about what Judaism could teach its younger cousin. Perhaps it's this—we have succeeded in surviving as a religious institution by welcoming and synthesizing our environment and context with our traditions and beliefs. It's also this---Judaism has been a religion of *patience*. In the main, my perception is that Christianity (and perhaps this is true of Islam as well) has not. Perhaps more years are needed for the virtue of patience to percolate to the top.

1. Probably his take on Ubuntu and on contextual influence on Christian thought
2. That depends who's reading what and who's providing the illuminative illustration. If you go to church 3 times a year, you will still be steeped in the tradition of "the glorious king" and "joyful and triumphant". If you join a book study group like this one and read fully, you can get at the meaning of Christ's life—one of humility and teaching
3. There is still danger inherent in this passage---the danger of martyrdom. The danger of all textual passages—that people will read the parts they want to read and interpret them alone. "And being found in human form, he humbled himself by **becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.** **Therefore God has highly exalted him** and bestowed on him **the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,** in heaven and on earth and under the earth..." (my emphasis)
4. In his recurring theme of almost completely sloughing off the old skin to moult into the new. He is talking about discarding one's belief *system*, not at all one's inherent ability to believe.
5. Ah, now! Let's head to the Chronicles for this one, a conversation I had with Deb a long, long time ago, my answer to a question she had for me—possibly about one of the earlier Spong books---I probably would have written this at least 12 years ago---it is almost brutally informative to re-read this. In some ways I've come quite a long way from these statements, in some others, they've never been more apposite:

*"Well first, I don't agree with everything here and I think it's a little narrow and maybe "underestimating" in viewpoint. To me, religion has never been about "casting out the fear". Instead, religion should be a vehicle for teaching, explaining, interpreting and, if it works properly, provide a model for living a good and righteous life (though I don't want to go too far down that path—remember my parasite-host conundrum with religion). I could argue equally forcefully that what religion does is provide a *focus* for spiritual *and* emotional energies...energies like fear and love and the doing of good deeds. And yes, when used improperly, hate. Actually, I take that back. When used differently. I am willing to admit that there may be times that hate may be necessary for survival and a necessary use or outcome of religion if it is itself to survive and/or grow. Remember..parasite-host again. Not *desirable* and I know that's taking a very long walk on a very shaky pier, but you started this. Where it can stray is when religion tries to lock these amorphous concepts into a too-rigid*

framework of laws and customs and, frankly, one of the main problems I personally have with my own religion and “losing interest”, if you will, in the old testament after they et across the sea is that it devolves into the exact number of sheep you are to count off and sacrifice or give away or turn upside-down if you perform this act or break that custom. Does it not seem that this is religion the parasite, intruding upon the secular world? Nevertheless, I think that when people are gathered together in worshipful community, there is a heightened awareness of usually deeply-buried emotions and feelings. I do agree with his concept of “potential energy” being unused. I have to, if I subscribe to the Celestine Prophecy way of life, don’t I? Remember, Redfield is saying the exact same thing, that people are only now rediscovering their spiritual beings. So this observation by him shouldn’t astonish you.

*Do we need God himself? Brace yourself Deb. I don’t know the answer to that, but sometimes, believe it or not, I’m not sure we do. Do we need religion and do we need to believe *in* God? My answer to that is unequivocally yes, from my point of view. There is plenty left that is unexplained and unexplainable. Don’t we all need some unattainable, unseeable, unknowable entity that we can alternately thank profusely for a miracle or blame vehemently for a disaster? The alternative is dreadfully worse. You pour your love or anger on a person or persons. None of us are built to withstand that. We also, from my point of view, need a community of like-feeling individuals with which we can commune and share and dispute and commune some more. One thing you can say for religion...it is a vehicle that has bridged many a wide gulf between people that would otherwise remain apart---even the concept of religion itself (not *a* religion per se)...look how it’s deepened our own relationship, or the one I have with Andrea & Dave, or the one I have with my father. When the rest of my family leaves after the memorial service at Yom Kippur and I sit with dad for another hour and a half or so, those are some of the closest moments of our lives. So here’s another metaphor for religion---it serves as an anchor. That’s a really good one, if I do say so myself, because it can indeed weigh us down, drag on us, hold us back. And it also keeps us safe, secure, centred. It is thi dichotomy, this juxtaposition that I think everyone fights against at some level.”*

6. 1.0, he says it himself, the strength he identifies is that an infant learns the super-important trait of *trust*. The weakness is that it comes without much thought or consideration for any outside person or effect. 2.0, I guess anything that moves us beyond self-centredness is good. The weakness is that it’s still essentially directionless. 3.0, rules make the world liveable, at least to a degree We do *sometimes* need boundaries and propriety to bridle our actions. Weakness, of course, is that rules can become the be-all and end-all....dogma, catechism, haverut, whatever you want to call a *religion without imagination*. 4.0, the God of humanity/humaneness. He identifies the weakness---it still doesn’t spread to everyone.
7. One keeps the baby and the bathwater and puts soap and healing salts into the concoction. One throws both out the window. It is dangerous to ascribe absolutely *no* value to what has come before. SOME of the concepts in our religions *are* worth keeping, even in some kind of transmuted form.

