“Bishop Spong is a Hero!”

Dear Mr. Closson,

I have recently been introduced to Bishop Spong’s works, and find them deeply affirming and inspiring! His claims are not speculative, but rather based in logic and a profound knowledge of biblical scholarship. For those of us who will not compromise our integrity with literal biblical interpretations and nonsensical, mythical stories, his works are a “special revelation.”

Our society is overflowing with thinking people who feel alienated from Christianity. Better the church embrace its alienated multitudes, than eventually dwindle into insignificance. The truth should never shy away from new ideas and open discourse. Because in the end, no matter what is said or done, the truth always prevails simply because it is the truth. If Christianity speaks the truth, it should stand up and embrace people like Bishop Spong and the rest of us. Show us the truth we are missing. Instead, I see Christianity shying away and hiding behind the security of premodern themes that require unthinking and unquestioning followers.

Just thought you might like to know.

Thanks for the thoughtful response to my essay on Bishop Spong. Your challenge to “show us the truth we are missing” is a reasonable request and one that I would like to respond to. But first I might suggest that one’s approach to the evidence regarding the deity of Jesus Christ or the authority of the Bible (or any religious claim) is greatly affected by the presuppositions one holds regarding the nature of reality itself. Dr. Spong is a product of the enlightenment and approaches the issue with a strong naturalistic bias. His view of biblical scholarship, along with the members of the Jesus Seminar, is filtered through this naturalistic grid that not

only rules out supernatural events but placing mankind's "happiness" (often sexual) as the ultimate good. He is perfectly free to do this, but to claim that this is "Christian" seems to be like trying to place a round peg in a square hole. Whether or not people are alienated by traditional Christian beliefs seem to be beside the point. Jesus himself said that the path is narrow and that many who called him Lord were not part of his kingdom.

It would seem to be far more consistent for Bishop Spong, and others who hold to naturalistic presuppositions, to claim a naturalistic form of humanism and quit using the language and symbols of Christianity as a cover for their humanity-centered (rather than God-centered) ethics.

As for Bishop Spong's profound knowledge of biblical scholarship, I do not challenge his knowledge of the Bible or his sincerely held convictions about it. I would merely point to the fact that there are those with equal or superior academic credentials who accept the traditional view of the Bible as supernatural revelation, and that it calls individuals to saving faith in Jesus Christ. These scholars offer a thoughtful alternative to the ideas held by Spong and others of like mind. A couple of books that might interest you are:

> *A Passion For Truth, Alister McGrath (InterVarsity Press, 1996)*
>
> *Reasonable Faith, William Lane Craig (Crossway, 1994)*

Thanks again for your comments.

Sincerely,

Don Closson
Probe Ministries