

DOES ECKHART TOLLE HAVE IT RIGHT?

A review of the book, "A New Earth"

Outside of the Bible, I have never read any book that describes what we're like as human beings as well as Eckhart Tolle in his hot, shoot-off-the-shelves, Oprah-drooling book, "A New Earth."

Tolle nails it. We're insane. And the reason we're insane is because we are driven so much by our natural impulses and emotions.

The Bible agrees. We live in a world of suffering, confusion and maniacal stupidity because we're ruled by our appetites and cravings - the obvious question then being, how do we get these voracious, insatiable cravings of ours under control? If we could answer that question, and get the nasty part of our human nature under wraps, we could forge, as Tolle says, "A New Earth" together, end all evil and suffering, and create a world of goodness, peace and love instead.

But is it possible?

Yes, say both Tolle and the Bible, it is. How?

Well, according to Tolle, it's humanity waking up to the awareness that all the goodness, peace and love we could ever need on this Earth is actually within us already, and the solution to all our problems is simply "allowing that goodness to emerge (page 13)."

Deep within ourselves, then, is this Consciousness, as he calls it, which is the real us, not this ego-driven zombie that careens blindly through life, constantly in slavery to the dictates of society and human nature. And if we could all zero in on this Consciousness of who we really are, says Tolle, that we're all powerhouses of goodness just waiting to be released, we could create such a ripple of positive energy it would flood the brains of everyone alive and transform our wretched world into something wonderful.

It sounds good. I'd love to be in control of my life and not be ruled anymore by my worries and weaknesses. And I love the idea that there is a power that can transform every moment in my life into a state of calm or Stillness, as Tolle calls it. Who wouldn't want to be free of the constraints and screaming demands of society and human nature, so we can live in a constant state of peace and unfettered creativity, instead?

It's been the human dream from the very beginning. Adam and Eve loved the idea right away when it was presented to them, that by simply eating off a certain tree a remarkable transformation would occur, that would open up a new Consciousness of themselves as gods, like God himself.

And from then on they would be their own source of wisdom, making them masters of their destiny, and master of every moment, too. Never in the future, therefore, would they be at the mercy of the forces of nature or their own nature. They could charge happily into life, safe in the knowledge that they had the capacity within themselves to deal with whatever came their way, and never would it affect them negatively.

And if I'm reading Tolle right, he's offering the same thing.

But this is where I come to a crossroads because Jesus says he's the source of this stillness, or the "peace that passes all understanding," but Tolle says we are.

So who's right?

Well, Adam and Eve went with Tolle, which is interesting because we have history since to see what happened.

And what did happen?

Well, the great “spiritual awakening” Tolle talks about, turned instead into a rude awakening for Adam and Eve, as their family life disintegrated and their world turned increasingly nasty. And it’s been the same ever since. Our world today is no different to theirs.

Why would I go the Tolle route, then, when history clearly demonstrates we don’t have it in us to create Stillness and peace? If we did, we surely would’ve made peace happen by now, especially when peace is what we so desperately wish for.

But is the Jesus route any better? Because by his route I’m being asked to depend entirely on him for my Stillness, or “rest,” as he called it. Well, imagine how difficult that is for my ego to accept. Dependence on God for help in my life? Yuk!

But this is where I take a leaf out of Tolle’s book, because as he so brilliantly explains, this is where our problem lies. It’s our ego. It’s that driving force within us that automatically rejects the need for dependence. It’s repelled by the idea that we don’t have it in ourselves to control our destiny.

To be told, therefore, that we can place our needs totally in the hands of a power we can’t see or feel, sounds ludicrous. And I admit it often does to me, too, because I’m stuck with a mind that thinks life is up to me.

But Jesus says life never depended on me, or on any power I’ve got within me, either, because the reason he was raised back to life after his death on the cross was so that he could take care of my every need by his power, not mine.

When it comes to a choice between Tolle and Jesus, then, I go with Jesus, because history proves Tolle wrong. History offers no evidence of a power within us that takes care of our every need - because if there was we wouldn’t be in the mess we’re in now, would we?

We are not our own saviours, as Tolle would have us believe. There is a Saviour, however, who says he’ll lift us beyond the negative reach of society and our nature, the proof of which he is more than willing to supply (Philippians 4:12-13).