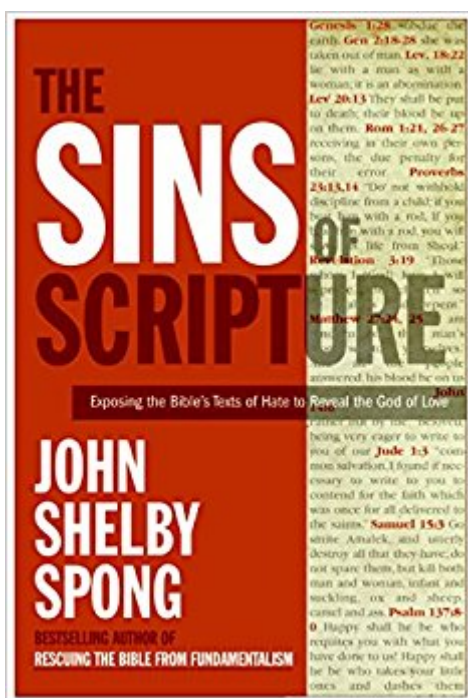


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The Sins Of Scripture: Exposing The Bible's Texts Of Hate To Reveal The God Of Love



Synopsis

The Bible contains many passages that believers and nonbelievers alike would recognize as appalling theology. Whether these texts are used to discriminate, oppress, or condemn, they distort the truth of Christianity and cast doubt upon the love of God. Now, legendary Episcopal bishop and advocate for liberal Christianity John Shelby Spong addresses these passages, shattering our misconceptions and delivering a new vision of how Christians today can use the Bible.

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Customer Reviews

In the *Sins of Scripture*, Bishop John Shelby Spong takes on a thematic exploration of the Bible, carefully analyzing those passages that inform some of our key debates, like the role of women in the church and in society, and homosexuality, to name just two. Beyond that he also looks at scriptures that have helped shape culture and history -- bringing to light the undercurrent of anti-Semitism he finds in the Gospels, for example. The journey is particularly compelling because Bishop Spong believes in and values the good the Bible has brought to many through the ages. His goal is not to define the Bible itself as something to be set aside, but instead to honor and value what he loves about it while still labeling what he dramatically calls "texts of terror" for what they are. The true joy of the book is found in Spong's vigorous intellect, which he shines bright in an attempt to catch a reflection of the age, culture and circumstances in which the texts he examines were written. Like an archaeologist working with ideas instead of tools, he removes the rocks, brushes away the sediment and reports on what he finds. What were the roots and

cultural realities behind the Scriptures that define the role of women in the church? What were the hopes and fears driving the writers who condemned homosexuality in such stark terms? What is the justification behind scriptures recommending "the rod of correction" (or as Bishop Spong simply labels it: "[t]he physical abuse of children"?) Whether or not you agree with some of his musings along the way, many of his conclusions are hard to argue with. Putting aside the issue of divine origin of the Bible, no one can deny passages have been used in service of very human ends. Finally, the Sins of Scriptures can be seen as a careful observer of what those ends have been. And when taken on those terms, it makes an interesting read, regardless of one's religious background.--Ed Dobeas --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Spong (Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism), a retired Episcopal bishop and prominent spokesperson for liberal Christianity, focuses this book on "terrible texts" which have been used to justify such "sins" as overbreeding, degradation of the environment, sexism, child abuse and anti-Semitism. These biblical texts, according to Spong, are not the incontrovertible Word of God, but flawed human responses to perceived threats. An incendiary example of this is Spong's assertion that Paul was a closeted gay man whose anti-gay statements were motivated by little more than his own self-loathing. Spong does not stop there; in the course of the book he suggests that Jesus and Mary Magdalene were married; that none of the supernatural events described in the Bible took place (including the resurrection); and that theism itself is a misunderstanding of God. Interestingly, readers who do not endorse Spong's radical reinterpretation of Christianity will still find much in this book they can affirm. His explanation of the roots of Christian anti-Semitism is fascinating and much less challenging to orthodoxy than many of his other claims. Unfortunately, Spong leads with his weakest section, which features a variety of poorly constructed arguments claiming, but giving inadequate evidence for, a strong causal relationship between biblical injunctions and both overpopulation and environmental problems. Nonetheless, this absorbing book has much to offer readers of all persuasions. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This is the best commentary on the Gospel of John I have ever read. He strikes down biblical literalism and replaces it with a metaphorical approach to understanding the message of John. He has successfully redefined the concept of God. He has linked being divine to being human and shows they are, in fact, one and the same being and are different expressions of the same ground

of being. This book should appeal to those who take the admonition of the apostle Paul seriously, who said, "when I was a child I thought as a child, but when I became an adult, I put away childish things", This book will appeal to those who have the intellectual capacity to explore new ideas and willing to embrace a new biblical paradigm that offers richer and more accurate biblical understanding. This is an excellent book that shows the contexts of the then current events leading to the the gospel of John.

For those that believe that the Bible is the inerrant word of God, this book will reek of blasphemy and heresy. For those who are looking for someone to use the Bible to diffuse the Bible, you will be disappointed. However, if you are looking for a 21st century take on a 2000 year old important element of Western civilization, you will find this book by John Shelby Spong an interesting read. Taking on the Bible's verses around women, homosexuality, the environment, children and anti-Semitism, Spong proceeds to discredit their modern use - predominantly through showing both the historical context in which they were written, as well as the literary context from which they were extracted. Supplementing this approach, Spong is unafraid to point out areas of the Bible that have been "overlooked" or abandoned (such as Levitical purity rituals) where time and tradition have impacted the "inerrant" dictates of the Bible. Proceeding to draw parallels to the Iliad and Odyssey, Spong then looks at the Bible - particularly the Old Testament and the Yahwistic, Priestly, Elohist and Deuteronomistic authorship - as a series of epic literature of a cultic people. Leaning on his theory of the Gospels as midrashic literature that he explores more fully in his book "Liberating the Gospels", he draws similar conclusions for the New Testament as well. He also takes on ecumenism and universality of religion as a quest for truth, as opposed to a quest for security. Spong is nothing if not controversial, and his views of Christianity and Christian thought are well out of the mainstream. However, they seem to resonate in a 21st Century scientific and accepting culture. The Christian message of life, love and acceptance underpins his theology as opposed to the Creeds. You may not agree, and you may feel uncomfortable in his approaches, but if you have an open mind, he will make you ponder and question - which in my opinion is the sign of a good author.

I am getting so much excellent information on current issues from this book. Anyone who is looking for answers to a kinder and gentler way to live the Christian life would appreciate what Dr. Spong has to say.

Bishop Spong has chosen a title that will shock fundamentalists. Not only does Bishop Spong argue that the Bible is not the "Word of God," he sees it filled with "terrible texts" that have been used to justify the worst of human instincts. Most of the book is a study of specific Biblical quotations that have been used to oppose birth control, suppress women and homosexuals, abuse children, and hate Jews. These chapters often place the text in historical context as part of explaining why they are no longer applicable to our times. The last sections of the book present the Bible as the Hebrew epic comparable to the Iliad and the Odyssey, recounting the development of the Torah through the writers usually designated as J, E, D and P. He maintains that trying to make the Bible "the source of religious authority or the ultimate definer of truth, is to turn it into being demonic." (p.276) Spong tells the story of an Episcopal minister in Louisville, Kentucky, who interfered with a study group that read books by Marcus Borg, Elaine Pagels, and Karen Armstrong. That minister would certainly not tolerate a group studying this book; but this is a book that should be used for Bible study in church classes, even though in most congregations it would require great courage. This book offers a new and dynamic model for contemporary Bible study.

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