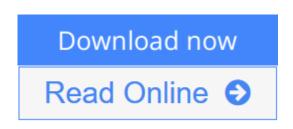


# The Sins of Scripture: Exposing the Bible's Texts of Hate to Reveal the God of Love

By John Shelby Spong



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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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#### **Editorial Review**

#### Amazon.com Review

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* 

#### From Publishers Weekly

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.

#### Review

"Spong shares his extraordinary gift of conveying the Bible's spiritual and ethical authority..." (Jack D. Spiro, Harry Lyons Distinguished Chair of Judaic Culture, Virginia Commonwealth University)

"Spong demonstrates the prophetic vocation that prefers truth to lies, honesty to hypocrisy, common sense to sick religious ideologies." (Matthew Fox, president, University of Creation Spirituality, author of Original Blessing, Creativity: Where the Divine and the Human Meet, and One River, Many Wells)

"Another brilliant chapter in Spong's quest to rescue the Bible from fundamentalism." (Robert W. Funk, Jesus Seminar, author of Honest to Jesus)

"Spong lifts the myths surrounding scripture, stripping away the superfluous so the kernal of truth becomes reality." (Reverend R. Robert Kimes, Director Religious Activities, Bay View, MI)

"Remarkably insightful and honest, John Shelby Spong explores some of the most compelling issues of our time." (Reverend Jarmo Tarkki, Ph.D.)

"The Sins of Scripture challenges Christians to look beyond the myths of their faith into the heart of the matter." (Bill O'Reilly, Anchor, Fox News Channel)

"This absorbing book has much to offer readers of all persuasions." (Publishers Weekly)

"With prophetic vigor, Spong lays bare the evil done...in the name of God...[and] calls the Christian community to accountability...." (Spirituality and Health magazine)

"This book is long overdue..." (New York Times)

"A valuable modernist manifesto for progressive readers seeking a response to the conservative theology dominating the news these days." (Boston Globe)

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