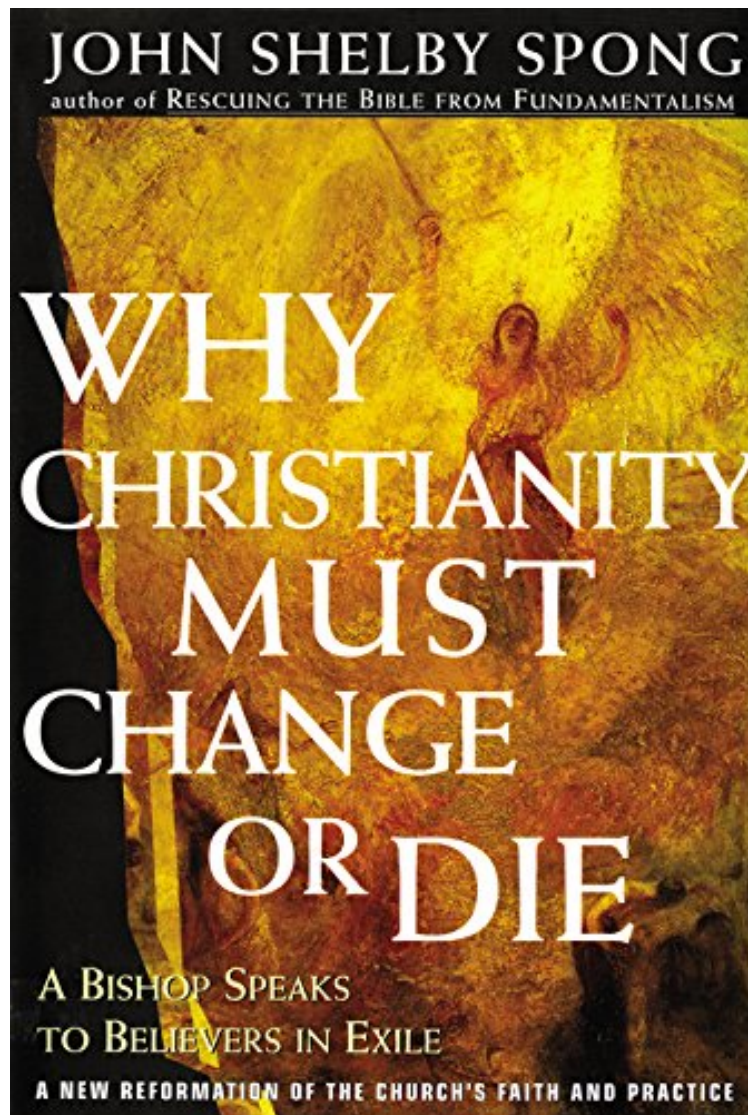


(Pdf free) Why Christianity Must Change or Die: A Bishop Speaks to Believers In Exile

## Why Christianity Must Change or Die: A Bishop Speaks to Believers In Exile

*John Shelby Spong*

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**John Shelby Spong : Why Christianity Must Change or Die: A Bishop Speaks to Believers In Exile** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Why Christianity Must Change or Die: A Bishop Speaks to Believers In Exile:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Finally, a sensible view of religion By Dave Bishop John Shelby Spong's book will undoubtedly change the reader's perspective on religion in the 21st century. Whether you are a

devout Christian, a confirmed Atheist, or somewhere in the middle, you'll find that this book casts a new light on religion. It certainly provides food for thought and is an interesting read. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A wonderful re-examination of religion and Christianity for the postmodern world. By L. M. Hibbard It was a wonderful read that took a scholarly look at religion. It opened new pathways to experience religion and most especially Christian religion. For me it was support for a view that I have held for quite some time and perhaps will point me toward a future view that I am exploring. 7 of 8 people found the following review helpful. This book is guiding me on my journey into believer's exile. By Nanvan I had read probably a half dozen or so of Bishop Spong's books by the time I got to this one, including a later related book, *A New Christianity for a New World*. Maybe it's because I had previously been introduced to God as Ground of All Being (which confused the heck out of me at first) and have since had some time to try to understand that mystical concept, but the explanations in this book finally made sense and brought it closer to home for me. I can understand the concept more clearly, although I am still trying to relate to this new kind of God. As I've turned away from the external theistic Being up there (or out there), I really had a hard time figuring out the place of prayer. I had struggled for so long in trying to be a traditionally prayerful person to no avail. Of course there was a reason, as the good Bishop points out in his chapter on Prayer, if I no longer believe in this external Being, then of course I wouldn't have any idea how to pray or to what or whom!! Spong's chapter on Prayer drew a hallelujah from me. He's been there, done that. Now prayer for me isn't just a bunch of words, but prayer is action: to be there for others, to serve, and in Spong's words, to love wastefully. This is my favorite book of all-time having ANYTHING to do with Christianity, God, Jesus or religion of any kind. I will read it over and over again. I always read with a highlighter in this book, many pages are totally highlighted. The explanations for why Bishop Spong can no longer accept the traditional dogmas and creeds of the Church filled in the blanks for me and gave a new impetus to my journey as a Believer in Exile. Like Bishop Spong, I am an Episcopalian who can no longer accept the traditional Christian doctrines of the virgin birth, incarnation, atonement, an Easter resurrection or a bodily ascension beyond the clouds (all of which are masterfully dealt with in this book). I have long since given up believing in a God who is the Master Puppeteer in the Sky. But, again like Bishop Spong, I can't give up Jesus. I'm not talking about the Jesus of miracles and magic, nor the Jesus of the creeds and the Trinity but the Jesus whom I have experienced, who in his holiness has touched God. There I was in my confusion and unbelief, not knowing where to turn. And then there was this book it was as if it was written for me personally! I applaud Spong for being courageous and honest in addressing the irrelevancy of age-old doctrines and creeds dealing with biblical inerrancy, creationism, rewards, punishments and Judgment Day, while so-called religious people often ignore human rights, whether they be for women, homosexuals or minorities. (In fact, neither the Church nor the Scriptures have always stood for equal rights for people in these three categories!) I've read similar material by other writers, but none of them unlike Spong appear to want to lead the present-day Church into the 21st century. I have resisted throwing out the proverbial baby with the bath water, and now thanks to Bishop Spong, I don't have to! I'll just change the bath water... If I were even a partially traditional Christian and not a believer in exile, this would have been a very disturbing book. Although I am 80 years old, I am a 21st-century woman, and this 21st-century believer in exile thinks this book is TERRIFIC! It is well-written, easy to read and understand, and has been a Godsend for me! Before all is said and done, I will have read all of Spong's books, and some of them I will read several times. I wish I could tell him how much his books, this one in particular, have meant to me, in helping to guide my journey into exile....

An important and respected voice for liberal American Christianity for the past twenty years, Bishop John Shelby Spong integrates his often controversial stands on the Bible, Jesus, theism, and morality into an intelligible creed that speaks to today's thinking Christian. In this compelling and heartfelt book, he sounds a rousing call for a Christianity based on critical thought rather than blind faith, on love rather than judgment, and that focuses on life more than religion.

John Shelby Spong is the Episcopal Bishop of Newark, New Jersey, and has enjoyed a career filled with controversy, much of it thanks to his many bestselling books, such as *Born of a Woman*, *Living in Sin?*, and *Liberating the Gospels*. He has tapped into an audience of people who are at once spiritually starved and curious, yet unwilling or unable to embrace Christianity. Spong refers to himself as a believer in exile. He believes the world into which Christianity was born was limited and provincial, particularly when viewed from the perspective of the progress in knowledge and technology made over the past two millennia. This makes any ideas or beliefs formulated in 1st-century Judea totally inadequate to our progressive minds and lives today. So Spong is in exile until Christianity is reformed to discard all of the outdated and, according to Spong, false tenets of Christianity. He begins his book by exposing the Apostles Creed line by line, then methodically moves on through the heart of Christian belief, carefully exploring each aspect, demonstrating in each case the inadequacies of Christianity as detailed in the Bible and in the traditions of the Church. The epilogue includes Spong's own creed, recast to reflect the beliefs he considers relevant to Christianity at the end of the 20th century. Oddly enough, Spong's views do not seem particularly new. In fact, his views seem very much in keeping with the religious humanist variety of Unitarianism. What is remarkable is not the

beliefs themselves, but that an Episcopal bishop would be the one to embrace and espouse them. Spong has become a trumpeter in the battle of beliefs, not just in the Episcopal communion, but in the realm of Christian faith in general in this country. His books are bestsellers and are in turn, presumably, read by those who, whether they agree or disagree, all acknowledge that in some way, Spong is involved in setting the agenda. This book, as the admitted "summation of his life's work" tells every reader what the complete agenda will be, for the next few years at least. --Patricia Klein

"This is an important contribution to the Christian dilemma of our time. With reverence, courage, and compassion, Bishop Spong helps his readers to articulate their difficulties with the conception of God and, in so doing, to take the first step toward a creative resolution." -- Karen Armstrong, author of "A History of God"

"Bishop Spong is a passionate, illuminating original. His knowledgeable concern for the future of Christianity offers strength, hope, and theological solutions." -- Clarissa Pinkola Estés, Ph.D., author of "Women Who Run with the Wolves, The Gift of Story, " and "The Faithful Gardener"

"Should be required reading for everyone concerned with facing head-on the intellectual and spiritual challenges of late-twentieth-century religious life." -- Karen L. King, Harvard Divinity School

"Spong demolishes the stifling dogma of traditional Christianity in search of the inner core of truth. This book is a courageous, passionate attempt to build a credible theology for a skeptical, scientific age." -- Paul Davies, author of "The Mind of God"

"This is Spong's manifesto, offering his vision for the institution he made his career serving." -- "Library Journal"

About the Author John Shelby Spong, the Episcopal Bishop of Newark before his retirement in 2000, has been a visiting lecturer at Harvard and at more than 500 other universities all over the world. His books, which have sold well over a million copies, include Biblical Literalism: A Gentile Heresy; The Fourth Gospel: Tales of a Jewish Mystic; Re-Claiming the Bible for a Non-Religious World; Eternal Life: A New Vision; Jesus for the Non-Religious, The Sins of Scripture, Resurrection: Myth or Reality?; Why Christianity Must Change or Die; and his autobiography, Here I Stand. He writes a weekly column on the web that reaches thousands of people all over the world. To join his online audience, go to [www.JohnShelbySpong.com](http://www.JohnShelbySpong.com). He lives with his wife, Christine, in New Jersey.