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The Bishop *who was not*

John Shelby Spong was born in Charlotte, North Carolina in 1931. John went to the public schools of Charlotte North Carolina and in the 1940s during his junior and senior years of school, he took two classes in the Bible. By age 12, he was given a King James Bible as a Christmas present by his mother after his father died. His mom is described as "a woman of a simple faith; no critical problems ever bothered her understanding of God" (Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism, p. 14). He read the bible religiously each day. The bible became his source of life and states he was able to quote the scriptures on salvation efficiently.

Spong was a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1952 and received his Master of Divinity degree in 1955 from the Protestant Episcopal Theological Seminary in Virginia. Both the seminary and St. Paul's College have both conferred on him honorary Doctor of Divinity degrees. He had served as rector of St. Joseph's Church in Durham, North Carolina from 1955 to 1957. Rector of Calvary Parish, Tarboro, North Carolina from 1957 to 1965. Rector of St. John's Church in Lynchburg, Virginia from 1965 to 1969. Rector of St. Paul's Church in Richmond, Virginia from 1969 to 1976. In 1973 he was elected by General Convention to a six-year term on the Executive Council, the governing body of the Episcopal Church, just under the General Convention. He was consecrated bishop on June 12, 1976. In 1986, under Bishop Edmond Browning, he was appointed to the Standing Commission on Human Affairs and Health. Spong has been the Episcopal bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Newark New Jersey since 1979. Starting in January 2000 he will retire and begin teaching at Harvard.

Bishop Spong's writings and teachings are on the authority of the Bible, God, History, the Virgin Birth, the resurrection of Jesus, culture, sexuality, and sin. However he is not writing an apologetic for the faith, he is criticizing it, ALL of it. His position is more than just challenging the Scripture, it is anti-biblical and antichrist. He has written several books that state that Jesus was not born of a virgin and another that denies that Jesus was actually raised from the dead, just about anything in scripture has become his target. He has campaigned for same sex marriages and the ordination of practicing homosexuals. He has lobbied for abortion rights on the premise of freedom from abortion restrictions, which are oppressive to women.

For those on his side he is admired and praised as a brilliant writer and speaker, bravely campaigning for reformation and a new morality in the Church. In his book In Living in Sin? 1988, A Bishop Rethinks Human Sexuality, Spong justified homosexuality, fornication. He has fervently promoted sexual relations outside of marriage

for both heterosexuals and homosexuals, maintaining that "sex outside of marriage can be holy and life-giving in some circumstances." He has developed a marriage like ceremony to "recognize and bless" gay couples in Episcopal Churches. Spong has ordained homosexuals to the ministry and wants all the church to do the same.

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Spong speaks with a man given authority on this and other matters. But in fact when one reads how he interprets the scripture they can only sympathize with a man with no direction. The real problem is his gangrene being spread to others. Spong is not gun shy to the public, he has appeared on The Phil Donahue Show, The Tom Snyder Show The Oprah Winfrey Show, Good Morning America, The Today Show, Firing Line with Wm. Buckley a few times, Politically Incorrect with Bill Maher on 5 occasions, The O'Reilly Factor with Bill O'Reilly twice, Nightline , CNN, and even the apologetic program - The John Ankerberg Show.

In 1988 Spongs first wife died and he states "people all over the Dioscese prayed for her because I was well known. I wondered if the garbage collector in downtown Newark had a wife who had cancer who died and people didn't pray for her would she die quicker, or would she die more painfully and I decided if that's the way this world works I don't want to believe in that kind of God." (Dec 27,99 Politically Incorrect Bill Mahr) Spongs mistake is interpreting God by his experience of the way the world is. Surely any Christian would pray for anyone from any walk of life, but it would be Gods prerogative to answering the prayer.

A NEW reformation

Spong is calling for a new reformation. Which he claims will be far more reaching than the Reformation of the 16th century. This in no way should be confused with the one by Martin Luther, since he wants to undo everything Luther tried to reform, and more. "It will not be concerned about authority, ecclesiastical polity, valid ordinations and valid sacraments. It will be rather a Reformation that will examine the very nature of the Christian faith itself."

"Reformation must also be willing to bear the attack of the threatened religious establishment"... Christianity is doomed for the anti-intellectual voices of the religious right today will never revive the Christian faith for that growing majority of those who have given up on organized religion. The choice before the Church is so clear to me. It is either a radical Reformation or a slow but inevitable death." (Renewing the call for Reformation)

But it is Spong who is actually promoting death because his reformation takes people away from the Scriptures as infallible, inerrant and life giving."I will post my theses on the Internet and send copies with invitations to debate them to the recognized Christian leaders of the world. My theses are far smaller in number than were those of Martin Luther, but they are far more threatening theologically." Many have been outspoken against his restructuring. Spong's response to his detractors and fundamentalist foes is " Certainly Martin Luther's life was at risk when he nailed his 95 Theses to the door of the church in Wittenberg in 1517. Every religious reformer before and since has confronted the same hysterical fear."Spong puts himself in the same class as Luther, when in fact he does not hold a candle to him.

Its not that Spong does not understand the Scriptures in light of the traditional Christian view, he just disbelieves it. "The bedrock of the Christian experience is captured in the assertion that the Holy God was present in and met through the life of Jesus. That experience was at first not explained, it was simply stated. Paul did it best when he wrote, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world..." various explanations began to develop based on the way God was perceived in the 1st century as a supernatural being dwelling

beyond the sky, who invaded human history to accomplish the divine will. If God was in Christ, then an explanation had to be devised about how this God above had entered the world in Jesus and how this God in Jesus returned to heaven when the work of redemption was complete. The story of the virgin birth was designed to achieve the divine entry. The story of the cosmic ascension provided the means of departure.

He goes on to take the stand "The virgin birth tradition, however, assumed an ancient view of reproduction which believed that the newborn lived in the sperm of the male who simply planted it into the womb of the female. So to proclaim the divine origin of a person, one simply replaced the human father with a divine agent. It was not necessary to replace the mother since she was believed to add nothing to the new life. A virgin birth was therefore a rather sexist male misunderstanding of procreation."

"Christianity so clearly stands today in need of a Reformation that will recast the Christ experience in radically different ways from those of our Christian past. If God was in Christ, as I deeply believe, then a new way must be found to make sense of that incarnate presence. ... The idolatry of ancient and outmoded explanations must be broken open or we stand to lose the wonder that makes the Christ so radically important."

Spong misses the point of theology being organic, that all the doctrines are interconnected with each other. If there is no virgin birth than God took upon himself a sinful nature which would make him in many respects no different than you or I. If we take what he says at face value, what would make Christ any more important than Buddha or Mohammed or any other religious teacher. How are we to believe anything in the bible? His position of the bible's stories being killed by its literal interpretation is nonsense. Those who were eyewitnesses and the next generation knew what took place and they certainly believed in its literal meaning. They all believed Christ had a real resurrection, Christianity would have ended in one fell swoop if they produced a literal body that was dead.

"... I am a Christian and I am not willing to assume that there is no way other than the way of yesterday to process the eternal Christ experience."

What kind of a Christian challenges what Gods prophets and what Christ said that was recorded by his holy apostles. What Spong is doing is apostatizing and wants others to join his rebellion. There is only one way, because Christ said so and he should know. If the choice is between the Biblical record or Spong what rationale would there be to discard all of Church history for his new opinions. I'm not sure what experience Spong is talking about, but without Christ's own words of truth it is impossible to REALLY experience the one it is written about.

His theology at times is laughable in the least and can be at times quite dangerous if given a platform. But in this age of toleration it is not surprising that one such as Spong can be a keynote speaker at church's and Universities.

"Every image of God is mythological," Spong affirmed. He said the resurrection and virgin birth of Jesus did not literally happen, but were just "interpreted" that way. Likewise, the disciple Judas and Jesus' earthly father, Joseph, were fictional characters whom the early church created. Spong called the Ten Commandments "immoral" because they "define women as property." (AFA Journal, 2112/96 author Mark Tooley, on "A homosexuality symposium at Foundry United Methodist Church in Washington, D.C.)

Spong tells us that it is wrong for Christians to try to convert Muslims or Buddhists to the Christian faith. To further his campaign of reformation, Spong clearly thinks it is right to change the central message of the Christian Faith.

As he so bluntly states "The view of the cross as the sacrifice for the sins of the world is a barbarian idea based on primitive concepts of God and must be dismissed."(this is also the new age view of mocking Gods way of bringing man back into a relationship with him)

Spong seems to believe that only thinking people and Christians will discover what he has. "The words so central to Christian self-understanding, like "Jesus died for my sins," or "Jesus paid the price of sin on the cross of Calvary," or "I have been saved by the blood of Christ,"...are nothing short of ludicrous when we recognize what they mean. They assume a literalness about various elements of the ancient Christian myth. His audience is what he terms "the vast number of people who have given up on those beliefs because they are simply too narrow...they do not make sense in the world in which we live." Human life was not just a little lower than the angels - it's just a little higher than the higher mammals, the apes and the baboons. We've had to emerge from evolutionary history. We weren't created perfect and then fell into sin.....There is no perfect Creation. There is no perfect humanity - we are evolving constantly."(COMPASS INTERVIEW WITH BISHOP JOHN SHELBY SPONG. Dec. 25th, 1997)

He holds in contempt the idea of original sin as well as being sinners." as we called it, that human beings stained by this sin were exiled permanently from God's presence. Unable to save themselves, the myth continued, these human beings stood condemned before the throne of grace, crying out for a savior to rescue them from their self-inflicted wounds." It becomes obvious that Spong has not contemplated what God calls sin to understand why we all share this natural state of humanity. Was Paul wrong when he echoed Jesus Rom 5:8But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."1 Tim 1:15This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief."

Some years ago Thomas Harris wrote a book I'm ok your ok in that book he said if you approach anybody from the vanish point of saying I'm OK and your not OK and your not going to be OK until you get to be like me, your being hostile... I don't believe you can preach the love of God with hostility, save my life, I don't believe that." (Dec. 27,99 Politically Incorrect Bill Mahr)

But if you don't take this literally then you need to do nothing to change. If we take Spong's advice into the real world, you couldn't go to a doctor if your sick. What if he discovered you had cancer and depended on your doctor to tell you the truth. What if he said your as healthy as he is I'm OK your OK. That is not truthful and neither is it love. What Spong misses in his philosophy is that Jesus who was God came to bring the truth. Mark 2:17When Jesus heard it, He said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." Spong thinks everyone is righteous, the bible says we are all sinners in need of a savior. Matt 9:13"But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.' For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." Spong would do well to do likewise.

Attacking **Biblical literalism**

So what was it that changed this man to go 180 degrees in the other direction? Spong traces the death of his bible faith to his years as a student in a secular university. "My literalistic approach to the Bible died in late adolescence under the onslaught of a great secular state university" (Living in Sin, p. 95).

"While at theological seminary I yearned to get as deeply as possible into biblical studies. I was thrilled with the insights of higher criticism" (Living in Sin, p. 96). "When I became aware that neither the word virgin nor the concept of virginity appears in the Hebrew text

of Isaiah that Matthew quoted to undergird his account of Jesus' virgin birth, I became newly aware of the fragile nature of biblical fundamentalism. ... 'Almah' never means 'virgin' in Hebrew. I had to face early on in my priestly career the startling possibility that the virgin tradition so deep in Christianity may well rest upon something as fragile as the weak reed of a mistranslation" (Rescuing the Bible, p. 16).

Spong finds himself with comrades like Rudolf Bultmann who claimed that it is impossible to believe in miracles.

"Am I suggesting that these stories of the virgin birth are not literally true? The answer is a simple and direct 'Yes.' Of course these narratives are not literally true. Stars do not wander, angels do not sing, virgins do not give birth,... The virgin birth tradition of the New Testament is not literally true. It should not be literally believed" (Rescuing the Bible, p. 215).

In *Born of a Woman* (1992), he promoted that Jesus was conceived by a Roman soldier rather than the Holy Spirit. In all probability Jesus was born in Nazareth in a very normal way either as the child of Mary and Joseph, or else he was an illegitimate child that Joseph validated by acknowledging him as Joseph's son. All that can be stated definitely is that the echoes of the status of illegitimacy appear to be far stronger in the text than the suggestion that Jesus was Mary's child by Joseph" (*Born of A Woman*, pp. 157,158). This is such an absurd assertion since the bible from Genesis through the NT attest to the fact of Mary being faithful, obedient and Joseph being upright

In one of his books the blunt and audacious Bishop John Shelby Spong reveals how interpreting the bible literally has been used to justify slavery and war, ban textbooks, deny the rights of gays and lesbians and subordinate women. He seems to blame all of our societal ills on a literal interpretation of literal Scriptural writings. If one looked at his position from a biblical perspective one would think he would be running as a candidate for the antichrist.

With each new book published, Spong has upped the ante, promoting more theological poison for people to ingest.

Spong is repelled by Gods justice, "Matthew also had a strange fascination with hell, gnashing of teeth, weeping and wailing, burning pits, and eternal punishment. ... Hell is a favorite theme in the evangelistic preaching of the literalists, of course, where behavior control by means of reward and punishment is prominent" (Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism, p. 155). Matthew only records what Jesus said so to accuse Matthew of distortion is to say the same of Jesus. it is these audacious statements that makes this man who has a little knowledge dangerous

Recently Spong appeared on the TV program Politically Incorrect and stated "So somehow all of these imperialistic religious ideas that we try put on people are just very destructive ideas. The gospels didn't get written for 40 -70 years after Jesus was crucified.".. they are written in a language that Jesus never spoke they are written in Greek, so by the time we read them there 40-70 years after and there written in language he didn't speak. Now I don't know about you Bill, but I don't believe anybody will quote me accurately 40-70 years after I died."

First : Spong is wrong on when the NT Bible was written, he takes the position of the apostate Jesus seminar "scholars" that we do not have eyewitness accounts. The bible was written 20 years after Christ and Johns last book the Revelation in 90 Ad.. Most was written in the years 45-65 Ad . The writers claim to be eyewitness accounts in the gospels, if in fact they are not we should not believe any of it, because they are liars. The newest

evidence shows a parchment of Matthew that is dated back to 60-65 AD. The greater majority of scholars that are linguistic experts all point to the writings before 70 AD. when Jerusalem was invaded by the Roman armies. The 2nd point that needs to be addressed is Spong's consistent attack on the bible where there is nothing left to believe. Not its history, dating, characters ethics, its meanings, its actual portrayal of the historical Jesus and who he claimed to be. What one is left with is to listen to Spong instead of Jesus. Which appears to be what he wants. For he doesn't agree with anything Jesus said. This includes statements on love as well, for Jesus said if you love me you will continue in my word.. and not to stop the children from coming to him. (Dec. 27,1999 Politically Incorrect Bill Mahr)

Again on the TV program Politically Incorrect he stated "Some parts of it I'd hate to blame God for (of the bible) some of it is pretty awful, women are treated as property in great sections of the bible, even in the 10 commandments says you shall not covet your neighbors wife nor his ox nor his ass nor anything that is your neighbors... and you know the neighbor in that is a male, the ox the ass and the other are possessions and possessions. And I think anything that treats a woman as less than fully human is wrong."

Here we find Spong plays to the audiences prejudices of equality and liberalism. He was exposed for his false statement as the only Christian on the program defended the bible by saying, " look at how Jesus Christ commanded man to treat his wife, you treat your wife like Christ loves the Church. Christ was servant to the church and we are suppose to be a servant to our wife." What needs to be added is that it was the religious leaders that misused the scripture and Gods intention was never for man to have a wife as ownership or possessions. Christ liberated the women from the false religious control that was prevalent in his day. The commandments point on covetedness is that anything one has should not be desired by another.

At a symposium he stated "If a star led the Wise men to the baby Jesus, then why couldn't King Herod find Him?" Bishop Spong asked a laughing audience, " ..he "dismissed the Jewish prophecies traditionally seen as foretelling the coming of Christ. "I don't think Isaiah, Jeremiah or the Psalmist anticipated the life of Jesus of Nazareth," said Spong. "People can't predict future events. It's a magical view of the Bible."

An audience member protested, "I am gay, Jewish Christian, convicted by the biblical prophecies, and in my heart." He asked the bishop, "Don't the Hebrew scriptures point in the direction of Jesus?" Spong responded, "Jews might be safer if we took evangelical Christianity away. Converting Jews to Christianity is not on the radar screen." (AFA Journal, 2112/96 author Mark Tooley, on "A homosexuality symposium at Foundry United Methodist Church in Washington, D.C.) Well there goes another of Paul's statement out the window "the gospel to the Jew first."

On the politically incorrect show in response to a Christians testimony of seeing a miraculous healing in his life he said, "I don't ever want to stand in judgement upon anybody's witness and experience, but I can only say God for me is so much bigger than my faith, my church, my world, my understanding of life. And I think I walk into the mystery of this God everyday but, for... God forbid I spend time telling people that what God is like, I don't believe there is a soul that knows what God is like. I know only what I experience and I cannot universalize from that." (Dec 27,1999 Politically Incorrect, Bill Mahr)

Yes, God is bigger then all of these, but this does not mean one cannot understand or know him. Here he states he won't stand in judgement on someone but then he does exactly that! To unequivocally say know one knows what God is like is to deny the purpose Jesus came for. Just because he has not experienced this does not mean someone else has not. This is

like the atheist's argument of "I can't see God or he has not done a miracle in front of me therefore he does not exist." We may not know everything of our best friend or wife, but we do know something of them to have a working, sustainable relationship. It is the same with God.

Obviously Spong does not believe the bible which states I Jn 5:20 "And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life."

He has stated the end of Jesus' life a story had to be devised to enable the theistic God whom they believed they had met in him to return to the divine abode above the sky. The ascension story then explains where the theistic God lived in heaven. Because Copernicus and Galileo confronted us with a new version of cosmic reality No intelligent person now thinks ascending into the sky is the route to heaven. With our present knowledge of cosmology, such a journey would at best achieve an endless orbit, while at worst one would ultimately escape the limits of gravity and sink into the infinite depths of space. So the "literal story of the ascension no longer translates to space age people."

"The ascension of Jesus was not about space travel or moon shots. It was not to be literalized in terms of a first-century cosmology. The Pentecost story did not mean that ignorant fishermen like Peter and Andrew suddenly were able to speak Chinese, German, or Swedish. To literalize the Lukan narrative would be to destroy it irrevocably" (Spong, *Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism: A Bishop Rethinks the Meaning of Scripture*, p. 184, 1991).

"Paul was not a universal scholar. He was not even a good biblical scholar. ... Paul treated Adam as if he were as literal and historic a figure as Jesus of Nazareth had been (Rom. 5:14,18). No biblical scholar will march today under that banner..."

Spong twists the bible writers own stance to make it seem that if one does not agree with him they are ignorant. The truth is it is he that is extremely ignorant. He has the most dangerous ignorance, one who is completely closed minded to evidence and is haughty enough to tell anyone and everyone they are wrong without any historical proof, only his opinion. Jesus said Adam and eve were literal , so did Moses in the creation account.

"Paul cannot be taken literally. He did not write the Word of God" (*Rescuing the Bible*, pp. 104,105) How can anyone with any intelligence say this?

Not only does Spong not take Paul literally he does the same to the whole bible "If a religious system requires that a literal Bible be embraced, I must walk away from that system" (*Rescuing the Bible*, p. 107).

"Resurrection is an action of God. Jesus was raised into the meaning of God. It therefore cannot be a physical resuscitation occurring inside human history." Spong is not just a liberal he is an atheist in disguise, one who hides behind a collar. This does not mean he will say he does not believe in God, he does. But it is a god of his own image, in fact he is reinventing Christianity. So why wear a collar and be called a bishop. In the first place it would be hard to get inside the church if he did not have some suitable means of appeal to old religion that he wants to dispense with. Spong will cut to the chase, and come right out and tells you that he does not believe the Bible literally. "I hold the Bible before my readers seeking boldly to free it from the clutches of a mindless literalism and, at the same time, presenting it as a dramatic and exciting document whose relevance for our day is both mighty and real."

We might consider the hypothesis that Paul may have been a gay male. ... I suggest the possibility that Paul was a homosexual ... nothing else accounts for this data as well as the possibility that Paul was a gay male." (Rescuing the Bible, pp. 116,117). His opinion is not entertained by any scholar worth his salt, nor has it been in Church history until the recent liberal movement infiltrated the Church.

The Same sex controversy

Throughout his career as an Episcopal priest and bishop, John Shelby Spong has been surrounded by controversy as he has labored on the leading edge of movements to bring blacks, women and homosexuals into the full life of his church." (The New York Times) .." to be a Christian in my opinion means you've got to open the church to all racial and ethnic varieties and experiences. You've got to treat men and women as if they're both created in God's image. You've got to reach beyond prejudice against gay and lesbian people and recognize that they too are part of Gods creation. (COMPASS INTERVIEW WITH BISHOP JOHN SHELBY SPONG. Dec. 25th, 1997)

Spong is not alone in his reformation of the Episcopal Church. Matthew Fox a former Roman Catholic known for his "creation spirituality." While he was being examined for his radical ideas he received a invitation to become an Episcopal priest. Fox accepted and now teaches a celebration of the spirit of pantheism (the world is divine) during his monthly "Techno Mass" in Oakland, California. Indeed the Episcopal church stands for change and Spong and Fox's leaven has affected them first. Many of the women ordained as priests in the Episcopal Church pray to Sophia (wisdom), rejecting the biblical language of father for God the creator.

Spong's hatred for God shows itself as he raises his own fist against him saying "I, for one, am no longer willing to acknowledge the claim that morality has been frozen in an era that primarily served the dominant male. ... I dare, rather, to claim that a new morality is emerging that does manifest the fruits of the Spirit and that is built on the foundation of the mutuality of the sexes" (Living in Sin, p. 66).

"Contemporary research is today uncovering new facts that are producing a rising conviction that homosexuality, far from being a sickness, sin, perversion, or unnatural act, is a healthy, natural, and affirming form of human sexuality for some people" (Living in Sin, p. 71). What research is he reading? Neither is it natural nor healthy.

"Yes, there can be holy sex in the life of a mature single adult. ... The church must abandon its irrelevant ethical judgments that arise from realities that no longer exist ... The prohibitions of the past have been abandoned, not because people are evil 'secular modernists' but because life has changed and those prohibitions are simply no longer appropriate" (Living in Sin, p. 217).

"What Paul actually says in the first chapter of Romans is that Homosexuality is punishment because you didn't because you didn't worship God properly" well friends if that's the way God operates I don't especially want to worship this God any longer, I mean that's really what it says." (Dec 27,99 Politically Incorrect, Bill Mahr)

No, that is not what it says. It states the very opposite because they did not worship God and instead replaced him. They then went into homosexuality as well as other sins. But Spong does say the truth in that he does not worship this God of the bible any longer, but one of his own imagination!

Romans 1:21-32 "Because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were

darkened.²²Professing to be wise, they became fools,

²³and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man- and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.²⁴Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves,(in other words God let them go their own way) ²⁵who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever.

Amen. ²⁶For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature.²⁷ Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. ²⁸ And even as **they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting;**

²⁹ being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them."

So the bible communicates that one gives up God first to go practice these things. That they stopped worshipping and living right and so these practices are a life without God. Spong's view is that none of this matters and God is indifferent on the way we live. "I think we've taken God and brought him out of the realm of awe and wonder and mystery and tried to make him so concrete that it's like having a comfortable Father figure around who's come to take care of us. That's not the world I live in. I believe God is real, but I believe God calls me beyond myself to take responsibility for my life and to try top work to allow other people to be themselves and to take responsibility for their lives." (COMPASS INTERVIEW WITH BISHOP JOHN SHELBY SPONG. Dec. 25th, 1997)

The love of God According to Bishop Spong

Bishop Spong at times sounds like Schuller in that he falls for the premise of love without truth and so he rows upstream with one oar in the water bringing a message of reformation without Christ.

" If I had to sum up the bible in sort of a three sentence thing, I would say that what I learned from the Hebrew scriptures primarily is that everybody's is holy everybody... what I learn from the Christian scriptures is that everybody is loved infinitely that Jesus story really means that there is nothing you can do that puts you outside the love of God." (Dec 27,99 Politically Incorrect Bill Mahr)

"Everybodys is holy "I have never read this in the Hebrew or Greek Scripture! Can anyone find this? As far as "there is nothing you can do that puts you outside the love of God." The bible does speak about love but when read it means nothing like Spong interprets it. Mark 12:30-31 'And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. "And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." How can someone be loved and experience this love if they do not love God correctly. Jesus addresses this by giving the qualification in John 5:40-42 "But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life."I do not receive honor from men."But I know you, that you do not have the love of God in you. John 14:15

"If you love Me, keep My commandments." Spong promotes the breaking of the commandments so one can only wonder if he understands what the love of God means.

"The gospel is the good news that your loved, its not that you have got to follow a certain creedal formulae."

While the bible does teach that God sent his son in love one needs to read how one receives and walks in gods love, there are requirements John 3:16-21 "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed." But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God." Spong has not come to the light and neither does he teach others to do so the way Jesus said. Jesus addresses the issue of receiving Gods love by saying John 14:21, "He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him."

John 15:10 "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love."

In issues of his diocesan newspaper, The Voice, Spong has stated that Darwin's evolutionary theory has "destroyed forever the power of the traditional Christian myth." Darwin's concept of an imperfect universe developing through evolution eliminated the traditional idea of the fall, he said. And consequently, the bishop continued, the interpretation of Jesus as a divine rescue operation became "inoperative." (Ecumenical News Service, Dec. 6, 1996).

"I will challenge the ignorance that is rampant in our society in regard to biblical studies. I will stand against the stereotypical prejudices still present in Christian churches against women, gays and lesbians. I will seek to get the theological debate of our generation into the public arena so that this secular society will know that the voice of Christ is broad, deep, competent and not limited to the shrill sounds of those who think religion is a place where one can find security and avoid the tensions of the modern world.

Christian education for adults is not to be confused with teaching religious propaganda designed to shore up the religious answers of antiquity. Christian education is an activity in which truth may be pursued come whence it may, cost what it will. It is an endeavor in which the spiritual realities of human life may be honestly explored." (If I Have Seen the Future of the Church, I Do Not Like it *John Shelby Spong*)

Bishop Spong, claims he is liberating the gospels from 2000 years of misinterpretation. His premise is that they are misunderstood because the Gospels are Jewish books, written in a Jewish world by Jewish authors. While this is true, what Spong looks to is not the Judaism of Moses to interpret what is correct.

For example in the story of Jesus feeding the 5000 he does not believe one should interpret it as literal that an actual miracle took place. According to Spong the Jewish frame of reference of the Jewish people being in the wilderness and being hungry, Moses prays to God and God brings heavenly manna upon the people in the wilderness so they can eat. He

considers this the Jewish style of story telling, "they take this Moses story, re-tell it about Jesus and heighten it. "

The obvious problem is his anti miracle stance, but there is more to this than meets the eye. For if Jesus did not literally feed 5,000 with 5 loaves and 2 fish than why should we believe that Moses actually fed the people in the wilderness as well! In fact, this would bring into question everything from Genesis on. In fact, that is exactly what he does. What kind of God is this that can't do the miraculous, that has not had history recorded correctly. What Spong is doing is wanting to have God, without him being defined as in the bible. He follows in the footsteps of Joseph Cambell who used metaphorical interpretations for the Scripture. It is exactly what the bible warned would happen in the last days "they would have a form of Godliness without the power."

Spong is always writing about what is wrong with the Church. After all the church is not Christ who alone is perfect. While no one can fault someone for finding better solutions, his are not biblical ones. He replaces the bibles authority with his own, his solutions are humanistic and are saturated with liberalism.

Spong first book was in 1973 called Honest Prayer. As time went on he began to speculate about Jesus as found in This Hebrew Lord (1974). This caused some Episcopalians to challenge his election as a bishop in 1976. His books in the last 10 years are "Living in Sin? A Bishop Rethinks Human Sexuality," (1991). "Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism: A Bishop Rethinks the Meaning of Scripture." (1992). "Born of a Woman: A Bishop Rethinks the Birth of Jesus, " (1994). "Resurrection: Myth or Reality? He rejected the doctrine of physical resurrection as mere "resuscitation" of a corpse. A Bishop's Search of the Origin's of Christianity." (1996). "Liberating the Gospels: Reading the Bible with Jewish Eyes," (1998). "Why Christianity Must Change or Die: A Bishop Speaks to Believers in Exile." (1999). In it Spong sets out his "12 theses" insisting that Christianity is doomed if we continue to insist on a supernatural God.

"The Bishop's Voice: A compilation of articles by John S. Spong, is his work from 1976 to 1998, from The Voice, a publication of the Diocese of Newark. One can see he uses his position in the church to appeal to the liberals and comfort them in their sin and unbelief, after all they are not alone, they have a bishop on their side.

Spong in his article 'A call for a new reformation.' This Reformation he claims will be about the very life and death of Christianity. Because it goes to the heart of how Christianity is to be understood, it will dwarf in intensity the Reformation of the 16th century. It will not be concerned about authority, ecclesiastical polity, valid ordinations and valid sacraments. It will be rather a Reformation that will examine the very nature of the Christian faith itself.

Spong lists 12 items that need to be addressed I will not address all of them, nor belabor the answers but be as a short and concise as possible to show that his prejudices cloud his conclusions.

1. Theism, as a way of defining God, is dead. So most theological God-talk is today meaningless. A new way to speak of God must be found."

Bibles answer- God has revealed to us on how we are to think of him and our relationship to him. God does not change and neither has his way for man to know, understand and grow in the knowledge of him.

2. Since God can no longer be conceived in theistic terms, it becomes nonsensical to seek to understand Jesus as the incarnation of the theistic deity. So the Christology of the ages is

bankrupt.

Bibles answer- God can no longer be conceived in theistic terms, says who? He seems to assume that he represents a vast portion of people. In fact he might but not within the walls of the believing church, but those who have backslidden or apostatized. To deny what God has revealed in his holy word and go around with a collar saying you represent him is to involve oneself and others in deception. Why use the bible at all if one does not believe its message.

3. The biblical story of the perfect and finished creation from which human beings fell into sin is pre-Darwinian mythology and post-Darwinian nonsense.

Bibles answer-If you can't believe in Genesis then you certainly will not believe in anything else. Jesus said Genesis was true, Spong says Jesus is liar. Despite his attraction to Darwin it still is a theory at best and as science progresses it looks like the light is going to further dimmer on Darwin's grandiose theory.

4. The virgin birth, understood as literal biology, makes Christ's divinity, as traditionally understood, impossible.

Bibles answer- Not at all and Spong needs to do his research and catch up with science as well as Scripture. If god cannot take a man from a woman then he certainly could not make man from the ground in Genesis. of course this is the crux of the matter. Spong is anti supernatural, so this can't occur according to his human reasoning.

6. The view of the cross as the sacrifice for the sins of the world is a barbarian idea based on primitive concepts of God and must be dismissed."

Bibles answer-The whole revelation from start to finish shows that God required a sacrifice for sin. From Adam through the OT tabernacle and all its typology. The bible is not written by one person nor a few in a short period of time. It spans 1600 years with 40 different authors on 4 different continents. It would be ludicrous to think that this was all invented by man when it is so consistent in its speaking to the problems and its solutions over this stretch of time.

7. Resurrection is an action of God. Jesus was raised into the meaning of God. It therefore cannot be a physical resuscitation occurring inside human history.

Bibles answer- He's got this half right, it is an action of God and there were resurrections occurring before Christ came. But for one to deny the fact of Christ being raised is not only anti supernaturalism but in fact disbelieving the gospel. Which then disqualifies him as a representative for the good news. In fact Spong has no good news but its all bad.

10. Prayer cannot be a request made to a theistic deity to act in human history in a particular way.

Bibles answer- God asks us to pray even though he knows what we will ask before we do and what will occur. You might as well say God is dead long live man. The way Spong's theology pans out.

11. The hope for life after death must be separated forever from the behavior control mentality of reward and punishment. The Church must abandon, therefore, its reliance on guilt as a motivator of behavior."

Bibles answer- The high standard of morality should not be powered by punishment itself but understood in light of consequences for ones actions. The love of God and obedience to

what he asks is the first motivator, if that fails the 2nd kicks in to warn someone of their ignoring the first. Guilt can be a good thing if it is used to change the course toward preservation and avoiding harm. To feel guilty about something means someone's conscience is working, they have a standard.

He ends this article by saying" So I set these theses today before the Christian world and I stand ready to debate each of them as we prepare to enter the third millennium. Has he debated anyone?

The bible says the fear of the lord (a healthy respect for ones creator)is the beginning of wisdom. Spong needs to start at the beginning for he certainly has no biblical wisdom, only earthly. For Christ will come again "to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him." (Jude 1:15) Mr. Spong may do well to reconsider his position while there is still time to do so.

Robert Schuller	Bishop Spong	Norman Vincient Peale

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