

John Shelby Spong Eternal Life

John Shelby Spong and the Concept of Eternal Life: A Modern Theological Perspective

John Shelby Spong Eternal Life is a phrase that invites us into a fascinating exploration of one of the most profound topics in Christian theology through the lens of an influential and often controversial figure. Bishop John Shelby Spong, renowned for his progressive views on Christianity, challenges traditional interpretations of eternal life, urging believers and seekers alike to reimagine what it means to live forever. His perspective offers fresh insights into spirituality, faith, and the human experience, making it a critical subject for anyone interested in contemporary religious thought.

Who Was John Shelby Spong?

Before diving into his views on eternal life, it's important to understand who John Shelby Spong was and why his ideas carry weight in theological discussions. Spong was an Episcopal bishop known for his outspoken and reformist stance on Christianity. Throughout his career, he pushed boundaries, advocating for a faith that embraces modern knowledge, inclusivity, and a metaphorical rather than literal understanding of sacred texts.

He believed that many traditional interpretations of scripture no longer resonate with contemporary believers because they are tied to ancient worldviews. Spong's work aimed to bridge the gap between ancient religious stories and modern scientific and philosophical understanding. This context is essential when considering his unique take on eternal life.

John Shelby Spong Eternal Life: A Reimagined Concept

One of Spong's most compelling contributions to theology is his reinterpretation of eternal life. Rather than viewing eternal life as a physical, never-ending existence after death, he emphasizes a more spiritual and metaphorical understanding.

Eternal Life as a Present Reality

Spong suggested that eternal life is not a distant promise but rather a reality we can experience here and now. For him, eternal life means living fully in the present moment with an awareness of the divine presence. This perspective shifts the focus from a future afterlife to the quality and depth of life we lead today.

This idea resonates with many who find the traditional promise of heaven as a literal place difficult to believe or irrelevant. Instead, Spong invites us to see eternal life as a state of being—a transformation that can occur within us, characterized by love, compassion, and spiritual awakening.

The Death of Literalism in Theology

Spong was famously critical of literal interpretations of the Bible, which often include descriptions of eternal life as a physical resurrection or a life spent in heaven. He argued that such views are outdated and fail to capture the true essence of Jesus' teachings.

By moving away from literalism, Spong opened doors for a more symbolic and metaphorical understanding of biblical narratives. Eternal life, in this framework, is less about where we go after death and more about how we live now, embodying the values that Jesus taught: forgiveness, justice, and unconditional love.

How Spong's View Challenges Traditional Christian Beliefs

John Shelby Spong's perspective on eternal life is not without controversy. Many traditional Christians hold firmly to the belief in heaven as a physical place and eternal life as an unending continuation of the soul in that realm. Spong's metaphorical approach invites debate and sometimes resistance.

The Role of Resurrection

Traditional Christianity often emphasizes the resurrection of the body as a cornerstone of eternal life. Spong, however, interprets resurrection symbolically—as a call to rise from spiritual death and embrace a new way of living. This interpretation reframes resurrection as an ongoing process of renewal and transformation, rather than a one-time event after physical death.

Implications for Faith and Practice

If eternal life is about present spiritual awakening rather than future reward, then faith becomes a call to live ethically and meaningfully now. Spong's approach encourages believers to prioritize social justice, compassion, and authentic relationships. It's a faith focused on action and presence rather than awaiting a future salvation.

This realignment can deeply affect how individuals engage with their spirituality. It encourages a more inclusive, open-minded approach that considers science, history, and human experience as integral to understanding divine truth.

LSI Keywords in Context: Progressive Christianity, Spiritual Awakening, Metaphorical Faith

When exploring John Shelby Spong's eternal life, it's helpful to consider related themes like progressive Christianity, which embraces modern interpretations of scripture and theology. Spong's ideas are a

hallmark of this movement, which seeks to make faith relevant for the 21st century.

Spiritual awakening is another important concept tied to Spong's view of eternal life. He invites believers to awaken to a deeper reality beyond dogma and ritual, to experience a personal connection with the divine that transforms their lives.

Metaphorical faith, as Spong advocated, allows for a dynamic relationship with sacred texts. Instead of rigid literalism, this approach embraces symbols and stories as tools for understanding spiritual truths, including the mystery of eternal life.

Why John Shelby Spong's Ideas Matter Today

In a world where traditional religious beliefs are often questioned or rejected, Spong's reinterpretation of eternal life offers a meaningful alternative. His work speaks to those who seek a spirituality that is intellectually honest, emotionally fulfilling, and socially engaged.

By focusing on eternal life as a present spiritual reality, Spong encourages us to find hope, purpose, and connection in this life rather than postponing meaning to an uncertain afterlife. This perspective can be particularly comforting for individuals grappling with doubt or disillusionment with organized religion.

Tips for Engaging with Spong's Theology

If you're curious about exploring John Shelby Spong's eternal life and his broader theology, here are some ways to engage thoughtfully:

- **Read his works:** Start with books like "Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism" or "Eternal Life: A New Vision," where he elaborates on these themes.
- **Join discussion groups:** Many progressive Christian communities welcome conversations about Spong's ideas, providing a supportive environment for questions and dialogue.
- **Reflect personally:** Consider what eternal life means to you and how Spong's metaphorical approach might enrich your spiritual journey.
- **Explore related thinkers:** Look into other progressive theologians who challenge traditional doctrines and prioritize inclusive spirituality.

Spong's Legacy on Eternal Life and Beyond

John Shelby Spong's legacy is marked by his courage to question and innovate within a faith tradition often resistant to change. His views on eternal life continue to inspire those seeking a faith that

embraces doubt, diversity, and discovery.

While his ideas may not align with every Christian's beliefs, they undeniably contribute to a richer, more nuanced conversation about life, death, and what lies beyond. By bringing eternal life into the realm of present experience rather than distant promise, Spong invites us all to live more deeply and authentically.

In exploring John Shelby Spong's eternal life, we encounter not just a theological concept but a transformative invitation—to reconsider how we understand existence, divinity, and the meaning of forever.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who was John Shelby Spong?

John Shelby Spong was a prominent American bishop of the Episcopal Church known for his progressive views on Christianity and theology.

What were John Shelby Spong's beliefs about eternal life?

John Shelby Spong believed that eternal life should be understood metaphorically rather than literally, emphasizing a spiritual and transformative experience rather than physical immortality.

How did John Shelby Spong interpret the concept of eternal life in the Bible?

Spong interpreted eternal life as a quality of life that begins here and now, focusing on living fully and authentically rather than a literal afterlife.

Did John Shelby Spong reject traditional views of heaven and hell?

Yes, Spong rejected traditional views of heaven and hell as physical places and instead saw them as symbolic representations of spiritual states.

What impact did John Shelby Spong have on modern Christian theology regarding eternal life?

Spong challenged conventional doctrines and encouraged a more inclusive, metaphorical understanding of eternal life, influencing progressive Christian thought.

Are John Shelby Spong's views on eternal life controversial?

Yes, his views have been controversial among conservative Christians but embraced by many who seek a more modern and inclusive theology.

Did John Shelby Spong write any books discussing eternal life?

Yes, Spong addressed themes related to eternal life in several of his books, including 'Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism' and 'A New Christianity for a New World.'

How does John Shelby Spong's view of eternal life differ from traditional Christian teachings?

Unlike traditional teachings that emphasize a physical resurrection and afterlife, Spong focused on eternal life as a present spiritual reality and personal transformation.

Where can I learn more about John Shelby Spong's theology on eternal life?

You can explore his official website, read his published works, or watch interviews and lectures where he discusses his progressive theological views.

Additional Resources

John Shelby Spong and the Concept of Eternal Life: A Theological Exploration

john shelby spong eternal life is a phrase that leads to a fascinating examination of one of the most provocative and influential voices in contemporary Christian theology. Bishop John Shelby Spong, a retired Episcopal bishop and theologian, is renowned for his progressive views that challenge traditional Christian doctrines, including conventional understandings of eternal life. His approach to spirituality and afterlife has sparked both acclaim and controversy, making his interpretations a critical point of discussion for those interested in modern religious thought.

John Shelby Spong's theological framework reinterprets eternal life not as a literal, physical continuation after death but rather as a profound spiritual reality experienced in the present life and beyond conventional boundaries. This perspective diverges significantly from traditional Christian teachings which often emphasize eternal life as an unending existence in heaven or hell. Instead, Spong invites believers to reconsider eternal life as a transformative experience rooted in love, justice, and personal growth.

Theological Context of John Shelby Spong's Views on Eternal Life

John Shelby Spong's theology is deeply influenced by contemporary biblical criticism and a commitment to inclusivity and human dignity. His views on eternal life are embedded within a broader critique of orthodox Christianity, which he argues has been shaped by outdated metaphysical concepts and a literalist interpretation of scripture.

Spong rejects the notion of a vengeful God who consigns souls to eternal punishment. Instead, he

presents God as a loving presence that transcends human conceptions of time and space. This reimagining of divine nature directly impacts his understanding of eternal life, which he interprets as an ongoing relationship with God that is accessible to all, irrespective of dogmatic boundaries.

Reimagining Eternal Life Beyond Literalism

One of the essential features of Spong's approach is his rejection of a literal resurrection of the body. Traditional Christian doctrine holds that eternal life involves the resurrection of the physical body and its eternal continuation in heaven. Spong, however, views resurrection metaphorically, emphasizing spiritual renewal and the continuation of one's influence and values beyond physical death.

This idea resonates with a growing segment of contemporary believers who find difficulty reconciling literal interpretations with scientific understanding and modern sensibilities. By framing eternal life as a spiritual and ethical reality, Spong aligns with a broader movement within liberal theology that prioritizes metaphor, symbolism, and experiential faith.

Impact on Christian Doctrine and Faith Practice

Spong's reinterpretation of eternal life has profound implications for Christian doctrine and practice. It challenges believers to focus more on present-life spirituality and ethical living rather than on the fear of judgment or hopes of an afterlife. This shift encourages a faith grounded in social justice, compassion, and the ongoing transformation of both individuals and communities.

Moreover, Spong's views open dialogue around the inclusivity of salvation and eternal life, advocating for a faith that embraces diverse identities and experiences, including those marginalized by traditional church teachings. His theological stance thus invites a reconsideration of who is eligible for eternal life and how that life is experienced.

Comparisons with Traditional and Contemporary Views

To fully understand John Shelby Spong's perspective on eternal life, it is helpful to compare his views with both traditional Christian beliefs and those of other modern theologians.

- **Traditional Christian View:** Eternal life is typically understood as a literal, everlasting existence in heaven or hell based on one's faith and deeds.
- **John Shelby Spong's View:** Eternal life is a metaphorical, spiritual state emphasizing present transformation, love, and ongoing relationship with God, rejecting literal bodily resurrection.
- **Contemporary Liberal Theology:** Similar to Spong, many modern theologians interpret eternal life symbolically, focusing on ethical living and spiritual continuity rather than physical immortality.
- **Universalism and Inclusivism:** Spong's ideas share affinities with universalist perspectives

that emphasize God's love as ultimately inclusive, transcending traditional boundaries of salvation.

These comparisons highlight the evolving nature of Christian thought regarding eternal life and underscore Spong's role as a key figure in reshaping these conversations.

Pros and Cons of Spong's Interpretation

While John Shelby Spong's ideas have been influential, they are not without criticism or challenges.

1. Pros:

- Offers a more inclusive and compassionate understanding of salvation and eternal life.
- Aligns faith with modern scientific and ethical perspectives, making Christianity accessible to skeptics.
- Encourages ethical living and social justice as expressions of eternal life.

2. Cons:

- May alienate traditional believers who hold to literal interpretations of scripture.
- Some argue it diminishes the hope and comfort provided by the promise of physical resurrection.
- Critics claim it risks reducing eternal life to a metaphor, potentially undermining theological depth.

These pros and cons reflect the complex reception of Spong's theology within the broader Christian community.

Legacy and Influence of John Shelby Spong's Eternal Life Theology

John Shelby Spong's contributions to contemporary theological discourse have sparked widespread discussion about the nature of eternal life and the future of Christianity. His emphasis on reinterpretation, inclusivity, and the spiritual dimension of eternal life continues to influence clergy,

scholars, and laypersons seeking a faith that resonates with contemporary realities.

In a religious landscape marked by declining traditional church attendance and increased spiritual exploration, Spong's ideas offer an alternative framework that challenges believers to rethink dogma and embrace a more expansive and compassionate understanding of divine life beyond death.

His work encourages ongoing dialogue about how eternal life is understood and lived, highlighting the dynamic and evolving character of Christian belief in the modern era.

As discussions about faith and spirituality continue to evolve, John Shelby Spong's perspectives on eternal life remain a vital reference point for those engaging with questions of meaning, mortality, and the divine in the 21st century.

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john shelby spong eternal life: Eternal Life: A New Vision John Shelby Spong, 2009-09-01 Drawing on a lifetime of wisdom, New York Times bestselling author and controversial religious leader John Shelby Spong continues to challenge traditional Christian theology in *Eternal Life: A New Vision*. In this remarkable spiritual autobiography about his lifelong struggle with the questions of God and death, he reveals how he ultimately came to believe in eternal life.

john shelby spong eternal life: Eternal Life: A New Vision John Shelby Spong, 2010-06-06 Drawing on a lifetime of wisdom, New York Times bestselling author and controversial religious leader John Shelby Spong continues to challenge traditional Christian theology in *Eternal Life: A New Vision*. In this remarkable spiritual autobiography about his lifelong struggle with the questions of God and death, he reveals how he ultimately came to believe in eternal life.

john shelby spong eternal life: From Mormon to Mystic Erin Jensen, 2014-11-26 *From Mormon to Mystic: Journey from Religious Disillusionment to Soulful Liberation* chronicles the journey of a sixth-generation Mormon woman. She travels a path that takes her from a tightly knit and theologically strict religious community to the open expanses of a mystical understanding of reality. Erin Jensen weaves together the account of her transformation and the strands of insight that come from James Fowler's *Stages of Faith*. By rooting her narrative in the vivid details of the steps she takes along the way, the author tells how she weathers her life's challenges, including a federal court witch trial, and emerges from the depths of several dark nights of the soul. While *From Mormon to Mystic* immerses itself in the details of one life, it simultaneously offers guidance for anyone seeking to overcome the strictures of rigid systems of belief and behavior. In its pages, the reader will learn how to make his or her way toward freedom and wholeness by understanding how faith develops, learning to work with shadow qualities, practicing non-attachment, taking personal responsibility, trusting one's ability to choose, appreciating the power of total forgiveness, connecting to inner sources of wisdom, and embracing a state of consciousness filled with hope, love, and peace. *From Mormon to Mystic: Journey from Religious Disillusionment to Soulful Liberation* offers both a narrative of one woman's path to spiritual freedom and a guide for others who seek their own way from the confines of their current circumstances to the liberation they

desire to envision for the own futures.

john shelby spong eternal life: *Secularization in Contemporary Religious Radicalism* Corneliu Simut, 2019-05-21 The concept of secularization has grown to become one of the most important features of contemporary religious thought. This book introduces and examines the thinking of sixteen key theologians, philosophers and historians of religion to explain (a) why by the late nineteenth century the traditional concept of God as an ontologically real being came to be considered no longer necessary and (b) how the new perspective on God, which accepts him only as an idea, turned into the preferred approach of today's religion and philosophy, namely "religious radicalism".

john shelby spong eternal life: *Long Road to Grace, The* Nichols, Merlin, 2015-04-26 Merlin Nichols tried to make it on his own. He worried about his salvation and whether he was good enough. Perhaps like you or someone you know, he preached, held church offices, and was outwardly faithful to the church, but he was spiritually dead. That is, until Paul's message of grace to the Ephesians hit him between the eyes and changed him forever. *The Long Road to Grace: Confessions of a Slow Learner* is an in-depth examination of Ephesians and its timeless message of grace that was needed in the early Christian church and is needed today. With a passion for helping the spiritually dead come back to life, Merlin examines the letter Paul wrote to Ephesus in light of the Bible as a whole. Taking the letter verse by verse, in the author's own words, and sharing stories from his life experiences, you will discover new insights into Paul's powerful message of the saving grace of Jesus Christ and the life-changing transformation that takes place when one fully submits to God.

john shelby spong eternal life: *Beyond Belief* Robert P. Vande Kappelle, 2012-09-17 The current age marks the transition from modernity to postmodernity, a period as impactful to the Western sensibility as any previous era. The role of religion and the future of Christianity are at stake. At this time of transition, many thoughtful individuals find themselves at a quandary, having reached a critical stage in their spiritual journey. Prompted by academia, science, reason, culture, and their own experience, they feel compelled to choose between the beliefs they inherited as children and the claims of science, reason, pluralism, and secularism. *Beyond Belief* suggests that one need not take an either/or approach on these issues; there is a better way, one that embraces adventure and ambiguity, science and religion, reason and faith, evolution and creation, and finds ways to live creatively with realities for which there are no easy explanations. Building on a paradigmatic journey of faith that involves three stages (precritical, critical, and postcritical understanding), *Beyond Belief* describes the quest for God and for authentic faith in the twenty-first century. The key point for this understanding is to replace belief with faith, acknowledging that belief in doctrines is not central, since they are themselves unprovable. This new theological perspective requires rethinking many of our cherished doctrines, including our understanding of God, Jesus, Scripture, prayer, miracles, and revelation.

john shelby spong eternal life: *Preaching After God* Phil Snider, 2012-08-01 Even though the postmodern return of religion is dramatically shaping the future of twenty-first-century theology, its riches for preaching are rarely mined. *Preaching After God* highlights the trajectories of the postmodern return of religion by introducing readers to the positive theological themes stirring in the work of influential philosophers like Jacques Derrida, John Caputo, and Slavoj Žižek. Phil Snider shows how engaging their thought provides possibilities for preaching that highly resonate with postmodern listeners. Preachers familiar with the postmodern return of religion will appreciate its homiletical appropriation, while those introduced to it for the first time will discover just how much it is helpful for the preaching task. Six lectionary-based sermons are included as examples.

john shelby spong eternal life: *Love, Oneness, and Radical Inclusion* William S. Geimer, 2025-07-15 For those people who grew up exposed to standard Christianity but came to reject it, this book will allow them to be a Christian again. For those people who reject association with standard Christianity's indifference to violence and social justice, this book will permit them to be a Christian again. With little understanding of the Judaic roots of the Jesus story, the hierarchy of

standard Christianity constructed the “sin and salvation” narrative that most people are led to believe is the essence of Christianity. Reading the Gospel of John with Jewish eyes, Episcopal Bishop John Shelby Spong found a different Jesus story. Standard Christianity has consigned that story to the relative obscurity of “scholarly theological debate.” In *Love, Oneness, and Radical Inclusion*, William Geimer resurrects that story and re-presents it to everyone in plain language. Jesus did not die for humanity’s sins. He is not “up there.” He is not coming back. Jesus showed humanity the way. The way to a new dimension of what it means to be human. Here and now. This Jesus story is one of a Way-Shower to a life of love, oneness, and radical inclusion.

john shelby spong eternal life: *Rebuilding the Temple* Robert P. Vande Kappelle, 2022-04-21 As the Bible indicates, our lives are a construction zone, for our bodies are temples of the divine Spirit. Formed initially in the image of God, human beings lost intimacy with God through corruption, rebellion, or neglect. In response, the divine Creator loves us back into relationship, providing means of grace to help restore us to wholeness, beginning with our body and continuing through our mind, soul, and spirit. As buildings need cleaning, maintenance, and ongoing care, so our inner temple needs spiritual stimulus, cleaning, and care. *Rebuilding the Temple* is the fourth book in Vande Kappelle’s series on spirituality and the arts. Books in this series reinforce the essential principle underlying all authentic spirituality: “Go deep in any one place and you will meet the infinite aliveness that is God, for God is everywhere!” Whereas earlier books consider the connection of spirituality with creative arts such as poetry, film, music, theater, drama, dance, and modern literature, this volume takes readers on a journey through classic Christian literature, beginning with the Bible and continuing through inspirational works written by diverse spiritual mentors such as Augustine, Dante, Luther, Calvin, Teresa of Ávila, George Fox, Blaise Pascal, Henri Nouwen, A. W. Tozer, John McLaren, John Shelby Spong, Richard Rohr, and Marcus Borg. Reading their works reminds us that Christian literature is most practical and inspirational when it takes a narrative approach to theology, interpreting the spiritual journey through the ongoing stories of people and communities rather than trying to capture timeless truths analytically or through rational argumentation. Like its companion texts, *Wading on Water*, *Deep Splendor*, and *Deeper Splendor*, this volume is useful for individual or group study. Each chapter concludes with questions suitable for discussion or reflection.

john shelby spong eternal life: *The Two Faces of Christianity* Richard Markham Oxtoby, 2014-08-29 Applying Eric Fromm's concept of the differences between Humanistic and Authoritarian religions, *The Two Faces of Christianity* proposes that Christianity consists of two distinctly different religions which co-exist under the same verbal label. The ethical teachings of that inspired Jewish religious genius, Jesus of Nazareth which has traditionally been believed to be the core around which the religion of Christianity has been built, constitute a Humanistic Religion. In many parts of the Christian Church the tenets of that religion have all but disappeared under the spreading influence of the salvation theology of St Paul and his fellow-travellers. Examination of the guilt-ridden mind of St Paul, to whom the authorship of nearly half of the 27 books of the New Testament has been attributed, throws revealing light on how this process has taken place. Paul's notoriously neurotic anxieties about sex are just one of the more striking manifestations of the psychopathology of his split personality which has been a major influence in the process by which the Humanistic religion of Jesus has been transformed into an oppressive Authoritarian one.

john shelby spong eternal life: *Rainbow of Mysteries* Norman C. Habel, 2012 Have you ever wondered how you can connect with the sacred in nature, or whether there is anything sacred in nature? Has the Christian tradition obscured the sacredness of nature? Is the Bible alive to the wonder of creation? How can we sustain a sense of mystery and an appreciation of the sacred in nature? In the biblical Flood narrative, the rainbow was the sign of God's covenant promise to never again to destroy the Earth with flood waters. The rainbow served to remind God of God's own bond with Earth. My rainbow, says Habel, represents my covenant promise to explore my bonds with Earth, my spiritual connections with creation. Each colour represents an often-overlooked aspect of creation and inspires the reader to consider our place in nature. Using poetry and prose, Norman

Habel journeys deep into his personal experiences of the sacred in nature, from his initial sense of alienation from Earth to his eventual homecoming. Along the way, he investigates seven wonders of nature and their spiritual dimensions or mysteries. He explores biblical texts that praise or suppress creation and examines each mystery through the lens of ecology and his own experiences. Ultimately his goal is to discern how to sustain each mystery and its spiritual dimension. The book includes a suggested workshop outline, and seven rites to explore mystery in nature.

john shelby spong eternal life: Iron Sharpens Iron Robert P. Vande Kappelle, 2013-07-26 Iron Sharpens Iron is grounded in the conviction that humans have the capacity to transcend conventional spirituality to a genuine and wholesome faith that is dynamic rather than static, future-oriented rather than past-oriented, and owned rather than passively acquired. Classroom tested, this discussion guide is an ideal way for thoughtful Christians--in individual and group settings--to interact with timely topics. Like its companion text, *Beyond Belief: Science, Faith, and the Value of Unknowing* (2012), this guide is written for those who affirm the value of lifelong spiritual growth. Topics covered include the authority of scripture, the uniqueness of Christ, faith and reason, religion and science, biological evolution and morality, cosmological evolution and the nature of God, and the doctrines of salvation, resurrection, and the afterlife. This guide encourages a high degree of interaction. The discussion questions are engaging and appeal to various levels of intellectual and spiritual awareness. Sessions follow a fourfold pattern: (a) Getting Started provides an overview of each session; (b) Gaining Momentum provides questions for discussion or further reflection; (c) Going Deeper encourages participants to acquire further perspective; and (d) The Essentials summarizes key points from each chapter of *Beyond Belief*.

john shelby spong eternal life: Religion as Art Form Carl L. Jech, 2013-05-09 If you find books such as Richard Dawkins' *The God Delusion* compelling but your faith heritage is also important to you, this book shows how you can affirm both. Taking a cue from Marcus Borg's contention that scriptural literalism is for many people a major impediment to authentic spirituality, Carl Jech describes how all religion can and should be much more explicit about its symbolic, metaphorical, and artistic nature. With a particular focus on mortality and the relationship of humans to eternity, the book affirms a postmodern understanding of God as ultimate eternal Mystery and of spirituality as an artistic, (w)holistic, visionary, and creative process of becoming at home in the universe as it really is with all its joys and sorrows. *Religion as Art Form* is a must-read for those who think of themselves as spiritual but not religious.

john shelby spong eternal life: Re-Claiming the Bible for a Non-Religious World John Shelby Spong, 2011-11-08 In *Re-Claiming the Bible for a Non-Religious World*, bishop and social activist John Shelby Spong argues that 200 years of biblical scholarship has been withheld from lay Christians. In this brilliant follow-up to Spong's previous books *Eternal Life* and *Jesus for the Non-Religious*, Spong not only reveals the crucial truths that have long been kept hidden from the public eye, but also explores what the history of the Bible can teach us about reading its stories today and living our lives for tomorrow. Sarah Sentilles, author of *Breaking Up With God: A Love Story*, applauds John Shelby Spong's *Reclaiming the Bible for a Non-Religious World*, writing that "pulsing beneath his brilliant, thought-provoking, passionate book is this question: can Christianity survive the education of its believers?...A question Bishop Spong answers with a resounding yes."

john shelby spong eternal life: Journey of Faith, Journey of the Universe Ivan Nicoletto, 2015 One of the most surprising discoveries of our time is that the universe is an unfolding and highly creative story: a cosmogenesis. In *Journey of Faith, Journey of the Universe*, Br. Ivan Nicoletto reveals how very insightful the Scripture and its commentary tradition are to these deep and cosmic perspectives, thus surprising even seasoned Bible-hearers with fresh understanding. It will serve as rich nourishment to anyone involved in the ministry of preaching or who wants to explore the lectionary in a new way. The distinction of the book is Br. Ivan's capacity to speak with depth and originality on both the Scripture readings and the cosmic spirituality, in fact, to blend them usefully, insightfully. This selection of homilies offered on various Sundays and holy days of the three-year lectionary cycle offers fresh insights on the readings for the day to those who are also

open to the challenge to theology and Scripture that comes from new cosmology.

john shelby spong eternal life: Radical Discipleship Robert P. Vande Kappelle, 2022-08-11 Discipleship is a universal experience all human beings share. In our lifetime, each of us has had a mentor, tutor, teacher, or role model, someone we admired, respected, and followed. As the central character in the Bible, the world's best-selling book, Jesus is known and revered the world over. What would it be like to be mentored by such an individual? Of course, we can follow the accounts of the historical Jesus and his disciples in the gospels, but what would it mean to be discipled by a contemporary, twenty-first-century Jesus? While people across the world claim to follow Jesus, what would it mean to live in the modern world guided by a modern Jesus on religious issues such as faith, God, and scripture, and on social issues such as poverty, healthcare, social justice, political reform, and caring for the environment? A good place to begin is with compassion, for Christianity and compassion are largely linked. To be apprenticed to Jesus is to follow one whose profound love for the hungry, sick, and dying inspired more compassion than any single person, movement, or force in history. Addressing discipleship as a priority in our lives, *Radical Discipleship* illustrates its subject with stories and accounts of ordinary Christians living out their discipleship in authentic and inspiring ways. Useful for individual or group study, this volume serves as a resource for people seeking tools necessary to fulfill Jesus' vision for a more vibrant and equitable world, one in which every human being can thrive.

john shelby spong eternal life: The Church Alumni Association Robert P. Vande Kappelle, 2021-08-10 Many people today, including Christians of deep conviction, are deciding, for one reason or another, to stop attending church. They have been swept up by the avalanche in America known simply as the nones, thereby joining the ranks of the religiously unaffiliated dubbed the church alumni association--or perhaps more accurately believers in exile--by Anglican Bishop John Shelby Spong. Research shows that during the first two decades of the twenty-first century, a seismic shift occurred in the U.S. population away from religious institutions and toward disaffiliation. While the causes and effects of this dislocation are varied and numerous, by 2015, the phenomenon of shrinking faith communities was so widespread that nones became the third largest religious identity in the world, behind Christians and Muslims. Today there are more religious nones than Catholics or evangelicals, and 36 percent of those born after 1981 do not identify with any religion. Does this shift mark a loss of spirituality, or do these changes point to a new global religious awakening, one that affirms religious pluralism and views faith relationally rather than dogmatically--as a way of the heart and not of the head? While some Christians are staying put, experiencing the current shift in traditional church settings, this book proposes a new understanding of the church, a new pattern and vision for Christian living and thinking that can transform our understanding of God, others, nature, and ourselves. Useful for individual or church study, each chapter of *The Church Alumni Association* concludes with questions for discussion and reflection.

john shelby spong eternal life: Resurrection John Shelby Spong, 2009-10-13 Using approaches from the Hebrew interpretive tradition to discern the actual events surrounding Jesus' death, Bishop Spong questions the historical validity of literal narrative concerned the Resurrection. He asserts that the resurrection story was born in an experience that opened the disciples' eyes to the reality of God and the meaning of Jesus of Nazareth. Spong traces the Christian origins of anti-Semitism to the Church's fabrication of the ultimate Jewish scapegoat, Judas Iscariot. He affirms the inclusiveness of the Christian message and emphasizes the necessity of mutual integrity and respect among Christians and Jews.

john shelby spong eternal life: Become Conscious of Wholeness Edwin E. Olson, 2021-11-30 How can we transcend our tribal, philosophical, and religious differences? Is it possible to develop a global consciousness to resolve the peril to our biosphere and other human-made existential crises? *Become Conscious of Wholeness: Humanity's Only Future* explores how connecting human consciousness with Universal Consciousness will give individuals and societies a sense of being complete, not fragmented. Accessing Universal Consciousness, the fundamental wisdom, intelligence, and love in the Universe, will align their identity and purpose and free them

from limiting beliefs and fears. Universal Consciousness is the organizing, unifying force, beyond space and time, filled with the creative potential from which our diverse philosophies, religions, and primordial traditions emerged. When Consciousness is understood from multiple scientific, spiritual, psychological, and mystical perspectives, what is of ultimate value becomes clear--our relationships with each other and the Earth, our essential Wholeness. The reader will explore various portals to Universal Consciousness, drawing upon their own mystical and spiritual experience to develop a more holistic Self. Specific action steps are also presented to reframe religion, reimagine education and mental wellbeing, and reform the business organizations, government agencies, and divisive politics that perpetuate a fragmented view of reality.

john shelby spong eternal life: Seeking to Become Whole Patricia Ambrose Welker, 2019-05-23 Seeking to Become Whole: Creating a Transformed Church for All the Children of God approaches the issue of marginalized persons-the other-by interpreting Jesus's parables in the context of progressive Christianity to create a church of love and justice for all God's children. Our society and church face a historical crisis. White people in America enjoy privilege just by being born. The other-the nonwhite, homosexuals, poor, prisoners, enemies, women, and those of other religions are not like us. Jesus's parables and teachings form the heart of our understanding about how we treat the other. Jesus's parables spoke to the everyday problems of his society. Modern-day parables speak to today's problems, and Jesus's teachings guide us to dig deeply for the message he conveys. I submit that this book is particularly relevant to the current racial and ethnic crisis in our country and the continuing oppression of the LGBTQ community and women as they relate to the church. What can bring reconciliation to the divisions in the church? This book challenges the church and Christians to look deeply into our theology, our witness, and our teachings and seek to reconcile the marginalized in Jesus Christ. To receive a free group discussion guide on the book and more information please go to the author's website: www.seekingtobecomewhole.wordpress.com

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