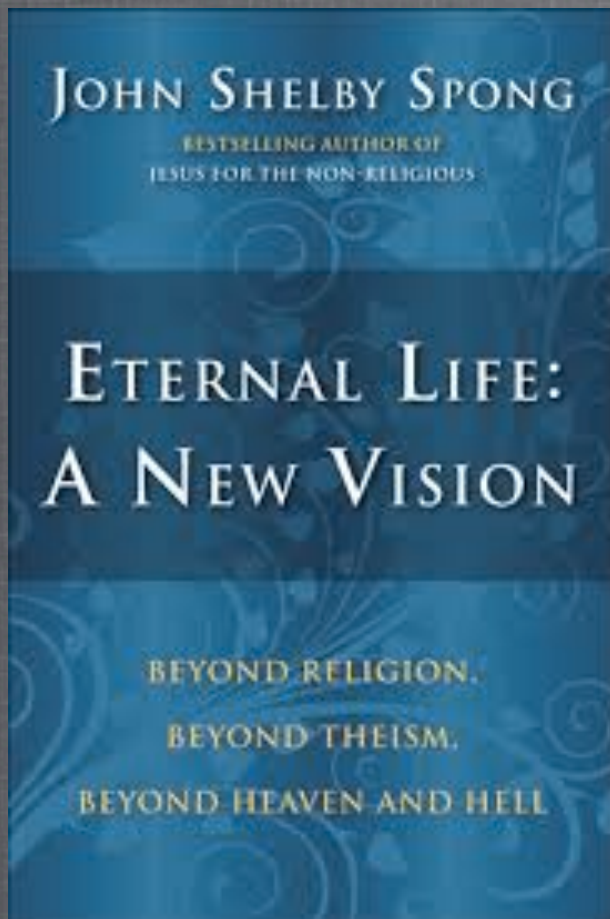
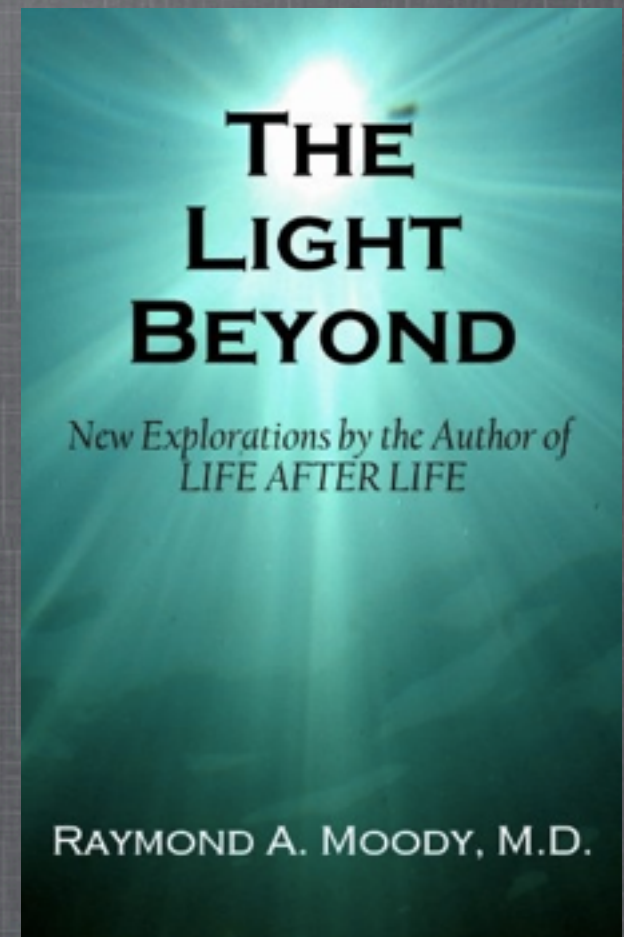


# MEETING DEATH WITH HOPE AND UNDERSTANDING



A bookstudy  
ACTS  
St David's  
United  
Church  
Calgary



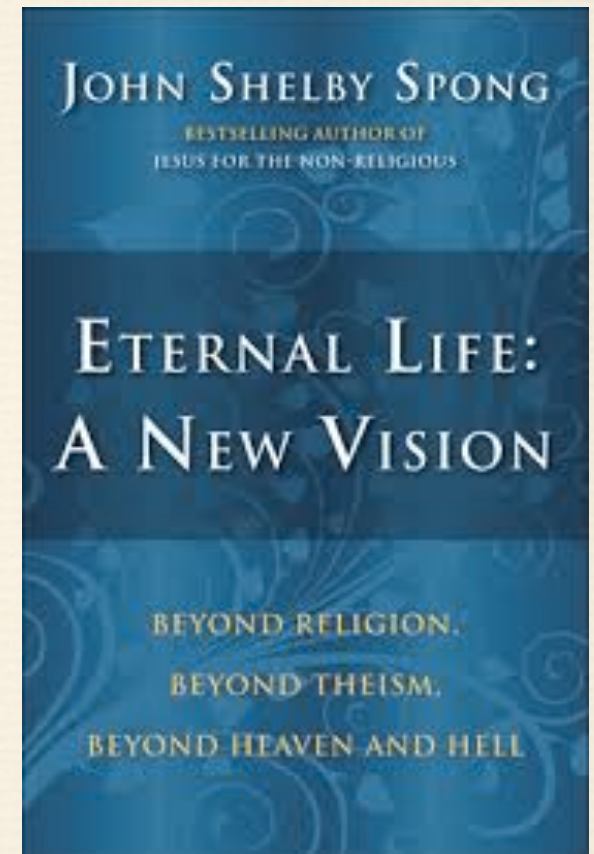
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# Meeting Death with Hope and Understanding

## Session 7

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- ❖ Opening
- ❖ Presentation - Religious Traditions and Death  
Chapters 5-9
- ❖ Video - John Spong - Q&A @ Chautauqua
- ❖ Break
- ❖ Discussion
- ❖ Closing



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# Meeting Death with Hope and Understanding

## Spong - Eternal Life

### Chapter 5 “The Lure of Religion”

Spong describes his early religious development and the common human patterns that development took.

inerrant Bible,

inerrant Church,

the reality of modernity.

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## Spong - Eternal Life

### Chapter 5 “The Lure of Religion”

Three ‘priests’ of modernity –

**Voltaire** “I think, therefore I am”

**Darwin** “Survival of the fittest”

**Freud** “Religion as illusion”

# Meeting Death with Hope and Understanding

## Spong - Eternal Life

### Chapter 5 “The Lure of Religion”

#### Darwin vs. Traditional Religion

The authority of scripture – creation timelines differ

The creation of all life – divine initiative vs. natural selection

The development of human life – creation from nothing vs evolving from other forms of life.

# Meeting Death with Hope and Understanding

## Spong - Eternal Life

### Chapter 5 “The Lure of Religion”

As Spong continued growing his vocation, he had to confront the “Enlightenment”

This led to the erosion of previous religious assumptions.

He concluded that this meant “change or die” for him

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## Spong - Eternal Life

### Chapter 6 “Life’s Dominant Drive – Survival”

The drive to survive seems a biological reality in all living things

Deep in all living things there appears an almost undeniable bias toward life

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## Spong - Eternal Life

### Chapter 7 “Religion’s Role in the Fear of Death”

There is a deep reality principle of the  
interdependence of all life

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## Spong - Eternal Life

### Chapter 7 “Religion’s Role in the Fear of Death”

The key human dividing point is the “Rubicon” of consciousness and self-consciousness

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## Spong - Eternal Life

### Chapter 7 “Religion’s Role in the Fear of Death”

Self-consciousness is both our crown of glory and  
our cross of anxiety

# Meeting Death with Hope and Understanding

## Spong - Eternal Life

### Chapter 7 “Religion’s Role in the Fear of Death”

We have developed coping devices to bank the fires of our own mortality-based anxieties

# Meeting Death with Hope and Understanding

## Spong - Eternal Life

### Chapter 7 “Religion’s Role in the Fear of Death”

Religion is the chief and most powerful coping device that human beings have ever constructed.

That is why before we can talk about death we must step beyond religion

Is it possible that religion, rather than transforming reality, enables us to hide from reality?

# Meeting Death with Hope and Understanding

## Spong - Eternal Life

### Chapter 7 “Religion’s Role in the Fear of Death”

I believe we must now go through the old human world of thinking to discover the ultimate truth to which all religion points

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## Spong - Eternal Life

### Chapter 8 “The Faces of Religion”

The “evolution of religion” and “the evolution of God”

Spong outlines the various stages in the development of religion as responses to human need – hunter-gatherer, agricultural, modern, post-modern societies

# Meeting Death with Hope and Understanding

## Spong - Eternal Life

### Chapter 8 “The Faces of Religion”

Investigate the various “eras” of spiritual development in Christianity and other faith traditions.

Discover that “truth” is not the main purpose of religion. “Security” is. There is a consistency here in all the faith traditions.

# Meeting Death with Hope and Understanding

## Spong - Eternal Life

### Chapter 8 “The Faces of Religion”

Three principles have remained in tact

God had to be external to us

God had to be supernatural to come to our aid

God had to be timeless and the guarantor of our immortality

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## Spong - Eternal Life

### Chapter 8 “The Faces of Religion”

To be effective, religion had to be divinely inspired even though sometimes it was quite manipulatively human

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### Chapter 9 “The Tools of Religious Manipulation”

The options - religion as “revealed truth” or “human invention” to help us cope with the reality of death and assure human survival

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## Spong - Eternal Life

### Chapter 9 “The Tools of Religious Manipulation”

To enforce its supernatural precepts religion assumed a “reward / punishment” controlling operational mechanism

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## Spong - Eternal Life

### Chapter 9 “The Tools of Religious Manipulation”

Traditionally, praise and worship of God became “divine manipulation” with “liturgical flattery” under the guise of “obeying the Deity’s rules”

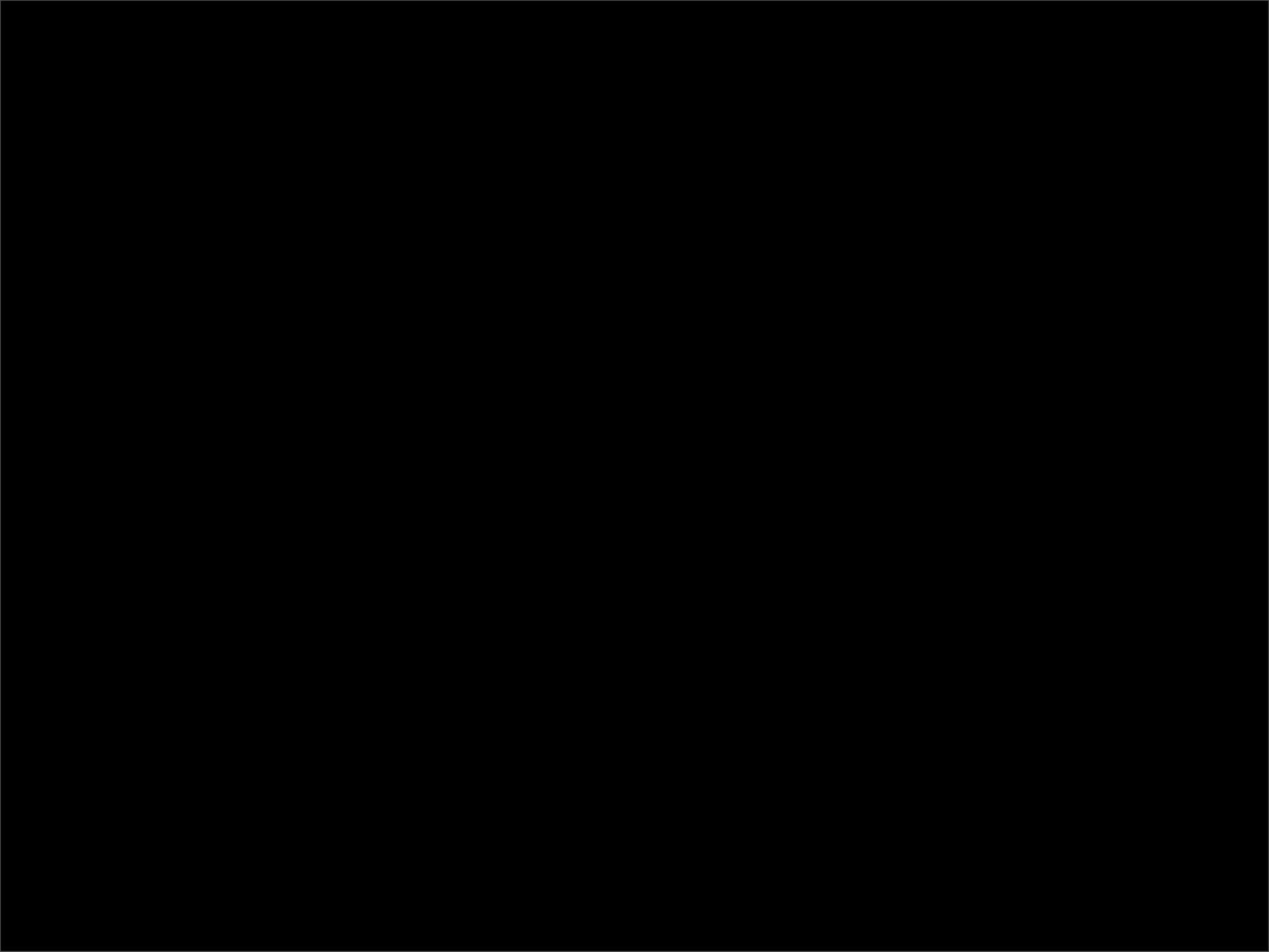
# Meeting Death with Hope and Understanding

## Spong - Eternal Life

### Chapter 9 “The Tools of Religious Manipulation”

All of this was presented to people by a priestly caste who positioned themselves as the human representatives of God on earth

In this all religions appear to be remarkably similar.



# BREAK



# Meeting Death with Hope and Understanding

## Discussion Questions

1. To what extent is Spong's experience with religion your experience? Discuss similarities and differences.
2. To what extent is your faith a "coping mechanism" for you? Is that a bad thing?

