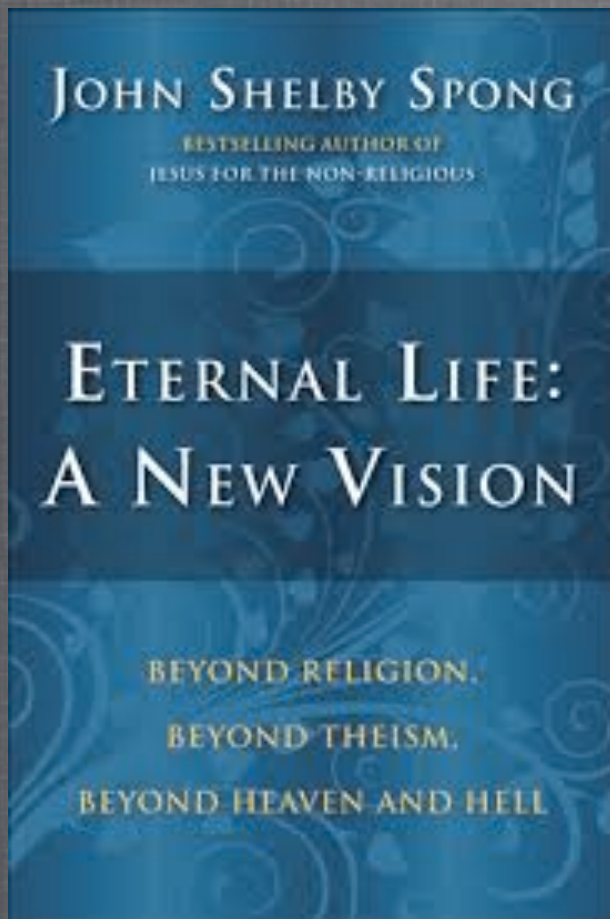
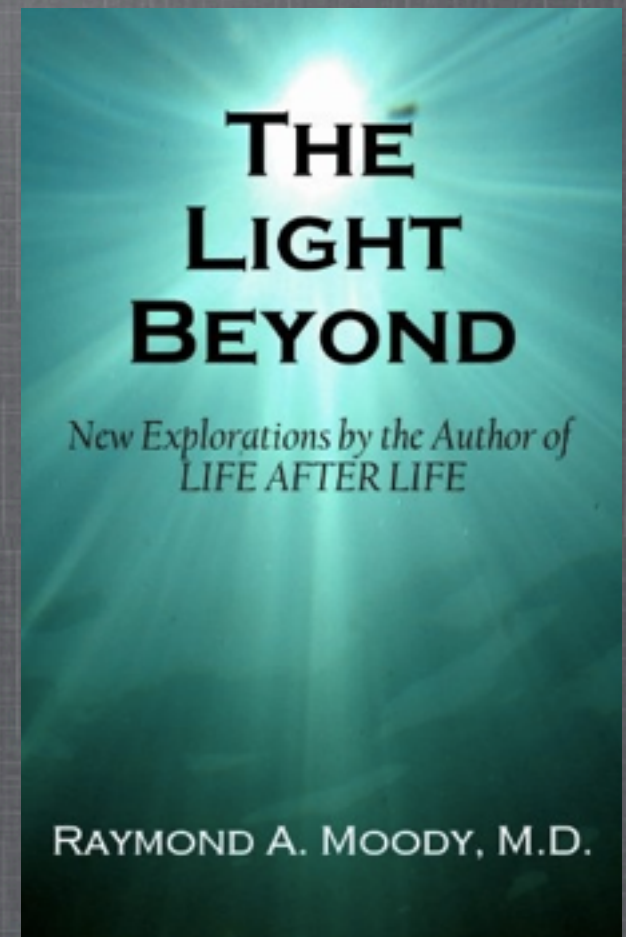


MEETING DEATH WITH HOPE AND UNDERSTANDING



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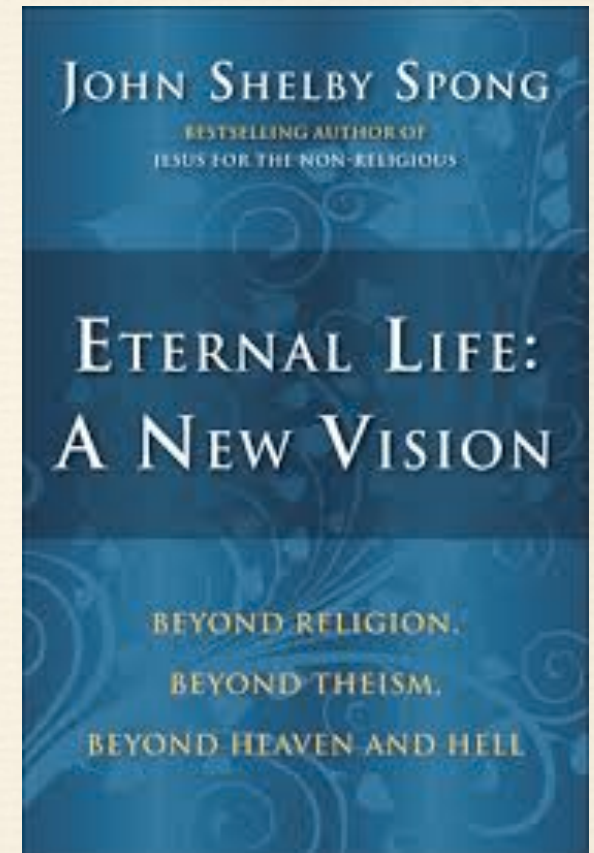


Internet Page: death.stdavidscalgary.net

Meeting Death with Hope and Understanding

Session 9

- ❖ Opening
- ❖ Presentation - The Elements of Hope
Chapters 13 - 17
- ❖ Video - John Spong - Q&A @ Chautauqua
- ❖ Break
- ❖ Discussion
- ❖ Closing



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Session 9. Spong - The Elements of Hope

Ch 13 Who Am I? What is God?

Ch 14 The Approach of the Mystics

Ch 15 Resurrection: A Symbol and a Reality

Ch 16 Hiding - Thinking - Being

Ch 17 I believe in Life Beyond Death

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THE ELEMENTS OF HOPE

- We can learn from our own faith tradition, from other faiths, and from what science teaches us.
- We are entering a mystery for which there is still no complete answer.
- Yet, we can begin to claim our own personal and hopeful answers

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WHO AM I? WHAT IS GOD?

We are learning that we live in an interconnected, interdependent universe, and the human mind is capable of transcending time and space.

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“My experience is that the more I reflect on these things, the more mysterious life becomes,” says Spong.

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- Life is mysterious and there is still not a complete explanation for how it began, how it continues to develop, and how it will evolve into the future.
- We have no way of predicting or even anticipating what the next stage in life's development will be.

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Given this reality, we need to expand tremendously
- even rethink totally - what we mean when we say
the word "God."

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- God cannot be understood as some 'eternal projection of our needs' but rather through entering the depth dimensions of human experience.
- Religion is not a journey into an eternal deity but a journey into the heart of our humanity. We must enter into that realization.

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THE APPROACH OF THE MYSTICS

- Turning to Christian tradition to help us find precedents for our spiritual quest.
- The mystics like Meister Eckhart help us move beyond traditional interpretations of Christian teachings.

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We might also approach the Gospel writings of our Bible, but read them through a mystical lens.

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- A mystical approach to St. John's Gospel helps us deal with classic themes like "Incarnation" in a different way.
- We move from seeing 'incarnation' as a divine invasion of the human to human identification. It is something internal, not external to us.

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- Spong moves beyond traditional ways of viewing “incarnation” that have used designations like “transcendent” and “immanent” .
- “The time has come,” he says, “to look once again at what it means to be human and what it means to be one in whom God lives, loves, and is made manifest.

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RESURRECTION: A SYMBOL AND A REALITY

We must begin at the centre of the meaning of “resurrection” and move beyond it. The Resurrection of Christ was not a historical fact, but a life-changing experience for those who were there when something significant happened.

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The early Christian community moved in its understanding of resurrection from a physical to a mystical story. Something happened to Jesus and to themselves.

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The Jesus Experience – seeing God through the
“filter of Jesus.”

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- Erich Fromm: “Acting into new ways of thinking”
- We “live” resurrection and this helps us shape a new personal meaning for it.

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HIDING – THINKING – BEING

- Spong revisits his own story, once more making it parallel to the human story.
- He acknowledges some similarities and differences between the two stories.

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The key transformation of his life?

- Spong has always been a “thinking” kind of person
- He now views himself as a “being” kind of person
- He does not denigrate thought, but believes his faith journey has transformed him into a person who values experience as primary

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- His love of learning will always be there.
- Now, however, loving and being loved is more important to him.

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- This helps him to deal in a more mature way with issues like “the church”
- “I won’t leave the church,” he says, “but I can no longer function within its traditional boundaries”

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For those faced with “leaving” or “staying” issues in the church, Spong says that our task now is not survival as a community, but finding new ways of building human community within and beyond our church walls.

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I BELIEVE IN LIFE BEYOND DEATH

“We do not at present need to know that final future. What we need to know is how to live now.”

- John Hick

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We have three choices regarding life beyond death.

- Continue to live in denial
- Reject old ways of thinking
- Claim a new understanding

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Three Precepts for Living a belief in Life Beyond Death

- Trust the journey
- The personal is real (eternity is within us)
- Eternity is a social experience (I will know my loved ones there)

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Final Thought -

- This life that I love is not all there is.
- Spong can answer YES to Job's question.

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Epilogue - “Defining the Choice to Die”

This beyond our theme for tonight but can be discussed next week.

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Video - a 14 minute excerpt from a second talk from the Chautauqua Conference on Eternal Life. Here we have the end of that talk and some Q&A.

Spong tells us to grow beyond religion's restrictions, if we would reach any new understandings of life and death.

http://fora.tv/2010/06/30/John_Shelby_Spong_Exploring_the_Mystery_of_Life



BREAK

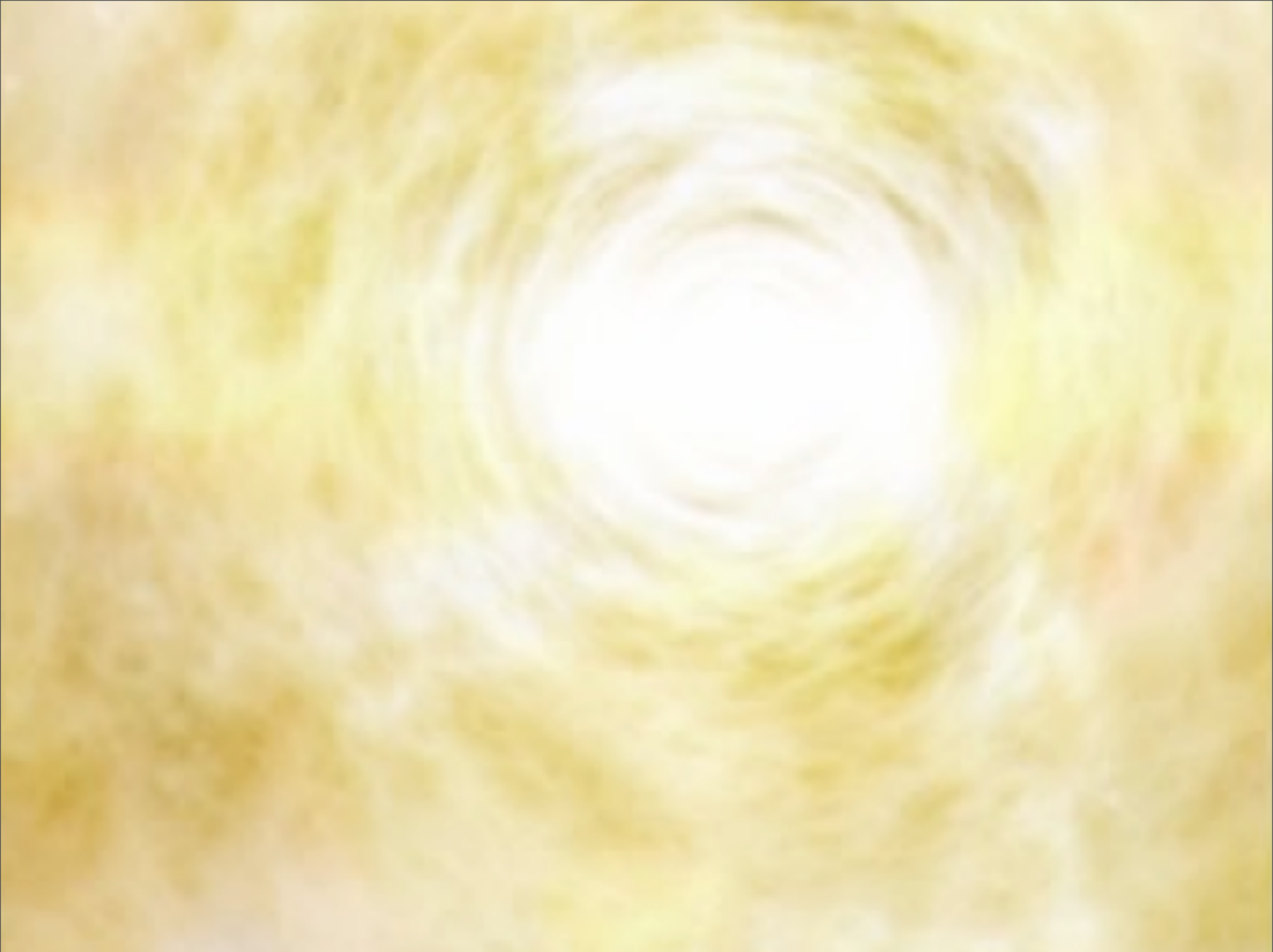


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Discussion Questions

“If a person dies, will he or she yet live?” Job.

1. Do you like, or dislike, Spong’s answer to Job’s question? Defend your choice.
2. How would you yourself answer that question now?



Monday, 31 March, 14