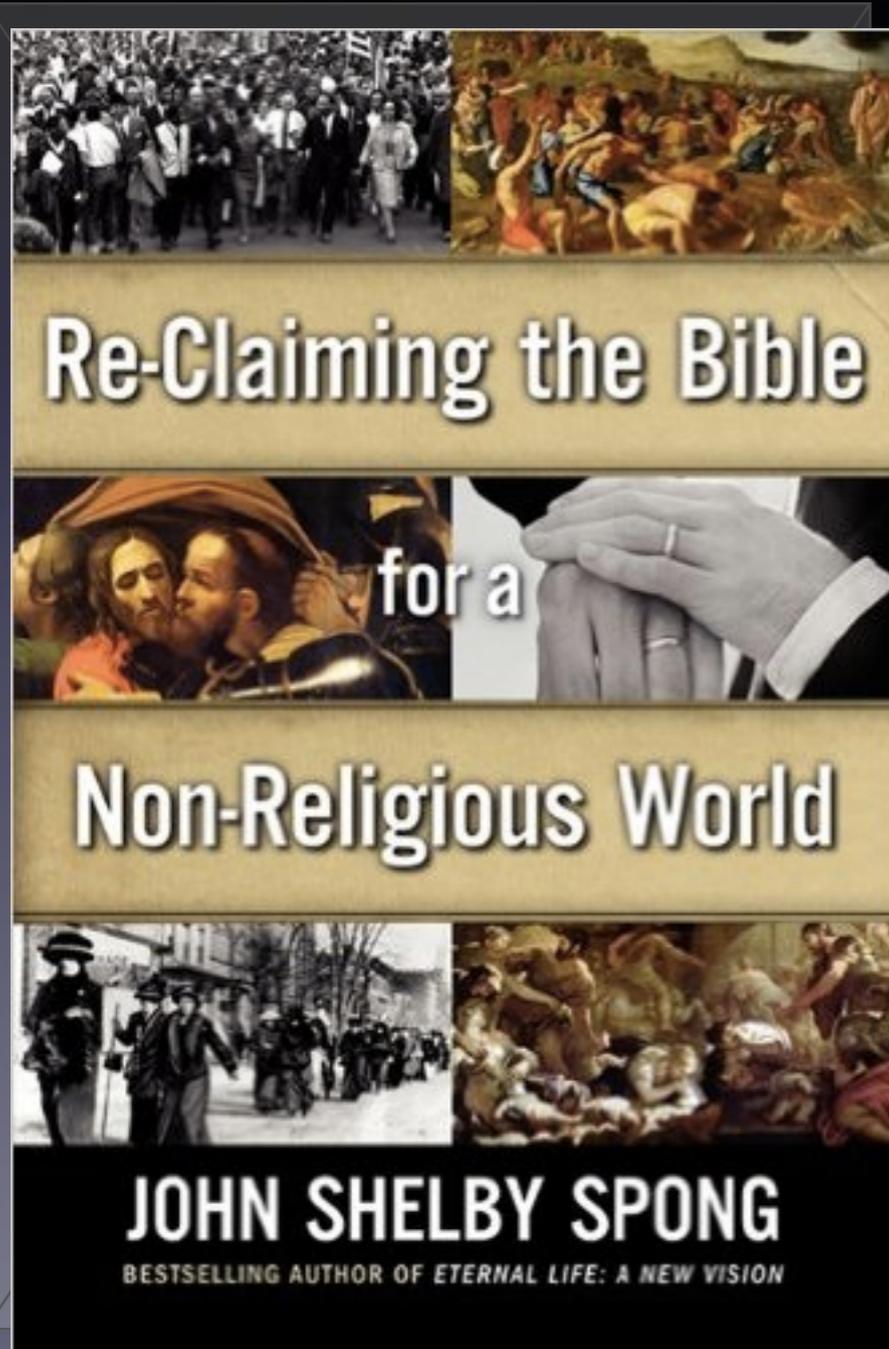


Reclaiming the Bible for a Non-Religious World

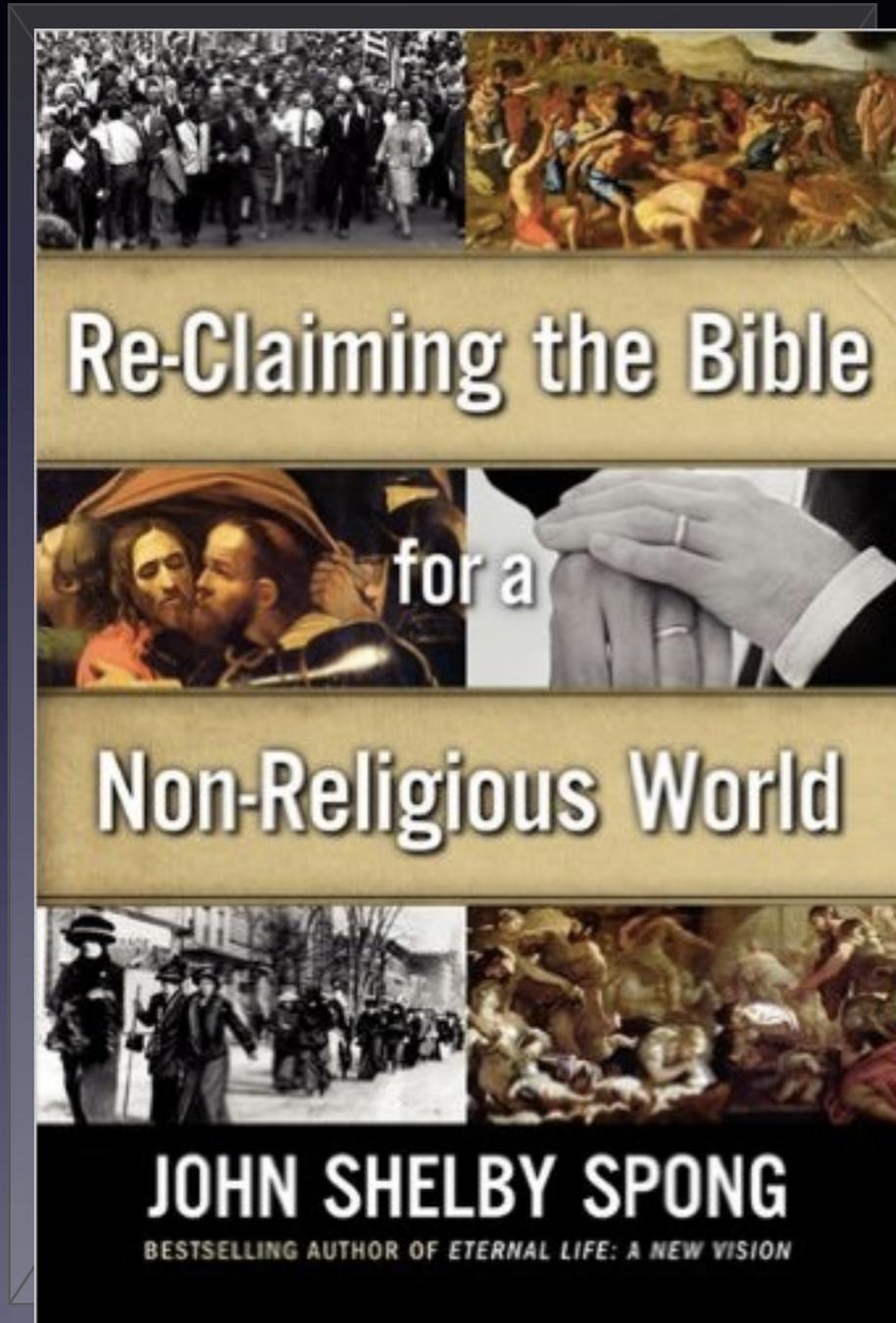
ACTS

Fall 2016

St David's United Church
Calgary



Reclaiming the Bible



Session # 7

- Opening
- Questions
- Overview
- Break
- Videos
- Discussions
- Closing

Opening



What book to study next?

TOPICS

- theology
- spirituality
- religion
- culture
- justice



Paul's Journeys

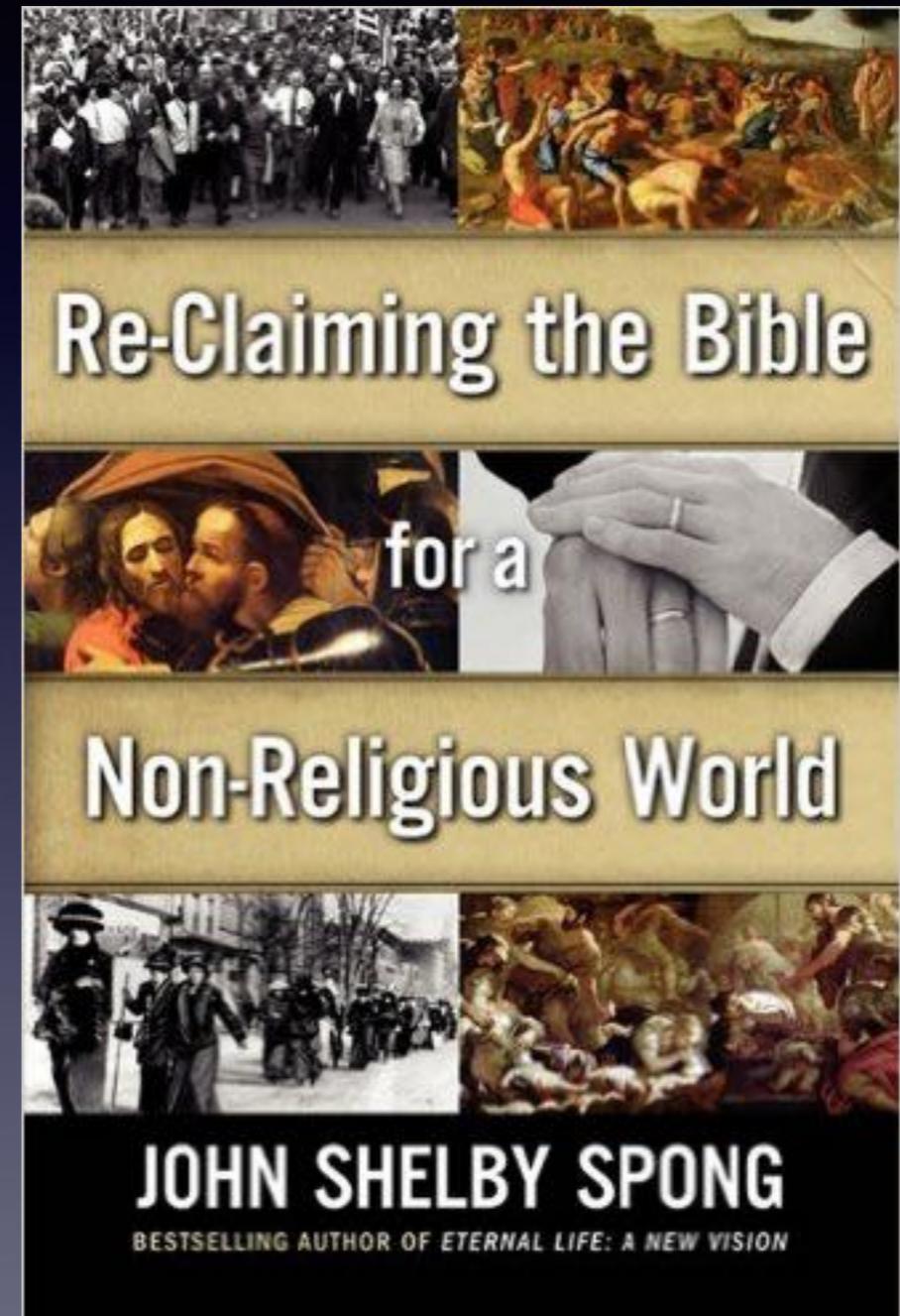


Paul's Journeys



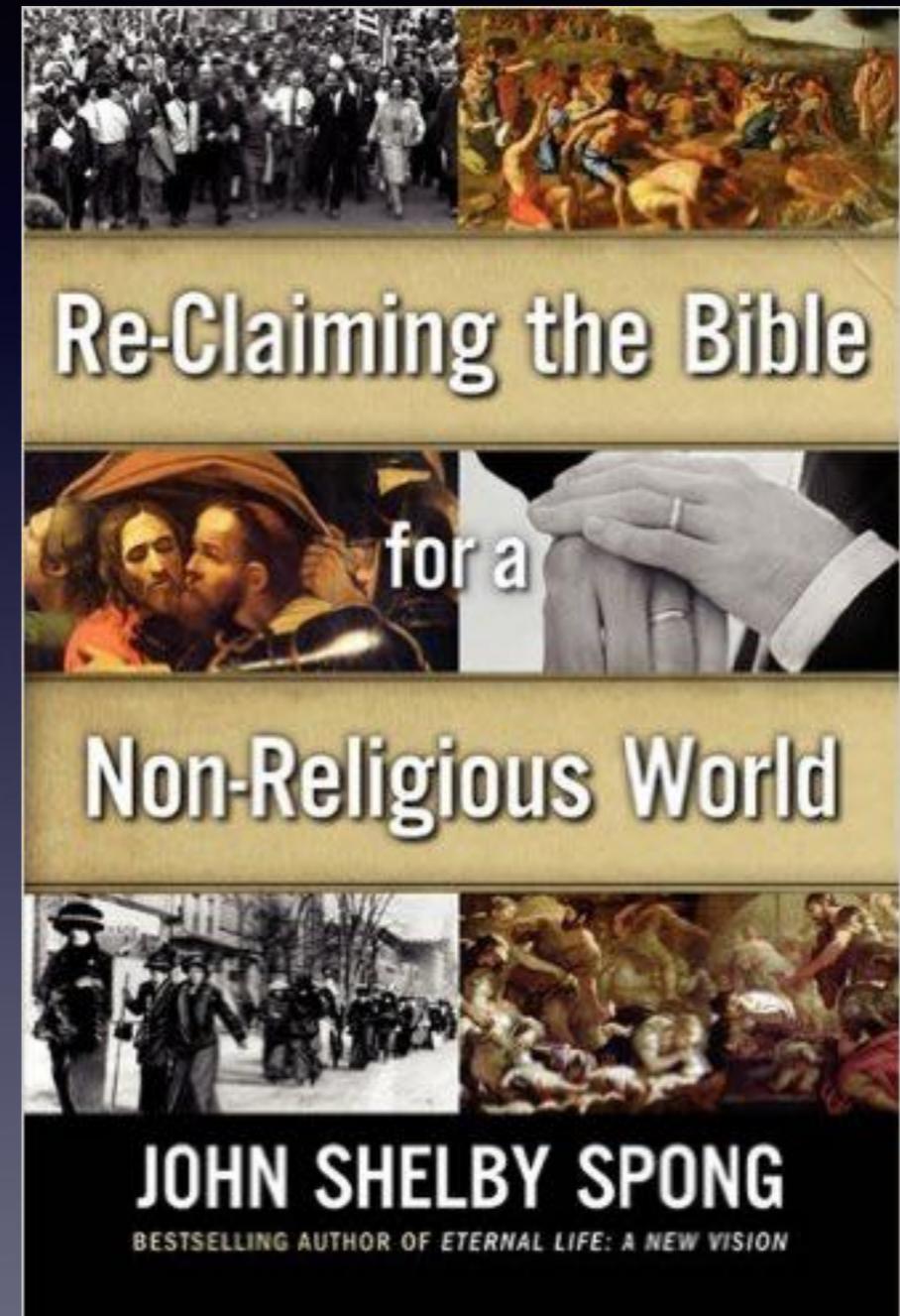
Important considerations -

- It is one thing to "talk about the Bible" as we do mostly in these sessions.
- It is another thing to actually "read/reflect" upon key portions of scripture.
- That is what we hope you will do on your own as this is a biblical overview, not a bible study.



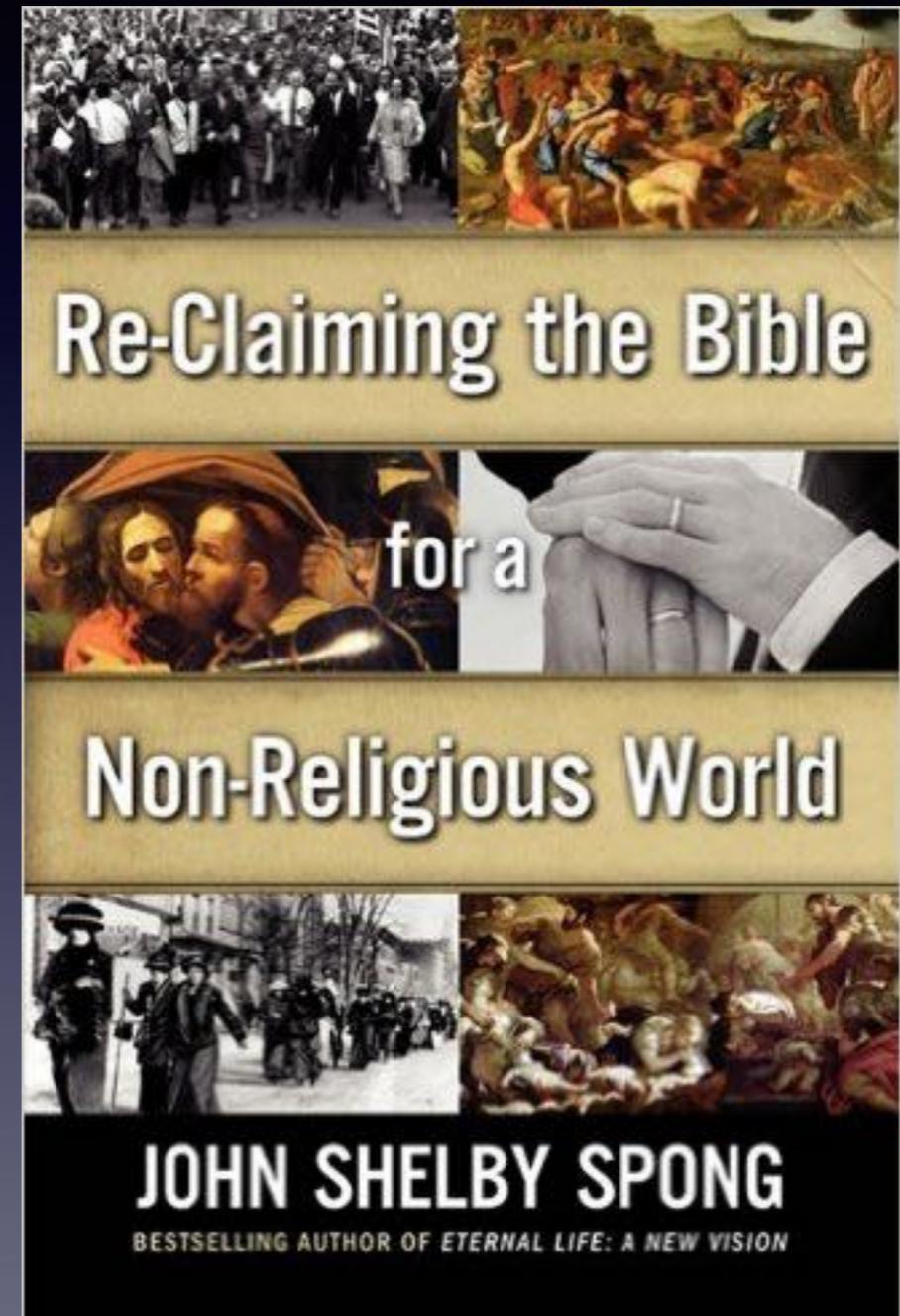
Important considerations -

- Spong offers ample opportunities for reading the Bible itself. Why not follow-up on some of this suggested biblical references?
- This book has "shelf life" and should continue to provide you with good answers to biblical questions you might have in the future.



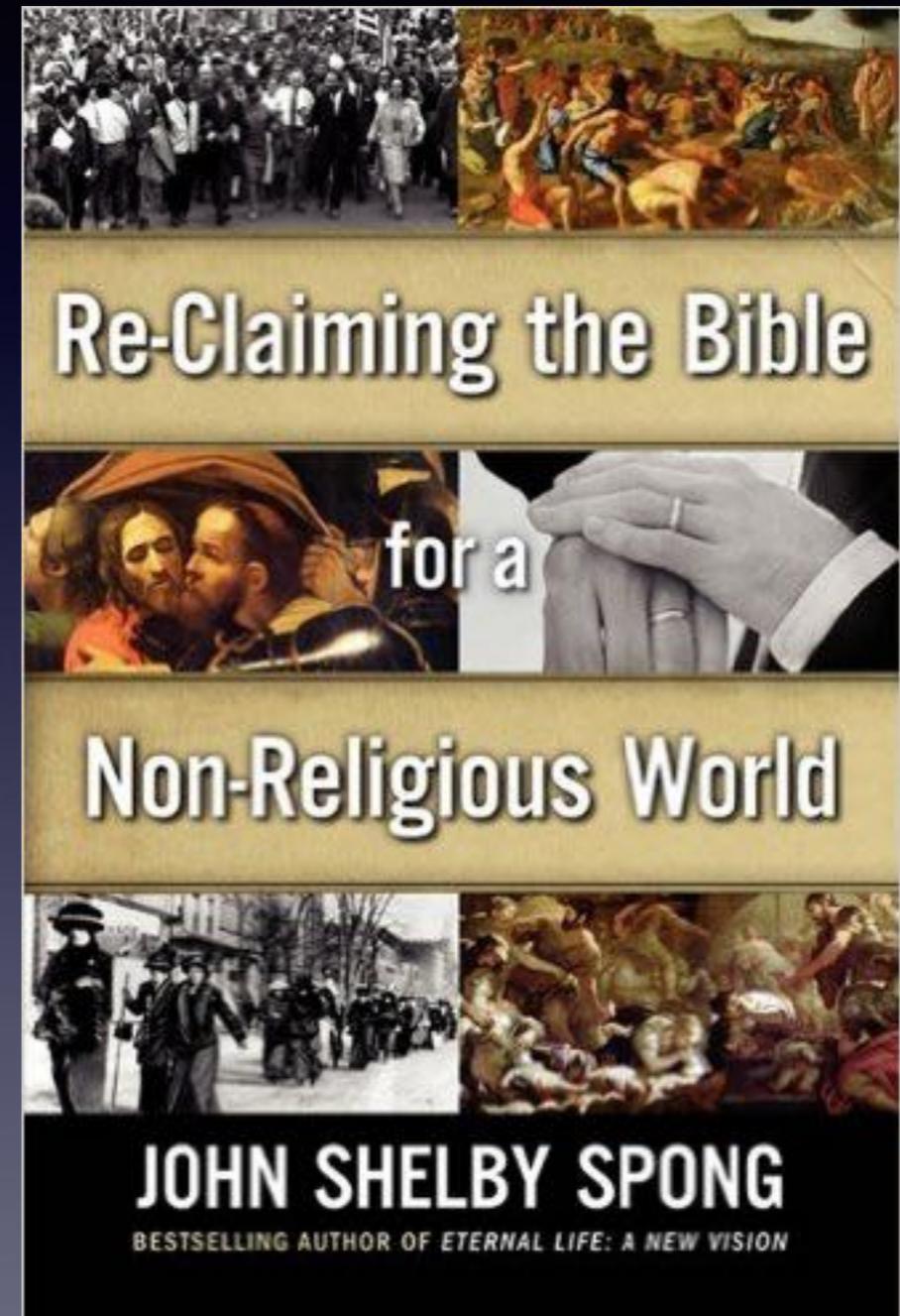
The Witness of Paul

- Spong takes a chronological/evolutionary approach to Paul's letters.
- He deals with these letters written first to last according to modern biblical scholarship.
- He describes how Paul's thinking developed over time.



Paul and Not Paul

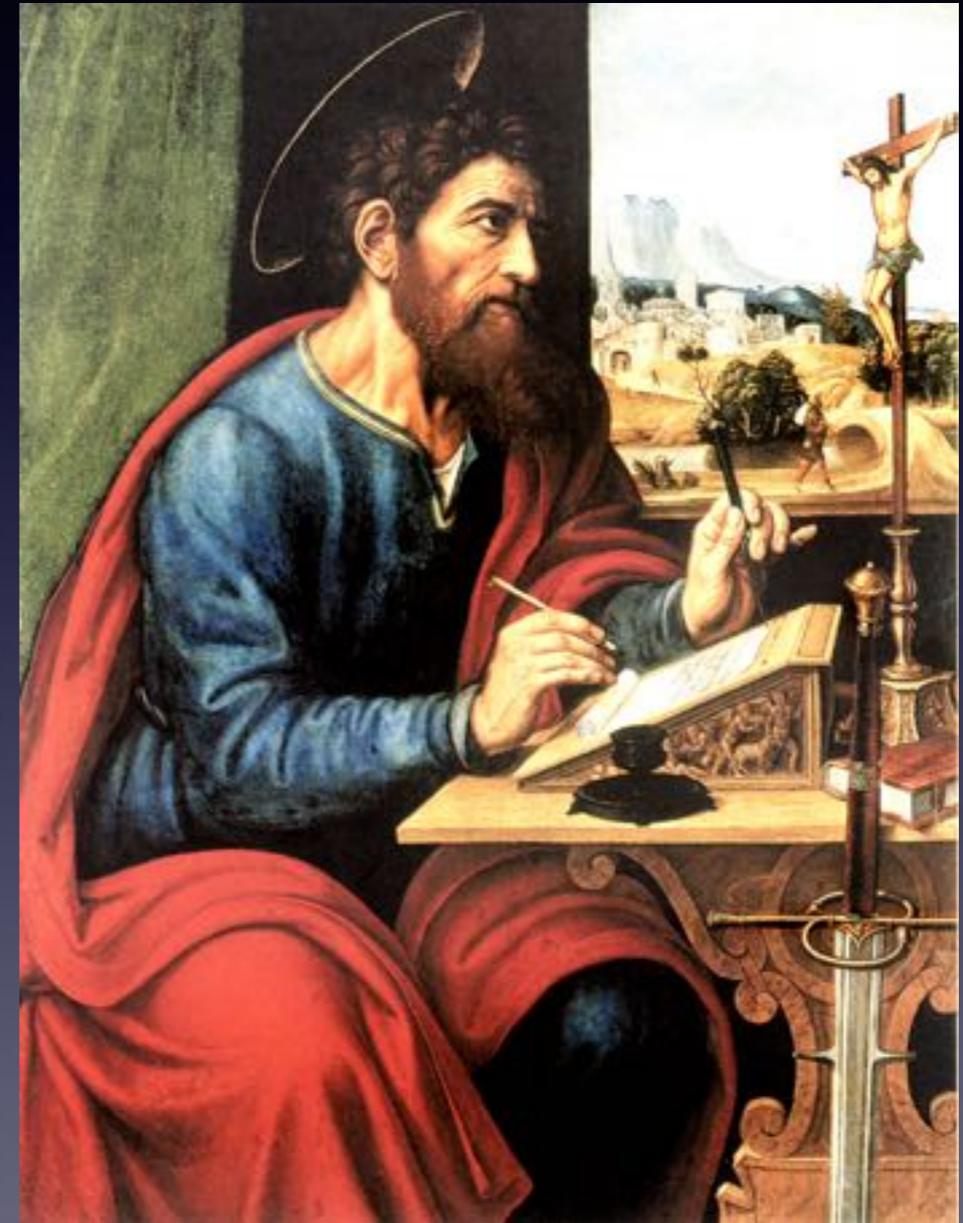
He also deals with authentic Paul and non-Pauline letters so that we come as close as possible to Paul's actual thinking, the way his thinking matured and was re-shaped by the early church.



Paul and Not Paul

We can divide the various books of the Pauline corpus into early/middle/ mature/ and the post-Pauline community

- I Thessalonians-Galatians-Corinthians/
- Romans-Philemon-Philippians/
- II Thessalonians-Colossians-Ephesians



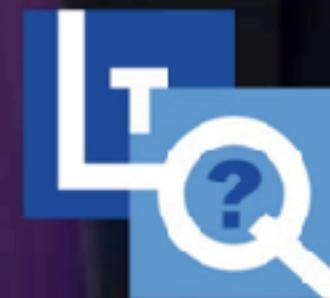
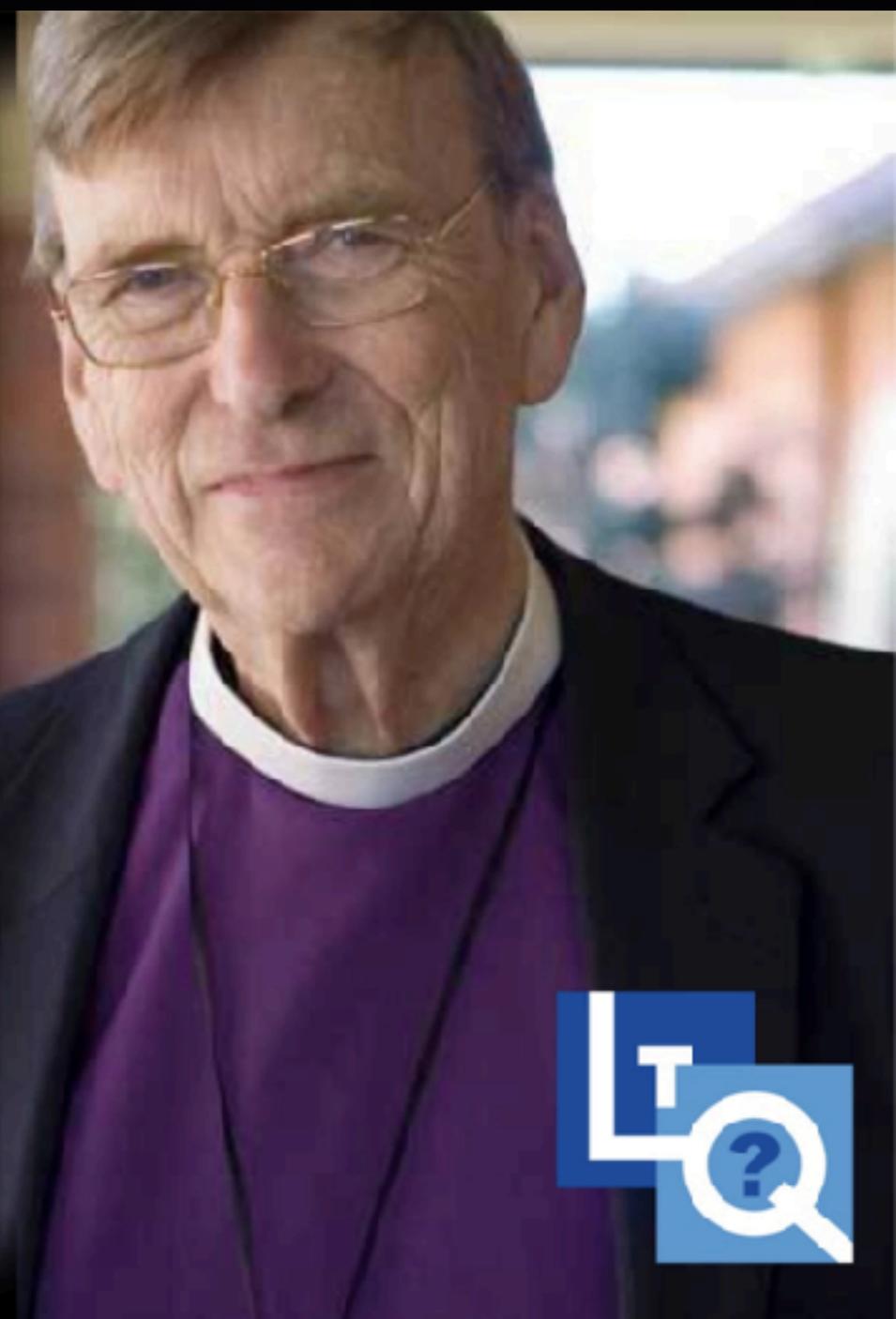
Unbound from Yesterday's Fears...

“If God is the ground of being, as I believe God is, then the only way you and I can worship God is by having the courage to be all that we can be — in the infinite variety of our humanity. Whether we are male or female, gay or straight, transgender or bisexual, white or black or yellow or brown, left-handed or right-handed, brilliant or not quite so brilliant.

No matter what the human difference is, you have something to offer in your own being. Nobody else can offer what you have to offer. And, the only way you can worship God is by daring to be all that you can be and not be bound by the fears of yesterday.”

John Shelby Spong

in “Living the Questions 2.0” www.livingthequestions.com

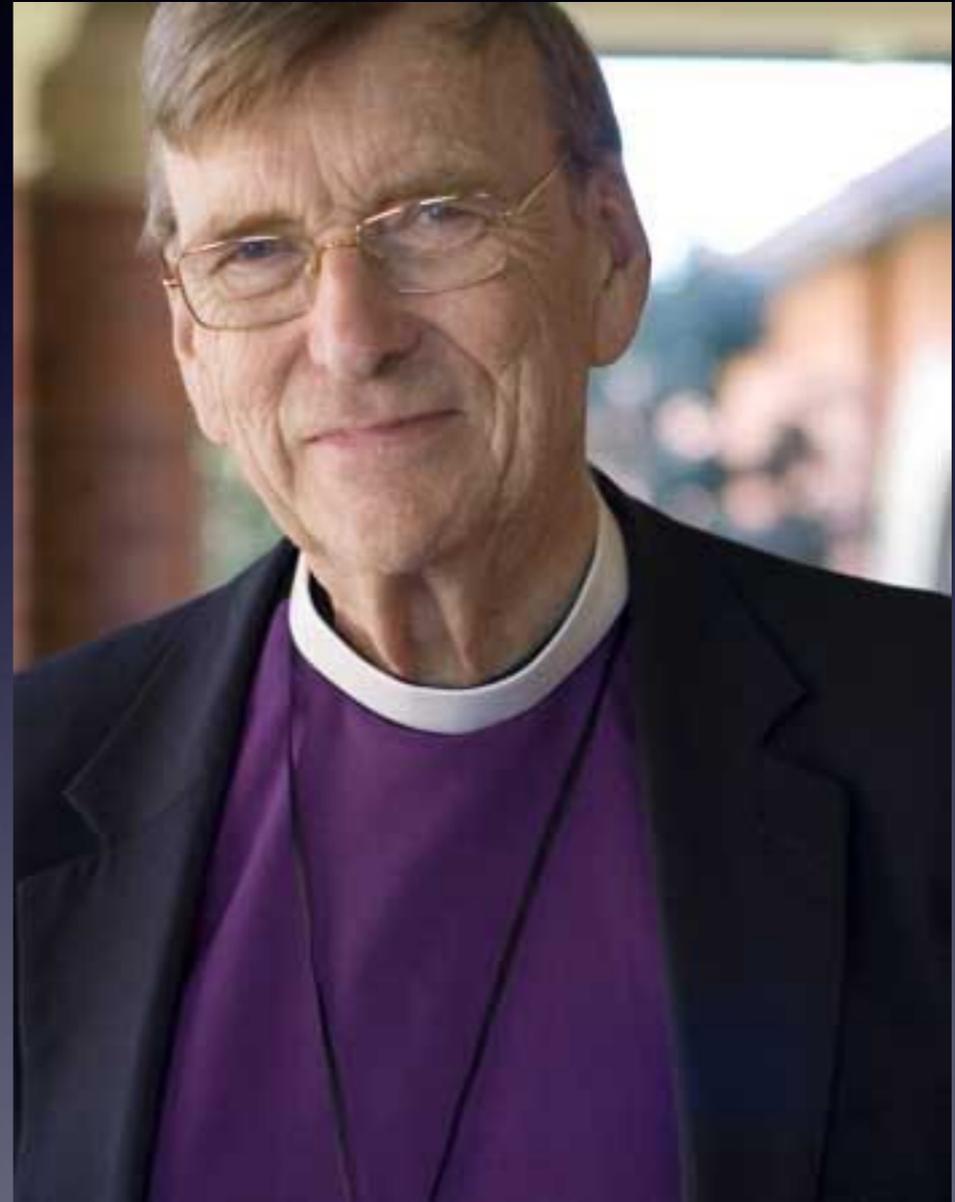


Spong's Theology

Spong disagrees with the Creation/Fall/Redemption chronological theology that has influenced much of our thinking in the past centuries.

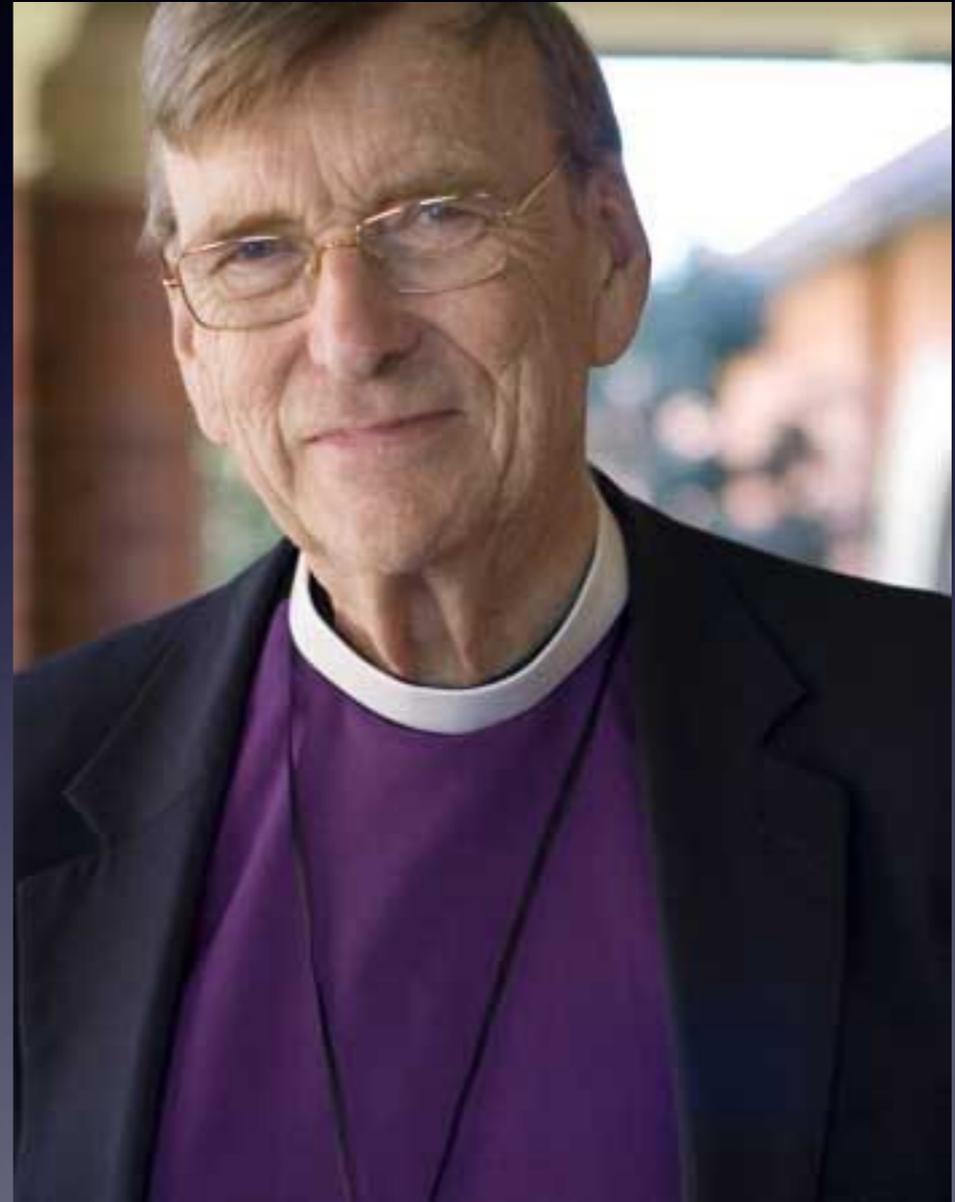
He objects to:

- "I was born in sin" (but)
- "I am rescued by Christ" (and now)
- "I am going to heaven"



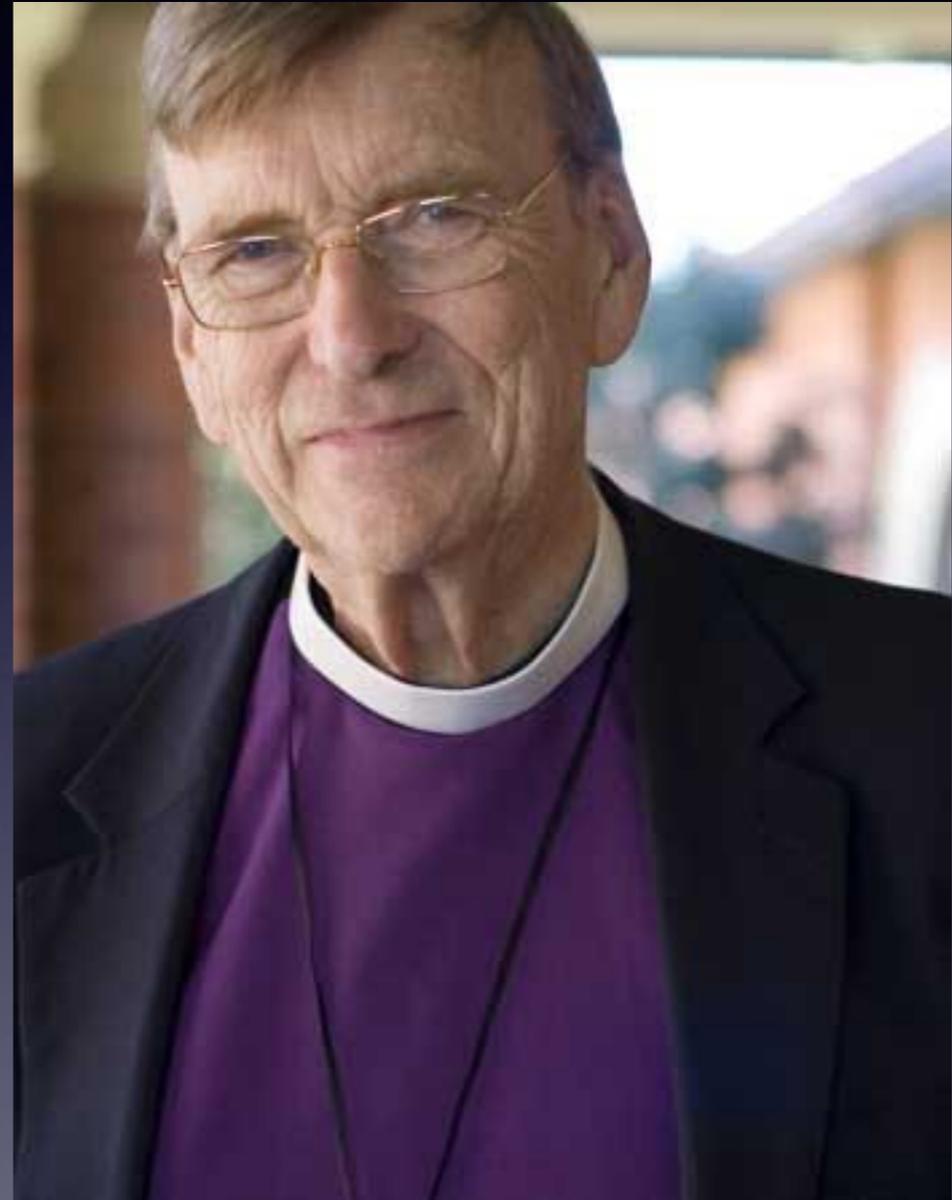
Spong's Theology

- To counter this chronological theology where Jesus intercedes to "fill the gap" between an angry God and vile sinners
- He proposes an evolutionary theology, understandable to the inconclusive, ever-changing nature of life, familiar to people today

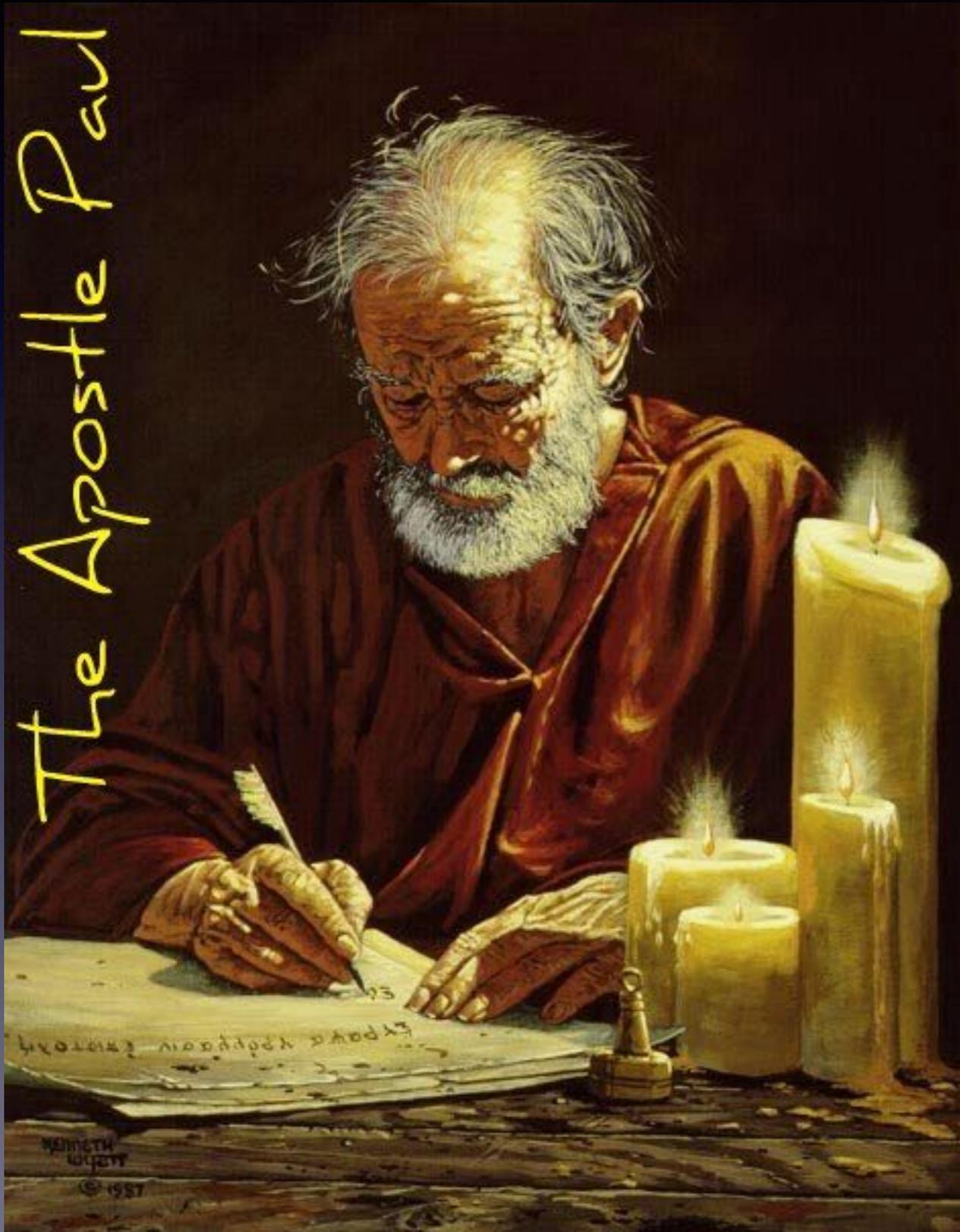


Spong's Theology

- He introduces the significance of faith for Christians.
- Living/dying/rising again - participating in the cyclical and continuing reality of Christ.
- Jesus and Paul were actually "pre-Christian" thinkers.
- They taught before a formal understanding of the Good News had developed in the church



Paul the Theologian



- Paul was also the first "Christian" theologian who bridged the gap between the early Jewish-Christian community and the Universal-Christian community.
- Paul wrote the first "systematic theology". A studied presentation of the meaning of Jesus

The Resurrection of Jesus

First Reaction

“I was there and I saw it.”



The Resurrection of Jesus

The Pauline Interpretation

“His resurrection was an experience for me, not an historical event per se.”

Paul is a prototype for all subsequent Christ-followers.

Paul built his theology on certain Hebrew greats like Enoch, Moses and Elijah



The Resurrection of Jesus

- Resurrection - implies there is life after death as it was for Jesus.
- The resurrection of Jesus equates him to the "Messiah of God"



The Resurrection of Jesus

- For us, it means that we "participate" in the death and resurrection of Jesus.
- The experience is on-going - to the end of time and the ends of the earth.



Paul's Core Teaching Reinterpreted

Saint Augustine



A Christian is: a mind through which Christ thinks, a heart through which Christ loves, a voice through which Christ speaks, and a hand through which Christ helps.

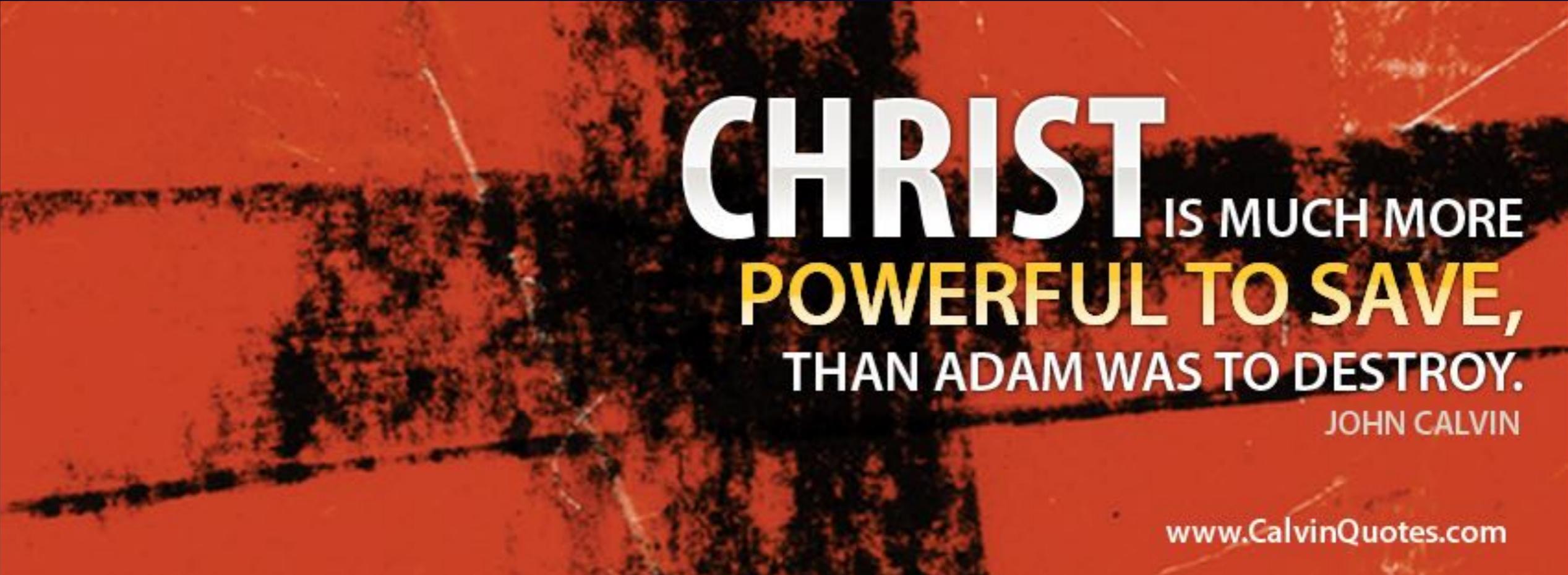
AZ QUOTES

Paul's Core Teaching Reinterpreted

**Everything that is done in the
world is done by hope.**

Martin Luther

Paul's Core Teaching Reinterpreted

The quote is set against a background of a red and black abstract, textured pattern. The word 'CHRIST' is the largest and most prominent, followed by 'IS MUCH MORE' in a smaller font. 'POWERFUL TO SAVE,' is in a larger font than the previous line, and 'THAN ADAM WAS TO DESTROY.' is in the same size as 'IS MUCH MORE'.

CHRIST IS MUCH MORE
POWERFUL TO SAVE,
THAN ADAM WAS TO DESTROY.

JOHN CALVIN

www.CalvinQuotes.com

Paul's Core Teaching Reinterpreted

The God content of the past no longer sustains the contemporary spirit. We sense that our only hope is to journey past those definitions of a God who is external, supernatural, and invasive, which previously defined our belief. We must discover whether or not the death of the God we worshiped yesterday is the same thing as the death of God.

John Shelby Spong

Paul's Core Teaching Reinterpreted

BUT CHRISTIAN illiteracy is only the first part of the crisis. **EVEN MORE SERIOUSLY**, even for those who think they speak "CHRISTIAN" fluently, the faith itself is often misunderstood and distorted by many to whom it is seemingly very familiar. They think they are speaking the language as it has always been understood, but what they mean by the words and concepts is so different from what these things have meant historically, that they would have trouble communicating with the very authors of the past they honor.

~**MARCUS J. BORG**

Video

Quest for the Real Paul

Excerpt - Conclusion portion - 5m37s

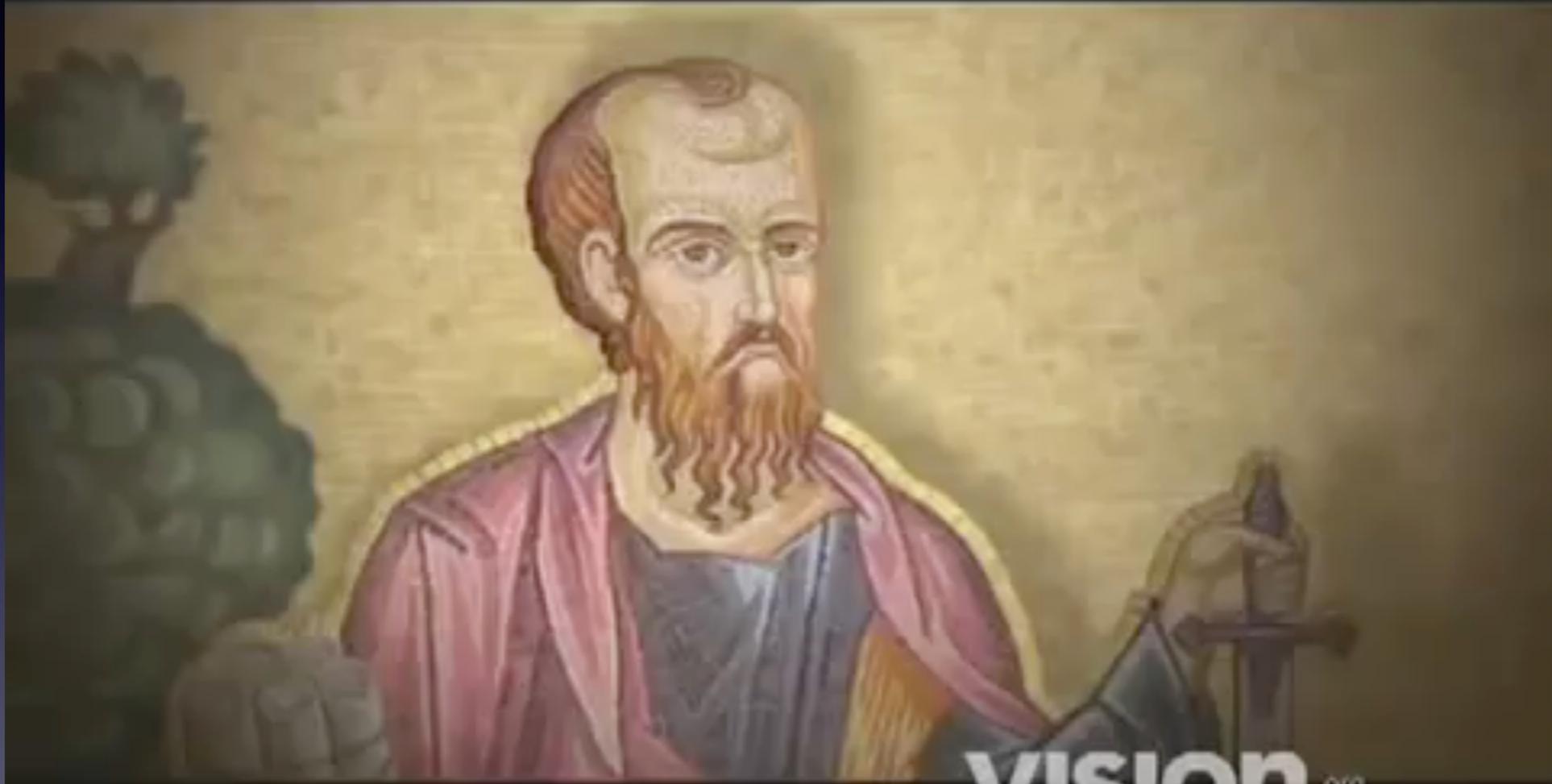
Produced by webzine publisher Vision, vision.org
Vision has a broad interest in history, religion, science, family,
and society, taking a progressive stance and seeking new
understandings.

Article: The Paul Puzzle

<https://www.vision.org/node/4772>

Full Video link 61m

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9kfXXnrUWp0>



VISION.org



Break

Discussion Questions

1. Does Spong's theory that Paul was gay help or hinder our understanding of his life and his writings?
2. Was Paul the founder of Christianity? Would there be a Christian Church today without Paul?
3. Has Spong successfully separated Paul from:
slavery,
patriarch, and
patronage?

Next Readings

Session 8

PART X - THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

Chapter 42 - 51

Study Website

<http://rtb.stdavidscalgary.net>

Closing

