



**IARF Peacemaking  
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freedom with responsibility

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**FIDEOLOGY, TRUST & ONENESS**

**Foundations for Forgiveness & Peacemaking**

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*"The function of the poet is to give to airy nothing,  
a local habitation and a name." - Shakespeare*

The Sociological link between Religion and Economics was the subject of Max Weber's, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.  
**"Fideology"** is proposed as a name both for this branch of Sociology, and as a term to bridge misunderstandings between Faith Systems.\*

It is built on the work of Wilfred Cantwell Smith, especially his book, Faith and Belief: the Difference between Them. Smith finds that "belief" has come to mean intellectual assent to an idea, "Faith" to Paul and Luther is something else. The Greek word for Faith, "*Pistis*," is key here, which can also be translated as Trust. In his later book, Toward a World Theology, Smith notes that "Theology" is an improper word for faith discussions for both Buddhists and Humanists. He liked the suggestion of "*Pistiology*," which I used in the title for my thesis, Pistiology – An Essay on Faith. However, "*Pistiology*" brings laughs because of obvious "*urinary*" association. **Fideology** was welcomed as a better term in conferences in London starting in 2004.

Healing the World was the theme of our 2012 conference at London Central Mosque opening Interfaith Harmony Week in Britain. In organizing the conference, the first panel was for the Abrahamic Faiths. The second panel was the Dharmic Faiths (Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, etc). At the end all affirmed:

*We come together affirming both the uniqueness of each faith  
**And the experience of The Holy which inspires us all.***

*We come together affirming the oneness of life and of our planet.*

***And our prayerful acceptance or submission to The Reality in the present moment.***

**Fideology** affirms that it is possible to build trust without the necessity of a common theology. Such "trust" building between nations and religions is essential to overcome the present "clash of civilizations." We need not just a "*global ethic*," but the practice of a global virtue, TRUST. As one of the leaders of the Brahma Kumaris said, , "to achieve peace, we need to overcome EGO AND GREED."

\* Thanks to my teachers, Ray Wakeley, Joseph Gittler, H. Richard Niebuhr, Robert Bellah.

## FIDEOLOGY

The world today may be seen to be in a crisis of trust. The old Protestant ethic, which Max Weber studied, no longer controls the decisions of business or political leaders.<sup>i</sup> Weber pointed out that to Martin Luther every honest job was a “*vocation*,” a calling. Calvin taught honesty was a sign that you were among the “*elect*” of God. At the end of 2008 as the present economic crisis began, “Christian Century” author Martin Marty wrote:

*The basis of virtually all news and opinion media of the past months (is) trust. Typical is the Madoff scandal, in which one network of trusters, many of them relying on connections and handshakes, saw a criminal breakdown of trust. ...*

*The media tell of the breakdown of trust in the entire financial sector, and of the difficulty of recovering there unless and until some measures of trust are restored. An old administration in Washington fades away, one of its main legacies being stories of broken trust in the highest counsels. Scandals, sexual and fiscal, in religious organizations have led many in the public to stop trusting clergy ..., ...The witness to broken trust is so vast and deep that to avoid it would be irresponsible. People in many disciplines need to speak up, and they are doing so. "Trust" is central ... in theological discourse, and in ... prayer.*

Moving from Martin Marty to July 2012, we read on the cover of Time Magazine, “*BARCLAYS IS JUST THE BEGINNING. Why London breeds Financial Scandals – and why this could be the biggest yet.*”

While the majority say they believe in God, millions act as though nothing is holy, except money or football. They believe in God as an idea, but put little faith in God. Wilfred Cantwell Smith shows how each religion makes a distinction between BELIEF and FAITH. In the Quran, the word amana means to have faith. On the other hand, zanna means, “to hold an opinion.” In Christianity, Aquinas, Augustine, Bach, all bear witness that CREDO means what it says, “I place my heart.”<sup>ii</sup> When Luther affirms “*the just shall live by faith alone*,” he clearly does not mean, “the just shall live by the right mental decision.” Hebrews 11 opens, “*now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*” This is not intellectual assent, but living trust.

In his book Towards a World Theology, Smith affirms there are different religious traditions in the world just as there are different languages. As in the song TRADITION from FIDDLER ON THE ROOF, a Jew is one who accepts the Jewish tradition as normative. “*To be a Christian means to participate in the Christian process, just as to be a Muslim means to participate in the Islamic process.*”<sup>iii</sup> All religions are not the same, yet different religions learn from one another: The Russian, Tolstoy, influences Gandhi. Gandhi names his first community in South Africa, “Tolstoy Farm.” In turn, Gandhi inspires Martin Luther King, Jr., who takes up Gandhi’s method of non-violent resistance.

In 2005 at the Unitarian Universalist General Assembly in Fort Worth, Texas, I gave my paper on FIDEOLOGY. This inspired a sermon by Thea Nietfeld, a minister in Oklahoma, which she sent to me.<sup>iv</sup> Thea opens her sermon by telling of her experience at that meeting: *“I attended a workshop where I learned a new word, FIDEOLOGY. And that workshop gave me an aha Moment, which, of course, I want to share with you. Rev. Richard Boeke ... says it is not belief we need to have in common but trust – fidelity. We need to study what it is that enables trust to happen and to learn what destroys trust so that we can cultivate it ... hence, FIDEOLOGY. This is such basic spiritual insight that I don’t know how I’ve lived this long without it! Of course, I learned in college psychology that Erik Erikson said, trust is essential to human development.”*

Thea affirms the *“basic trust”* learned in childhood. Erik Erikson illustrates this with the power of Madonna images. He maintains that the root of worship is renewing of *“basic trust.”* From the wordless trust and hope we learn from our mothers, we move to the wider trust in *“mother earth”* and the cosmos. We experience the fact that we are a piece of the universe made alive. We have a right to be here.

This sense of *“Cosmic Consciousness”* is beautifully illustrated by a series by Cantwell Smith on the Canadian Broadcasting Company, published as *THE FAITH OF OTHER MEN*. Smith focuses on one key emblem of each of six religions. Of Hinduism, he says, *“The phrase I have chosen consists of three Sanskrit words, ... the succinct formulation of a profound and ultimate truth about man and the universe. The phrase is TAT TVAM ASI. TAT means “THAT,” TVAM means THOU, and ASI is the second person singular of the verb “to be.” “THAT THOU ART.” It means you are that reality. ... You are not your ego. The soul of your Soul is oneness with God or Reality.”*

Thea Nietfeld quotes from the book, *A STRATEGY FOR PEACE* by Sissella Bok (1989). Bok writes, *“... there is an atmosphere of mixed trust and distrust in which all human interactions take place. ... Without some mutual trust human beings cannot cooperate from common goals; yet without a measure of scepticism and distrust they are defenceless against exploitation and assault.”* She affirms, *“... the men and women who work to diminish the sway of violence, of deception, of breaches of faith, and of excessive secrecy are all doing the work of peace. I see all those who strive to reduce distrust as working for peace.”*

What can we do to build trust? I am often asked *“Why are you so passionate about interfaith dialogue? What sort of trust can be built when preachers in one religion say that followers of other religions are going to Hell?”* For me, it was my time in the military which made me a *“peacenik.”* During the Suez Crisis, I saw 35 B-47s loaded with Hydrogen Bombs ready to destroy half of Russia. In a way the pilots were suicide bombers. According to the mission plan, only one in four would return safely. MAD is the right word – MUTUALLY ASSURED DESTRUCTION. Efforts at *“One World Theology”* are frustrated by

the fact that each theology is built up from its own special history and tradition. As a student was told by an Oxford Theologian, *You cannot have a theology based on more than one tradition.*

Smith tells us, *“Because I am a Christian, I know that God is greater -- much greater than my idea ... . The Muslim knows that God is greater than his idea ... Ultimately, the concept “God” ... is a symbol..* Smith says, *“Theology is not faith. It is the attempt on the part of the theologian, .. to give an intellectual statement for his faith. As Archbishop Temple put it, his business is to formulate in words the revelation that God has given, much as a music critic.”* So theologians are like music critics attempting to describe the awesome experience of an inspired performance of *Mozart’s Requiem.*

In the Middle Ages, Theology was the Queen of the Sciences. When I attended Harvard for a term, I stayed in Divinity Hall. In the 1840s, Ralph Waldo Emerson gave his Divinity School address in the chapel across from my room. Now, Divinity Hall is surrounded by a great Quadrangle of Science. My window looked out at the Rhinoceri statues at the entrance to the Biology Building. I wrote:

*When I awake and behold the light  
Out of my window such a sight  
Staring me right straight in the eye  
Are two huge rhinoceri.*

Has Science discovered “THE GOD PARTICLE?” A Professor from Norway gives a different answer in his lecture to British G.P. Doctors. Professor Fugelli began his lecture with these words: *In Switzerland, in Cern, in the giant European atom smasher centre, ... the Nobel physics laureate, Leon Lenderman, ... got a glimpse of The God Particle. It lies at the heart of one of the most important mysteries of modern science: What mechanism holds all this stuff in the Universe together?* Fugelli goes on, *I have been pursuing a similar particle. It lies at the heart of one of the most important mysteries of modern medicine: what mechanism holds patients and doctors together?*

*The God Particle I have glimpsed is called Trust.* <sup>v</sup>

Fugelli told of the breakdown of trust in an African nation, so often repeated in our world. Troops came in and killed the cattle, the main food of the people. A year later, a government sponsored team came in to give polio vaccine. The people refused. *Bullets from the army had killed trust, and without trust the vaccine was 100% ineffective.”*

For Fugelli, *“Trust is for general practice, like blood for the body. As the flow of blood enables the organs to function, so the flow of trust enables the GP to function as a personal doctor,...”*

With Doctor Fugelli, we can say that for human community, trust is like blood for the body. Banks used to be named *TRUST COMPANIES*, or *FIDELITY SAVINGS AND LOAN*. Over 100 years ago, Republicans were breaking up monopolies like Standard Oil. And we could trust the small town bankers like Jimmy Stewart in the movie, *“It’s a*

*Wonderful Life.*” Today, as governments create more monopolies millions are shouting “ENOUGH.”

Erik Erikson found the foundation of religion as worship in which humans find a renewal of that “*basic trust*” which we experience as infants. That sense of wonder which Wordsworth describes in his “*Intimations of Immortality from Early Childhood.*”

Without worship, whether with silence, stories or songs, religion loses its soul. One great teacher of worship was Father Anthony de Mello . Anthony followed the example of Martin Buber who said, “*God created humans because God loved stories.*” In one of his lectures Anthony asks the audience, “*Are you listening in order to discover something new?. ... We hate the new. ... We don’t want new things if they involve change. Most particularly if it involves saying, “I was wrong.”*” Anthony spoke of an 87 year old Jesuit. who said at the end of a workshop, “*I should have heard you speak sixty years ago. ...I’m been wrong all my life.*” Anthony says, “*God, listen to that! It’s like looking at one of the wonders of the world. That, ladies and gentlemen is FAITH! An openness to the truth, no matter where it leads you. ... That’s faith. NOT belief, but faith.*”<sup>vi</sup>

Not belief, but faith: trust in the Holiness of Truth, **TRANSCENDANCE.** What Robert Jay Lifton calls, *a psychic state so intense that time and death disappear.* A transcendent purpose for which we would die is the power by which we can live. This consciousness is a “*never ceasing quest for rebirth.*” So Henry Thoreau wrote, “*I shall have my eternity now in the quality of my daily life.*”

Many, like Thoreau, renew their touch with nature in the forest. Others join in the collective peak experiences of Rock Concerts or Peace Marches. Life is not measured by the moments we live, but by moments that are timeless. When we have an experience of rapture, our symbolic world is reordered. “*These experiences bring a sense of connectedness and significance ..., and there is at least a temporary move beyond the problems of time and death.*”<sup>vii</sup> Lifton draws from his studies of “**BRAINWASHING**” and “**SURVIVOR GUILT**” to point to the intense “**oneness**” that heals the soul. He points to “**ANTICIPATED SURVIVOR GUILT**” which spurs us to avoid future HOLOCAUSTS: to be ambassadors of forgiveness and reconciliation.



## ONENESS

This leads naturally to a few comments on **ONENESS** with which I will close. Each autumn, Jewish Communities around the world observe

*Yom Kippur*, The Day of Atonement: The Day of At-one-ment. It is a day in which you empty yourself of all that separates you from God.

Today, millions of Muslims around the world will start their prayers by saying “*there is no God.*” Yes, they begin by saying there is NO GOD. Yes, the prayer goes on, THERE IS NO GOD, BUT GOD. Islam teaches the surrender of the ego and oneness with the Holy.

Many Hindu Gurus teach Oneness as **Advaita** or non-duality. <sup>viii</sup> Peak Experience in Zen Buddhism starts with **Sunyata**, “Emptiness.” Letting the mind be at rest. Being totally in the present: Oneness with Reality. In such experience prayer is no longer talking to the Holy. No longer “think about your loved ones.” Or “Confess your sin.” In silence we discover the wonder of the Holy, which is “No-Thing.”

At the foundation of religion is the experience of oneness: The Holy found in all things. In the words of Emerson, “*Man is a piece of the Universe made alive.*” As we seek to heal the brokenness of people and planet, may we be a *Oneness Community*: A community that cooperates with many traditions affirming, *The Dignity of Difference*.

Each year I enjoy an interfaith gathering at a Benedictine Monastery, Worth Abbey. Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Bahais and Humanists all share joyfully. One autumn, the Abbot of the Monastery led us through four different modes of Interfaith Dialogue. His last mode is acceptance: Instead of trying to force everyone into a single culture, a single story, he asked us to recognize that people like their own stories. There is much talk that the Internet is creating a global village. In fact young people are using the Internet and the I-POD to create their own villages.

Here, Abbot Christopher quoted one of the two neighbours in a Robert Frost poem who says, “*Good Fences make Good Neighbours.* He called for each of us to speak loudly in terms of our own tradition. “*While all religions deal with a common human urge, to be religious is to be part of some tradition.*” Yes, learn from each other. A visit to a Sikh Temple can take us deeper into our own faith. “*If I am a Christian or a Muslim, I can believe that my religion has 9 of the 10 keys to God, but not all 10.*”

The threat to the continuity of human life has intensified human concern with the world around us. “*Reverence for life*” comes in our identification with nature. From Greenpeace to Ramblers, from tree huggers to animal lovers, the Capitalist rape of nature is opposed. We are called to treat earth as sacred, as our Eden, as our Home?

The day before she died as the Columbia Spacecraft burned out on re-entry, Astronaut Laurel Salton Clark wrote, “*Hello from above our magnificent planet earth. The perspective is truly awe-inspiring ...I have seen some incredible sights: lighting spreading over the Pacific, the Aurora Australis lighting up the entire visible horizon ..., the crescent moon setting over the rim of earth, the vast plains of Africa and the dunes on Cape Horn ... Mt Fuji looks like a small bump from up here,*

*but it does stand out as a very distinct landmark. Whenever I do get to look out it is glorious. Even the stars have a special brightness.* <sup>ix</sup>

## ΑΧζςΑΔΦΓΔΦΓΒ

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- <sup>i</sup> Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, published 1904
- <sup>ii</sup> W.C. Smith, Faith and Belief, The Difference between Them. One World, Oxford, 1998 p.104
- <sup>iii</sup> W.C. Smith, Towards a World Theology, MacMillan, London, 1981, p.34
- <sup>iv</sup> Thea Nietfeld, Minister, UU Congregation, Tahlequah, Oklahoma, 2005.  
Wilfred C. Smith, THE FAITH OF OTHERMEN, Harper Torchbooks 1972, p91
- <sup>v</sup> Per Fugelli, TRUST IN GENERAL PRACTICE, The James MacKenzie Lecture 2000, British Journal of General Practice 2001; 51; 575-9.
- <sup>vi</sup> Anthony de Mello, Awareness, Harper Collins, London, 1997, p.18
- <sup>vii</sup> Robert Jay Lifton, as quoted in "The Politics of Immortality," a conversation with T. George Harris, "Psychology Today," Nov 1970, p. 108. Also, Lifton, Death in Life.
- <sup>viii</sup> "Sankara and Advaitic Hinduism," in David Hart, Trading Faith, O Books, 2006, p.29-40.
- <sup>ix</sup> Marcus Braybrooke, 365 Meditations, Godsfield Press, 2004, Meditation 365.

See [www.worldfaiths.org](http://www.worldfaiths.org) and [www.iarf.net](http://www.iarf.net) for more articles by Richard Boeke.