



## FIDEOLOGY 2004 – Faith as Trust

**(Fideology 2005 will be held Saturday, 12 November at Croydon Unitarian Church. Speakers include Rev. Alan Race, Dr. Joy Barrow, Imam Abduljalil Sajid, Rev. Cal Courtney, Dr. Richard Boeke).**

### INTRODUCTION

*“Fideology”* is a new word derived from the Latin root of words like *“Fidelity, Confidence, Bona Fide.”* It is an alternative to the old word in the OED, *“Pistiology.”* This came from the Greek word for faith, *“Pistis,”* the word for faith used in the famous 13<sup>th</sup> Chapter of First Corinthians on “Faith, Hope and Love.”

The world today may be seen to be in a crisis of trust. Sociologist Max Weber can be seen as the forerunner of the science of trust.<sup>i</sup> The old Protestant ethic which he studied no longer controls the decisions of business or political leaders. Weber pointed out that to Luther every honest job was a “vocation,” a calling. Calvin taught honesty was a sign that you were among the “elect” of God. For centuries, Presbyterians and Quakers were as good as their word. Now, in England headlines refer to Scottish born Prime Minister Tony Blair as “The Trust Problem of the Labour Party.” Trust is breaking down.

The issue is illustrated by two Doonesbury cartoons on Donald Trump’s TV Show, *THE APPRENTICE*. In the first cartoon, Trump says, *You blew it, man! You let your team down! Do you even know the point of success?*

The Contestant replies, *Well, Mr. Trump, for me success is about creating something of real and lasting value to society.* Trump says, *Wrong! The point of success is to die with more money than God.!*

In the Cartoon for the next day, Trump says, *You’re fired, kid! You should have been more honest with me.*

The Contestant replies, *You want the truth, Mr. Trump. The truth is you’re nothing but a bloated, preening bully with a dead muskrat on his head!*

Trump shouts, *CUT! Leave that out, Mark. And let that be a lesson to the rest of you ... NEVER TRUST ANYONE!*

What of religion as a trust builder? What sort of trust can be built between religions when preachers in one religion say that followers of the other religion are going to Hell? At this time of an oil fuelled “clash of civilizations,” many like Polly Toynbee are asking, *Is religion the problem or the solution?* Efforts at “One World Theology” are frustrated by the fact that each theology is built up from its own

special history and tradition. Thus, recently, a student was told by an Oxford Theologian, *You cannot have a theology based on more than one tradition.*

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 Rhinoceros 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.*

In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century we live in a world of many theologies. “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 this 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 Brahma Kumaris said this summer, “to achieve peace, we need to overcome EGO AND GREED.”

#### PROPHET OF FIDEOLOGY

On 13<sup>th</sup> November, FIDEOLOGY 2004 starts by honouring the memory of Wilfred Cantwell Smith, Professor at McGill and Harvard. We explore the meaning of his book, FAITH AND BELIEF, THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THEM. 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 a discussion of intellectual assent, but of living trust.

Smith went on to write Towards a World Theology. Yes, there are different 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 Towards a World Theology, Smith finds the term “theology” inappropriate, not fitting Buddhism for example. Shortly after Smith’s book was published, I wrote an essay on faith titled, PISTIOLOGY, from the root word for faith in Greek, PISTIS. In a letter Smith responded, “*I must thank you for your suggestion of pistiology my new book is my first to have the word “theology” in the title, and I have a section within it commenting on the inappropriateness of that term.*”<sup>iv</sup> If Wilfred Cantwell Smith were still alive, I like to think that he would welcome the term FIDEOLOGY for the science which he pioneered.

#### FIVE MODES OF MEANING

Another teacher has dealt with the current breakdown of “trust in life.” Robert Jay Lifton studied the survivors of Hiroshima<sup>v</sup> he found expressions such as, “*There is no God, no Buddha,*” and the question, “*Why am I alive when others are dead?*” From these interviews, Lifton developed his concept of “*survivor guilt.*” His study showed him that the experience of the Atomic Bomb and the Death Camps of Nazi Germany brought a major change in our worldview. In a sense we are all survivors of these experiences. We became conscious that we may be “the last generation in the experiment with living.” And with this consciousness came the fear that we might fail to prevent the horror predicted in films like TERMINATOR 1 and TERMINATOR 2. Lifton calls this fear, “*anticipated survivor guilt.*”

Lifton found five different ways in which humans sought to overcome this fear of being TERMINATED. I suggest that these five modes offer one possible framework for the beginnings of a science of trust. The five modes start with the biological

BIOLOGICAL. We connect with humans in the larger web of life. From the “basic trust” symbolized by the Madonna images of mother and child, our “network” expands from family into the sense of connection with one’s tribe, people, nation, or even species. “*I live on through humankind.*”<sup>vi</sup>

Recently, I read an article titled, Trust as the God Particle. It was a report of a lecture given to British Doctors in General Practice by a Professor from Oslo, Norway. Per Fugelli begins his lecture: *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>vii</sup>

He told of the breakdown of trust in an African nation, so often repeated in our world. Troops came in and laid waste to cattle, the main food of the people. A year later, a government sponsored team

came in to give polio vaccine. *But the bullets from the army had killed the trust, and without trust the vaccine became 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, .. as a gate-keeper to the medical tower of Babel. Trust is the oxygen. ... Without trust our vital functions will suffocate.*”

With Doctor Fugelli, we can say that trust is for human community like blood for the body. In America, Sociologist Robert Bellah studied trust in Habits of the Heart. How do we nurture healthy family relationships? In business, banks used to be named TRUST COMPANIES, or FIDELITY SAVINGS AND LOAN. What effective steps can be taken to balance ego and greed with building a web of trust?

THEOLOGICAL is Lifton’s second mode of meaning. For centuries, theology was the Queen of the Sciences. Whether Torah, Bible, Koran or Lotus Sutra, theological study was based upon a book. Quakers and Zen Buddhists were among the few who held for an inner light, a direct transmission outside of Scripture. The foundation of religion is worship in which humans find a renewal of that “basic trust” which most experienced as infants. That sense of wonder which Wordsworth describes in his “Intimations of Immortality for Early Childhood.”

Each religion has its own traditions, special language and laws or Shari’ah, by which followers are called to live. In every religion there is some teaching that sin is breaking trust. And that evil is causing human beings to act in an inhuman way. Underneath different languages and cultures, humans in any religion or none have much in common. In 1981 the IARF took a survey of the values of Western Christians and Japanese Buddhists. Questionnaires were prepared in English and Japanese. The result? The values were the same. We thought the result was a failure. Now, I realize this is also an important finding. The human values of over 100 participants were much the same. If we took a survey of agnostics and a half dozen world religions, would we find the same result? This is the sort of question a Science of Fideology can raise. Let me be clear, FIDEOLOGY is not a new religion. It is the study of trust in human relationships, religions, and in nations.

CREATIVITY is Lifton’s third mode. Bach lives on in his music. Van Gogh transcended his human frailty with his paintings. Shakespeare writes,

*So long as men can breath or eyes can see,  
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.*

Scientists seek to endure by giving to a body of knowledge with a limitless life span. The publish or perish attitude can be only the everlasting wish to write, *Kilroy was here*. But creativity can be done with a sense of relatedness by which it becomes *love made visible*.

From 9/11 on we have become increasingly conscious of the power of destructive creativity. Many leaders seem to be following Machiavelli's advice to stay in power by creating fear and offering protection. What communities nurture trust and creativity? What activities overcome distrust between nations and religions? Our world has become a global village. Perhaps the greatest creative challenge is acting each day as a citizen of this global village.

One who lived as a citizen of the global village was Father Anthony de Mello, a native of India. Anthony followed the example of Martin Buber who said, "God created humans because God loved stories." In one of his lectures Anthony asked, *Are you listening in order to discover something new? ... It is difficult for sleeping people. ... We hate the new. ... We don't want new things if they involve change. Most particularly if it involves saying, I was wrong. I remember an 87 year old Jesuit. ... He attended a workshop like this. "I should I have you speak sixty years ago. ... I'm been wrong all my life." 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>viii</sup>

NATURE is the fourth mode of Lifton. The threat to the continuity of the first three forms has tended to intensify human concern with those which remain. "Reverence for life" comes in our identification with nature. So Shelley could write on the death of Keats, *He is made one with nature, there is heard his voice in all her music*. So the English sing, *I don't mind growing old with you to have and hold in an English Country Garden*. From Greenpeace to Ramblers, from tree huggers to animal lovers, The Capitalist rape of nature is opposed. It is not enough to speak of Mother Earth. Humans often abuse their mothers. What can inspire humans to treat earth as they should treat their home? *Earth is our homeland: a song of stars, a grace. Wrought of the ages, an opal hung in space*.

EXPERIENTIAL TRANSCENDANCE is the Fifth and Final Mode of Robert Jay Lifton: *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 William Ellery Channing said, "I am born again, and again, and again." And Henry Thoreau wrote, "I shall have my eternity now in the quality of my daily life."

To renew touch with nature new rituals are taken into the forest. To effect mass media and history, rituals are taken into the street. Lifton now emphasizes his fifth mode "because in many ways it is the key to all the others." When we have an experience of rapture, our symbolic world is reordered. "These experiences bring a sense of connectedness and significance rarely available to the individual, and there is at least a temporary move beyond the problems of time and death." <sup>ix</sup> Lifton

draws from his studies of “BRAINWASHING” and “THE SURVIVORS OF HIROSHIMA” to point to the intense “oneness” that is their opposite: The consciousness of eternity as the key to discovering it in any mode.

World Religions Scholar Huston Smith ends his book, WHY RELIGION MATTERS with a personal story,

*My wife and I were spending a week  
in the dead of winter in Death Valley, California,  
On the full- moon night that we were there I awoke around two A.M. to  
a call that seemed to come from the night itself,  
a call so compelling that it was almost audible.  
Hurrying into some clothes, I answered it.  
Stepping out of doors, I found not a breath of air was stirring. The sky  
held no clouds to conceal the panoply of stars ascending from the  
circling horizon. ...  
For a half an hour or so I walked the road, without a thought. . It may  
be as close as I have ever come to the empty mind that the Buddhists  
work toward for years.<sup>x</sup>*

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As Samuel Johnson put it,

*‘It is happier to be sometimes cheated than not to trust.’*

From Orora O'Neill, A Question of Trust, Cambridge U. Press, 2002

FIDEOLOGY 2004, 13 Nov. 2004, Croydon, UK. See [www.worldfaiths.org](http://www.worldfaiths.org)

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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> R. Boeke, Pistiology, an Essay on Faith, Pacific School of Religion, 1982, p.73

<sup>v</sup> Robert Jay Lifton, Death in Life, Random House, 1967

<sup>vi</sup> Robert Jay Lifton, The Broken Connection, Simon and Schuster, 1979

<sup>vii</sup> Per Fugelli, TRUST IN GENERAL PRACTICE, The James MacKenzie Lecture 2000, British Journal of General Practice 2001; 51; 575-9.

<sup>viii</sup> Anthony de Mello, Awareness, Harper Collins, London, 1997, p.18

<sup>ix</sup> Robert Jay Lifton, as quoted in “The Politics of Immortality,” a conversation with T. George Harris, “Psychology Today,” November 1970, p. 108

<sup>x</sup> Huston Smith, Why Religion Matters, Harper, San Francisco, 2001, p.276