Faith Beyond Belief

Accompanying Our Congregations on the Journey Toward Faith

Presented by
Margaret Placentra Johnston

Author of
FAITH BEYOND BELIEF
Stories of Good People Who Left Their Church Behind
(Quest Books, 2012)
My Book

FAITH BEYOND BELIEF

Stories of Good People Who Left Their Church Behind

Margaret Placentra Johnston

GOLD WINNER of the 2013 NAUTILUS BOOK AWARD in Religion/spirituality
Session One

Introduction to Faith Development
My Own Story

- Why I moved away from conventional belief
My Own Story

- Why I moved away from conventional belief
- How I spent many years estranged from all forms of religion
My Own Story

- Why I moved away from conventional belief
- How I spent many years estranged from all forms of religion
- What happened when I learned about the stages
My Own Story

- Why I moved away from conventional belief
- How I spent many years estranged from all forms of religion
- What happened when I learned about the stages
- The impression that the possibility of post-critical faith made on me
My Own Story

- Why I moved away from conventional belief
- How I spent many years estranged from all forms of religion
- What happened when I learned about the stages
- The impression that the possibility of post-critical faith made on me
- How this perspective might help you
I have called it Spiritual Development Theory, but many of you have studied it under other names. (Faith development, etc.)
Spiritual Development Theory

In many cases you may have studied it as a theoretical possibility at the academic level, but did not connect it to real lives of people in your congregation or out in the real world.
Spiritual Development Theory

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The stories in my book are real-life examples of the stages (as I understood the concept).
Spiritual Development Theory

Many theorists have described this same concept.
Spiritual Development Theory

Simplified into four “stages”

- Lawless
- Faithful
- Rational
- Mystic
Spiritual Development Theory

- Lawless
- Faithful
- Rational – uninvolved in religion or atheist/agnostic, but principled = POST-religious
- Mystic
Spiritual Development Theory

- Lawless

- **Faithful** – traditionally religious, superficial rule-following, literalists.

- Rational – distanced from religion/atheist/agnostic, but principled

- Mystic
Spiritual Development Theory

- Lawless – pre-religious – religion never took hold, chaotic, manipulative, unprincipled.
- Faithful – traditionally religious, superficial rule-following, literalists.
- Rational – distanced from religion/atheist/agnostic, but principled
- Mystic
Most of the religion that is explicit in our culture, sounds like the Faithful stage, as contrasted against the Lawless stage.
Spiritual Development Theory

- Lawless – pre-religious – religion never took hold, chaotic, manipulative, unprincipled
- Faithful – traditionally religious, superficial rule-following, literal
- Rational – distanced from religion/atheist/agnostic, but principled
- Mystic – religious or spiritual but in a larger, deeper way than the Faithful. Post-religious
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Spiritual Development Theory

M. Scott Peck, Psychiatrist

Claimed he developed his stages through work with his own patients.

- Lawless – Stage I - Chaotic, Antisocial
- Faithful – Stage II - Formal, Institutional
- Rational – Stage III - Skeptic, Individual
- Mystic – Stage IV - Mystic, Communal
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Spiritual Development Theory

James Fowler, Professor of Theology and Human Development at Emory University, ret’d.

Also United Methodist minister

Conducted formal interviews of 359 people, their faith stances rated and categorized into six stages.

Stages of Faith:

The Psychology of Human Development

and the Quest for Meaning
Spiritual Development Theory

Dr. James Fowler, Developmental Psychologist/Minister

Conducted formal studies

NOT the same as

Lawless ≠ Stage 1: Intuitive-Projective Faith – Egocentric – typical ages 2 - 7

Faithful - Stage 2: Mythic, Literal and
- Stage 3: Synthetic, Conventional

Rational - Stage 4: Individuative, Reflective

Mystic - Stage 5: Conjunctive Faith and
- Stage 6: Universalizing Faith
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## Spiritual Development Theory

**Dr. James Fowler, Developmental Psychologist/Minister**

Conducted formal studies

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<th>Stage</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</tr>
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Spiritual Development Theory

Dr. James Fowler

Lawless ≠ Stage 1: Intuitive-Projective Faith – egocentric – typical ages 2 - 7

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Spiritual Development Theory

Fritz K. Oser, Professor, University of Fribourg, Switzerland, ret’d. (and Paul Gmünder)

Five stages of what they called Religious Judgement.

(no correlation) Stage 1 “Orientation of Religious Heteronomy”

Faithful - Stage 2 “Do Ut Des” “Give so that you may receive.” (Reward and punishment oriented.)

Rational - Stage 3 “Orientation of Ego Autonomy.” (tends to push the “Ultimate” out of the world.)

Mystic - Stage 4 “Orientation of Mediated Autonomy,” (The Ultimate appears symbolically in nature, culture, and human capacities for love.)

Mystic - Stage 5 “Intersubjective Religious Orientation”
Spiritual Development Theory

Popular Authors, New Agey

**Ken Wilber**, a modern-day philosopher

Twelve color stages. Individuals pass through same stages as cultures in general. First to suggest our culture is evolving in a forward direction/transforming.

“Integral Spirituality”

**Caroline Myss**, a thought leader in human consciousness, spirituality

7 stages correlate with the chakras
Spiritual Development Theory

Saint Teresa of Avila, 16th century Spanish mystic

*The Interior Castle* - 7 “mansions”

Both James Fowler’s

and Carolyn Myss’s stages

compare with Saint Teresa of Avila’s 7 Mansions
Spiritual Development Theory

Paul Ricoeur, French Philosopher

- Faithful - First Naïveté
- Rational - Critical Distance
- Mystic - Second Naïveté
Spiritual Development Theory

Paul Ricoeur, French Philosopher

- Faithful - First Naïveté
  - Taboo
  - Refuge
- Rational - Critical Distance
- Mystic - Second Naïveté
Spiritual Development Theory

Paul Ricoeur, French Philosopher

- **Faithful** - First Naïveté
  - Taboo (rules)
  - Refuge (protection)
- **Rational** - Critical Distance
- **Mystic** - Second Naïveté
Spiritual Development Theory

Paul Ricoeur, French Philosopher

- Faithful - First Naïveté
  - Taboo
  - Refuge

- The “corrupt parts of religion”
Spiritual Development Theory

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Spiritual Development Theory

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Spiritual Development Theory

Paul Ricoeur, French Philosopher
- Faithful - First Naïveté – Religion
- Rational - Critical Distance – Atheism
  - Mystic - Second Naïveté – Faith
Spiritual Development Theory

Arguments against “Stage Theory”
Spiritual Development Theory

- **Lawless** – pre-religious – religion never took hold, chaotic, manipulative, unprincipled. Governed by own will – **Egocentric**

- **Faithful** – traditionally religious, superficial rule-following, literal.

- **Rational** – distanced from religion/atheist/agnostic, but principled.

- **Mystic** - religious or spiritual but in a larger, deeper way than the Faithful.
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- **Rational** – distanced from religion/atheist/agnostic, but principled. **Have individualized, but identify with a larger part of the universe** – Worldcentric

- **Mystic** - religious or spiritual but in a larger, deeper way than the Faithful.
Spiritual Development Theory

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- **Mystic** - religious or spiritual but in a larger, deeper way than the Faithful. *All inclusive – Universal*
Spiritual Development Theory

Spiritual growth: an expanding circle of concern, an expanding worldview:

Lawless – MYSELF - Egocentric

Faithful – MY GROUP - Ethnocentric

Rational – EVERYDAY REALITY - Worldcentric

Mystic – SEEN AND UNSEEN REALITY - Universal, all-inclusive, unitive.
## Lawless Stage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Lawless Traits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religious Attitude</td>
<td>Disinterested or superficial interest only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretive Style</td>
<td>Self-centered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locus of Authority</td>
<td>One’s own will/unprincipled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circle of Concern</td>
<td>Self (egocentric)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity</td>
<td>Self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Community</td>
<td>May join for own needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>Personal pleasure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>View of “God”</td>
<td>Self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Undeveloped, Manipulative, Insincere, Chaotic lifestyle</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Faithful Stage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Faithful Traits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religious Attitude</td>
<td>Needs definite answers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretive Style</td>
<td>Literal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locus of Authority</td>
<td>Oracle authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circle of Concern</td>
<td>Own group (ethnocentric)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity</td>
<td>Defined by group/divisive against outsiders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Community</td>
<td>The only “right” one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>Security/Certainty/Comfort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>View of “God”</td>
<td>External, separate Being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Naïve Fear-based</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Rational Stage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Rational Traits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religious Attitude</td>
<td>Skeptical/seeks truth over comfort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretive Style</td>
<td>Reason/Science-based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locus of Authority</td>
<td>Conscience Authority/Principled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circle of Concern</td>
<td>All humans/Social Justice (worldcentric)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity</td>
<td>Individuated – but not selfish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Community</td>
<td>Questioning/may reject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>Truth/Integrity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>View of “God”</td>
<td>Science/Reason/Truth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Critical/Seeking/Involved in social causes</td>
</tr>
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</table>
# Mystic Stage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Mystic Traits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religious Attitude</td>
<td>Prefers Mystery/Seeks Unity over Truth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretive Style</td>
<td>Metaphorical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locus of Authority</td>
<td>Spirit Authority (Will of God/Order of the Universe)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circle of Concern</td>
<td>All that exists (Universal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity</td>
<td>Seeks community with all levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Community</td>
<td>Chooses one (or more) from many acceptable possibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>Unity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>View of “God”</td>
<td>Universal principle. Inner light/Love/Goodness/ALL</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Second Naïveté Humility/Forgiveness/Gratitude/Compassion/Acceptance</td>
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Spiritual Development Theory

Spiritual growth: an expanding circle of inclusiveness,
an ever broader worldview:

- Lawless – MYSELF - Egocentric
- Faithful – MY GROUP - Ethnocentric
- Rational – EVERYDAY REALITY - Worldcentric
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# Spiritual Development Theory

**Two kinds of nonbeliever:**

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<th>Rational</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unprincipled</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own will</td>
<td>Conscience-based</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ego-centric</td>
<td>World-centric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaos</td>
<td>Reason/science</td>
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*Arrested development in an adult*

*Development is advanced over conventional understandings*
### Spiritual Development Theory

Two kinds of nonbeliever - separated by subjecting oneself to the rules of society/church/institution/tribe.

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<td>Unprincipled</td>
<td>Principled by group</td>
<td>Principled from within</td>
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<td>Arrested development</td>
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<td>Development is advanced over in an adult conventional understandings</td>
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## Spiritual Development Theory

Two kinds of religious people:

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<tr>
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<th>Mystic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Believe literally</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>God as Outer Being</td>
<td>God as Universal Concept</td>
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<tr>
<td>Security/comfort</td>
<td>Unity</td>
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<td>Certainty</td>
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**Spiritual Development Theory**

Two religious stages are separated by the Rational Stage

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Faith Beyond Belief!

Two kinds of religious people:

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- Believe literally
- God as outer Being
- Security/comfort
- Certainty
- Belief

**Mystic**
- “believe” metaphorically
- God as Universal Concept
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- Mystery
- Faith