

# Faith Beyond Belief

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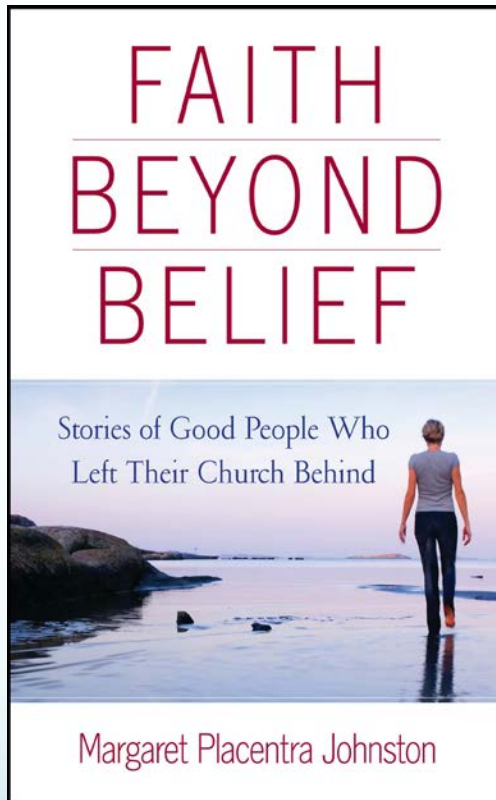
## *Accompanying Our Congregations on the Journey Toward Faith*

Presented by  
Margaret Placentra Johnston

Author of

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

# My Book



**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**

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- 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**



# Spiritual Development Theory

**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.**

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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.**
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# Spiritual Development Theory

**Most of the religion  
that is explicit in our culture,  
sounds like the Faithful stage,  
as contrasted against the  
Lawless stage.**

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- **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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## Dr. James Fowler

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- **Stage 6: Universalizing Faith**

# 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, 16<sup>th</sup> 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
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# 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”

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# Spiritual Development Theory

**Paul Ricoeur, French Philosopher**

- **Faithful - First Naïveté – Religion**
- **Rational - Critical Distance – Atheism**
- **Mystic - Second Naïveté – Faith**

Ricoeur, Paul. "Religion, Atheism, and Faith." (Translated by Charles Freilich.) In *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics*. Edited by Don Ihde. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2007.



# Spiritual Development Theory

## **Arguments against “Stage Theory”**

# 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

Issue	Lawless Traits
Religious Attitude	Disinterested or superficial interest only
Interpretive Style	Self-centered
Locus of Authority	One's own will/unprincipled
Circle of Concern	Self (egocentric)
Identity	Selfish
Religious Community	May join for own needs
Values	Personal pleasure
View of "God"	Self
Other	Undeveloped, Manipulative, Insincere, Chaotic lifestyle

# Faithful Stage

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



# Rational Stage

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

# Mystic Stage

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

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

# Spiritual Development Theory

## Two kinds of nonbeliever:

### Lawless

Unprincipled

Own will

Ego-centric

Chaos

**Arrested development** in a adult

### Rational

Principled

Conscience-based

World-centric

Reason/science

**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.**

## Lawless

Unprincipled

Own will

Ego-centric

Chaos

Arrested development    Conventional

## Faithful

Principled by group

Group rules

Ethno-centric

Rule-bound

Development is advanced over    in an adult  
conventional understandings

## Rational

Principled from within

Conscience-based

World-centric

Reason/science

# Spiritual Development Theory

**Two kinds of religious people:**

## **Faithful**

Believe literally

God as Outer Being

Security/comfort

Certainty

## **Mystic**

“Believe” metaphorically

God as Universal Concept

Unity

Mystery

# Spiritual Development Theory

Two religious stages are separated by the Rational Stage

## Faithful

Believe literally

God as an Outer Being

Security/comfort

Certainty

## Rational

Questioning

Skepticism

Truth/integrity

Reason

## Mystic

“Believe” metaphorically

God as Universal Concept

Unity

Mystery

# Faith Beyond Belief!

Two kinds of religious people:

## Faithful

Believe literally

God as outer Being

Security/comfort

Certainty

**Belief**

## Mystic

“believe” metaphorically

God as Universal Concept

Unity

Mystery

**Faith**