

PREPARING FOR THE STRANGER:
ASSESSING THEORIES FOR ANALYZING AND ATTENDING TO
RELIGIOUS-BASED CONFLICT

by

J. Nathan Kline
A Thesis
Submitted to the
Graduate Faculty
of
George Mason University
in Partial Fulfillment of
The Requirements for the Degree
of
Master of Science
Conflict Analysis and Resolution

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Date: _____

Summer Semester 2015
George Mason University
Fairfax, VA

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DEDICATION

I remain indebted to my loving wife, Dawn Marie Kline. Her support and encouragement—whether during my long absences on deployments to combat zones, attending military schools, late nights at the office, or responding to middle-of-the-night emergencies—help sustain me. Ours is a shared ministry. As such, she joins me in dedicating this work—to include the research, writing, and especially the lived and professional experience informing it—to our children Benjamin, Jared, and Sophia. Because we believe all parents love their children as we love ours, we remain convinced there is always hope for peace.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to acknowledge my thesis chair, Professor Marc Gopin, and my thesis committee members, Professor Daniel Rothbart and Professor Karina Korostelina for their guidance and expertise and for reminding me that we can never understand the world too precisely nor listen too well. For infecting me with a love of learning and a respect for people from every walk of life as much as they have grounded me in my own religious tradition, I thank my parents, Jim and Vickie Kline. My professional and personal journey has frequently intersected with that of my dear friend and fellow chaplain, Jason Unsworth. Our many shared interests and experiences, within the context of a life-long dialogue, are essential components to my personal process of discovering life's meaning and value. For approving my study at George Mason's School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution I thank the United States Army and Chaplain Corps, and for funding my research and degree program I remain accountable to the U.S. Taxpayers. My respect for the religious Other began to take on distinct form during my interreligious ministry in metropolitan Chicago working alongside legendary religious leaders including, Rev. Stanley L. Davis, Jr., Rev. Paul H. Rutgers, Rabbi Ira Youdovin, Bishop Dimitri Kantzavelous, Sister Joan McGuire, and Kareem M. Irfan. I acknowledge former supervisory chaplains, Chaplain Mark Nordstrom and Chaplain Bobby Whitlock, for their mentorship and for exemplifying a proper balance between serving as religious leaders and excelling as staff officers, and also Chaplain David Colwell who humanely and intelligently exemplifies the need to reexamine one's prejudices against new experiences if one hopes to remain faithful. Similarly, I wish to thank my combat commanders, Douglas Victor and Michael Silverman, and those brigade commanders whose friendship I cherished in garrison: William "Bill" Stacey and Michael Simley. Finally, I remain indebted to my chaplain assistants, both those who risked their lives keeping me safe in the line of duty—Dave Lee and Eric Tremain—and those who tirelessly sustained Soldier and Family ministry in garrison and training environments: Jarrith Johnson, Tramaine Cohen, Michael Hall, Delores Hatcher, and Devin Shaw. No chaplain has had finer "battle buddies".

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AG</i>	<i>Ad Gentes</i>
AQI	al-Qaeda in Iraq
<i>CSI</i>	<i>Conflict Strategies Inventory</i>
<i>DI</i>	<i>Dominus Iesus</i>
<i>DP</i>	<i>Dialogue and Proclamation</i>
FDS	Faith Development Scale
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
IG	Ingroup
IP	Iraqi Police
ISIS/ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria/Islamic State in the Levant
<i>NA</i>	<i>Nostra Aetate</i>
OG	Outgroup
USACHCS	United States Army Chaplain Center and School
VBIED	Vehicle-borne Improvised Explosive Device

ABSTRACT

PREPARING FOR THE STRANGER: ASSESSING THEORIES FOR ANALYZING AND ATTENDING TO RELIGIOUS-BASED CONFLICT

J. Nathan Kline, MS

George Mason University, 2015

Thesis Director: Dr. Marc Gopin

This thesis will address two related questions: one regarding conflict analysis and the other conflict resolution. As instruments for analyzing religious-based conflict, what are the possibilities and limitations of: 1.) Theologies of the Other and the ethical grounds for interreligious dialogue, 2.) Fowler's theory of faith development for individuals, and 3.) Rothbart & Korostelina's theory of axiological difference for groups? As a theory informing interreligious dialogue as a means of addressing religious-based conflict, what are the possibilities and limitations for hermeneutical theory in the tradition of Hans-Georg Gadamer? This study will conclude by identifying opportunities for incorporating the findings of this research and possibilities for future research during the author's follow-on assignment as the World Religions Instructor at the United States Army Chaplain Center and School.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

“It is the will of God that we be tolerant with those who disagree with us about the will of God”—quipped Richard John Neuhaus.¹ If this strikes the reader as humorous it is likely the ironic type, for while many would agree such a principle or maxim is the ideal, far too few of us practice it. Why is this ideal so difficult to practice? Does a realization of the ideal come only at the expense of ultimate truth claims? Is there more implied here than a simple live-and-let-live or agreeing-to-disagree mentality? Why is it that religion and conflict seem existentially tied to one another? These and many other questions related to religious-based conflict are relevant to the present study. The study concerns the military chaplain as a practitioner attending to religious-based conflict on the battlefield. The study will introduce and examine theories and their models as instruments for both analyzing and transforming conflict. It is hoped the examination will help determine these instruments’ possibilities and limitations for utilization in practice. And yet it seems helpful to first say a bit about religious-based conflict in general and the types of conflict a military chaplain is likely to encounter. Looking briefly at some of the latest ideas about conflict can help set the stage for the present study.

¹ Cox, Harvey, et al. “World Religions and Conflict Resolution,” in *Religion, the Missing Dimension of Statecraft*. Douglas Johnston and Cynthia Sampson, eds. (New York: Oxford UP) 1994, 266.

But first, let us get out of the way a few of the fundamentals relating to the nature of conflict. Most would agree not all conflict is harmful or unwelcomed. Conflict is part of nature, not just human nature. While some conflicts (including religious-based conflicts) have led to the most heinous and tragic events in human history, it is just as necessary to acknowledge some types and degrees of conflict lead to growth, discovery, and advancement—so not all conflict is destructive; there is a spectrum. The focus of this study concerns religious-based conflicts, or the elements of conflict, that *are* harmful and unwanted.

Over the past century as the professional field of conflict analysis and resolution has developed, there has been no lasting consensus on the nature, cause, or grounds for conflict—though there are dominant, if not competing, theories. The theories are as diverse as the academic disciplines represented in the field of conflict resolution, where researchers and practitioners have credentials as sociologists, psychologists, political scientists, economists, philosophers, theologians, health professionals, and peacebuilders, to name only a few. Varieties of basic human needs theories—some that include *meaning, identity, and dignity* in this category—limited resource theories, Marxist theories, critical theories, and multi-cultural and post-modern theories are among those influencing practitioners' understandings of the *nature* of conflict. This present study will examine a few theories and models formed on the basis of positivist, basic human needs theories, but also a few that more closely correspond to critical and post-modernist theories. An assumption throughout the study is while scientific-positivist instruments remain helpful to practitioners, no universalizing principle accurately captures reality,

and, therefore, practitioners are required to remain agile and nimble in both assessing and attending to conflicts. The most responsible and successful practitioners will be aware of and draw from the various resources appropriate to a given conflict. To act otherwise in the face of the world's richest wisdom is arrogantly and painfully foolish.

Two recent contributions to our understanding of conflict are Steven Pinker's *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence has Declined* and Karen Armstrong's *Fields of Blood: Religion and the History of Violence*. Both scholars draw on an abundance of data and historical traditions to challenge popular assumptions about violence. Their work is critically acclaimed yet provocative and not without opponents. Their work not only makes for an interesting approach to thinking about religious-based conflict, but it will also serve nicely as a segue into the body of the present study.

An experimental psychologist and cognitive scientist, Steven Pinker finds historical data to support his thesis that, contrary to popular opinion, violence in the past century or so is actually on the decline. He also discovers in history an explanation for this conclusion. A psychological understanding of violence corrects the assumption that humans experience an inner build-up of aggression over time and must systematically release their aggression. But aggression is not a single motive, let alone a mounting urge. Pinker explains aggression "is the output of several psychological systems that differ in their environmental triggers, their internal logic, their neurobiological basis, and their social distribution."² He describes these as *inner demons* and identifies five of them:

² Pinker, Steven. *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence has Declined* (New York: Penguin, 2011), xxv.

predatory or instrumental violence, dominance, revenge, sadism, and ideology. When it comes to religion, Pinker is fairly critical.

Individual people have no shortage of selfish motives for violence. But the really big body counts in history pile up when a large number of people carry out a motive that transcends any one of them: an ideology. . . . The infinite good it promises prevents its true believers from cutting a deal. It allows any number of eggs to be broken to make the utopian omelet. And it renders opponents of the ideology infinitely evil and hence deserving of infinite punishment.³

Pinker acknowledges religion has its benefits, but he also seems to imply these benefits may be acquired by means less dangerous.⁴

Humans are neither innately evil nor good. Pinker's four *better angels* counter his five inner demons. These "angels"—*empathy, self-control, moral sense, and reason*—help orient humans away from violence and toward cooperation and general concern for the Other. All four better angels are factors in religious-based conflict, especially empathy. Pinker commends historian Lynn Hunt as a champion of reading "fiction as an empathy expander and a force toward humanitarian progress."⁵ Directly relevant to the present study in general, and Chapter Five's examination of Gadamer's hermeneutical theory and interreligious dialogue in particular, Hunt summarizes her thesis in the following manner:

My argument depends on the notion that reading accounts of torture or epistolary novels had physical effects that translated into brain changes and came back out as new concepts about the organization of social and political life. . . . I am insisting that any account of historical change must in the end account for the alteration of individual minds. For human rights

³ Ibid., 556.

⁴ Ibid., 556-569.

⁵ Ibid., 589.

to become self-evident, ordinary people had to have new understandings that came from new kinds of feelings.⁶

Hunt's explanation that the concept of human rights developed as Eighteenth Century European readers began to identify with others very different from themselves not only speaks to the nature of empathy, but an effective strategy for attending to conflict, especially between parties of religious-based conflict who often see one another as altogether alien.

Though he examines the possibility that the human genome has evolved to become less violent, Pinker's focus remains on transformations that are strictly environmental. While not disagreeing with Pinker's explanation that many atrocities have resulted from religious fervor, many will sense Pinker paints religion with too broad a brush. It would be foolish to argue his better angels could somehow be separated from the influence of the world's many religious traditions and impulses, a fact Pinker hints at, though never quite admits. Pinker cites multiple experiments and studies to demonstrate empathy's crucial role in the decline of violence; humans have learned it is in their best interest to develop and practice concern for others; it "can mitigate self-defeating exploitation and costly retaliation."⁷ Pinker admires Peter Singer's hypothesis of an expanding circle of empathy by which a person becomes progressively more concerned with others.⁸ However, to "hope the human empathy gradient can be flattened so much that strangers would mean as much to us as family and friends is utopian in the worst 20th

⁶ Hunt, Lynn. *Inventing Human Rights: A History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2007), 33-34.

⁷ Pinker, 585.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 580.

century sense.”⁹ In the final analysis, empathy is limited; it is a means to an end. Its “ultimate goal should be policies and norms that become second nature and render empathy unnecessary.”¹⁰

Where Pinker’s argument addresses the history of violence in general, Karen Armstrong’s thesis challenges popular assumptions about the relationship *between* violence and religion—one for which Pinker, himself, argues. Armstrong looks to the abundance of evidence from history to counter the claim that religion is a source of aggression, intolerance, and divisiveness, and that it is bad for society. Such an idea seems to be carrying weight in the mind of many in today’s society, evidenced by the decline in the United States by those who identify themselves as religious. Armstrong demonstrates time-and-again that until relatively recently, religious and political experience, ideals, and authority were existentially inseparable. Strong and clearly articulated traditions of both peace or pacifism and war or violence exist within all the religious traditions. It is Armstrong’s claim that which of the two surfaces at any given point in time depends more on political issues, than religious ones—or to be more precise, how leaders of a geographic area choose to use the utilize the religious tradition to serve their notions of advancement.

Armstrong credits legendary religious leaders such as Ashoka, Confucius, Mahavira, and the Buddha—as well as Jewish, Christian, and Muslim greats—for advancing the liberating and resilient notion of empathy and helping to transform their

⁹ Ibid., 591.

¹⁰ Ibid., 592.

oppressive and violent societies. Reminiscent of Pinker's critique of how many apply Singer's hypothesis above, Armstrong describes a similar resistance in Confucius' time: "Later philosophers criticized Confucius for concentrating too exclusively upon the family, but Confucius saw each person as the center of a constantly growing series of concentric circles to which he or she must relate cultivating a sympathy that went beyond the claims of family, class, state, or race."¹¹ The lessons a person learns within her family teaches her how to "feel empathy for more and more people" until she and others ultimately dismantle the "structural violence" within which human society is framed.¹²

Armstrong concludes her study with the following summary: "We have seen that, like the weather, religion 'does lots of different things.' To claim that it has a single, unchanging, and inherently violent essence is not accurate. Identical religious beliefs and practices have inspired diametrically opposed courses of action."¹³ Armstrong does not criticize the various movements and impulses that lead to the modern concept of religious freedom and more specifically the separation of religion and government. She merely sets up historical evidence in such a way as to demonstrate that for both the ancients and those in the middle and early modern ages, separating the secular and the sacred was unimaginable, because it was impossible. "We are all", Armstrong argues, "religious and secularist alike, responsible for the current predicament of the world. There is no state,

¹¹ Armstrong, Karen. *Fields of Blood: Religion and the History of Violence* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf), 2014, 90.

¹² Ibid. Armstrong uses the term "structural violence", introduced by Johan Galtung in 1969, on nearly every other page of her 400 page study. That she fails to reference him is less of an indictment on her scholarship than it is a testament of how thoroughly his ideas have permeated the larger culture.

¹³ Ibid., 393.

however idealistic and however great its achievements that has not incurred the taint of the warrior.”¹⁴ If we are to avoid losing our humanity, we must learn to do what religion does at its best. Though unimaginably difficult, it is far more conceivable that religious traditions are nurtured and developed to progressively enhance peace and deemphasize violent conflict than it is to “imagine” the world free of religion.

We now turn to the types of religious-based conflict a chaplain can expect to encounter on the battlefield. While its subject is theory, the aim of this study is entirely one of praxis and practicality. Because a military chaplain can be assigned to any type of unit, she practices in a wide variety of settings throughout her career. Furthermore, whether special forces, combat arms, or combat service support, units are either training for or deployed to an operational environment. Military operations fall under six categories or progressive stages:

- 0: Shape the Environment
- 1: Deter the Enemy
- 2: Seize the Initiative
- 3: Dominate the Enemy
- 4: Stabilize the Environment
- 5: Enable Civil Authority¹⁵

While military chaplains are present with military forces at every stage of military operations, they remain the strictest of non-combatants, the only military members in any of the branches of service in the United States prohibited from carrying a firearm. Even military medical doctors—who in their professional role have taken the Hippocratic Oath

¹⁴ Ibid., 401.

¹⁵ Military operations *other than war* include disaster relief and peacekeeping missions.

to *First, do no harm*—are issued and carry a personal weapon.¹⁶ Chaplains’ multiple duties concern the military member in operations. Chaplains, especially Army chaplains, approach their duty to care as a *ministry of presence*, what some have characterized as “muddy boots” ministry: chaplains go where soldiers go. And yet there *are* limited opportunities for chaplains to have a role in stabilizing the environment (category 4), and enabling civil authority (category 5). Though minor compared to the amount of overall time and energy devoted directly to soldier care, chaplains’ role in enabling civil authority can be significant to mission success. This enabling takes place when meeting with local leaders, and especially religious leaders, when assisting in humanitarian missions. Chaplains have assisted in these ways, for example, while working together with imams and mullahs in Iraq and Afghanistan and imams and priests in Bosnia. It must be emphasized that chaplains’ non-combatant status applies to every element of traditional *and* counter-insurgency operations; while chaplains are fully aware of operational details, they *do not* participate in executing the mission, to include

¹⁶ If the reader has difficulty processing this, there are at least three ways of understanding this policy; only the first is official. First, according to the Geneva Convention, and more specifically by order of each branch’s Chief of Chaplains, chaplains are designated as non-combatants *and* must neither carry nor train with firearms. Unofficially, and for both pragmatic and ideological purposes, the military has often had difficulty staffing chaplains from the more liturgical Christian traditions and denominations that also tend to be pacifist in doctrine, if not practice. Without the support of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA, for instance, the military would have no chaplain priests to attend to the religious needs of many of its service members and their families. Finally, although an active duty Army chaplain, I, like some chaplains, have prior military service in the combat arms. I am capable of defending myself with a weapon. As one might imagine, this prohibition confuses many military members. When asked by a Soldier or Marine for an explanation I sometimes explain that I forfeit my Second Amendment rights in order to protect their First Amendment rights.

information gathering. Psychological Operations (PsyOps) and Civil Affairs (CA) are separate and independent branches of each of the U.S. Armed Forces (though, to be sure, these military units are also assigned chaplains to care for their soldiers).

During my first deployment to a combat zone (Takrit and Samara, Iraq) military operations were almost exclusively focused on dominating the enemy (category 3).

However, my second deployment to Ramadi, Iraq for a period of fifteen months spanned from categories 3 to 5. A May 2006 article in *Time* magazine described Ramadi in these terms:

There is no reason to believe that Americans' battle against Iraqi insurgents is going to get better . . . parts of Iraq remain as deadly as ever. Nowhere is the fighting more intense than in Ramadi, the capital of Anbar province and for the moment the seething heart of the Sunni-led insurgency.¹⁷

Similarly, Thomas Ricks, writing for the *Washington Post*, reported, "the prospects for securing that country's Anbar province are dim and that there is almost nothing the U.S. military can do to improve the political and social situation there."¹⁸ This was the general consensus before "the Surge". As one might expect, from such grim, journalistic descriptions, the first several months of our deployment to Ramadi were highly kinetic. Not a single day passed without multiple reports of significant activity on the battlefield ranging from small-arms firefights with al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) insurgents to sniper activity, on the one hand, and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) buried in the streets to car bombs or vehicle-borne explosive devices (VBIEDs) and suicide bombers, on the

¹⁷ Ware, Michael. "The Most Dangerous Place," *Time*. May 21, 2006, 21.

¹⁸ Ricks, Thomas. "Situation Called Dire in West Iraq, Anbar is Lost Politically, Marine Analyst Says," *Washington Post*. September 11, 2006, A01.

other. Indeed, just as Coalition and Iraqi military¹⁹ and police forces were killed and wounded on the battlefield that was the City of Ramadi, casualties obviously also included many of the city's citizens. The capital of al-Anbar was in chaos.

Certain tribal leaders' responded to the threat of AQI having established its headquarters in their province's capital, which was quickly labeled the *Anbar Awakening*. Not without its problems and blemishes, the Awakening resulted in a cooperative endeavor between Anbaris and Coalition forces that witnessed AQI defeated and expelled in the area, the environment stabilized, and civil authority re-established through a democratic election process. In a matter of months the deadly streets of Ramadi were again teeming with markets, school children, and construction teams, secured by a trusted, local police force. The change happened rapidly.

In May 2007, my Commander, Lieutenant Colonel Mike Silverman, introduced me to the tribal sheikh in our unit's area of operations, Sheikh Heiss. (See Figure 1.1.) The meeting went well and led to subsequent meetings with the imams of the area, including Sheikh Abdullah Jalal al Faraji, who was the director of the province's Sunni dowry and also the sheikh of his local tribe. Several formal dialogues ensued, where Abdullah and I learned about one another's families and backgrounds. We discussed our religious beliefs and practices only summarily. Once relationships of respect and trust were established, we spent the majority of our time planning initiatives we hoped would further stabilize the region. (See Figure 1.2.) Together Sheikh Abdullah and I trained

¹⁹ By this time, the term *Coalition* applied to Iraqi forces too. I separate them here merely to stress the level of cooperation.

Coalition force company, platoon, and squad level leaders working with Iraqi Army and Police how to best accommodate these practicing Muslims' observance of Ramadan. During the month of Ramadan (a time when generosity and hospitality are especially honorable), we organized humanitarian relief missions for local imams to help distribute food and medical supplies and community leaders to help distribute educational supplies (collected and shipped to us by elementary school children in the U.S.) to principals and teachers of local schools. This is not to imply a purely noble or altruistic motive was at play, nor that such assistance was not mired with ethical or political problems, only that these activities were drastically less destructive than those that occurred only a few months prior and that they helped empower the community's many leaders.

It must be clear that while I am honored to have played a significant role in the Anbar Awakening, mine was merely one of *many* uniformed and civilian efforts to stabilize the area for peace. To document my role, I cite my commander's published account:

Nathan and Abdullah became strong colleagues, and Nathan wound up meeting regularly with a group of imams. We didn't hide his actions; in fact, we shared them with the office of the U.S. Army's Chief of Chaplains. . . . Abdullah and Nathan found a way to truly bring my soldiers and the community so close during Ramadan that there would be no room for insurgents to come between us. The ingenious plan centered on the Muslim tradition of providing food for the poor during Ramadan, and had imams, IPs [Iraqi Police], sheikhs, and Americans providing humanitarian relief supplies to the poor areas in Jazzera during the holy month—sheer genius. By the end of the month, we had gained support

from thousands of Anbaris who were still, up to then, sitting on the fence.²⁰

My experience remains one of many exemplary reports of chaplains engaging religious leaders on the battlefield. It is shared to provide the reader with a concrete sense of one of the more common contexts chaplains might utilize the instruments and theories analyzed in this study.

²⁰ Silverman, Michael. *Awakening Victory: How Iraqi Tribes and American Troops Reclaimed al Anbar Province and Defeated al Qaeda in Iraq* (Philadelphia: Casemate, 2011), 259.



Figure 1.1 Meeting Sheikh Heiss. In May 2007, my Commander, Lieutenant Colonel Mike Silverman, introduced me to the tribal sheikh in our unit's area of operations, Sheikh Heiss. In addition to what seemed like small talk, our conversation concerned the role of any leader—political, military, or religious—to remember his place before God. Humility was a value Sheikh Heiss valued. Our meeting must have pleased him. During our follow-up meeting he introduced me to one of the principal imams in the region, Abdullah Jalal al Faraji.



Figure 1.2 Dialogue with Imam and Sheikh Abdullah Jalal al Faraji. After Sheikh Heiss introduced us in May 2007, Sheikh Abdullah and I meet regularly. We almost always had a translator, this instance was one of the rare times we did not. Abdullah was surprisingly candid and naturally inquisitive. We met one-on-one on at least ten occasions and with his subordinate imams on three separate occasions, each visit lasted between two to five hours. We met at least five times to plan training programs and humanitarian missions and probably another ten times to oversee the missions.

Because the tone of the above report on Ramadi is decidedly optimistic, it bears mentioning that during the composition of this study, Ramadi has fallen to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), also referred to as the Islamic State in the Levant (ISIL), or just simply the Islamic State. Like any human state of being, success, however significant, is temporary. And yet we must strive for better, more lasting, success in the face of challenges and dilemmas.

Chaplains directed by their combat commanders to engage local religious leaders frequently have little formal training to inform their mission. Chaplains' responsibilities cover so many areas, and their training takes place over the course of their careers. Most responsibilities address soldier (and family member) mission readiness and resiliency, especially as it relates to religious needs, healthy relationships, and morale. Chaplains also play a critical role in counseling and training soldiers. Chaplains are also expected to be their commanders' "subject matter experts" on all issues relating to religion, ethics, culture, and morale. The logistical challenge to train chaplains during wartime sometimes results in chaplains receiving training for scenarios only *after* they occur, as was the case for me.²¹ If they are fortunate, deploying chaplains may have power point presentations reporting examples of what has worked for other chaplains in other areas. Fewer still have the opportunity to continue what their geographic predecessors began, and will have a brief opportunity to learn from these chaplains *before* these deployed

²¹ I received six months of formal training at the USACHCS in 2011, after serving as a chaplain for 7 years. (My four months of initial training occurred in 2004.) My combat deployments occurred in 2005 and 2007-2008. This is one of the reasons more senior chaplains with formal training are preferred for such tasks, but the ideal and the reality do not always correspond.

chaplains redeploy and leave their replacements to continue the mission. In recent years, part of the emphasis to continue to improve training has been to bring chaplains back to USACHCS *sooner* in their careers for intermediate training. This means chaplains now return after serving about four years or two assignments, rather than six-to-eight years and three or four assignments. The formal training related to engaging local religious leaders emphasizes Army doctrine and the cultural resources available to chaplains, such as the Central Intelligence Agency's World Factbook.²²

One of the implied implications for my formal training at George Mason University's School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution is discovering meaningful applications for theory in the chaplain's role on the battlefield. Familiarization with the theologies examined in Chapter 2 will assist chaplains in determining the grounds and their own tradition's resources available to them when engaging the religious Other. Absent these, it is more likely a chaplain will experience an internal dilemma and resistance to such cooperative engagement. Chapters 3 and 4 provide chaplains relatively concrete terminology and theory for analyzing religious-based conflict and exploring promising strategies for ways forward. Chapter 5 allows chaplains the freedom to be more reflective of the larger context and the many parts that constitute the *happening of understanding*. Such awareness can only lead to more responsible reflection *and* practice. While other theories exist, the ones examined here are those I judge will be most helpful to the chaplain on the battlefield. Whether the religious dilemma (resulting from the relationship between divinity, the individual, and her neighbor), the

²² <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

philosophical dilemma (involving the subject-object split we have inherited from Plato), the scientific dilemma (concerning the relationship between fact, truth, and goodness), or the socio-political dilemma (concerning the tradeoffs made between freedom and security)—it seems right to say the nature and any hope of rising above violent conflict is found not by *solving* these dilemmas but in discovering the simpler, yet transcendent, direction that awaits us in their creative tensions. If so, there is hope that conflict may not be so much a problem we solve as a condition we transcend.

CHAPTER 2: THEOLOGIES OF THE OTHER

This chapter summarizes Jewish, Christian, and Muslim theologies addressing concerns for the outsider. An attempt will be made not merely to attend to the unique concerns of each tradition but also to respectfully convey the “voice” of the three theologians. These theologians’ approaches will be carefully summarized and analyzed, but they are only a sample of the wide diversity within each tradition. Chaplains do well to remember such diversity but also to resist the tendency to over-simplify others’ beliefs and jump to conclusions and simplistic labeling. Identifying others’ theologies, if such is even possible, is *secondary* to the task of being aware of one’s own theology for relating to the religious Other. We examine theories/theologies of the Other—as it relates to a chaplain’s own paradigm—before we look at the instruments and theories concerning others. The following summarizes in detail the positions of David Novak, a Jew—Paul Knitter, a Christian—and Abdulaziz Sachadina, a Muslim.

Novak: Theological Grounds for Dialogue

David Novak’s²³ theory for Jewish-Christian dialogue is aimed at discovering the theological grounds that justify this ethical task. He is concerned with each community’s

²³ David Novak is a scholar of Jewish law, ethics, and theology. He wrote the primary text informing this section while Professor of Religion at the University of Virginia.

ability and *responsibility*. These grounds for engaging the outsider must be informed by one's own tradition. Novak is confident that each of the Abrahamic traditions has the ability, the internal resources, to inform one's engagement of the Other, the outsider. As a Jew, Novak presents a justification informed by his tradition he hopes will serve as a template that helps his interlocutors fashion their own justifications and theories in Christian, if not also Muslim terms. Whatever one's end product might be, Novak insists it is imperative that one's approach to dialogue avoids caricaturizing the Other; the *minimal condition* for dialogue to be successful is that each party must be able to see herself (and her tradition) in the Other's description of her. Constrained by each tradition's respective revelation, the most each party can hope to achieve in dialogue, the *maximal condition*, is working alongside the Other on issues of shared, public interest. The following is a closer look at the Novak's justification and theory.

Novak frames his argument in response to traditional Jewish objections to Jewish-Christian dialogue on the one hand, and to secularism's rejection of religion's role in public dialogue, on the other.²⁴ Only after one successfully confronts such objections is one then free to "proceed to the positive theological task" of dialogue.²⁵ Since "many—

²⁴ Should one forget Novak's context and audience, one is prone to read an unwarranted pessimism in his tone. Published in 1987, Novak's argument clearly reflects the social concerns of the time. However, one makes a mistake disregarding Novak's position as dated or old-fashioned since it is capable of providing both articulation and authority, for many Jews, Christians, and Muslims today. See Novak's *Curriculum Vitea* to appreciate his most recent contributions to theological ethics and interreligious dialogue: <http://religion.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/CV-Novak-2014.pdf>

²⁵ Novak, David. *Jewish-Christian Dialogue: A Jewish Justification* (New York: Oxford UP) 1987, 3.

probably most²⁶ of Novak's Jewish *traditionalists* are opposed to Jewish-Christian dialogue his task is not only fundamental but urgent. These traditionalists fall within three general categories. The first assumes a society and culture historically consistent with the medieval world, wherein Christians continue to relate to Jews merely "to force them or to seduce them . . . into submission to Christianity."²⁷ This group is not anti-Christian as much as it is lamenting a non-Jewish world. For them, "No value at all is seen in Jews being engaged with non-Jews."²⁸ Framing their understanding of dialogue against the history of the Holocaust, Novak's second group of Jewish traditionalists can only see dialogue as "group masochism";²⁹ "Jews can relate to any non-Jews *except* Christians."³⁰ Upon closer inspection, this second group seems to reject the moral authority of religion in favor of secularism, something Novak categorically detests for reasons we will see below. The third group of traditionalists is milder; it sees some limited value of relations with non-Jews. While Novak shares the view that a "metaphysical gap" exists between the religious community and the world at large, such that there is a sense in which the religious cannot be understood from a purely secular paradigm, he rejects the claim that only when religion is "consciously kept out of the discussion may Jews converse and work with the world at large."³¹ Such a context is artificially contrived; secularism is categorically at odds with *any* religious community,

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid., 4.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., 5.

³⁰ Ibid., 6.

³¹ Ibid., 7.

so that “when the faithful remain silent, secularism wins by default.”³² Operating on a “dual truth standard . . . [upon which] singular truth and general truth are mutually exclusive”,³³ when traditionalist Jews refuse to engage in interreligious dialogue, especially that which informs public interests, then these important issues will, by default, be forfeited to “Jews far less committed to the authority of the Torah [and will] be ‘Judaism’s spokespersons’.”³⁴

Secularism, in general, and its claims regarding dialogue, in particular, threatens both Judaism and Christianity. Security needs in the midst of a diverse society serve the basis of what Novak sees as secularism’s argument for bracketing religious commitments in the process of dialogue with the Other. To the common claim that secularism is safe, even ideal, because it is a neutral space for all participants, Novak counters with a resounding, No! Jews and Christians cannot participate in such a space when the terms of such participation require participants to be what they are not; no religious participant can recognize herself in secularism’s account of her. Furthermore, an ideologically-free context is an ontological impossibility. While “such bracketing might be necessary”³⁵—at least to the extent that no one community becomes the basis for all others in a contemporary society—religion must, however, remain an active component if both Jews and Christians are to avoid myopia and instead approach the “horizon of the Jewish-Christian relationship” so that together they are “able to constitute a role for humankind

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., 8.

³⁴ Ibid., 9.

³⁵ Ibid., 12.

as a whole.”³⁶ While Novak can be read as a rigid maintainer of religious boundaries, this is one instance in which his theology conveys a fairly generous and optimistic tone. Indeed, Novak proclaims, “We cannot simply return to our respective covenants for an immediate alternative to secular universalism.”³⁷ A theological ethics concerned with the world writ large mandates an interreligious dialogue if Jews and Christians are to discover together shared, social interests.

Having formed arguments against his fellow Jewish traditionalists and also secularism, next Novak turns his attention to the even more fundamental question of whether one *could* relate to the religious Other before he dedicates his focus on the task of discovering whether one *should* relate to the religious Other. In light of the triumphalist and supersessionist history of Jews and Christians relating to one another,³⁸ Novak argues, dialogue is “too revolutionary” to “be taken for granted”; he insists on the need to “carefully . . . distinguish between authentic and inauthentic” dialogue.³⁹ In short, authentic dialogue is that which is theological; participants’ motivation, justification, and conversation must be informed by their religious traditions. Phenomenologically and existentially speaking, traditions are understood as communities who are bound by covenant in response to *the* revelation God has spoken exclusively to each community and to no one else. This theological and phenomenological claim is central to Novak’s theory of dialogue:

³⁶ Ibid., 13.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Admittedly, while this is a two-way street, history documents as horrifically disproportionate Christians’ misunderstanding and mistreatment of Jews.

³⁹ Ibid., 14.

It is correct to assert that neither Judaism nor Christianity (nor any other religion) can authentically claim the truth as its own original possession. That type of theological arrogance is religiously insufferable. Nevertheless, the doctrine of revelation, which Judaism and Christianity affirm, enables each community to claim that it is *uniquely related* to the truth, that it has received a revelation of the truth from God unlike that of any other community.⁴⁰

And yet Novak is firm in insisting that such a doctrine of revelation precludes religious relativism in favor of a mutual exclusivity. “Christianity”, Novak asserts, “is no less exclusivistic in its claims [than Judaism]. Thus relativism on the part of either Jews or Christians is as inauthentic about its own faith as it is about the faith of the other.”⁴¹

Novak summarizes and critiques accounts of seminal figures in Judaism who sought grounds for Jewish-Christian relations, namely Maimonides, Martin Buber, and Franz Rosenweig. This allows Novak to set what he contends are the necessary conditions for a Jewish-Christian dialogue. Maimonides argued studying the Bible and philosophical monotheism were the appropriate and legitimate means for Jews to relate to Christians and Muslims, respectively.⁴² And yet Novak concedes that Maimonides’ approach was essentially an effort to reframe Jews’ task as missionaries to non-Jews. Not only would Christians and Muslims fail to recognize themselves in Maimonides’ descriptions of them, but neither would most Jews recognize their own tradition as Maimonides had reframed it. This said, Novak finds commendable Maimonides’ search for a grounds for relating to the non-Jew.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 17.

⁴¹ Ibid., 18.

⁴² Ibid., 66.

Writing in the Twentieth Century, Martin Buber discovers in the person of Jesus a need to “transcend the limitations” of law in both Judaism and Christianity.⁴³ Neither Jews nor Christians get it right when it comes to Jesus; both reduce him to dogmatics, the former making too little of him, the latter too much. Worse still, traditional Christians’ view of Jesus as mediator disrupts the immediacy of Buber’s *I-Thou* relationship between human and divine.⁴⁴ Novak finds Buber’s account of laws and commandments wanting: “The proper constitution of the commandment is a *precondition of the dialogue*.”⁴⁵ As such, Novak concludes that Buber failed to establish the grounds for “a durable dialogue” between Jews and Christians.⁴⁶ Emphasizing the subject or individual Jew at the expense of the object or revealed God of creation results in commandments that are reduced to *human projections* and the converse reduces them to mere *behavior*. God’s revealed law constitutes Jews’ relationship with God, informing all Jewish activity, including dialogue.

Franz Rosenweig established the basis of Jewish-Christian relationship in a Hegelian view of history.⁴⁷ With a conviction that any religion must be revealed from a transcendent God, Rosenweig was similarly alarmed by explanations that reduced the individual human to something that dissolves into a larger whole rather than maintaining the individual in direct relationship with God. At Hegel’s culmination of history,

⁴³ Ibid., 81.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 87.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 91.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 92.

⁴⁷ G.W.F. Hegel’s philosophy of history is framed in the Platonic tradition of a thesis and antithesis in confrontation and raised in a new synthesis and onward to the ultimate and culminating ideal of history. It is instrumental in this and Chapter 5. A general understanding of Hegel’s thought is assumed.

Rosenweig expects God will remain transcendent. Jews and Christians, on the other hand, are to remain “particular”⁴⁸ and “distinct”⁴⁹ until that culminating point, at which time “on the horizon of the final redemption [there] will be a relationship in which both will converge and be simultaneously overcome. These differences will be negated in a third, as yet unemerged, historical reality.”⁵⁰ Novak is compelled to ask whether Rosenweig is describing a relationship that involves communities actually *relating* to one another? Indeed, Rosenweig insists that in the present age Jews and Christians are obliged to consider one another with “enmity” and “denies any positive area of common interaction between the two faiths”.⁵¹ Since *relating* seems beyond the realm of possibility—whether in this present age or at the culmination of history when the two communities will synthesize into an entirely new community—it follows that dialogue is similarly impossible. Novak concludes, “Authentic dialogue must have a common-situation-between and not just a common-threat-without.”⁵²

Finally at the ethical and central component of his task, which at first resembles his theological concerns, Novak insists that dialogue must be religiously legitimate. It is not enough to ensure one’s own religious legitimacy; each participant must also conduct “the hard theological work” to establish “mutual recognition of each other’s religious legitimacy, [without which] there can be no dialogue at all.”⁵³ Furthermore, each Jew

⁴⁸ Ibid., 101.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 105.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid., 112.

⁵² Ibid., 113.

⁵³ Ibid., 56.

must be informed by her tradition, meaning the divine revelation and consequent covenant that define and give life to her tradition. Specifically, she is required to look to the source of that tradition, in this case the *Torah* or Hebrew Scriptures and the subsequent *Rabbinic* or legal tradition associated with it. Looking to the tradition's linguistic and ethical grammar of the Other, Novak finds instructive the distinction between *neighbor* and *stranger*. Since the Rabbinic tradition's use of neighbor refers to one's fellow Jew, Novak turns his focus to the biblical *Ger*, a positive connotation of *stranger*. The stranger is the basis for the Rabbinic and ethical concept of the *Noahide*: a category of person obligated to ethical standards on her own initiative. She is a *Gentile*, a non-Jew. She is a monotheist, not idolatrous. She obeys the seven laws that resemble the Decalogue and include the responsibility to establish courts to enforce these laws. These allow for accountability and the minimal standard of precluding any act one would not want another to do to her. She stands before God apart from, and as a non-recipient of, the Jewish revelation. She operates on the basis of her conscience, a sort of natural law, independent of the Jewish tradition and its legal role and responsibility to enforce the tradition. Both Jew and Noahide live in a world where God is the legal authority.⁵⁴

Contrary to what others have claimed,⁵⁵ Novak insists that the Jewish doctrine of election or chosenness need not inform hostility toward non-Jews. To say that the Jews

⁵⁴ Ibid., Chapter 1: "The Doctrine of the Noahide Laws"

⁵⁵ A claim Armstrong also implicitly counters. In short, for more than two-hundred-years the argument has developed that monotheism, by its very nature—there is only one God, whom *we* worship, and *you* do not—is discursive and inherently intolerant. Among the more notable to make and develop this claim are David Hume, William James, Bertrand Russell, and Auguste Comte.

are elect is simply to say that God entered into a particular relationship with Jews; this says nothing negative about others, nor that God does not enter into covenant with others. Novak warns against bracketing revelation and election, especially because these are the sole resources for relationship with the Other. The Jew relates to the Jew differently than she relates to the non-Jew. To deny this, is to deny that God established the covenant relationship with Jews. For the Jews to do anything else makes no sense; it would be non-Jewish, for it is anti-nomianism. It is the *nomos* (or law) that is the centerpiece of Jewish life. A Jew must allow the law to inform, indeed define, her *covenantal* relationship with the *neighbor*; only then can she understand what the law has to say about the *stranger*. Novak argues that one is obliged by *first* tradition and *then* reason, to begin from the center and move outward, to start from the particular (one's tradition and community) and use the reason particular to her tradition to move to the general (the stranger or non-Jew).⁵⁶

Novak holds that the Noahide laws are the basis for minimal success in Jewish-Christian-Muslim relations, like any just society. The Noahide laws constitute a sort of negative natural law. Even before any distinctive revelation,⁵⁷ one perceives both that she is *not* God (though prior to revealed religion and covenant she does not yet know *who* God is) and what she ought *not to do*. Natural law points to revelation, though not to a particular revelation, but it is *not* secular. By working together these three communities

⁵⁶ Ibid., Chapters 1 and 6.

⁵⁷ The chronology is operative here. In the tradition's historical understanding, just as the Noahide laws preceded God's revelation of the law to Moses and God's consequent covenant with Israel, so too can the Noahide laws serve as a basic foundation between covenantal communities of revealed religions.

can ensure their fellow citizens follow at least these laws. The Noahide is the basis by which the Jew can relate to the non-Jew. The Jew can care for the stranger because they share an ethical system. This creates the conditions for dialogue. While this justification might be understood in terms of ontology (the nature of human relationships) and narrative (as it is tied to their shared ancestor, Noah), for Novak the justification is primarily, fundamentally, and existentially *legal*.

For dialogue to be authentic, Novak insists it must occur between parties informed by their respective religious traditions. But for all its potential, interreligious dialogue is constrained by what Novak sees as inherent, epistemological limits. The understanding of an outsider is limited exactly because she is an outsider. The phenomenon of knowing and understanding what it means to be Jewish occurs on the basis of Jewish experience and identity, which are defined by the experience of being a recipient or heir of the revelation and the covenant. Such knowledge “is an act of *insight*”; therefore, an outsider can never “directly understand the covenant intimacy” of the insider.⁵⁸ Insiders are “more intimately . . . related” to insiders than they are to outsiders; “the former relationship is more singular; the later more general.”⁵⁹ The task then, is for parties of authentic dialogue to strive first, to understand the Other, the outsider, in such a way that *the outsider could recognize herself in her interlocutor’s description of her and her tradition*. With this accomplished, Novak argues that participants in authentic dialogue must seek next to understand how the Other “stand[s]

⁵⁸ Ibid., 114.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

before [her] against the wider background of the world.”⁶⁰ Finally, while most would consider it obvious, it must be said that entering dialogue with the aim of proselytizing one’s interlocutor categorically disqualifies the dialogue as inauthentic. Because such dialogue would fail to be Platonic, its “disavowal has long been the indispensable precondition for Jewish-Christian dialogue.”⁶¹

In the final analysis, Novak’s theology for dialogue is influenced by Rosenweig’s eschatology. Jews and Christians share starting and ending points: creation and the final redemption. And “yet”, Novak argues, “we cannot deny that our appointed tasks in this world are very different and must remain so because the covenant is not the same for both of us. It is God alone who will bring us to our unknown destination in a time pleasing to him.”⁶² While the final redemption is in God’s hands, humanity’s survival requires our best efforts. Authentic Jewish-Christian dialogue could conceivably lead to peace in a world of strife and conflict. If so, it might serve as a model and as an inspiration to the rest of the human family, where “its very survival can only be the hope for its final redemption.”⁶³ Sharing the starting point of creatures in God’s creation, Jews, Christians (and presumably Muslims) are united by hope that God has “not abandoned us *or the world*. . . . The promised redemption is surely yet to come.”⁶⁴

Novak sets the conditions for a particular kind of dialogue, the only kind he believes to be authentic, which stands in contrast to how many think of it today. Novak’s

⁶⁰ Ibid., 115.

⁶¹ Ibid., 123-29.

⁶² Ibid., 155-56.

⁶³ Ibid., 156.

⁶⁴ Ibid. [Emphasis is mine.]

dialogue is essentially *political*, in that it creates the possibility for dialogue in the public square, and in this shared space it is ultimately aimed at identifying shared public interests and the extent to which parties can work together to achieve these interests. While Novak says nothing about dialogue with non-Abrahamic religious communities, the fact that his justification is tied to the tradition of Noah and that this provided a basis for a type of Natural Law leaves room for us to speculate whether Natural Law itself might serve as a basis for ethical dialogue in the public sphere? Of course, to satisfy Novak, this type of dialogue must leave room for the *religious* if it is to be *ethical*.

Let us consider whether a Jew and Buddhist may engage in authentic dialogue? Notwithstanding her non-theistic position, a Buddhist will certainly discover within her tradition a genuine affinity for Natural Law. Might we speak of a Jewish-Buddhist ethic based on “the common anthropological border”⁶⁵ just as Novak described the one that exists between Jews and Christians? While not a single one of the four theological affirmations shared between Jews and Christians Novak identifies falls within the tradition of Buddhism, might Jews and Buddhists discover their own borders and draw up similar theological affirmations? I suspect Novak would resist this on the basis that a Jew and a Buddhist lack the shared starting and ending points in their traditions, not to mention that the notion of *revelation* functions very differently in each. Even if God were *not* mentioned in the dialogue, the basis of the dialogue would not constitute a *theonomous morality*. It seems right that Novak would say while an affinity with Natural Law is a necessary condition, it is not a sufficient condition for authentic interreligious

⁶⁵ Ibid., 141.

dialogue. But this leaves us with the question on what basis Novak might argue Jews and Buddhists (or any other non-Abrahamic religious community) are to interact? It also seems right that Novak would want to argue for a religious grounds upon which Jews and Buddhists might relate to and live alongside one another. Unfortunately, it appears that Novak's theory for interreligious dialogue is contextualized by the Jewish-Christian dynamic such that he would have to turn to his tradition to construct not only a justification but a corresponding theory *each time* he is confronted with the possibility of interreligious dialogue with yet another religious tradition. It would have been more efficient and helpful had Novak provided and summarized the fundamental or universal elements of his theory. His Jewish audience might then adapt the theory to the justifications they worked out in anticipation of dialogue with interlocutors from the many religious traditions. Of course, all this assumes Novak would agree that Jews and Buddhists might participate in authentic interreligious dialogue.

But there seems to be an even more pressing concern that rises from an analysis of Novak's theory for authentic Jewish-Christian dialogue. While Novak maintains there must be a place for participants' religious traditions, convictions, and experiences within the dialogue, he insists, for example, that there are elements of what it means to be a recipient of the Jewish tradition and law that remains beyond the Christian's grasp to understand. The capability to reason and the opportunity to engage in open dialogue are insufficient to understand. Experience is needed. Once again, the type of experience is *in-sight*, which remains available only to insiders. If reason were sufficient to understand the revelation, then God's revelation is not essential. In light of the limitations for

understanding and relating to outsiders, one is compelled to wonder whether Novak's theory allows for insiders' adequate understanding and relationship with outsiders? Can a Jew recognize herself and her tradition in the description provided by the outsider with whom she is in dialogue, even though essential elements of what it means to be Jewish remains inaccessible to her interlocutor? The differences between Jew and non-Jew, neighbor and stranger, insider and outsider result in the ultimate limits upon the nature of how a Jew relates to others, namely she does so on the basis of respect, rather than love.

While I take issue with his ontological (what are humans and how do they relate to one another), epistemological (how knowledge of others is experienced), and ethical assumptions, Novak's theory is most problematic for its complete lack of identifying what he actually means by *dialogue*. While he provides a footnote to inform his reader that he rejects a "Buberian expression" in favor of one that resembles Levinas', who, in turn, was influenced by Husserl's dialogical structure⁶⁶, Novak's silence on this point leads me to suspect that his philosophical lineage, not only his religious tradition, has directly influenced his theory. Namely, Novak's thesis seems entrenched within a Cartesian paradigm where the subject and the object, the knower and the known, remain split. Such a separation has lasting implications on how humans are to understand their being, how they are to relate to one another, and even what constitutes right action. It would be satisfying to witness how Novak might refine his theory, if at all, following a critique from the philosophical traditions that seek for a recovery from such a dichotomy.

⁶⁶ Ibid., fn. 23, 159.

Can we imagine careful critiques from the likes of Heidegger, Gadamer, and Ricoeur influencing Novak's understanding of dialogue?

Such speculation aside, I believe the greatest contribution of Novak's theory is his criterion that parties must recognize themselves in their interlocutors' descriptions of them. Of course, while it is preferred parties are well informed by their traditions, the rigidness of such a requirement restricts the richness of what might otherwise be discovered about the traditions and our larger society when participants in interreligious dialogue might also include *former* Jews, those whose Jewishness is *more cultural* than religious, and those who were raised by parents with different faith backgrounds—to name a few diverse scenarios. Also, while I believe there are compelling epistemological arguments that the possibility of one's understanding of others is seriously limited, I do not believe this necessarily leads to Novak's tragic conclusion that insiders nature of relating to outsiders is limited to respect. And yet, in the final analysis—it just might be that in his theory of interreligious dialogue that mandates interlocutors must recognize themselves in the Others' descriptions of them—Novak's theory might also be understood as elevating our notion of mere “respect” to the level of what we might call “esteem”.

Finally, it must be appreciated that while Novak was providing a Jewish justification for a Jewish-Christian dialogue, his theory is discussed as if the Christian *is in the room*. The justification is thoroughly and exclusively Jewish, but the theory reflects the spirit of a generous dialogue. Novak knows that he cannot do the groundwork for Christians anymore than he can be in dialogue with himself; Christians

have a responsibility to do the work before, during, and after dialogue. And yet, by seeking to not only *justify the task*, but also to *uncover the theory* for how the Jew is to relate to her Christian interlocutor, Novak is demonstrating more concretely than most a hope that is grounded in the promise of a future redemption.

Knitter: Theological Models & the Grounds for Dialogue

The majority of U.S. military chaplains are Christian and will more likely discover the means for articulating their theory/theology for relating to the religious Other within the scope of Paul F. Knitter's⁶⁷ work. Once again, the present chapter is far more applicable to chaplains' self-awareness and also when dealing with one's fellow chaplains than it is identifying local religious leaders' ideologies. Here, Knitter surveys Christian theologies of religions that have developed in response to the growing sociological reality of religious diversity in contemporary societies. Knitter's introduction categorizes the varieties or models of Christian theologies of religions that have formed over time in various contexts. Because I cannot do it for them, I would invite adherents of non-Christian traditions to explore the usefulness of Knitter's models as a tool for identifying one's sense of relatedness to the religious Other. I suspect Knitter's categorization of models will make some contribution to every tradition, even though the models are admittedly Christian—or formed in response to Christian questions. Along these lines, and while throwing caution to the wind, the final analysis

⁶⁷ Paul F. Knitter is a Roman Catholic theologian and the Paul Tillich Professor of Theology, World Religions and Culture at Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York.

will consider to what extent we might see glimpses of Novak’s positions in those that follow. These models will provide structure for thinking about the grounds for interreligious activity. The four models have sometimes been referred to as exclusivist, inclusivist, pluralist, and relativist—although these terms are helpful only in the most general sense. A summary of the four models that define the current spectrum follows.⁶⁸ It should be noted that words such as “spectrum” and “continuum” can be misleading; the models do not always correspond linearly and one can sometimes detect overlap. (See Figures 2.1 and 2.2 below. These are my own creation to convey the sometimes overlapping nature of Knitter’s models.) Most importantly, please note the exclusive spaces and complete break between the mutuality and acceptance models and the overlapping boundaries of the replacement, acceptance, and fulfillment models. Also, I considered making the size of the spheres consistent with the approximate population of Christians corresponding to each, but this disparity would make it difficult to visually capture the overlapping nature as I estimate the following: replacement 80% (about 60% total and 20% partial); fulfillment 15%; mutuality 4%; and acceptance 1%. As will be seen below, the replacement and fulfillment models correspond to Christian traditions and denominations, whereas the mutuality and acceptance models correspond to academics, organizations, and activists, and are therefore much smaller in number, while

⁶⁸ It turns out, that even the names Knitter gives to his models are only helpful on the surface. Of this he laments in his conclusion: “I wanted the names I’ve given to them to be both reflective of what the model is about but also a neutral, or as nonjudgmental, as possible. Again, since names are always so contextually and subjectively loaded, I suspect that nomenclature didn’t succeed as well as I had hoped. (Perhaps I should have followed the advice of a friend and called my models *A*, *B*, *C*, and *D*.)” Knitter, 239.

disproportionately influential. In a few instances, the study breaks from Knitter to examine more closely individual theologians and official decrees from the Roman Catholic Church.

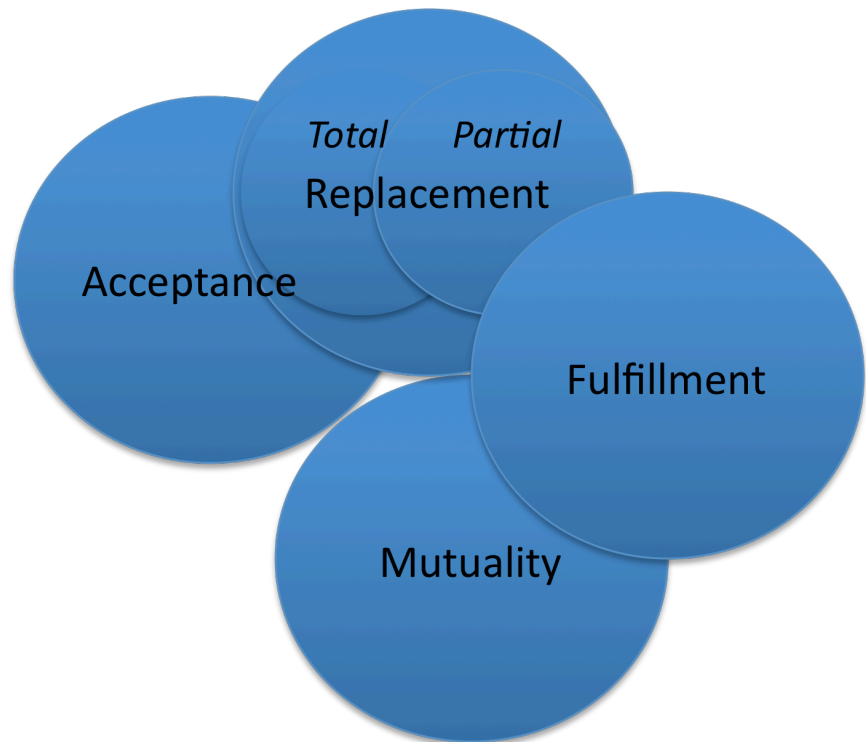


Figure 2.1 Knitter's Models for Interreligious Activity [spheres]



Figure 2.2 Knitter's Models for Interreligious Activity [continuum]

The Replacement Model

The first of these models is the replacement model, with its subcategories of total and partial replacement. It is the dominant model throughout most of Christian history. According to this model, Christianity is ultimately meant to replace all other religions. If the other religions have any value at all, it is only provisional. God's love is universal, extending to all—but that love is realized through the particular and singular community of Jesus Christ.

Those currently working from this model are largely conservative Protestants, or more commonly, *Evangelicals*; ⁶⁹ during the past century they have identified variously with the terms: *Fundamentalist*, *Evangelical*, *New Evangelical*, *Pentecostal*, or *Charismatic*. Those functioning from this model share, to a large extent, four basic beliefs: 1.) The Bible is the standard by which one judges truth. 2.) Believers exhibit a lifestyle of commitment and talk of being “born again”. 3.) Jesus is savior of humanity. 4.) This good news must be shared with everyone in the world, in an effort to convert them. Although it is commonly done, to dismiss this model as outdated is to hide from the fact that these attitudes *do* represent a strong, and increasingly louder, voice within the Christian population.⁷⁰ If dismissing the viewpoint of any community before one has understood its position is not troubling on principle alone, then perhaps self-interest will

⁶⁹ Christians in all traditions, denominations, and communions have been known to identify with the term, *Evangelical*.

⁷⁰ This takes on added significance when considering reports that fundamentalism is also growing in Hinduism, Judaism, and Islam. See: Emerson, Michael O. And David Hartman. “The Rise of Religious Fundamentalism”, in *Annual Review of Sociology*. Vol. 32, (2006), 127-144.

serve as a motivator when one considers that this particular community represents approximately one-third of the United States' population. Knitter sees his own reason to listen carefully to his Evangelical sisters and brothers, and warns: "Evangelicals are telling us something about humanity that we can forget only at our own peril, something that, because it is so uncomfortable, many Christians, humanists, scientists, New Agers tend to sweep under the rug of consciousness: as things stand presently, there is something wrong with us and the world."⁷¹

Contemporary articulation of the total replacement model has its foundation in scripture and theology. Scripture is cited to advance the belief that Jesus saves, and other religious leaders, practices, or beliefs do not. Perhaps no passage is cited more often than Acts 4:12:⁷² "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved."⁷³ The first three chapters of *The Epistle to the Romans* lay out the hopeless situation of all humans who are without Christ: "Ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made. So they are without excuse; for though they [Jews and Greeks] knew God, they did not honor him

⁷¹ Paul F. Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religions*. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2002), 51.

⁷² All biblical passages are taken from *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books: New Revised Standard Version*. eds. Bruce M. Metzger, Roland E. Murphy, et al. (New York: Oxford UP), 1994.

⁷³ See also 1 Cor. 3:11; 1 Tim. 2:5; John 14:6; 1 John 5:12.

as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their senseless minds were darkened.”⁷⁴

The theology of Karl Barth is instrumental in informing the total replacement model. For Evangelical Christians who function out of this model, the fundamental theological question is soteriological, and the answer is four-fold: humans are saved by *grace alone*, by *faith alone*, by *Christ alone*, and *scripture alone*. Barth decries all religion as unbelief and that which prevents us from trusting God to be God in Jesus. Unlike God’s self-revelation in Jesus, religion is a human creation that cannot save. Christianity, in classic paradox, is the true religion, because it is the only religion whose faithful adherents recognize their *religion* is inadequate to save them. There is little for Christians to relate to in other religions; there is no revelation, no saving grace, because there is no Jesus.⁷⁵ Interaction with the religious Other is justified by the possibility of convincing her that Jesus is savior; unless knowledge of other religious traditions serves this end, it is useless, even harmful. What the total replacement model advocates is a holy, evangelizing competition between the many religions and their respective truth claims. These are the only grounds for interreligious activity for those functioning from within the total replacement model. Many Evangelicals informed by this model are confident such a competition will result in Jesus as winner.

Evangelicals who consider the total replacement model too severe, have articulated a response to religious pluralism that Knitter calls “partial replacement”.

⁷⁴ Romans 1:20-21.

⁷⁵ Knitter, pp. 23-29. Knitter cites: Karl Barth. *Church Dogmatics vol. 1/2*. (Edinburgh: Clark), 1956.

These Evangelicals claim total replacement fails to detect God’s presence and revelation in the worlds of other religious traditions. This aspect of revelation has variously been referred to as “original revelation”, “creation revelation”, and more commonly, “general revelation”. God’s power and divine nature have always been universally available in the observation and experience of creation.

Like the former model the partial replacement model claims scriptural support.

To the Romans Paul wrote:

When Gentiles, who do not possess the law, do instinctively what the law requires, these, though not having the law, are a law to themselves. They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, to which their own conscience also bears witness; and their conflicting thoughts will accuse or perhaps excuse them on the day when, according to my gospel, God, through Jesus Christ, will judge the secret thoughts of all.⁷⁶

To the Athenians Paul announced:

From one ancestor he [God] made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us. For “In him we live and move and have our being”; as even some of your own poets have said, “For we too are his offspring.”⁷⁷

In the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel the *logos* is presented as the life giving force for the whole world, “and the life was the light of *all* people. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it.”⁷⁸ These and similar passages are often given in support of the partial replacement model, which is not so much a case that God has spoken and is speaking *to* others, but rather that God’s voice can be heard from *within* the

⁷⁶ Romans 2: 14-16.

⁷⁷ Acts 17: 26-28.

⁷⁸ John 1: 1-5.

traditions of the religious other, from movements of the heart and through the events of history.

Nor is this model without the support of influential theologians.⁷⁹ Paul Tillich explained that all humans experience the presence of God when they find themselves grasped by an “Ultimate Concern”. Humans experience this Ultimate Concern grasping us when we sense, feel, or believe that, no matter what, we are *accepted*. The challenge is to yield to this acceptance, and recognize we are in God’s care. Similarly, for Wolfhart Pannenberg, the acting, speaking presence of the Divine within all history can be observed in the various religious traditions. The history of religions for Pannenberg is the history of the appearing of the Divine Mystery, which is presupposed in the structure of human existence. God wills other religions; they are God’s representatives, tools by which God carries out the divine plan. This is quite a contrast with Barth’s view that all religion is void of the Divine.

However, while these theologians clearly declare that God reveals in other religions, they just as clearly state that God does not save in other religions. General revelation is insufficient for salvation for two fundamental reasons. First, salvation occurs because of, and is made known only by, Jesus. For these Christians salvation is not merely a deep oneness with God, or a sense of inner peace, but salvation is union *with* Christ; it is receiving the righteousness of God through faith in God’s special, self-

⁷⁹ Ibid., 35-41. Knitter cites: Paul Tillich, *Christianity and the Encounter of World Religions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), 4; Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 1:153-55; Tillich, *The Courage to Be* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952). Wolfhart Pannenberg, ed., *Revelation as History* (London: Macmillan, 1968), 1-158; Pannenberg, *Basic Questions in Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 2:112.

revelation in Jesus. Understood in such a way, it is clear there can be no salvation without Jesus. Second, despite all they know about the existence and love of God, adherents of other religions, to some extent, ultimately attempt to save themselves; they fail to yield their pride and trust that God is able to fulfill God's promises. Rather than allow good works to *follow* God's love, adherents of other religious traditions attempt to use good works to *earn* or *win* God's love.

More can be said regarding the grounds for interreligious activity for the partial replacement model than the total replacement model. Harold A. Netland, a respected Evangelical theologian, describes both the motive and the content of dialogue with adherents of other religions. Dialogue is a way of respecting one's fellow human beings, of loving one's neighbor. Dialogue can include such questions as: Why do participants want to speak? What presuppositions does each bring to the conversation? It can also be the means for combating stereotypes and correcting false notions, thus dissolving the prejudice and mistrust between adherents to different religious traditions. Interreligious dialogue can be a format to discuss common social and political concerns. Participants may engage in cooperative efforts to make their communities more peaceful.⁸⁰ However, the issue of salvation cannot, and must not, be ignored. It is disingenuous to be concerned for the *general* welfare of one's neighbor and ignore her *eternal* welfare. Non-Christian religions inadvertently prepare the way for the gospel; they provide questions, present incompetencies, or indicate directions, which only Jesus can answer,

⁸⁰ Ibid., 40-42. Knitter cites Harold A. Netland, *Dissonant Voices: Religious Pluralism and the Question of Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), 1991, 297-300.

fix, or guide. Differences cannot be overlooked. Evangelical Christians functioning from this model would consider it equally disingenuous to digress from evangelizing (persuading, inviting, attracting) to proselytizing (coercing, cajoling, condemning).⁸¹

The Fulfillment Model

Those functioning from within this model, a perspective sometimes referred to as inclusivist, see Christianity as the fulfillment of other religions. They seek to affirm the insights of the previous model, but continue along the present continuum in efforts to come to what they believe is a balanced understanding of other religious traditions. The general view is informed by theologies that give equal weight to the convictions that God's love is universal, extending to all peoples, but that it is also particular, made real in Jesus Christ. To varying degrees this model seems to represent the official, institutional positions of most mainline Christian institutions, where "mainline" describes Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant churches.⁸²

⁸¹ The above distinction between *evangelizing* and *proselytizing* is common. However, it is important to note that for some Christians the terms are synonymous, and *proselytizing* may even be more common. It seems fair to assume that regardless of terminology, for those functioning from within either sub-category of the replacement model, neither coercing, nor cajoling is appropriate. However, a distinction between total and partial fulfillment models may be that *condemning* the religious other is required by the former, and probably not even tolerated by the latter.

⁸² Confining a particular tradition or denomination to a single model is problematic for at least two reasons. First, traditions or denominations have long histories across which they have developed and likely reflect different aspects during different circumstances. An institution's position may also be situated between two of the models articulated here, or may even seem a composite of many. Second, institutions are not individuals, with their individual experiences and insights.

Examples of the fulfillment model extend to the early church Fathers. Jesus, the universal logos, is the One of whom all humankind partakes. In the early Christian church a concept of the *logos spermatikos* (the seed-like word), explained that even before Jesus, the logos was scattered throughout the world. Justin Martyr proclaimed that anyone who hears God's call in this universal *logos spermatikos* and tries to follow its lead is basically already a Christian, even though he or she has never heard of Jesus. Somewhat more forcefully, Tertullian declared that because of God's universal presence and call, the spirits of all humans are naturally Christian.⁸³ However, these accepting views were virtually overcome by Augustinian (replacement) theologies that would dominate the western Church until the sixteenth century.⁸⁴

The beginning of a shift in this view coincided with European exposure to the peoples of Asia and the western hemisphere, but also with the Council of Trent (1545-63). The shift is perceived as coming to conclusion during the first half of the twentieth century when theologians devised various concepts by which they could include within the church "holy pagans" outside the church. For example Jews, Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists who followed their conscience and loved their neighbor belonged to the "soul" of the church, or were "attached", "linked", or "related" to the church. Other theologians

⁸³ Ibid., 64-68. Knitter cites: Justin, *I Apologia*, 46; *II Apologia* 10, 13; Tertullian, *Apologia*, 17, 4-6.

⁸⁴ These theologies were encapsulated in the famous third century dictum, "Outside the church, no salvation", which was not aimed at outsiders, but meant for persons already within the church as a warning that if they had any thought of leaving, it would be at their eternal risk. However, after the fifth century and throughout the Middle Ages, this proclamation was directed at non-Christians to tell them that those who are not in the church are excluded from the blessings of heaven.

were slightly less accepting and argued the religious Other was an “imperfect”, “tendential”, or “potential” member of the church.⁸⁵

More recent expression and further articulation of this view are seen in two fundamental sources: the theology of Karl Rahner and the Second Vatican Council. Karl Rahner reasoned that because “God is love”⁸⁶, and God “desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth”,⁸⁷ God makes salvation possible for all people.⁸⁸ God’s love results in God’s communicating or revealing God’s self to all people, or giving saving grace to every person. Human nature is touched by the Divine; it is informed by divine grace; it is human to grasp for that which is better. Humans are finite beings capable of the infinite. As such, people can truly experience God and find salvation outside the church. God’s grace is active in and through other religious beliefs, practices, and rituals; God is drawing people to God’s self in and through other religions. Therefore, other religious traditions may be “ways of salvation”. The religious Other may be saved not despite her religious belief, practice, and rituals, but because of them.⁸⁹

Yet, so as not to ignore the concern for particularity, Rahner was also clear that all grace is Christ’s grace. Jesus is not the efficient cause of God’s saving love; such love has always been. Rather, Jesus is the final cause; in Jesus we see what God intends in

⁸⁵ Ibid., 67. Knitter cites: Maurice Emyan, *The Theology of Salvation* (Boston: St. Paul Editions), 1960, 167-81.

⁸⁶ 1 John 4:8b.

⁸⁷ 1 Timothy 2: 4.

⁸⁸ See also 2 Peter 3:9: “The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance.”

⁸⁹ Ibid., 68-72. Knitter cites: Karl Rahner, “Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions,” in *Theological Investigations* (Baltimore: Helicon Press) 1966, 5:115-34.

gracing all people with the Divine Spirit. Those graced in and through their own religions are also oriented toward the Christian church. They are, in a sense, already Christians and are directed toward what Christians have in Jesus; they simply do not realize it; they are anonymous Christians.⁹⁰

In sharing their good news Christians work *with* other people, not just *for* them, in order to become more fully aware of, and thus more committed to, others' identity as children of God. In becoming a follower of Jesus one assumes a greater responsibility for others rather than a greater advantage for oneself. Yet, because Jesus is the only final cause of salvation, those progressing through other religious traditions do not really know where they are going, or even who they really are. The purpose of other religious traditions is to be fulfilled by Christianity.

Similarly, the Second Vatican Council can be interpreted as a model of fulfillment. What the council had to say is most clearly contained within its Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions (*Nostra Aetate* [NA]),⁹¹ which summarizes briefly the basic teachings of and practices within Buddhism,

⁹⁰ Ibid., 72-74. Knitter cites: Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith* (New York: Cross Road) 1978, 178-203. It is important to note that Rahner did not write for Hindus, Buddhists, Jews, or Muslims; his purpose, as he saw it, was to liberate Christians from their negative and destructive views of the religious Other. He would have been deeply disturbed if Christians had responded to his writings and approached their friends and neighbors of other traditions with the news that all was well: they were already Christians.

⁹¹ Originally, the participating bishops intended to produce a statement confronting anti-Jewish attitudes within the Church, but other bishops representing areas where Christians lived alongside those of other traditions, pushed for a statement that would speak to the dynamic of these relations as well. See: Jacques Dupuis, S.J., *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis) 2002, 158-179.

Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism and makes positive reference to “other religions to be found everywhere”. It affirms that their teachings and practices represent what is “true and holy” and “reflect a ray of the Truth that enlightens all people”. It also delivers an “exhortation” that all Catholics are “prudently and lovingly” to “dialogue and collaborate” with believers of other traditions and so “witness of Christian faith and life, to acknowledge, preserve, and promote the spiritual and moral goods found among these people.”⁹² Since it was published, Catholics have debated what this statement says about the salvation of Non-Christians. For Bishop Piero Rossano (who for years worked in the Vatican’s Secretariat for Non-Christian Religions) “Vatican II is explicit on this point”—salvation does “reach or may reach the hearts of men and women through the visible, experiential signs of the various religions.”⁹³ Perhaps clarification is provided when considering that the phrase mentioned earlier, “Outside the church, no salvation” (Non salus ex ecclesiae), seems to be re-interpreted by Vatican II: “no certain salvation outside the church” (non certus salus ex ecclesiae).⁹⁴ Many have observed how, *Dominus Iesus [DI]*, a follow-up statement from the Vatican on this issue, is influencing the discovery of grounds for interreligious activity.⁹⁵

⁹² NA p.2 *Nostra Aetate* may be viewed on the Vatican’s website at: http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html

⁹³ Knitter, 77. Knitter cites: Piero Rossano, “Christ’s Lordship and Religious Pluralism in Roman Catholic Perspective,” in *Christ’s Lordship and Religious Pluralism*, ed. Gerald H. Anderson and Thomas F. Stransky (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books) 1981, 102-103.

⁹⁴ I thank my friend, Jon Wesley Foreman, for bringing this to my attention.

⁹⁵ The Declaration *Dominus Iesus*, issued in September 2000 by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, is widely regarded as a response to the above interpretations of Vatican II. One cannot help but wonder whether the Catholic Church’s pioneering efforts

From the beginning Pope John XXIII had defined Vatican II as a pastoral not a doctrinal council. Some have explained that it was offered for the people rather than the theologians; it was intended to encourage Catholics “to foster . . . new attitudes of mutual understanding, esteem, dialogue, and cooperation.”^{96 97} Yet it would be disingenuous to fail to mention the ultimate purpose for dialogue with other believers as stated within another document of the council: “Through sincere and patient dialogue they [Christians] will learn what treasures the bountiful God has distributed among the nations. At the same time they should strive to illumine those riches with the light of the Gospel, to liberate them and to bring them under the dominion of God the Savior.”⁹⁸

in ecumenical and interreligious ministry, may be negatively impacted by a narrowing theology. The following is an example: “22. With the coming of the Saviour Jesus Christ, God has willed that the Church founded by him be the instrument for the salvation of all humanity (cf. Acts 17:30-31). This truth of faith does not lessen the sincere respect which the Church has for the religions of the world, but at the same time, it rules out, in a radical way, that mentality of indifferentism “characterized by a religious relativism which leads to the belief that ‘one religion is as good as another.’” If it is true that the followers of other religions can receive divine grace, it is also certain that objectively speaking they are in a gravely deficient situation in comparison with those who, in the Church, have the fullness of the means of salvation.” The complete document may be viewed on the Vatican’s website at:

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000806_dominus-iesus_en.html

⁹⁶ Dupuis, Jacques S. J., *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 158, 169-70.

⁹⁷ Dupuis offers an evaluation of the various responses to Vatican II that may provide clarification: “The present review of Vatican II and of the postconciliar magisterium will have shown that the Church doctrine is neither monolithic nor of one piece. Distinct overtones and shades of meaning can be found from one document to another. Neither is it always easy to decide the precise meaning or bearing of a particular statement or affirmation.” Dupuis, 179.

⁹⁸ The Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity (*Ad Gentes* [AG]), 10. [Emphasis is mine.] *Ad Gentes* may be viewed on the Vatican’s website at:

In *Dialogue and Proclamation* (DP), issued jointly in 1991 by the commission on Interreligious Dialogue and the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, spokespersons recognized “the active presence of God through His Word” and “the universal presence of the Spirit” not only in persons outside the church but also in their religions. Therefore, it is “in the sincere practice of what is good in their own religious traditions . . . that the members of other religions correspond positively to God’s invitation and receive salvation.”⁹⁹

Dialogue and Proclamation also provided purposes and guidelines of interreligious dialogue. In addition to being “a method and means of mutual knowledge and enrichment,”¹⁰⁰ dialogue participants must be prepared to be “questioned”, “purified”, and thoroughly “challenged”.¹⁰¹ Having been questioned and challenged, a Christian must also be prepared “to allow oneself to be transformed by the encounter”.¹⁰² This transformation is described as “a deeper conversion of all toward God”, but even more, “in the process of conversion, the decision may be made to leave one’s previous spiritual or religious situation in order to direct oneself toward another.”¹⁰³ Such a dialogue presumes participants will listen boldly and courageously. However, to portray this tradition and the model it informs in the clearest possible light, it should be noted that

http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651207_ad-gentes_en.html

⁹⁹ DP, 29. Dialogue and Proclamation may be viewed on the Vatican’s website at: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/interelg/documents/rc_pc_interelg_doc_19051991_dialogue-and-proclamatio_en.html

¹⁰⁰ DP, 9.

¹⁰¹ DP, 32.

¹⁰² DP, 47.

¹⁰³ DP, 41.

although proclamation and dialogue are each necessary, they are “not on the same level”, for dialogue necessarily “remain[s] oriented toward proclamation”.¹⁰⁴

The Mutuality Model

Knitter’s mutuality model corresponds to ecumenical/interreligious organizations and philosophers of religion more than it does particular traditions or denominations. Here the concern of relating to the religious other occupies the center of gravity. When applied to this model, the term “pluralist” can be misleading, since for those functioning from within this model, relationship is more important than pluralism, and the relationships must be mutual. This model began to take shape in the second half of the twentieth century and, many argue, is growing in popularity: “Pluralist [read mutuality] positions, which are proposed as the most open and adequate theological explanations of the empirical fact of the diversity of religions . . . seem to be replacing inclusivism [read Fulfillment Model] as the Christian theological position of choice.”^{105 106}

Those functioning from the mutuality model want to answer three basic questions. First, how can Christians engage more fully in authentic dialogue with persons of other religious traditions? These Christians cannot imagine following Jesus without conversing with believers of other religious traditions. Interacting and conversing with the religious

¹⁰⁴ *DP*, 77,75.

¹⁰⁵ Knitter, 112. Knitter cites: Wolfgang Beinert and Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, *Handbook of Catholic Theology* (New York: Crossroad), 1995, 95.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, With disappointment, Carl Braaten offered his assessment that a pluralist or mutuality model “has won hands down within the religious studies departments of universities and divinity schools. It is rapidly making inroads into the liberal and mainstream denominational seminaries.” Braaten, Carl. “The Triune God: The Source and Model of Christian Unity and Mission”, *Missiology* 18 [1990]: 419.

Other seems inseparable from the imperative to love one's neighbor. They would argue one is not really loving another unless she is willing to listen, respect, and learn from the other person. Second, how can interaction with the religious other balance attention to both similarities and differences? And third, how can Christians come to a clearer understanding of Jesus' uniqueness that will sustain dialogue? To those of the Mutuality Model, it appears that traditional understandings of Christ and the church throw up *doctrinal* obstacles to the *ethical* obligation to engage in authentic interaction with others. They do not want to gloss over what makes Jesus unique, nor do they want to ignore the God-given uniqueness of other religious traditions. Those working from the mutuality model claim they place as much emphasis on scripture as they do their observations of the diverse world around them. Knitter describes Christians functioning from within this model as bridge builders, involved in three complementary efforts.

The first of these efforts attempts to bring together what is viewed as the historical limitations of all religions, and the philosophical probability that there is one Divine Reality *behind* and *within* them all. One of the better-known Christian theologians working on this task is John Hick. Following a conversion experience Hick became a Presbyterian minister. As Hick became more exposed to other religious traditions, he became increasingly unsettled by the exclusive or ultimate faith claims of his tradition and by his observation of the diversity of religious "revelations". He proposed a Copernican revolution in Christian theology:

[It] involves a . . . radical transformation in our conception of the universe of faiths and the place of our own religion within it. . . . [It demands] a paradigm shift from a Christian-centered or Jesus-centered to a God-

centered model of the universe of faiths. One then sees the great world religions *as different human responses to the one divine Reality*, embodying different perceptions, which have been formed in different historical and cultural circumstances.¹⁰⁷

Hick soon modified his God-language—out of sensitivity to Buddhists and adherents of traditions with similar views on the nature of reality—and spoke of “the Real” or “really Real”. The Real is a pointer of what lies at the center of our experiences, not a description of what is actually there. In Kantian fashion Hick explains that if that which is Real is one, the symbols by which it is perceived and expressed will be many: one divine *noumenon*, many religious *phenomena*. A Christian who believes that the Real is Father and a Buddhist who believes that the Real is Emptiness can both achieve similar lives of peace in themselves and compassion for others. Similarities in ethics suggest, for Hick and other mutualist Christians, that differences in doctrine may not be that important. At the same time Hick and other mutualists want this model to be of use to adherents of all religious traditions, including those identifying with and functioning from the models mentioned previously. As such, Hick challenges these Christians to develop a Spirit Christology, which emphasizes Jesus as filled with the Spirit that is given to everyone, rather than what he views as the more common Word or Incarnation Christology, which emphasizes the particular nature of Jesus.

The second effort is building the bridge between the beliefs that the Real is both more than anything experienced by any one religion and yet present in the mystical experience of them all. Mutualist Christian theologians working on this bridge are often

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 114. Knitter cites John Hick, *God and the Universe of Faiths* (New York: St. Martin's Press) 1973, 131. [Emphasis is mine.]

viewed as mystics who have been influenced by Asian religions and cultures; Knitter identifies examples ranging from Thomas Merton to Raimon Panikkar. Panikkar proposes that to speak of Jesus as “the *only* Son of God” is meant to say something positively of Jesus; it was not meant to say something negatively of Buddha.¹⁰⁸ Jesus is the Christ, Christian mutualists maintain, but the Christ is more than Jesus. Rather than a particular doctrine or philosophy, it is one’s own religious experience that enables her to recognize and learn from her neighbors of other traditions. In any authentic interreligious activity, one’s heart speaks to another’s, or no one would understand her interlocutor.

The third bridge-building effort of this model attempts to span the distance between the ethical and the practical, recognizing the needs and sufferings afflicting humanity and the earth are a common concern for persons of all religious traditions. Doctrines or beliefs have to first appear in the court of ethics before they can be admitted to the churches and schools of Christianity. What makes a particular belief or theology “orthodox”, therefore, is not just that it is based on scripture and reflects past tradition but also that it enables Christians to carry out what Jesus held up as the law of laws: to love one’s neighbor.¹⁰⁹ Any model for interaction with the religious other must foster love. Whereas the first two bridge-building efforts of this model are looking *within* or *beneath* the various religious traditions for the unifying ground common between them; this effort is looking *around* the traditions to identify that which confronts them all. This unifying similarity impinging on all religious traditions is suffering: poverty, exploitation,

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 129.

¹⁰⁹ This emphasis on ethics situated in law and accessible is fundamental to Novak’s notion of Natural Law. The same will soon be seen of Sachadina.

violence, patriarchy, etc.. The value of engaging in dialogue with one another is increased if participants have first engaged in a cooperative effort to alleviate suffering. This, after all, is the way these Christians see the Jesus of scripture encountering the religious other. The *dialogue of life* precedes dialogue in its narrower sense.

At this point, taking a moment for evaluation and summary may prove helpful. Each of the Knitter's four models has been criticized for going too far or not far enough in interacting with the religious other. A few of the criticisms directed at the mutuality model may be helpful as an example of defining some of the issues involved in discovering grounds for interreligious activity.

One of the most common criticisms of this model is that for all its mutuality, it refuses to accept the possibility that the various religious traditions have no commonality; what may appear to be similar at first glance is actually something quite different. Every effort to bring adherents of different religious traditions together on the claim that commonalities between them exist, results in compromising diversity. The motto *E pluribus unum* (out of many one) does just that; through assimilation or reduction the many are lost in the one. Similarly, the goal of mutualism seems unattainable when, by excluding exclusive claims from the dialogue, mutualists become exclusivists. This is the argument given by William Placher, that after mutualist Christian theologians announce a dialogue is open to all because none will make exclusive or absolute claims, "it turns out that evangelical Christians, Hasidic Jews, and traditional Muslims, and so on are not really eligible to join that dialogue, because they are unwilling to accept the proposed rules of the game, rules that seem to emerge from a modern, Western, academic

tradition.”¹¹⁰ If compromise is required before some communities can join the conversation, then do these participants remain representative of their religious traditions? As Novak would ask, will they recognize themselves in the endeavor? Mutualists often seem to ignore that every religious tradition has its “jealousies” or its “nonnegotiables” that it can never abandon or put up for interreligious debate.¹¹¹

The Acceptance Model

The acceptance model for interreligious activity is the most recent to address theological issues in response to religious pluralism. From its view, the models discussed thus far have attempted to balance the practices and principles of *universality* and *particularity*. The replacement and fulfillment models stress the particularity of one tradition to the extent that the validity of all others is jeopardized; and the mutuality model stresses the universal validity of all in a way that jeopardizes the particular differences of each. The acceptance model neither holds one tradition as superior, nor searches for the commonality that makes them all valid; its aim, simply, is to *accept religious diversity*. Those functioning from within the acceptance model identify with the postmodern assessment: they warn of an excessive confidence in the power of reason, the primacy and reliability of empirical data, the exclusion of mythical-mystical views of the world, and the quest for universal truth. The theologies of George Lindbeck, Paul

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 159. Knitter cites: William Placher, *Unapologetic Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox) 1995, 146.

¹¹¹ Ibid., Knitter cites: J.A. DiNoia, “Pluralist Theology of Religions: Pluralistic or Non-Pluralistic?” in *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books), 20.

Griffiths, and Mark Heim will help to illustrate the emerging, but sometimes contrasting, views that inform the acceptance model.

The first view of the acceptance model has been advocated by the postliberal theology of George Lindbeck. For Lindbeck, “a religion can be viewed as a kind of cultural and/or linguistic framework or medium that shapes the entirety of life and thought.”¹¹² We first have to be given external words by our religious traditions/cultures before we can have internal words in our minds and hearts. This means that without language, experience is not possible. Who we are is determined by the worldview (cultural/religious) into which we are born; it also determines what we experience.¹¹³ It being the case that our language creates our worlds, Lindbeck and others argue against the possibility of a common framework, even a “single generic or universal experiential essence” within the various religious traditions; “one can . . . no more be religious in general than one can speak language in general.”¹¹⁴ More positively, Lindbeck argues:

Adherents of different religions do not diversely thematize the same experience, *rather they have different experiences*. Buddhist compassion, Christian love, and French Revolutionary *fraternité* are not diverse modifications of a single fundamental human awareness, emotion, attitude, or sentiment, but are radically (i.e., from the root) distinct ways of experiencing and being oriented toward self, neighbor, and cosmos.¹¹⁵

¹¹² Ibid., 172. Knitter cites: George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press), 1984, 33.

¹¹³ As will be seen in Chapter 5, Lindbeck is influenced by Gadamerian hermeneutics. Though Lindbeck’s severe epistemic limitations go beyond anything Gadamer’s theory warrants.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 178. Knitter cites: Lindbeck, 23, 49.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 182. Knitter cites: Lindbeck, 40 [Emphasis is mine.]

As Paul Griffiths argues, “Bilingualism is possible, but bireligionism is not.”¹¹⁶

Religious words and religious experiences can be understood and are “true” only within the given texts or language systems of a particular religious tradition. Because each religion offers adherents a totally comprehensive framework from which they are to understand everything, any given principle or experience cannot be taken from that framework and understood from the perspective of another. No religion can be measured by another religion; *there can be no comparative religion!*

If various religious traditions cannot, in any meaningful sense, be compared, how are their adherents to relate? The different religions are to be good neighbors to each other, recognizing that there is no commonality in their respective religious frameworks and that we do not need bridges at all, we need fences. In the effort to talk over our fences, we realize that while our fences and our religious systems do *define* us, they do not totally *confine* us. How this takes place can only be discovered in the process of conversation. Yet, there are no predetermined rules for the conversation, no necessary items like social justice or the environment that have to be on the agenda for dialogue. The conversation and the relation between religious believers will just happen, if they happen at all.

Others who are working within this model approach relations with the religious other more aggressively. Griffiths argues that every religious viewpoint or claim (if taken seriously) is not only comprehensive, but central to one’s life, and this

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 182. Knitter cites Paul J. Griffiths, “The Properly Christian Response to Religious Plurality”, *Anglican Theological Review* 79 (1997): 11.

comprehensiveness and centrality are felt not only to apply to oneself and one's own religious community but to all people. If honest, one will encounter the religious other with a polite, but firm and clear expression that her interlocutor is wrong. In dialogue, each participant seeks to articulate for her interlocutors why her religious view is more comprehensive than theirs. To engage in such an apologetic is one's ethical duty to oneself as well as to others. If all adherents would engage in such apologetics, humanity would find itself progressing along the dialectical path to truth envisioned by Hegel, Marx, and others. Griffiths reflects with disappointment that his observation of interreligious dialogue seems to have as its guiding principle that participants be nice to each other and stress similarities over differences. He argues: "Such dialogue is also a practice that ought to cease; it has no discernible benefits, many negative effects, and is based upon a radical misapprehension of the nature and significance of religious commitments."¹¹⁷ Griffiths maintains the necessity of engaging in apologetics with compassion and sensitivity, as well as recognizing the probability that one will learn from her interlocutor. As if in response to the soteriological question governing the thought of those functioning in replacement and fulfillment models, Griffiths summarizes:

Christians should say of religious aliens first that in so far as they do not attend to Christ they cannot become what God wishes them to be, which is to say they cannot be saved. Second: that knowledge as to the salvation of particular individuals or groups, Christian or otherwise, is in principle *inaccessible* to us.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 187. Knitter cites: Paul Griffiths, "Why We Need Interreligious Polemics", *First Things* 44 (1994): 32.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 190. Knitter cites: Paul J. Griffiths, "The Properly Christian Response to Religious Plurality", *Anglican Theological Review* 79 (1997): 23-24. [Emphasis is mine.]

Griffiths almost seems more at home in a replacement model—an indication that, perhaps in some ways, the continuum has come around full circle.

The final example of the acceptance model is the theology of S. Mark Heim. In essence, Heim's reply to Lindbeck is that religions have different languages because they are different religions to begin with; difference *precedes* language. For Heim, the differences between the religious traditions transcend language and truth claims; what really make them different are their ultimate goals. When speaking of the ultimate Real, or the ultimate goal, we would do well to use the plural rather than the singular. Buddhist enlightenment and Christian salvation are two different realities, and each may be achieved. The religions, now and always, will be different. Heim presents the Christian doctrine of God as Trinity as an explanation of how the real differences among the religious traditions are both a reflection and a perception of this divine *manyness*. There is plurality among the religions because there is plurality *within* God, and as such, there must be permanently co-existing truths.

Since Trinity is constituted by an enduring set of relations, the divine life has varied dimensions. So human interaction with the triune God may take different forms. It is impossible to believe in the Trinity *instead* of the distinctive religious claims of all other religions. If Trinity is real, then many of these *specific* religious claims and ends must be real also. If they were all false, then Christianity could not be true. The universal and exclusive quality of Christian confession is the claim to allow the fullest assimilation of permanently co-existing truths. The Trinity is a map that finds room for, indeed requires, concrete truth in other religions.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ S. Mark Heim, *The Depth of Riches: A Trinitarian Theology of Religious Ends* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), 2001, 167.

Does the acceptance model, at least in the form Heim advocates, foster relativity?

If so, on what grounds is one to interact with the religious other if her ultimate goal is superior only within her own context? Heim argues:

Some Christians endorse dialogue with followers of other faiths only insofar as it can be seen as “evangelism by other means” [read replacement and fulfillment]. Other Christians would exclude evangelism entirely, except insofar as it might be understood as a subordinate sub-element of dialogue in which one is invited to speak freely about one’s private convictions [read mutuality]. . . . [I]t should be clear that dialogue necessarily spans both these concerns. It is, and need not be ashamed to be, “witness by other means,” inviting testimony to communion with God in Christ. It must also be submission to the witness of the other, in the mode of a learner before superior wisdom. The wisdom extends not only to historical knowledge of the other religious tradition and its practices, but to aspects of the divine life, to truths hidden or never expressed in Christianity. In such dialogue, Christians must be willing to accept their partners as guides with the eagerness that Dante accepted Virgil, as elders and authorities.¹²⁰

One can be substantially different through interreligious dialogue, even though one remains within her own tradition. Yet, like Lindbeck, Heim insists that there can be no rules for interreligious dialogue. As if responding to his contemporaries within the mutuality model, Heim states, “To make ‘justice’ the compulsory subject of dialogue . . . is unjust.”¹²¹ In dialogue, the main possibility for Heim, and responsibility for Griffiths, is the understanding of dialogue as the embrace and the clash of really different “superior” viewpoints will always preserve the character of competition or apologetics.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 294-95.

¹²¹ Ibid., 128.

Each religious tradition, while accepting the validity of others, will seek to convince that its view is, as its adherents believe, *more superior*.¹²²

Post Analysis

Knitter concludes his comparative analysis wondering whether the same thing can be said of Christian pluralism that had been said of religious pluralism: it is a problem, which is also a promise? Is the plurality of Christian voices and experiences, which some find embarrassing and confounding, also a blessing? Might Christian pluralism be a matter of fact—resulting from human decisions, and therefore temporary—as well as a matter of principle—resulting from God’s will, and as such, the way things are supposed to be? Questions such as these and comments throughout his work lead one to locate Knitter, himself, within the mutuality model.¹²³ His comparative study is one of many,¹²⁴

¹²² Knitter, 238.

¹²³ In fairness, Knitter finds it worth noting that for many years he was a student of Karl Rahner, perhaps to allow his readers to judge whether or not he is biased in his treatment of Rahner’s theology. In my estimation, Knitter’s work, despite a few objections I have with some of his lesser points, presents the various theologians and thinkers informing his models as he would friends and family. Heim (mentioned above) makes a similar comment in his words of endorsement found on the rear cover of Knitter’s work: “This introduction crisply outlines the players and the issues in the theology of religions. It is a triumph of intellectual empathy.”

¹²⁴ I also considered Tracy, David. *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press), 1975., wherein Tracy looks twenty years later at his five basic models in contemporary theology: the Orthodox, Liberal, Neo-Orthodox, Radical, and Revisionist theological models. Because Tracy argues for the revisionist model, and because his aim includes locating the evolution of this conversation in terms of culture, I opted for Knitter’s more comprehensive and balanced study. Furthermore, although Tracy’s work might serve as a better comparison alongside Novak’s study, Knitter’s work is more representative of the broad Christian field of theologies of religion.

but it is sufficiently thorough to present a context from which to discuss and evaluate Christian theologies of religion or arguments for the proper grounds for interreligious dialogue.

Knitter's tone is one of respect and gentility. Novak might likely consider Heim's description of Knitter's "intellectual empathy" as evidence the former has recognized himself in the latter's description of him. And yet, it is the kind of interreligious dialogue Knitter practices with which Griffiths takes issue and finds disingenuous. While Knitter's aim is to set aside one another the various voices and arguments for how Christians ought best to relate to the religious Other—and this to facilitate understanding through comparison—perhaps just as valuable is the implied, if not silent dialogue that occurs for Knitter's audience as they carefully observe the nuance and contrasting concerns of his many subjects and traditions *within* Christianity. In fact, while Knitter focuses on how Christians see the Other, what becomes clear is the need for Christians to think more critically and carefully about how they see themselves and one another as Christians. To this point, Knitter speaks, if only briefly in his conclusion. Christians would do well to engage one another across these various traditions on the very question of the religious Other. Finally, Knitter recognizes the need for Christians to engage in the broader interreligious dialogue, where dialogue involves not only cooperative initiatives, but also sustained, personal relationships.

Novak would be highly suspicious of Knitter and his theory. First, Novak would look at the two thousand year history of Christianity, it's two billion adherents, and its many forms Knitter engages and wonder whether they even represent a single revelation,

a single tradition? Novak might agree with Knitter on the need for an inter-Christian dialogue, or find such a task *even more pressing than* or perhaps *a precondition to* the Jewish-Christian dialogue. While Knitter's continuum is designed with Christian theologies of religions in mind, something of value might be learned by seeking to discover where within Knitter's models we might find points for comparing Novak and his Christian contemporaries? We might with greater accuracy attempt to answer such a question through a process of elimination, in the order we examined them above. Novak seems to share a reverence and respect of tradition for which those within the *replacement* model advocate, while rejecting not only the need to replace the Others' religion with his own, but also denying that such could be either respectful or authentic. It does not seem that Karl Rahner and those within the *fulfillment* model are concerned with the same kinds of issues Novak addresses. Novak would resist all the conclusions of Knitter's *mutuality* model, and yet his paradigm that maintains revealed religions each possess their exclusive message from God is something akin to Knitter's understanding of grace. Novak's claims for inaccessibility, while not explicitly framed in epistemological terms, do resemble the skepticism and agnosticism of Lindbeck and Griffiths' *acceptance* model. This should help remind the chaplain that one's theology of the religious Other is rarely delivered in a finished fashion by her tradition or denomination. Rather, it is one of many possible theological responses from within that tradition. The responsible and self-aware chaplain will discover her theology within her tradition and nurture it in reflective practice.

Pluralism in the Writings of Sachedina

While authentically Muslim, Abdulaziz Sachedina's¹²⁵ theology for relating to the non-Muslim is arguably progressive and would conceivably be rejected by most practicing Muslims. And yet it is provided as an example because it serves as a contrast to Novak (one of Sachedina's peers) is a rigorous example of Knitter's mutuality model, and while yet unrepresentative of general Muslim thinking, it is gaining in popularity—especially in the west, and more modestly in Iran.

Sachedina's concern for the Other is situated in the theological and philosophical discussions about religious democracy, universal human rights, and religious pluralism.¹²⁶ Sachedina articulates a religious pluralism informed by the original sources

¹²⁵ Sachedina (b. 1942), of Indian ancestry, has degrees from institutions in India, Iran, and Canada. For the majority of his professional career he has been a professor of Islam and Religious Studies in the United States, primarily at the University of Virginia and George Mason University, but he has also been an advisor and consultant to the United States Department of Defense on issues relating to the Middle East.

¹²⁶ Biographically, Sachedina is an ideal case study of Malcom Gladwell's Outlier principle: many stories of success rise from contexts where hard work and talent are rooted in the difficult and painful experience of never quite fitting in, of always being an outlier, but an outlier whose contributions result in membership based on valuable contributions. One could argue that his unique take on Qur'anic pluralism is as much a result of striving to belong and relate across ethnic, national, religious, and academic boundaries as it is any influence from mentors, peers, or opponents. See: Gladwell, Malcom. *Outliers: The Story of Success* (New York: Backbay Press), 2011. Sachedina says as much: "I endeavored to *seek the approval* of the community reassuring it about the significance of Islamic tradition *rather than challenging* its gross misunderstanding of the pluralistic impulse of the Islamic revelation. Under *the burden of my ties* with the Muslim religious establishment and *the gratitude I owed* to my teachers in the seminaries in Iraq and Iran, *I constantly struggled* with these debts, which seemed to *demand compromise* of my ethical stance when it came to offering honest criticism and proposing alternative readings of the scriptural sources." Sachedina, *Challenge*, 185. [Emphasis is mine.] This is more than the typical "competing loyalties" experienced by scholars who

and analyzes the variety of Islamic approaches to religious diversity. Like his predecessor, Abdolkarim Soroush, Sachedina's interests include a reflexive reformation of Islam that results in a compatibility with a religious democracy that promotes and protects universal human rights. Also like Soroush, Sachedina's writings have garnered him both praise and criticism, the latter to a degree where his personal safety is a factor of consideration. Sachedina's scholarly foundation is squarely positioned between Islamic and western, academic traditions. While identifying as a faithful, but progressive Muslim, his work is thoroughly critical, in theory, method, and presentation. The majority of Sachedina's writings on religious pluralism are found in two different chapters, one written in a 2001 text, prior to the events of September 11th, and the other in 2009. Most of the citations will come from the later, as his thought on the subject has understandably evolved over time and in response to world events.¹²⁷

Sachedina argues the foundations (or original sources) of Islam warrant a generous or liberal understanding of both religious diversity and religious pluralism. Indeed, the notions of *fitra*—or the freedom of conscience God bestows upon all human beings—and the religious diversity God wills into existence, become the basis for his claim that religious democracy and universal human rights are presupposed by an authentic and critical interpretation of Islam. The challenge posed by the “dizzying

claim to be both academic *and* religious. Because he risks life, limb, and liberty to do so, his writing and speaking set him apart from most.

¹²⁷ See chapter 2, “The People are One Community” in Sachedina, Abdulaziz. *The Islamic Roots of Democratic Pluralism*. Oxford University Press: New York City, NY, 2001—and Chapter 6, “Freedom of Religion and Conscience: The Foundation of Pluralistic World Order” in Sachedina, Abdulaziz. *Islam and the Challenge of Human Rights*. Oxford University Press: New York City, NY, 2009.

diversity” throughout the world is “as much a summons as a celebration.”¹²⁸ Even in its infancy, Islam “acknowledged, evaluated critically, but never rejected . . . pluralism”.¹²⁹ In fact, far from rejecting the religious diversity of the day, the Qur’anic¹³⁰ principle “‘the people are one community’ (2:213) is the foundation of a theological pluralism that presupposes the divinely ordained equivalence and equal rights of all human beings.”¹³¹ Humans’ innate ethical ability (God-given) allows for the “development of a ‘global ethic’ that can provide for the pluralistic basis for mediating interreligious relations among people of diverse spiritual commitment.”¹³² Given that the religious pluralism warranted by Islam is not only Abrahamic, but universal in scope, (and assuming he is not generalizing for his readers) Sachedina makes a common, categorical error: “Since all religions are concerned with salvation . . .”,¹³³ as Hindus have something entirely different in mind when using this term in dialogue and Buddhists, Jains, Taoists and adherents of other Asian religions are neither theistic nor salvifically oriented.

It is helpful to note that Sachedina analyzes exclusivist positions informed by traditionalist readings of Islam. He distills these into three separate claims: *Only My Religion is Genuine*; *Only My Religion Rests on Truths Received in Religion*; and *Only*

¹²⁸ Sachedina, *Roots* 22.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹³⁰ Sachedina’s later work reflects what is now the standardized, western spelling of Qur’an (versus “Koran”). For purposes of continuity, I have adjusted the spelling when citing his 2001 work.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ *Ibid.*

*My Religion Possesses the Intrinsic Religious Value for Attaining Religious Perfection.*¹³⁴

These claims, though not shared by all Muslims, help explain the tensions within the community concerning the question of how best to relate to the religious Other. Over and against these impulses, Sachedina proposes to “mine the riches of the Qur’an to forge a theology of the other”,¹³⁵ that “view[s] interfaith relations as a divinely ordained system of human coexistence”,¹³⁶ while “remaining mindful of the intensity with which religious identity is negotiated in the reality of today’s Muslim world”.¹³⁷ Sachedina’s interest in articulating a theology of religions—to borrow Christian terminology—is a foundation to his overall thought.

Over the next decade, Sachedina’s positions on pluralism became more nuanced and distinct. The previously stated “tensions” from the traditionalists became grave prognostications. A failure to “recognize religious pluralism” can only result in “endless violence and radical extremism”.¹³⁸ In fact, Sachedina neither equivocates nor fixates: “I can assert without any reservations that the impending danger to a human rights regime will come from *both* moral relativist arguments and exclusionary theological doctrines”, the latter position views “religious pluralism as incompatible with . . . exclusive experience of truth”.¹³⁹ To be fair, traditionalists fear a human rights paradigm threatens

¹³⁴ Ibid., 36-38.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 44.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 50.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 51.

¹³⁸ Sachedina, *Challenge* 186.

¹³⁹ Ibid., [Emphasis is mine.]

Muslims' freedom to find identity, superiority, and community-centered values.¹⁴⁰

Contrary to a universal, religious pluralism informed by the Qur'an, "Islamic juridical tradition empowers Muslim governments to impose restrictions and discriminate against non-Muslim minorities by reducing them to second-class citizens."¹⁴¹ This results from a failure to distinguish the strictly religious from the political, even though a distinction between the spiritual and the temporal was already informing the jurists' readings.¹⁴²

Sachedina analyzes the tradition and observes three primary positions on religious pluralism. The first position—he does not name them—seeks for legitimate grounds from which to base a relationship and concern for the religious outsider. We might call this the Universalist approach, one that focuses on relationship and recognizes other religions' legitimacy based on a Qur'anic reading that doing so is God's will. The second position might be called either a Compatibilist, or even a Cooperativist approach, and is "guided by conventional wisdom and moral insights".¹⁴³ It is fundamentally a live-and-let-live approach. Finally, the third position is clearly an Exclusionist position. Interreligious activity is pursued not to genuinely understand the other but to convert the other to a particular understanding of Islam. He explains "classical exegetes endorsed the view that tolerance in the matter of religion was to be afforded *only to the people of the Book and that others were to be coerced into converting to Islam.*"¹⁴⁴ Sachedina distinguishes between two forms of the exclusionist position: the first is a sincere belief in

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 190-191.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 192.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 196. [Emphasis is mine.]

the exclusive faith claims of one's own tradition following a genuine familiarization with other religious traditions, and the second is based on one's choice to categorically reject other traditions' beliefs simply because they differ from one's own.¹⁴⁵ The challenge remains: how does one respect others whose beliefs are wrong?

Considering the impulses responsible for exclusivism, Sachedina resorts to foundational hermeneutics and argues "both modernists and religiously oriented intellectuals fail to emphasize the fact that . . . social and political history influence how people read and understand the revealed texts. Remarkably, different periods of Muslim history have generated different interpretations of the Qur'an."¹⁴⁶ Failing to take into account the social and historical contexts informing a reading is to jettison one's responsibility to live a thoughtful and mature faith. It also, Sachedina argues, "leads to many misunderstandings and unjustified accusations about Muslims and their scriptures" from the rest of the world.¹⁴⁷

Sachedina further develops his Universalist approach to religious pluralism, contending for a radically progressive evaluation of others' universal truth claims. Obviously, humans need to be grounded in their respective religious communities, but Sachedina argues this is the case, "so that they can *forge long-term relations*, in order to *grow spiritually and morally* [and so that] they may *not be confined* to any one community in order to benefit or effect change in themselves or others based on the

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 198.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 193.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

standards of another.”¹⁴⁸ In short, one can only celebrate diversity and benefit from others from within one’s own community of identity; an existential grounding is always needed.¹⁴⁹ Recognizing what he calls “inclusive truth claims . . . encourage[s] the development of a sense of multiple and unique possibilities for enriching the human quest for spiritual and moral well-being through participation in a plurality of communities”.¹⁵⁰ Sachedina is influenced by David Novak’s interrelated communities and sees relationships between communities in terms of “partially overlapping . . . [rather than] wholly concentric circles”.¹⁵¹ For Muslim communities, the task has always been two-fold: first, discovering how to achieve an authentic religious identity informed by a responsible reading of the sources, without denying other communities the same privilege, and second, how to “institutionalize pluralism” without forfeiting to a secular Islam.

To be clear, although a foundational religious principle, Sachedina’s religious pluralism is not independent; it is connected to the notions of *fitra* and requirement of religious freedom. Indeed, “religious freedom . . . is the cornerstone of the notion of religious pluralism.”¹⁵² With its Qur’anic foundation, religious pluralism is a “divinely ordained system”.¹⁵³ Historically, those who opposed pluralism in favor of exclusivist

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 194. [Emphasis is mine.]

¹⁴⁹ This is similar to Novak’s requirements, but for reasons Novak would categorically reject. Interestingly, while both taught together at UVA for many years, I have discovered no evidence of a discussion between them on this topic.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid., 201.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

readings and “discriminatory ruling[s] in the Shari’a [did so] to gain control over conquered peoples”.¹⁵⁴ Opposing pluralism has also prevented the *Umma* from fulfilling its charge to establish “an ethical public order. . . [which order, in turn] sets the conditions for fulfilling “the universal obligation to call people to good and forbid evil. [Unfortunately,] “the community was tempted and did succumb to the abandonment of the common ethic.”¹⁵⁵

To date, the framework of Sachedina’s reflexive reading of Islam, specifically as it involves God’s design for religious pluralism and freedom of religion, is the most sophisticated from within the Muslim community, at least in western, academic terms. Sachedina’s understanding of religious pluralism as divine design, informing the cornerstones of religious freedom and religious democracy, is central to his challenge to traditional juridical Islam. His analysis of the tradition’s various approaches to understanding religious diversity and the best approach to relating to the religious other provides a structure by which to measure the *Umma*’s success and failure of achieving a more authentically Qur’anic principle of religious pluralism. Sachedina’s concern is more than analytical; it is intrinsically ethical.

Concluding Sachadina

From the above comparative analysis we gain understanding relative to interreligious dialogue. It is important to appreciate that Sachadina is coming from a

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 205.

place as a Muslim, identifying and attempting to answer questions, that most likely do *not* apply to the others. Unlike the above Christian theologians, Sachedina is wrestling with a more immediate, practical concern: which is the best political context—form of government—for a religiously diverse society to respond to God’s call to chose the good and reject the evil? Christian theologians, contributing from societies structured around secular democracies, are either unaware or unconcerned with the risks of secularism. The best form of government is simply not a category in the present topic of how best to relate to the religious Other. We might imagine the Christian say with a confused expression: “What do religious freedom and form of government have to do with the question at hand?” And yet this is precisely why Lindbeck and Griffiths would argue that such a comparison is impossible. Rahner, Hick, and Heim, on the other hand, would counter that even if conclusions do not result from the comparative analysis, if dialogue is occurring—and it is—then relationships are forming, and the endeavor is worthwhile.

Although both superficial and artificial to do so, identifying Sachedina on Knitter’s continuum is a helpful starting point to bring the analysis from local to comparative contexts. Sachedina’s thought most closely resembles the mutuality model and the theological ethics of John Hick, though with some important differences. Hick’s paradigm shift from a Jesus-centered God to a God-centered approach allows for flexibility to relate to the religious Other and resonates with Sachedina’s explanation that the religious pluralism God designed allows humans a unique opportunity to relate, learn, and grow from one another’s truths. The religious Other is not merely tolerated, nor is the religious Other a means to some other end, such as fulfilling the commandment to

love one's neighbor. The religious Other embodies spiritual truths from which one might benefit for herself. The religious Other is a blessing.

It must be noted that although both Christians and Muslims produce examples of progressive, cooperative—even universalist—models for approaching the religious Other, the majority of adherents in each tradition remains ignorant about the Other, and even those who are somewhat familiar with the other approach life from some exclusivist view of religious diversity. Looking to one's religious tradition for authentic grounds for a theology or ethic for relating to the religious Other is a worthy task, but without the effort to share one's findings with one's community and engage the religious Other, there is little, if any, meaningful contribution. Approaching Muslim concerns for religious pluralism from the cultural context of a secular society distorts or obscures one's understanding of the critical issues. Christian theologians (and other western religious leaders) stand to gain a good deal from engaging their Muslim peers in a conversation on religious-political discourse. They will be surprised to learn that for Sachadina and other reformers, religious diversity is a design *and* blessing from God that presupposes freedom of conscience and religious democracy. Indeed, the very differences that define one as a racial, ethnic, gender, or religious minority are the same differences with which God blesses humanity. An evolution of thought from Muslim reformers challenges secular democracies and Christian theologians to reconsider the nature of religious diversity. Is it a burden and problem to be solved or a treasure to be nurtured and celebrated? The answer determines the course for interreligious dialogue with our Muslim sisters and brothers.

Application & Conclusion

Once again, while its subject is thoroughly theoretical, the aim of the present study is ultimately practical. Examining Novak, those working from Knitter's models, and Sachadina provides a panorama of theories rich with possibility. Unexpectedly, analyzing these theologies led me to consider not only implications for religious-based conflict on the battlefield, but also those within the chaplain corps itself. I will address these here and save battlefield scenarios for Chapter 6. I expect some of the insights will prove especially useful in my upcoming assignment as an active duty Army chaplain serving as the world religions instructor at the United States Army Chaplain Center and School (USACHCS).¹⁵⁶

Chaplains are both *commissioned officers* by their branch of service (in this case the United States Army) and *endorsed* by their respective denominations or traditions as *ordained ministers* (or qualified clergy). I will be responsible for helping chaplains discover what it is in their traditions that informs successful ministry in a religiously diverse force. When it comes to soldiers' religious support, chaplains either *perform* religious support for those whose needs correspond with their own traditions or *provide* religious support for those whose needs fall outside their traditions and commitments by coordinating with chaplains or lay ministers with corresponding beliefs. I am also responsible for teaching chaplains how to conduct religious area analyses on the battlefield for their commanders. Perhaps most challenging is engaging my students on the task of working with local religious leaders on the battlefield when the mission

¹⁵⁶ See: http://usachcs.armylive.dodlive.mil/?page_id=141

requires it. The following is a brief description of the chaplaincy and demographics to help illustrate the context and challenges I anticipate during my assignment as professor of world religions.

While some students will be ordained ministers coming to USACHCS for their *initial* training, the majority of chaplains attending my classes will be returning to USACHCS for professional military training at different points in their chaplain careers. Some of the chaplains will have multiple graduate degrees; all will have earned at least the Master of Divinity or its equivalent. Of the more than 1,600 Army chaplains currently serving on active duty; approximately 87% are Protestant, 9% Roman Catholic, and the remaining 4% are Orthodox Priests, Rabbis, Imams, and 5 Buddhists and 2 Hindu clergy.

Not all who are categorized Protestant identify with the term. Bureaucratic impulses have led the government to combine into one group all Christian ministers who are neither Catholic nor Orthodox. This includes, Christian Scientists, Latter-day Saints, and even Unitarian Universalists. Furthermore, of the Protestant chaplains, approximately 75% are from more conservative traditions and identify themselves as Evangelical, Pentecostal, or Charismatic, and would fall squarely within Knitter's *total* replacement model. While they concede that open and aggressive proselytizing is contrary to their professional creed, these chaplains are *drawn* to military chaplaincy not only for the opportunity to minister to their own but also to find and convert *the unchurched*. The "unchurched" or religiously unaffiliated are seen as "fair game",

evangelizing them is not “poaching” from another’s flock. None of this language corresponds to Army policy, though it does seem to inform many chaplains’ ministries.¹⁵⁷

The remaining chaplains’ ministries seem to fall into partial replacement and fulfillment models. Interestingly, these chaplains are disproportionately senior, in terms of years of chaplain experience. It is commonly observed that chaplains’ theologies of the Other tend to broaden in acceptance in proportion to their exposure to and cooperation with chaplains of other denominations and traditions. With the exception of two Unitarian Universalist chaplains, I know of no chaplain whose theology of the Other corresponds to either the mutuality or acceptance models. I suspect that while a small portion of chaplains have universalist leanings with regard to the origins and ultimate end points of religious traditions, *the requirement for chaplains to be endorsed by a DOD recognized agency ensures a degree of institutional identity sufficient to root them in either the replacement or fulfillment models.*

I plan to submit for approval from the director of professional training a component in my syllabi that will require students to become familiar with a variety of theologies of religion. Students will be introduced to Novak, Knitter, and Sachadina. The purpose of this familiarization is to help chaplains become aware of the different traditions, theories, and justifications in representatives’ own voices. An elementary form of dialogue takes place as students engage these traditions in their assigned readings. Students will have writing and presentation assignments where they will be

¹⁵⁷ I take full responsibility for this assessment based on personal observation and experience over the course of the last decade.

required to articulate their own justifications for ministry to soldiers within the Army's religiously diverse culture. Similarly, students will be required to articulate the theological grounds that justify and inform how they might approach building relationships of trust and executing cooperative humanitarian missions with local religious leaders on the battlefield when directed to do so by their commanders. Finally, students will be required to articulate the theological justifications for both of the above contexts of ministry for a notional (hypothetical) subordinate chaplain whose tradition and or approach differs from their own.

Evaluating students' performance will be challenging. Krister Stendahl's¹⁵⁸

"Three Rules of Religious Understanding" are instructive for such activities:

- (1) When trying to understand another religion, you should ask the adherents of that religion and not its enemies.
- (2) Don't compare your best to their worst.
- (3) Leave room for "holy envy."¹⁵⁹

By *holy envy*, Stendahl advocates that one seeking to understand the religious Other will begin to appreciate her interlocutor's position to the degree that she will see the beauty in the Other tradition. However, though it appears beautiful—and she is attracted to the belief or practice that is wholly Other—her own tradition prevents her from claiming it. Such a rule facilitates empathy and respect, but it also entails a degree of risk. One value of using these rules is they allow students to be guided by them while working from *any* theological model or theory. The obvious downside is the difficulty of measuring and grading the degree to which students appropriate these rules. For that reason, in addition

¹⁵⁸ Krister Stendahl is an Episcopal priest and former Dean, Harvard Divinity School.

¹⁵⁹ See: <http://www.religious-diplomacy.org/node/40>

to Stendahl's *Three Rules*, I also plan to use Novak's minimal criterion for dialogue. For instance, a Roman Catholic chaplain who works from a "Rahneresque" *fulfillment* paradigm will be graded on the degree to which he can articulate the theological grounds for chaplain ministry informed by a *replacement* model. Students who fall short of meeting the minimum requirement will be provided a description of the areas needing improvement and given the opportunity to try again. The learning experience provides the conditions for increasing self-awareness and better understanding one's peers in ministry—including both subordinates and superiors. With increased awareness chaplains are not only better poised to experience greater satisfaction in ministry, but they are also better prepared to fulfill mission tasks to a high professional standard, whether those tasks relate to advising commanders, ministering to soldiers, or supporting subordinate chaplains.

CHAPTER 3: FOWLER'S STAGES OF FAITH

Chapters 3 and 4 assess social-psychological theories that can serve as instruments to chaplains assessing religious-based conflict. Chapter 3 relates to the faith or value development of individuals and Chapter 4 to the manner groups view themselves (insiders) and others (outsiders). Some situations in religious-based conflict will allow the chaplain limited opportunities to assess individuals and groups who are parties in a given conflict. The theories and instruments assessed in Chapters 3 and 4 are intended for contexts that allow chaplains the opportunities to interact with parties to the degree such interaction provides a basis for favoring one assessment over another. It is also important to note the following: Chapter 2 was primarily useful for chaplains' self-awareness and appreciating their peers' theologies and only secondarily useful for assessing and understanding local religious leaders' views. However, with Chapters 3 and 4 the inverse is the case. And so it should be noted that while very much a secondary purpose, Chapters 3 and 4 may also be helpful in understanding one's peers and their associated groups.

Fowler's Stages of Faith in Context

The foundations of modern developmental psychology are frequently attributed to the works of John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau but also to the later works of

Charles Darwin and Sigmund Freud. The impulse to discover whether the Darwinian model of species' biological evolution could tell us anything about human development within the course of an individual's life emerged early in psychology. Freud's five stages of psychosexual development, Erik Erikson's eight stages of psychosocial development, Jean Piaget's six stages of cognitive development, and Lawrence Kohlberg's four stages of moral development continue to shape the way we approach human experience and informed James Fowler's similar research on faith development. Introduced to the work of Kohlberg and Piaget by his graduate students at Harvard Divinity School, Fowler describes himself as "a citizen reared in the land of theology [who sought] to earn dual citizenship in the new world of the psychology of human development".¹⁶⁰ It is critical to Fowler that he identifies his sources of inspiration:

I want to communicate some of the immense richness I have found in the worlds of Jean Piaget, Lawrence Kohlberg, and Erik Erikson. I have read and learned from many other theorists of human development, but as regards the timbers and foundations of my own work these three keep proving most fundamental.¹⁶¹

Fowler developed his theory based on research his teams conducted while he taught at Harvard University, Boston College, but especially while directing the Center for Ethics in Public Policy and Professions at Emory University.

It is not surprising, as a theologian and psychologist, Fowler's working definition of faith is more nuanced than anything taught in religious education. Faith is a

¹⁶⁰ Fowler, James W. *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (New York: HarperOne), 1981, 38.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 39.

phenomenon that describes the posture with which humans approach experience; it is as relevant and descriptive of the wife and mother who takes her children to church on a Sunday morning as it is of the husband and father who remains at home reading that day's paper. It informs the actions of the evangelizing missionary no more than the non-religious peace activist or the atheistic scientist. Fowler uses a broad brush to make this point: "I believe faith is a human universal. We are endowed at birth with nascent capacities for faith. How these capacities are activated and grow depends to a large extent on how we are welcomed into the world and [in what kinds of environments we develop]."¹⁶² Fowler fleshes this out: "Faith is a coat against the nakedness [one experiences in the rare, objective instances of viewing oneself from afar]. For most of us, most of the time, faith functions so as to screen off the abyss of mystery that surrounds us. But we all at certain times call upon faith to provide nerve to stand in the presence of the abyss [In short,] the dynamics of faith [are] the ways we go about *making and maintaining meaning in life*."¹⁶³ Finally, fowler proclaims:

To you I want to affirm the largeness and mystery of faith. So *fundamental* that none of us can live well for very long without it, so *universal* that when we move beneath the symbols, rituals and ethical patterns that express it, faith is recognizably the same phenomenon in Christians, Marxists, Hindus and Dinka, yet so *infinitely varied* that each person's faith is unique. Faith is inexhaustibly mysterious. . . . Growth in faith requires self-examination and readiness for encounter with the faith perspectives of others whether they are religious or nonreligious.¹⁶⁴

Fowler identifies six stages of faith development, though Stages 3 through 5, which

¹⁶² Ibid., xiii.

¹⁶³ Ibid., xii. [Emphasis is mine.]

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., xiii.

occur during adulthood, are most pertinent to this study.¹⁶⁵

- **Stage 0**, *Undifferentiated*, is a pre-stage that occurs during infancy. Here the seeds of trust, courage, hope, and love are fused in an undifferentiated experience and contend with threats of abandonment, inconsistencies, and deprivations in one's environment. The experiences of trust and relationship, together with the emergence of language, symbols, and ritual play serve as a transition to Stage One (Fowler, 119-121).
- **Stage One**, *Intuitive-Projective*, is the stage of preschool children where the imaginative processes underlying fantasy are unrestrained and uninhibited by logical thought. However, during this stage, we pick up from our parents and/or society our most basic ideas about God and become aware of life and death. The desire to differentiate between how things are and how things merely seem is the basis for transitioning to Stage Two (122-134).
- **Stage Two**, *Mythic-Literal*, is when school-age children begin understanding the world in more logical ways. They generally accept for themselves the stories told to them by their faith community but tend to understand them in very literal ways. These stories are the primary means of providing unity and value to experience. The limitations of literalness and an excessive reliance upon reciprocity as a principle for constructing an ultimate environment present the conditions for frustration with the world. The implicit clash or contradictions in and between stories leads to reflections on meaning and a new "cognitive conceit" (Elkind) emerges, serving as the transition into Stage Three. Few people remain in this stage through adulthood (135-150).
- **Stage Three**, *Synthetic-Conventional*, is to where most people move on as teenagers. At this point, one's life has grown to include several different social circles, requiring one to pull it all together. When this happens, one usually adopts some sort of all-encompassing belief system, one's own myth of becoming and identity. However, at this stage, one tends to have difficulty seeing outside one's system and does not recognize that he is *inside* the belief system. At this stage, authority is usually placed in individuals or groups who represent one's beliefs. Those living from systems other than one's own are seen as deficient, threatening, or hopeless. More serious contradictions and inconsistencies in the system's story or leaders' changes in policy can serve as the impetus for transition to Stage Four. This is the stage in which many people remain (151-173).
- **Stage Four**, *Individuative-Reflective*, is marked with challenge and tension. It can begin in young adulthood, but for many it occurs in their mid-thirties to forties. One begins to see things from others' perspectives, realizing that others have systems just as she does. One begins to take on the responsibility to critically examine her beliefs, demythologizing faith, often becoming disillusioned with her faith, and even willfully breaking from her system and community. In this stage one may exude an excessive confidence in the conscious mind and critical thought, a kind of second narcissism. Ironically, Stage Three people usually think that Stage Four people have become "backsliders" when in reality they have actually moved forward. Transition to Stage Five occurs when one is confronted with the limits of logic and the sterility and flatness of the meaning this stage provides and re-examines the stories, myths, and symbols of her previous system, while now also open to the possibility of discovering meaning in other systems (174-183).
- **Stage Five**, *Conjunctive Faith*, is unusual to reach before mid-life. Here, one becomes open and alive to paradox and the truth in apparent contradictions. In this stage, one strives to unify opposites in mind and experience. One maintains vulnerability to strange truths of the other that seemed threatening or silly in Stages Three and Four, respectively. At times, one's identity seems inextricably connected to others'. Ironic imagination enables one to simultaneously experience the most powerful meanings of one's initial system as well as others'. The challenge here is to

¹⁶⁵ The following summarization of Fowler's stages is primarily my own. See Fowler, 117-214. I also relied on Conn, Joann Wolski. *Women's Spirituality: Resources for Christian Development* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press), 1986, 226-252.

avoid the paralyzing passivity or inaction, giving rise to complacency or cynical withdrawal due to the paradoxical vision of truth. A tension in living between an untransformed world and a transforming vision and the loyalties it demands provides the transition to Stage Six for a select few (184-198).

- **Stage Six**, *Universalizing Faith*, is something very few achieve. One who does lives a life of devotion to the highest ideals, committed to others with no regard for self. She is "contagious" in the sense that she creates zones of liberation from the social, political, economic and ideological shackles we endure and place upon human futurity. The self in this stage engages in spending and being spent for the transformation of present reality in the direction of transcendent actuality. Those they are trying to help often kill people in this stage (199-213).¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁶ Fowler admits his limitations in describing in greater detail this stage. He confesses his Christian perspective leads him to describe the stage as an image very much like H. Richard Niebuhr's Jewish-Christian vision of the Kingdom of God. "When asked whom I consider to be representatives of this Stage 6 outlook I refer to Gandhi, to Martin Luther King, Jr. in the last years of his life and to Mother Theresa of Calcutta. I am also inclined to point to Dag Hammarskjöld, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Abraham Heschel and Thomas Merton. There must be many others not so well known to us, whose lives exhibit these qualities . . . [which] is not to say that he or she is perfect . . ., self-actualized . . ., or a fully functioning human being." Fowler, 201.

Stage One, *Intuitive-Projective*
Stage Two, *Mythic-Literal*
Stage Three, *Synthetic-Conventional*
Stage Four, *Individuative-Reflective*
Stage Five, *Conjunctive Faith*

Stage Six, *Universalizing Faith*

Note: This illustration is designed by the author. Fowler does not use one. It is intended to convey:

- The overlapping nature of certain stages and distinctiveness of others,
- Faith Development's general linear progression,
- The relative population (U.S.) functioning from within each stage is represented by shape size, and
- The shape length indicates the general length of time or stage of life transitions occur.

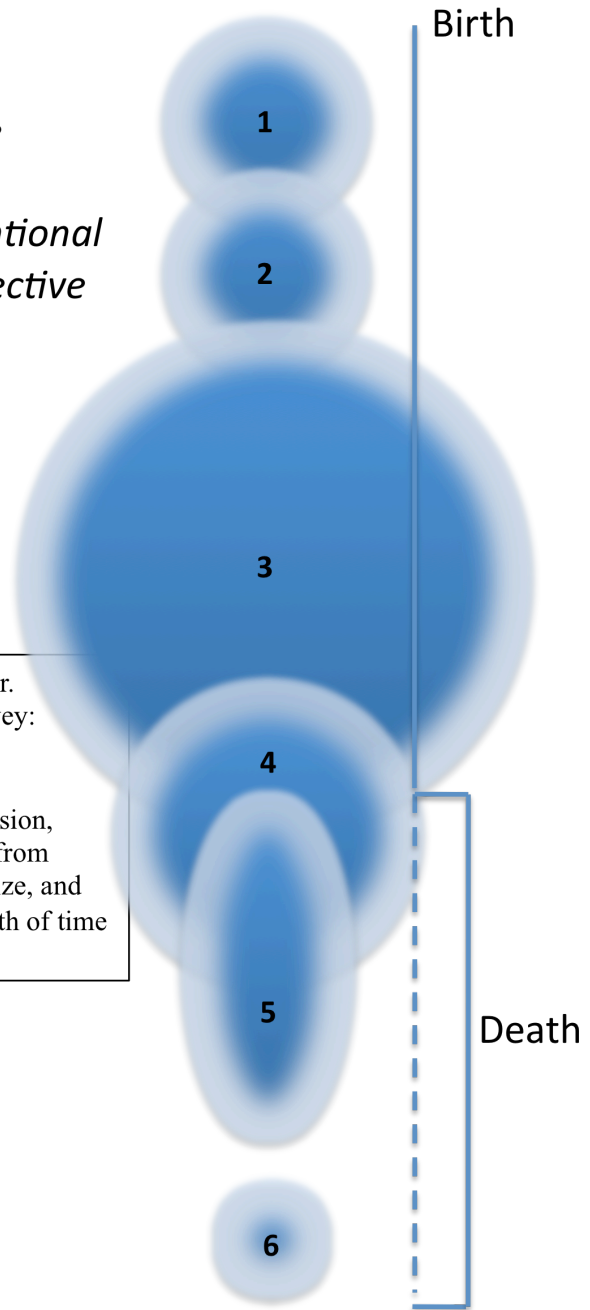


Figure 3.1 Fowler's Stages of Faith

Though Fowler's theory was the first and most influential to deal with faith development, others followed. Among these, the most significant are M. Scott Peck's Four Stages of Spiritual Growth¹⁶⁷ and Clare Graves' Eight Stages of Values or Spiral Dynamics.¹⁶⁸ The differences between these later models and Fowler's theory are not all minor, but on the whole they serve more of a complementary than a corrective function. Though the field of psychology is faced with the burden to *get it right*, the proposal that universal, developmental forms or stages apply to the phenomenon of faith has a strong probability as well as a practical value in life and, more specifically, in the field of conflict analysis and resolution. In this field, the process of getting it right requires that we start using it. That said, it is helpful to note the criticisms of Fowler's work.

Fowler's theory is based on the findings of a decade-long study conducted by his team of graduate students and professional researchers. The empirical data were derived from 359 in-depth interviews that asked 34 detailed questions in four categories: Life

¹⁶⁷ See Peck, M. Scott. *The Different Drum: Community and Making Peace* (New York: Touchstone Press), 1999. See especially pages 187-203. His four stages are as follows: 1: Chaotic-Antisocial; 2: Formal-Institutional; 3: Skeptic-Individual; and 4: Mystical-Communal. In short, stages 2 and 3 in Peck's model are the rough equivalents to stages 3 and 4 in Fowler's model. Peck's stage 4 conflates Fowler's stages 5 and 6. For Peck, the primary addition is the need to understand both individual and communal aspects in each stage. Peck was a doctor of medicine who had a devoted readership with his widely popular *The Road Less Traveled: A New Psychology of Love, Traditional Values and Spiritual Growth* (New York: Simon & Schuster), 1978. To date, it has sold more than ten million copies. It is also worth noting the following endorsement from Peck that adorns the cover of Fowler's 1981 study: "This classic book on the subject of faith development . . . An extremely important work, integral to the understanding of the human condition and our sense of meaning.—M. Scott Peck"

¹⁶⁸ A slight reworking of Graves' models by infusing Richard Dawkins' concept of *memes* is quite popular. See Beck, Don Edward and Christopher Cowan. *Spiral Dynamics: Mastering Values, Leadership and Change* (New York: Wiley-Blackwell), 2005.

Review, Life-shaping Experiences and Relationships, Present Values and Commitments, and Religion. The transcripts were then coded and analyzed. 180 men and 179 women; 97% of participants were white; 45% were Protestants; 36% were Catholics; 12% were Jews, 3% were Orthodox Christians, and 4% were “other”. The data was categorized by gender and age; each age group was roughly one decade.¹⁶⁹ The theory of stages began to develop early on in the research, so it is important to ask to what extent might this have closed researchers from seeing alternate views? To what extent did the research gradually become an effort to reinforce this pre-conclusion? To what extent can the study claim to speak to the human condition when its control group did not represent the cultural, religious, ethnic, and national diversity of the human family? Fowler did not directly address the shortsightedness. However, he did speak to a statistical variation in the research in such a way that leads one to conclude he would agree with this criticism of poor representation and welcome follow-up research.¹⁷⁰

Limitations & Applications for Assessment

Criticism of Fowler’s work focuses on methodological weakness. Only stages one and two have strong empirical support, largely because they follow Piaget’s work on cognitive development, and his work has been closely attended over the past half-century. Statistical verification was not met, nor was the study published in a professional journal

¹⁶⁹ Fowler, 304-323.

¹⁷⁰ “Although these variations suggest that there may be a relationship between age and sex and stages of faith, *further analysis on a larger, more scientifically drawn sample is needed* to press the point any further.” Fowler, 321-323. [Emphasis is mine.]

allowing for peer review. It was, however, presented to the public in 1981 and published by HarperOne as *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*. Furthermore, the study did receive scholarly attention and praise in the form of at least two doctoral dissertations *prior* to its public release.¹⁷¹ Presently, the study is in its 38th printing, and is available in several translations including German, Korean, Spanish and Portuguese.¹⁷²

For this present study, the significance of Fowler's theory lays especially in the classification and limitations of adult stages three, four, and five, and the dynamic interplay between individuals within them. Two important clarifications must be made. First, although stage theory is categorized by a sequential numbering system and begins with infants and children on the one end and adults on the other, it must not be inferred that individuals in Stage 4, for example, are superior to those in Stage 3. True, each successive stage denotes a higher or more sophisticated level of faith development, but this is intended to communicate little or nothing of the *quality* of that faith. Let us consider the following comparative example: a young college student is living out her faith commitments from a Stage 3 paradigm. She pities those who do not share her convictions; those who ardently advocate for different convictions scare her, so she avoids them. But she consistently strives to embody the ideals of her chosen system and

¹⁷¹ See Mischey, Eugene J. *Faith Development and Its Relationship to Moral Reasoning and Identity Status in Young Adults* (Ph.D. diss.). Department of Educational Theory, University of Toronto: 1976. and Shulik, Richard Norman. *Faith Development, Moral Development, and Old Age: An Assessment of Fowler's Faith Development Paradigm* (Ph.D. diss.). Committee on Human Development, Department of Behavioral Science, University of Chicago: 1979.

¹⁷² See Emory University: Center for Ethics: <http://ethics.emory.edu/people/Founder.html>

treats everyone with respect and consideration, at least as these virtues are understood in her paradigm. Conversely, a middle-aged professional's journey has taken her to Stage 5, where her choices and life circumstances have led her to a sort of moral paralysis. She looks on at instances of injustice and imbalance in her community with passivity incongruent with her values. In this example, the faith exhibited by the Stage 3 college student is more authentic and healthier than that exercised by the Stage 5 middle-aged professional. It is important to note that each stage has opportunities for growth and transition as much as it does challenges and pitfalls. Therefore, although it is easy to do so, imposing a hierarchical structure onto the model is unhelpful. In fact, there are some life situations and responsibilities that might be better suited to individuals in one stage than another. For instance, consider the benefit of someone in Stage 3 serving in situations requiring indoctrination and unwavering obedience from both rank-and-file and leadership (such as institutions whose majority membership fall into the age categories corresponding to Stage 3: i.e., military, secondary education, and youth sports organizations).

The second needed clarification regards placement. Fowler's study identifies stages of transition between each distinct stage, for instances Stages 3, 3-4, 4, 4-5, and 5.¹⁷³ Although this addresses the nature of transition and growth, it does so exclusively in linear fashion. Human development, indeed nature itself, is far more complex. This is a limitation of most stage theories. For example, the following is a possible self-identification: "I *vacation* in Stage 3, *run errands* in Stage 4, and *get my mail* in Stage 5."

¹⁷³ Fowler, 321-322.

Such a description might fit a person who was raised in a very conservative religious setting and, armed with that identity, experienced great success in living and sharing that specific faith with people around the world before taking up both a rigorous liberal arts education and advanced, formal theological training that compelled transitions from Stage 3 to Stage 4 and later to Stage 5. Often, one chooses to deal with the tension and conflict of transition, especially that associated with transitioning *in* and *out* of Stage 4, in a very private manner. In fact, for many professionals and public figures doing this privately is a necessity. Transitions are not static evolutions as much as they are progressive fluctuations, with gradual emphases toward one stage and away from another.¹⁷⁴ The following from the journal of Anaïs Nin speaks to this non-linear experience:

We do not grow absolutely, chronologically. We grow sometimes in one dimension, and not in another, unevenly. We grow partially. We are relative. We are mature in one realm, childish in another. The past, present, and future mingle and pull us backward, forward, of fix us in the present. We are made of layers, cells, constellations.¹⁷⁵

The dynamic interaction between parties in Stages 3, 4, and 5 accounts for growth as much as it does discord. To be sure, development is contextual and lifelong; it does not seem to be something for which someone intentionally strives, so much as it is a product of humanity's search for meaning along the way.¹⁷⁶ Stage theory does not seem

¹⁷⁴This is an exceptionally distilled version of my own journey, with additional understandings drawn from the lives of hundreds with whom I have counseled as a military chaplain.

¹⁷⁵ Nin, Anaïs *The Diary of Anaïs Nin* Vol. 4 (1971); as quoted in *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology* Vol. 15 (1984).

¹⁷⁶ On this point, consider the wisdom of Edward Abbey: "Growth for the sake of growth

to support a political or sociological paradigm such as the conservative-liberal construct, with all the conservatives, Baptists, and Republicans neatly filing into Stage 3, and all the liberals, Unitarians, and democrats taking their proper place in Stage 5. Though ideologies might shape predispositions in one direction more than another, the fact remains that there are Stage 5 Southern Baptists, Muslims, and capitalists just like there are Stage 3 Episcopalians, Buddhists, and socialists. Nor is it accurate to think that those in Stage 4 are god-less heathens. True, Stage 4 is not a safe place for those looking to maintain their conventional faith. But that is not to say it is inherently hostile to faith merely because it is suspicious and cynical or distrusting of anything that cannot be independently and empirically verified.

Generally speaking, those in Stage 3 experience concern for those in Stages 4 and 5, and vice versa. These concerns, in both intensity and content, vary from sympathy, caution, alarm, fear, disdain, bewilderment, etc. Generally speaking, Stage 3 individuals regard those in other Stages as lost, infirm, weak, and even evil. Stage 4 individuals regard those in Stage 3 as naïve and simple, but as a massive whole, dangerous; stage 4 individuals look to those in Stage 5 with confusion and distrust. Others deceive those in Stage 3; those in Stage 5 are consciously *self-delusional*. Finally, those in Stage 5 will see aspects of themselves, of their own journeys, in those within Stages 3 and 4. That is not to say those in Stage 5 are not susceptible to intolerance and irritation caused by others' differences, in fact this is especially the case for those still in transition. Stage 5

is the ideology of the cancer cell.” See Edward Abbey, *The Journey Home: Some Words in Defense of the American West* (New York: Plume), 1991.

living, especially among the masses of 3s and 4s, can be lonely, even alarming, when those in Stages 3 and 4 ardently oppose the principles revered by those in Stage 5.

Awareness of stage theory and its principles informing interpersonal dynamics can be a valuable tool in forming expectations for encounter and cooperation. Along the lines of political negotiations, it can help one speak another's "language" for purposes ranging from manipulation to mutual benefit. More specifically, as this theory looks at faith as the mode of acquiring meaning in one's life, and meaning and identity are often categories for consideration within basic human needs theories, it stands to reason that Fowler's Stages of Faith can help inform the analysis of conflict resolution where human needs are a factor. However, it is important to note that although these may be experienced as *needs*, the value to the intervener is not necessarily to aid her in working with parties to have this need met. On the contrary, as these perceived needs serve one party—sometimes at the expense of the other—the benefit of being aware of them allows the intervener to avoid them, if possible, and to factor them when facilitating dialogue and working to arrive at agreements. But avoiding these ideological needs or immutable preferences is not the same as ignoring or disregarding them. Some conflicts may contain dynamics of faith that, like a land mine, offer nothing good. Other dynamics may provide opportunities to harvest insights from which a reflective practitioner may help to create common understanding from shared values. To the practitioner, no gift or talent is more indispensable than discernment.

No tool exists for assessing one's stage of faith in conflict resolution.¹⁷⁷ Although the 34 questions Fowler's team used are included in the study, the methodology used for classification was excluded. But again, practical utilization of categorizing individuals' stages of faith does not require any great precision. Furthermore, age patterns alone can help remove a good deal of the guesswork. For instance, if a majority of a given party are adolescent and young adults we can safely assume they are functioning either from Stage 3 or Stage 4. From listening to parties' grievances, say environmental activists and corporate relations professionals, we may learn that one or both parties may be functioning from a position of universal, acritical virtue they have simply inherited from trusted sources (Stage 3) or from critical and rigid views of values (such as justice) they view as empirically evident (Stage 4). Though the older leaders of either movement may be living from Stage 5, age alone helps us narrow the possibilities of the rank-and-file. As individuals living from both Stages 3 and 4 crave and are lead by a desire for certainty, differentiating between the stages can initially be difficult. Determining an

¹⁷⁷ "The 'Faith Development Scale' (FDS) developed by Gary Leak and his group is probably the most recent development of a brief instrument for the quantitative evaluation of faith development. Leak et al. present results of studies to evidence validity. This short eight-item scale would be well-suited for research with larger samples in respect to time limitations. However, the FDS created by Leak and his group has a narrow focus on the institutional environment of Christian churches, family, friends, and belief systems. Here, I voice again the critique that narrowing the focus to exclude non-Christian faith orientations is unfortunate. Persons with a non-Christian new religious orientation would not find themselves represented well. Furthermore, the FDS has a strong focus on formal-operational reflection (Stage 4 competencies), and the style of the questions elicits rather self-reflective statements." See Schweitzer, Friedrich L. ed. *Developing a Public Faith: Newdirections*. (Atlanta: Chalice Press), 2003, 29. See also: Leak, Gary K. et al. "Development and Initial Validation of an Objective Measure of Faith Development," *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 9 (1999): 105-124.

individual's ability to understand the position of his opponent is helpful in this regard. Stage 3 individuals categorically dismiss their opponents' positions simply because they are *not their own*. Stage 4 individuals, on the other hand, will often be able to articulate their opponents' positions before refuting them on purely logical grounds. (Keep in mind that countless logical models exist, though few may resemble linear, Aristotelian systems.) Again, approximate categorization is likely as valuable when informing the practitioner of which strategies to *avoid* as it is in identifying strategies to employ. In short, it is helpful in identifying the limits of resources available to practitioners for resolution.

While gathering information and listening to parties, the practitioner should strive to be mindful of the characteristics of Stages 3, 4, and 5, coding one's record, if possible. Remember most contexts are dynamic and complex; individuals sometimes span stages and groups often reflect diverse, individual development. Careful approximation is the method of approach. That said, group philosophy and values informing group identity could serve to shape group behavior to resemble actions and choices that differ from individual preference and inclination. Sometimes a group charter or mission statement is especially influential. In other instances, it is necessary to identify a group's decision makers, those calling the shots, to approximate the stage theory limitations that apply. Group values and dynamics will be examined in the following chapter.

Applications & Examples for Resolution

If the goals cognitive behavioral theories employ when aiming to maximize

individual wellness have application on the group and tribal levels then agreed upon goals should be *meaningful, manageable, and measurable*. To be very clear, solutions for conflict resolution must not include helping parties get from their present stage to a more “developed” one. Only the most long-term goals could justifiably incorporate such a strategy because of the time and experience necessary for growth and transition.

Whenever possible, goals set with and/or between parties ought to be clearly tied to their most enduring values. Interveners should never waste effort and energy in trying to sell an agreement or goal that cannot be framed within the structure of a party’s existing system of virtues. To the extent such is avoided, goals and agreements will inherently be *meaningful* to parties and their respective members. A thoroughly practical standard, ensuring goals are manageable is essential. Similarly, ensuring goals are measurable within the agreed upon timeline helps set the conditions for success.

Many of the universal and community building ideals informing world views often held by conflict resolution practitioners fall within the realm of Stage 5 (compromise, compassion, empathy, universality, correspondence, etc.). The challenge is for practitioners to guard against the impulse to project these ideals onto a Stage 3 situation. This would lead to failure and may even result in parties becoming more deeply entrenched in conflict. One solution might be to find the corollary of a Stage 5 principle in a Stage 3 environment. Let us take for instance the decades-old dilemma of universal human rights. Following World War II, western nations led an initiative to draft a document that would help ensure the genocidal atrocities committed by Nazi Germany and the Japanese Empire would “never again” occur. Not only are “rights” a

concept born out of western liberal democracy, but within Islamic and Communist ideologies they are antithetical, apply to only God in the first instance and exist in only a communal sense (rather than an individual one) in the second. When it came time to vote, nine nations abstained. These nine consisted of several communist block and Muslim majority nations and also South Africa, which strove to preserve its system of apartheid.¹⁷⁸ World leaders feared the result was the best they could manage and settled for partial success. Nowhere in the minutes of the three-year long process is there evidence of anyone asking questions about alternative approaches! No creative thinking is evident, aside from diplomacy and manipulation. Clearly, human rights violations and genocide have continued, and these from western liberal democracies—no less than communist regimes, Muslim majority nations, and developing nations. Had a stages of faith theory helped inform the international body of delegates with their aim, it might have led to questions such as: Is the category of *rights* the *only* way to address our concerns? Do concepts such as *justice* and *responsibility* (Muslim-majority) and *duty* and *community* (Communist regime) work as well? If there is not a one-size-fits-all solution available, is it acceptable for nations to provide their own standards and criteria by which to measure them to the satisfaction of the international community? These are the types of questions likely to be raised by leaders functioning from a Stage 5 mentality.

One wonders whether the percentage of individuals experiencing Stage 5 is on the rise. Granted, there is no obvious way to determine whether that is the case. But if one

¹⁷⁸ Morinsk, Johannes. *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Origins, Drafting & Intent* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press), 1999, 14-22.

can conclude from the behavioral traits and attitudes characterizing those in the different stages that, say, Stage 5 individuals are less violent than Stage 3 individuals—which seems likely, though unverifiable—then perhaps studies that speak to the latter may implicitly support the former. Consider the provocative conclusion put forth by Harvard Professor, cognitive psychologist, linguist, and philosopher Steven Pinker in *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence has Declined*,¹⁷⁹ mentioned in Chapter 1.

Discernable from his subtitle, Pinker argues that contrary to our estimation of what technology has made possible, violence is actually on the *decline*. This is a result of our better angels, especially empathy, self-control, and reason. Although they have place in Stages 3, 4, and 5—these better angles are more central to the guiding principles characterizing Stage 5. If Pinker is only partially correct, and there are many who think this is the case, then it seems that his conclusion might support the separate claim that the Stage 5 community is expanding.

A similar extrapolation might be achieved with Malcom Gladwell's *Outlier Principle*,¹⁸⁰ mentioned earlier in connection with Sachedina's life. Again, many stories of success rise from contexts where hard work, practice, and talent are fueled by the difficult and painful experience of never quite fitting in, of always being an outlier, but eventually and gradually an outlier whose contributions result in membership based on valuable contributions. The experience of being an outlier with the desire to fit in provides opportunities for growth, insight, and perspective needed to achieve greatness.

¹⁷⁹ Pinker, Chapters 7-10.

¹⁸⁰ Gladwell, Malcom. *Outliers: The Story of Success* (New York: Back Bay Press), 2011.

From this we might reason that since the world's population centers are becoming more culturally, religiously, and ideologically diverse—more and more minorities are discovering the benefit of being outliers. Similarly, the attitudes and behaviors that allow one to successfully navigate the systems and structures of the majority class or party are those characterizing Stage 5. The friction that results with increased diversity is also likely to initiate an increase of stage transitions and at earlier ages. Though thoroughly inconclusive, this may be yet another way to argue for a rise in those corresponding to Stage 5 faith.

Concrete examples of Stage 5 individuals addressing conflict or friction with Stage 3 majorities include religious reformers, Abdolkarim Soroush and Abdulaziz Sachedina, who have their work cut out for them arguing for a reformation of Islam. The oppression and injustices frequently occurring within Muslim-majority nations are an indication that something is amiss with the “religion of peace”. Soroush’s emphasis is on democracy, whereas Sachedina’s is human rights. For Soroush, the ontological reality of religious diversity has ethical implications. “The religious society, due to the . . . inherent freedom and irreducible plurality [read diversity] of faiths . . . is consistent with, even *in need of*, democracy.”¹⁸¹ True to his emphatic style of reasoning, Soroush does not stop here, but brings home his argument to its logical conclusion: indeed, “a (religious) government that does not believe in protecting the security and freedom of faith or the

¹⁸¹ Soroush, Abdolkarim. Translated and Edited by Sadri, Mahmoud and Sadri, Ahmad. *Reason, Freedom, and Democracy in Islam: Essential Writings of Abdolkarim Soroush* (New York: Oxford University Press), 2000, 146. [Emphasis is mine.]

dynamism of religious understanding [Stage 3] *forfeits its claim to religious legitimacy!*”¹⁸²

With similar directness, Sachadina argues the foundations (or original sources) of Islam warrant a generous or liberal understanding of both religious diversity *and* religious pluralism, where the former is a sociological fact and the latter a theological position. Indeed, the notions of *fitra*—or the freedom of conscience God bestows upon all human beings—and the religious diversity God wills into existence, become the bases for his claim that religious democracy and universal human rights are presupposed by an authentic and critical interpretation of Islam. Again, for Sachadina, the challenge posed by the “dizzying diversity” throughout the world is “as much a summons as a celebration.”¹⁸³ One can detect the different stages of faith represented in Sachadina’s characterization of historical Islam. Considering the impulses responsible for exclusivism (Stage 3), Sachadina resorts to foundational hermeneutics (also Stage 3) and argues “both modernists [Stage 4] and religiously oriented intellectuals [Stage 3] fail to emphasize the fact that . . . social and political history influence how people read and understand the revealed texts. Remarkably, different periods of Muslim history have generated different interpretations of the Qur’an [Stage 5].”¹⁸⁴

To be clear, although a foundational religious principle, Sachadina’s religious pluralism is not independent; it is connected to the notions of *fitra* and the requirement of religious freedom. Indeed, “religious freedom . . . is the cornerstone of the notion of

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Sachadina, *Roots*, 22.

¹⁸⁴ Sachadina, *Challenge*, 193.

religious pluralism.”¹⁸⁵ With its Qur’anic foundation, religious pluralism is a “divinely ordained system”.¹⁸⁶ Historically, those who opposed pluralism in favor of exclusivist readings and “discriminatory ruling[s] in the Shari’a [did so] to gain control over conquered peoples.”¹⁸⁷ Opposing pluralism (a Stage 3 impulse) has also prevented the *Umma* from fulfilling its charge to establish “an ethical public order [a Stage 5 concern]. . . [which order, in turn] sets the conditions for fulfilling “the universal obligation to call people to good and forbid evil. [Unfortunately,] “the community was tempted and did succumb to the abandonment of the common ethic.”¹⁸⁸

Both Soroush and Sachedina are arguing for Stage 5 principles—primarily, that universal truths and religious plurality exist by divine will, and secondarily, religious democracy and universal human rights are humanity’s best options for safeguarding God’s gift of diversity. Each does this by looking to the original sources of the tradition (a Stage 3 staple), but their methods require a hermeneutical revision to arrive at their conclusions. Not unexpectedly, the traditional jurists to whom their work is addressed view such strategies as suspiciously western and alien—an unfortunate obstacle in light of the fact these reformers as Shia are *already* seen as outsiders, if not enemies. That said, these arguments are gaining traction in the Muslim world, especially in more western democracies and across the Sunni-Shia divide.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 201.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 205.

Other concrete examples of addressing Stage 3 realities from Stage 5 paradigms are no less impressive. For instance, Marc Gopin states current “multifaith communication and cooperation [in the liberal religious sphere—read Stage 5] have never seen their equal in human history.”¹⁸⁹ He notes the trend among those whose “education runs wide and deep” to employ a selective hermeneutic that emphasizes elements of their religious tradition that correspond “with the liberal humanitarianism of the Enlightenment”.¹⁹⁰ Such a response reflects an attitude comparable to the transition Stage 4-5, provoking a reaction from another type of people whose hermeneutic allows for conclusions that their own tradition is,

Distinctive, superior, and particularly opposed to the Enlightenment, or opposed to the kind of liberal humanitarian values expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights [read Stage 3]. What is most crucial for conflict analysis and resolution, when it comes to religion, is a focus on those hermeneutical trends that are felt to be authentic by a large portion of believers. Conflict resolution theory and practice must be interested in those trends that embrace values that could be commensurate with peacemaking and coexistence [read Stage 5] both inside the religious groups as well as between them and Others.¹⁹¹

Chapters 5 and 7 of this Gopin volume are of paramount importance. The first outlines modern Jewish Orthodox Theologies of Interreligious Coexistence. It seems the ideal counterpart to Novak’s justification above. The second addresses conflict resolution as religious experience, using contemporary Mennonite peacemaking as a case study, which will be picked up in Chapter 7 of this study.

¹⁸⁹ See See Gopin, Marc. *Between Eden and Armageddon: The Future of World Religions, Violence and Peacemaking* (New York: Oxford University Press), 2000, 3.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 87.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 87-88.

The final concrete example is the work of Irene Oh. In *The Rights of God: Islam, Human Rights, and Comparative Ethics* Oh makes the case western efforts to engage Muslim-majority nations on the subject of universal human rights have started with flawed dialogical principles in place. Drawing fundamentally on the mid-twentieth century hermeneutical and sociological philosophies of Hans George Gadamer and Jurgen Habermas, Oh makes a case for improving the human rights dialogue. Oh's analysis, a case study of high importance to those in many fields of research and service, sets itself up as an example worthy of consideration, if not emulation. A non-Muslim, Oh shows that however difficult it may be, the ongoing process of understanding others can only be achieved when we begin by carefully examining our own pre-judgments and beliefs. As such Oh respectfully and accurately views the arguments and concerns of Stage 3 Muslims through the lens of a hermeneutic that perfectly aligns with Stage 5 values. Oh's comparative analysis will be referred to again in Chapter 6. In the interest of focus and space other concrete examples are summarized below.^{192 193 194}

¹⁹² See Gopin, Marc. *Holy War, Holy Peace: How Religion Can Bring Peace to the Middle East* (New York: Oxford University Press), 2002, wherein Gopin uses the Middle East as a larger case study against which to argue for the role of a mature, responsible interpretation of religion. Just one of many points relevant to this conversation on the developmental theory of faith is the need to balance concerns between parties: "a peacemaking method can provide asymmetry in an of itself if its execution favors the skills of one group over another", 88. If this is true of *skills*, it is certainly true of experiences.

¹⁹³ See Menocal, Maria Rosa. *The Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Jews, and Christians Created a Culture of Tolerance and Peace in Medieval Spain*. (New York: Back Bay Books), 2012, wherein Menocal presents examples from Spain's history that illustrate the degree to which these religionists lived together in an atmosphere that transcended simple tolerance and made possible great advances in literature, science, and the arts.

Conclusion on Fowler

This study argues the probability the phenomenon of faith develops by stages is sufficient to warrant the practicality of using the theory as a lens through which to approach the dual tasks of analyzing and resolving religious-based conflict. Many questions about the theory remain. Even greater are the number of questions of exactly how practitioners would utilize the theory to inform both analysis and resolution of conflict. Some of the more pressing questions include: Assuming assent to a theological ontology is not required for living out faith in neither Stages 5 nor 6, what might this life look like for the atheist? How might this vary from a non-theistic Buddhist aspiring for *Nirvana* and a Hindu aspiring for *Moksha*? Why do the majority of adults remain in Stage 3? Is it a result of aptitude and capability? Or might it have more to do with circumstances and opportunity? If the latter is the case, can programs be designed to maximize these opportunities, such as foreign and cultural exchange programs? Is it too much to challenge institutions—whether religious, political, or strictly ideological—to contextualize the instruction in their existing programs in universalist terms so that while Stage 3 boundaries are maintained in the present, Stage 5 ideals might be viewed as a viable future paradigm? Is there a difference of advantage between the Stage 5

¹⁹⁴ See Givens, Terryl L. *People of Paradox: A History of Mormon Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press), 2007, wherein Givens argues that Mormon belief can be conceived as a series of paradoxes rather than a set of fixed principles and both comprehensively explores both the distinctiveness of Mormon cultural production and its continuities with wider religious currents. As an insider, Givens could not survive making the same claim about the religious tradition's Stage 3 belief system, but by looking at the tradition's cultural contributions, he gets away with making a claim with similar, Stage 5, implications.

individual whose early development included a structured, religious context and the one whose development did not? As developmental theories and the present notion of faith are grounded in and/or informed by western academic culture, are there comparable ways of understanding the experiential differences in human systems of discovering meaning? And finally, *is it unrealistic to think adults squarely situated in Stages 3 and 4 would be open to seeing themselves in a structure wherein they were developmentally inferior?* Put in terms of Novak's minimal criterion, would those in Stages 3 and 4 recognize themselves in the descriptions of them provided by those in Stage 5? Until these are answered or clarifying questions are provided, it is hoped that this initial study will encourage additional research and prompt field trials that allow for greater confidence in the method's utility in conflict resolution. Considerations for utilizing this theory in assessing religious-based conflict will be discussed in Chapter 6.

Chaplains attending to religious-based conflict on the battlefield would do well to remember the above limitations when using this theory to assess local religious leaders' faith. Chaplains must never forget they work within a context of conflict and that they represent a nation and military that are neither neutral nor impotent. More will be said about intimidation and authenticity in Chapter 6. But for now, it is helpful to seek for what Fowler's theory *can* provide the chaplain on the battlefield.

In my own case with Sheikh Abdullah, I would say that while every bit the traditional Muslim (embodying Armstrong's observation of the inextricable relationship between the political and religious realms) my interlocutor's traditional views (Stage 3) merely gave expression to his communal and practical concerns (Stage 5). Had I

possessed Fowler I may have acted sooner and with greater confidence when partnering with Abdullah and his subordinate imams. Conversely, in the future, should I encounter local religious leaders whose concerns center more on ideological purity and group security and identity (see Chapter 4), then I will likely seek for ways to reframe stability efforts in terms consistent with Stage 3 values and narratives.

CHAPTER 4: ROTHBART & KOROSTELINA'S THEORY OF AXIOLOGICAL DIFFERENCE

As mentioned above, where Chapter 3 addresses the faith development of the individual, Chapter 4 speaks to a group's views of itself and outsiders. When interacting with local religious leaders on the battlefield, chaplains would do well to remember that while these leaders from individual faith, they belong to and represent group ideologies. Interaction, an better yet, dialogue, can provide the chaplain insight into group dynamics, values, and views. However, a chaplain must take care to avoid even the impression she is gathering intelligence, something expressly prohibited by her status as a non-combatant. That said, interaction that allows a chaplain to assess a group's axiology will help her work with local leaders in setting more manageable and meaningful goals for conflict transformation.

Threat Narratives & Collective Axiology

Daniel Rothbart and Karina V. Korostelina's¹⁹⁵ theory of axiological¹⁹⁶ difference further widens the scope for understanding and assessing religious-based conflict. While

¹⁹⁵ Daniel Rothbart is Professor of Conflict Analysis and Resolution, and Karina Korostelina is Associate Professor and Director of the Program on History, Memory, and Conflict—both at George Mason's School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution.

rooted in a positivist tradition of understanding conflict as a result of the deprivation of basic human needs, the authors' social identity theory is far more nuanced than their predecessors: Abraham Maslow, Auguste Comte, and John Burton. In-groups¹⁹⁷ rely on threat narratives that not only describe violent deeds but also characterize actors as immoral, depraved, and even evil. The initial need to understand the immediate facts of a tragic event evolves into a quest for *meaning* that involves questions such as: Who are *they*? Why are *they* evil? and When will *they* strike again?

Rothbart and Korostelina's social identity theory appreciates that every group of high salience unifies its members with an ideal vision of, and aspiration, for immortality. The vision is constructed on the basis on a group's value commitments to answer the questions from whence they came, what is their ultimate purpose and destination, and how shall they proceed to that end? The authors find instructive Martin Buber's ontology that illustrates humans long for union with God and with one another; such relationship transcends the boundaries of both time and space.¹⁹⁸ The efforts of highly salient groups

¹⁹⁶ *Axiology*—the philosophical study of value, value theory, and ethics—is rooted in Aristotle's virtue ethics and Bentham and Mill's utilitarian calculi, but also, as the authors point out, in Plato's idealized and abstract forms or even in Nietzsche's suspicious, even cynical, take on values as they are always used by the powerful elite to subject and oppress the weak. See Rothbart, Daniel, and Karina V. Korostelina. "Moral Denigration of the Other." *Identity, Morality, and Threat: Studies in Violent Conflict* eds. Rothbart, Korostelina (Lanham, MD: Lexington), 2006, 14.

¹⁹⁷ While the field uses the simpler "ingroup" "outgroup" spellings of these terms, I have opted to use the hyphen to emphasize their artificial and constructed nature.

¹⁹⁸ Rothbart and Korostelina, 3, cite Martin Buber. *I and Thou*. Transl. Ronald Gruger Smith (New York: Scribner Classics) 1989, 107-108.

are inextricably political¹⁹⁹ and normative and are dependent on mutual obligations and compliance. Normative principles promote group cohesion and are transmitted over generations through the telling of stories that define the identities of in-groups and out-groups in terms of virtue and vice, respectively. The authors define *collective axiology* comprehensively:

A collective axiology is *a system of value commitments* that define which actions are prohibited, and which actions are necessary for specific tasks. It provides *a sense of life* and world, *serves to shape perceptions* of actions and events, and provides a basis for evaluating group members. . . . [It] *defines boundaries and relations* among groups and establishes criteria for ingroup/outgroup membership. Through its collective axiology, a group traces its development from a sacred past, extracted from mythic episodes beyond the life of mortals, and *seeks permanence*. Transcending the finitude of individual life, a collective axiology extends retrospectively from the salient episodes of the past to a prospective vision, presumably into the otherwise uncertain future. An individual's identity and values that are acquired at birth and left behind at death *exist before that birth and behind that death*.²⁰⁰

To this end, Rothbart and Korostelina examine threat narratives to identify how value-commitments inform a collective axiology of identity and difference. A result of their study is the articulation of the authors' theory of axiological difference and their subsequent model: Four Stages of Axiological Difference. The model is inclusive, identifying to the one extreme, highly salient groups perceiving in-group and out-groups through a binary lens, and to the other extreme, groups seeking to discover the complexities and nuances of all groups—in *and* out.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid. 2-3. By “political” the authors intend both the common sense of the word as involving the world of political power and rule but also the classical sense of the word, where the *polis* serves as the ideal community.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 4. [Emphasis is mine.]

As their model is intended as an instrument for analyzing conflict, the greater part of the authors' focus rests on highly salient groups' propensity for violent conflict. The "threat-logic" behind the narratives that inform in-groups' sense of self and Other is inherently flawed as it "cut[s] off any access to the very phenomenon that it presumably explains"²⁰¹. Furthermore, the process removes one from appreciating the Other—whether her suffering, fear, and loss, on the one hand, or her achievement, insight, and joy, on the other. While existing studies have addressed saliency and identity-based conflict, the authors state theirs is a contribution of focus on "the axiological dimensions of *group identities*"²⁰². So not to cast an entirely negative light on their task, Rothbart and Korostelina ask the solution-oriented question that anticipates the ultimate direction of *this* present study: "How can negative characterizations be transformed in ways that promote a sense of positive worth in the Other?"²⁰³

Threat Narrative Elements Informing Axiological Difference

Rothbart and Korostelina's theory of axiological difference is framed upon themes in social identity theory related to group's perceptions of self and other. Fundamental to the inquiry is from whence came values of *peace* and *reconciliation*? Why do some groups value, pursue, and ideally demonstrate these values when others do not? The authors acknowledge violent acts have both positive and negative consequences that can never be fully anticipated, much less understood. They avoid, or at least resist,

²⁰¹ Ibid., 6.

²⁰² Ibid. [Emphasis is mine.]

²⁰³ Ibid.

the positivist tendency to separate the subject from its object, opting for a more sophisticated view of violent conflict that maintains a place for “mysteries”. Indeed, the authors unwittingly anticipate the following chapter’s theory of hermeneutics as a means of recognizing the interdependent nature of societies as illustrated here: “An agent of violence initiates, and in turn is potentially influenced by, the action, becoming both a ‘doer’ and a ‘sufferer’.”²⁰⁴ Suffering is often the result of denigration and stigmatization. In-groups essentialize out-groups as evil, the projection of which serves as a cognitive force fortifying real and perceived boundaries. To better understand why some respond to conflict with violence and others with dialogue, Rothbart and Korostelina explore ways threat narratives shape in-group responses to the Other. While initially concerned with the immediate questions: Who did what? To whom? And who supported the violence inflicted upon them?—in-group threat narratives tend to shift from negative individual attribution to collective denigration. This shift provides the grounds for in-groups to see the Other more narrowly, not only in terms of security but also in moral and ontological terms, where the Other is immoral, uncivilized, or even sub-human.

Even in societies that generate economic and social equality in-group/out-group comparisons will stress minor differences.²⁰⁵ Favorable social comparisons²⁰⁶ and

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 29. The idea expressed in this quotation is more in line with the Marxist-Hegelian view of social reformer Paulo Freire than Gadamer’s comprehensive ontology.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 30. Rothbart & Korostelina cite Volkan, Vamik. *Bloodlines: From Ethnic Pride to Ethnic Terrorism* (New York: Westview Press), 1997.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., Rothbart & Korostelina cite Tajfel, H. “The Social Identity Theory of Ingroup Behavior”, *Psychology of Ingroup Relations*. Eds. Worshel & Austin. (Chicago: Nelson-Hall), 1986, 7-24.; Turner, et al. “Self and Collective: Cognition and Social Context”, *Personality and Psychology Bulletin*. 20, 454-463.

perceptions of relative deprivation lead to stereotypes and bias²⁰⁷ that shape in-group identity. Therefore, it should be expected that in-groups within societies encountering economic and social disparities experience an *even greater* sense of collective identity and in-group homogeneity.²⁰⁸ These, in turn, lead to increased in-group bias and negative projections of the Other.²⁰⁹ As a counterexample to unattended conflict that can spread and intensify, cross cutting practices—the authors identify intermarriage—can maintain stability and balance within the larger society.²¹⁰

In-group members look within for security and moral legitimacy informed by myths that generate identity and cohesion in a dangerous world shared with the demonized Other. With the shift in threat narratives from a description of events to a

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 31. Rothbart & Korostelina cite Davis, J. “A Formal Interpretation of the Theory of Relative Deprivation”, *Sociometry*. 22, 280-96.; Gurr, T. *Minorities at Risk: A Global View of Ethnopolitical Conflict* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace), 1993.; and Runciman, W. *Relative Deprivation and Social Justice* (London: RKP), 1996.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., Rothbart & Korostelina cite Brewer, M. “Superordinate Goals Versus Superordinate Identity as Bases of Intergroup Cooperation”, *Social Identity Processes*. Capozza & Brown Eds. (London: Sage), 2000.; Elmers, N. et al. “Perceived Intragroup Variability as a Function of Group Status and Identification.” *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 31, 410-436.; Simon, B. “The Perception of Ingroup and Outgroup Homogeneity: Re-Introducing the Intergroup Context.” *European Review of Social Psychology* 3. Stroebe & Hewstone, Eds. (Chichester, UK: Wiley), 1992, 1-30.; and Simon, B. & Hamilton D. “Self-Stereotyping and Social Context: The Effects of Relative Ingroup Size and Ingroup Status.” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. 66, 699-722, 1994.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., Rothbart & Korostelina cite Gerard, H. & Hoyt, M. “Distinctiveness of Social Categorization and Attitude toward Ingroup Members.” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. 29, 836-842, 1974.; Mullen, B. et al. “Ingroup Bias as Function of Salience, Relevance, and Status: An Interrogation.” *European Journal of Social Psychology*. 22, 103-122, 1992.; and Sachdev, I. & Bourhis, R. “Minimal Majorities and Minorities.” *European Journal of Social Psychology*. 14, 35-52, 1984.

²¹⁰ The present study will look a particular theory of dialogue for its possibilities and limitations to do the same. See Chapter 5.

pronouncement of the perpetrators' malicious and depraved character, these narratives address what the authors identify as *normative agency* and not only describe incidents but the perpetrators' motives, long-term plan, and future actions, sometimes culminating in a call for the in-group to act preemptively. As victims of torture, rape, and other brutalities recount for the in-group their afflictions, "axiological differences emerge".²¹¹ The fear of an unknown future "is one of the most disturbing aspects of threats"²¹² and leads to attempts to *predict* through non-scientific means, future threats. "Phenomenological methods are needed to assess" these non-cognitive, unempirical claims.²¹³

Normative or global positioning is a third theme of threat narratives that informs axiological differences. When resisting the dangerous and evil Other, a devotee can engage in acts that are taboo and would otherwise incur cognitive dissonance if those acts were conducted according to in-group virtues and sanctioned by a higher, religious authority. As a result, the in-group actor receives absolution and adornment rather than guilt and self-loathing.²¹⁴ Recounting such actions redacts the narrative and reinforces in-group behavior. Through this process threat narratives continue to shape value commitments that inform group differences. Members of the out-group, by reason of

²¹¹ Ibid., 32.

²¹² Ibid., 33.

²¹³ Ibid. By *phenomenological means* it is assumed the authors are referring to internal logic and ethical systems that while of a limited utility to the practitioner for assessing religious-based conflict, is of little-or-no value (and one might argue counterproductive) when addressing the conflict with an aim toward resolution, transformation, or simply delay.

²¹⁴ Ibid., Rothbart and Korostelina cite Piven, J. "On the Psychosis (Religion) of Terrorists," *The Psychology of Terrorism: Theoretical Understandings and Perspectives*. Stout, Chris. Ed. (London: Praeger), 2002, 120.

their inherent depravity, are incapable of virtue and cannot be trusted. Because normative positioning is more than mere proscriptions and injunctions but provide members guiding principles, rights, duties, and obligations within a set of rules that encompass all life's activities,²¹⁵ one can imagine the authors would claim that while *normative positioning* in threat narratives is, to varying degrees, characteristic of all groups, it is especially the case for religious communities. Here, *submission* and *obedience* facilitate membership, where the notions of *covenant*, *election*, *chosenness*, *righteousness*, *worthiness*, and *purity* are directly tied to the normative order. The order is linked to the past, as it is understood in the group's mythic origins, but it is also open to modification by incorporating new events.²¹⁶ These themes—normative agency, predictability, and normative or global positioning—are themes of threat narratives that result in axiological differences.

Axiological Difference

As a mere construct itself, axiological difference, Rothbart and Korostelina explain, is useful for addressing the three themes of agency, predictability, and normative

²¹⁵ Ibid., 34.

²¹⁶ The histories of religion and philosophy are replete with examples of modifying the normative order. The Jewish and Christian practices of observing Sabbath are illustrative. Uttered at various times in the Hebrew Scriptures, the commandment to observe the Sabbath differs in the Genesis, Exodus, and Leviticus accounts—where its purpose is to remind the faithful of God's act of *Creation*—compared to the later Deuteronomistic account, where observance was to remind the faithful of their *deliverance* from bondage in Egypt. Similarly, for First Century Christians who initially observed both the Sabbath (seventh day) and the Lord's Day (first day) for two distinct purposes, the eventual modifying and collapsing of both ends into one observance not only served functions of in-group identity, but out-group Otherness.

order. Threat narratives foster normative boundaries that glorify and vilify in-group and out-group institutions and policies, respectively. Axiological differences embolden in-groups to create, maintain, and fortify in-group relations while prohibiting and disparaging relations with members of out-groups. Foreign ideas and practices, to include scientific and rational methods, are taboo and are perceived as a threat to in-groups' security, self-esteem, and collective values. The authors anticipate some may object to their theory on the grounds that axiological difference can be refuted on the basis of the fundamentalist attribution error, where negative behaviors are explained in terms of *overemphasizing character traits* and *underemphasizing circumstantial factors*. They counter that such an argument oversimplifies the fact that in-groups not only rely on circumstantial factors but their actions are also informed by characterizing all parties in terms of virtue and vice. Heroic acts, leaders' strengths, and faithful sacrifices promote moral distancing from the Other. The role of *circumstance* cannot exist apart "from perceived axiological differences".²¹⁷

While informed by in-group threat narratives, Axiological difference, is itself a dynamic process, and manifests in in-group behavior through the forms of mythic narrative, sacred icons, and normative orders, similar to their function in threat narratives. Axiological differences are shaped by episodes occurring in a mythic past often situated within an internal chronology or even transcending time altogether. The episodes retellings acquire archetypal import and meaning that construct both the prototypical

²¹⁷ Ibid., 37

leader or exemplar and the archetypal villain²¹⁸ within a corresponding dualistic view of nature. Children's stories involve characters that correspond to this binary morality, wherein they are encouraged to identify with the hero-prototype and eschew and objectify the evil Other. Such identification fosters pride and self-esteem linked to virtue, goodness, and achievement just as the corresponding objectification promotes the Other in terms of vice, shame, and failure. In-group members who emulate the prototype are esteemed as exhibiting a positive morality, and we are to presume that in-group members seek evidence that corresponds with the view of the Other as aberrant. The process and function of mythic narrative serve the dual purpose of positively socializing the in-group, while negatively esteeming the out-group.²¹⁹

Icons appearing in religious traditions' eschatologies are idealized and otherworldly and inform both prototypical and archetypal images. Utilizing these symbols suppresses confusion that might otherwise overwhelm in-group members confronted with a complex and nuanced social reality. Sacred icons help replace complexity with caricature. Icons are often tied to a sacred home, territory, or land. Identity is tied to notions of boundary and territory that suggest the borders between groups reflect a "static ontology" that is, rather than historically and temporally situated, "rooted in nature itself".²²⁰ Finally, non-human images such as serpents, swine, dogs,

²¹⁸ Ibid., 38. Rothbart and Korostelina cite Turner, J. et al. "Self and Collective: Cognition and Social Context." *Personality and Psychology Bulletin*. 20, 454-463. 1994.

²¹⁹ Ibid., 39.

²²⁰ Ibid., 40. Rothbart and Korostelina cite Mallki, L. "Refugees and Exile: From "Refugee Studies" to the Natural Order of Things." *Annual Review of Anthropology*. 24, 495-523.

wolves, and preying insects are employed to rationalize the objectification of the Other.²²¹

Normative orders inform the process of axiological differentiation by constructing dualities such as good-evil, virtue-vice, and sacred-profane. In order to identify one's self and in-group it is necessary to define who one is *not*. How can the identities of *Israeli, Arab, Hamas, and Palestinian*²²² be understood independently of the others? Such in-group/out-group identities are implicitly constructed in terms of both ontology and teleology or what the world *should* (and presumably *will*) look like. The authors introduce a *telimorphic*²²³ model to describe the dynamic process by which a group draws upon a mythic *past* while making sense of the *current* conflict in terms of *future* ideals. All groups, especially religious communities, experience identity as being bound by *covenant* or reciprocal moral obligations. As with principles already discussed, covenants serve just as much to identify, objectify, and vilify the Other as they do to identify, strengthen, and glorify the in-group. Whereas contexts of national and ethnic conflict involve claims for primacy based on original habitation, one presumes the authors would recognize parties of religious-based conflicts make similar primacy claims based on original status, correct belief, accurate understanding, proper authority, etc. In

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Ibid., 41. Rothbart and Korostelina cite Rouhana, N. *Palestinian Citizens in an Ethnic Jewish State: Identities in Conflict* (New Haven: Yale UP), 1997.

²²³ A Greek compound word—*telios* meaning purpose, completion, or end goal, and *morphe* meaning outer form or shape—*telimorphic* also captures the sense of transcendent time and dynamic nature of myth and narratives shaping identity related to axiological difference. (See figure 4.1 on the following page.)

figure 4.1²²⁴ below the each vertical arrow pointing up represents a sacred episode that is recounted through generations of storytelling, whereas each vertical arrow pointing down represents the process of narrative exemplification and the formation and re-formation of normative values. For instance,

the virtues of justice demand uniform application of the axiological order, establishing a moral requirement for consistency, that is, always doing the right thing under similar conditions. Exactly what those circumstances are rests on the nuances of ingroup value-commitments.²²⁵

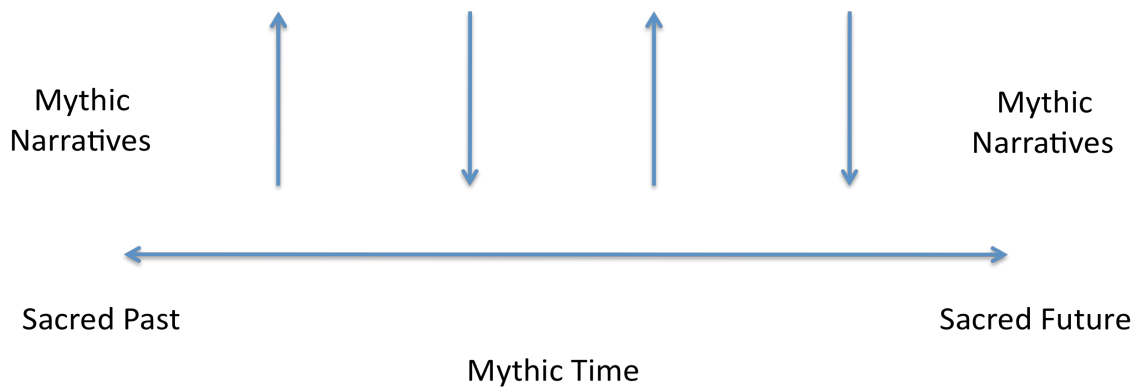


Figure 4.1 Rothbart & Korostelina’s Telimorphic Model

Rothbart and Korostelina explain that in-groups both *fear* and *need* an enemy. Axiological difference is a set of constructions in-groups use to “validate, vindicate, rationalize or legitimize actions, decisions, and policies”²²⁶ that solidify in-group identity and enable understanding of hardship and suffering in meaningful ways. Yet these differences remain vulnerable to shifting circumstances and exposure to outside ideas and

²²⁴ Ibid., 45.

²²⁵ Ibid., 46.

²²⁶ Ibid.

experiences that factor into axiological thinking and norms. The authors recommend each axiological difference be assessed using two variables: the degree of *collective generality* and the degree of *axiological balance*.

Collective generality is the manner in which in-groups categorize the Other and the degree to which they allow for complexity and nuance or resist these in favor of a more binary, monolithic, or caricatured description. An in-group's collective generality is assessed using four criteria:

1. homogeneity of out-group members' perceptions and behavior,
2. long-term stability of their beliefs, attitudes, and actions,
3. in-group resistance to changing their ideas about the Other, and
4. the scope or range of category of the Other.²²⁷

High collective generality reflects an in-group's notions the out-group is homogenous, unwilling or unable to change behaviors or modify beliefs, that the scope or range of those falling into the category of the out-group is broad, possibly even universal.

Conversely, *low collective generality* is the perception that out-group members are diverse, capable of change, exhibit various behaviors, and are limited in scope. The authors explain "fundamentalist religions" tend to rely on a high degree of collective generality, evidenced by an analysis of the apocalyptic and eschatological narratives rife with moral dualism. On the other hand, "protagonist groups" exhibit a low degree of collective generality that demonstrate complex and nuanced understandings of the

²²⁷ Ibid., 47.

Other.²²⁸ Often, pre-and-early-conflict stages are marked by low generality that increases as conflict escalates until finally:

The outgroup is perceived as a monolithic unit, acting as a single ‘entity’, speaking with one voice usually through a glorified leader. In such cases the ingroup tends to expand the category of the outgroup to include more and more nationalities, religious and ethnic groups, or races.²²⁹

Axiological balance, the second variable of axiological difference, represents the degree to which virtues and vices are available constructs for in-groups to assess both themselves *and* out-groups. This is a concern of balance, or fairness. To what extent are in-groups interested in identifying *their own* failings and moral inconsistencies? To what extent are they committed to discovering *out-groups’* virtues and accomplishments? Groups for whom these are priorities exhibit high degrees of axiological balance. Groups exhibiting low levels of axiological balance suffer from “tunnel consciousness”:²³⁰ a diminished capacity for critical reflection and independent thinking. In-groups perceive monolithically out-groups, and the grounds for protracted conflict are established. Based on the above theory, the authors have constructed a model to identify in-groups’ axiological qualities, with quadrants circumscribing the two axis of variance—each quadrant represents a different type of axiology, with either high or low generality and balance.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Ibid., 49.

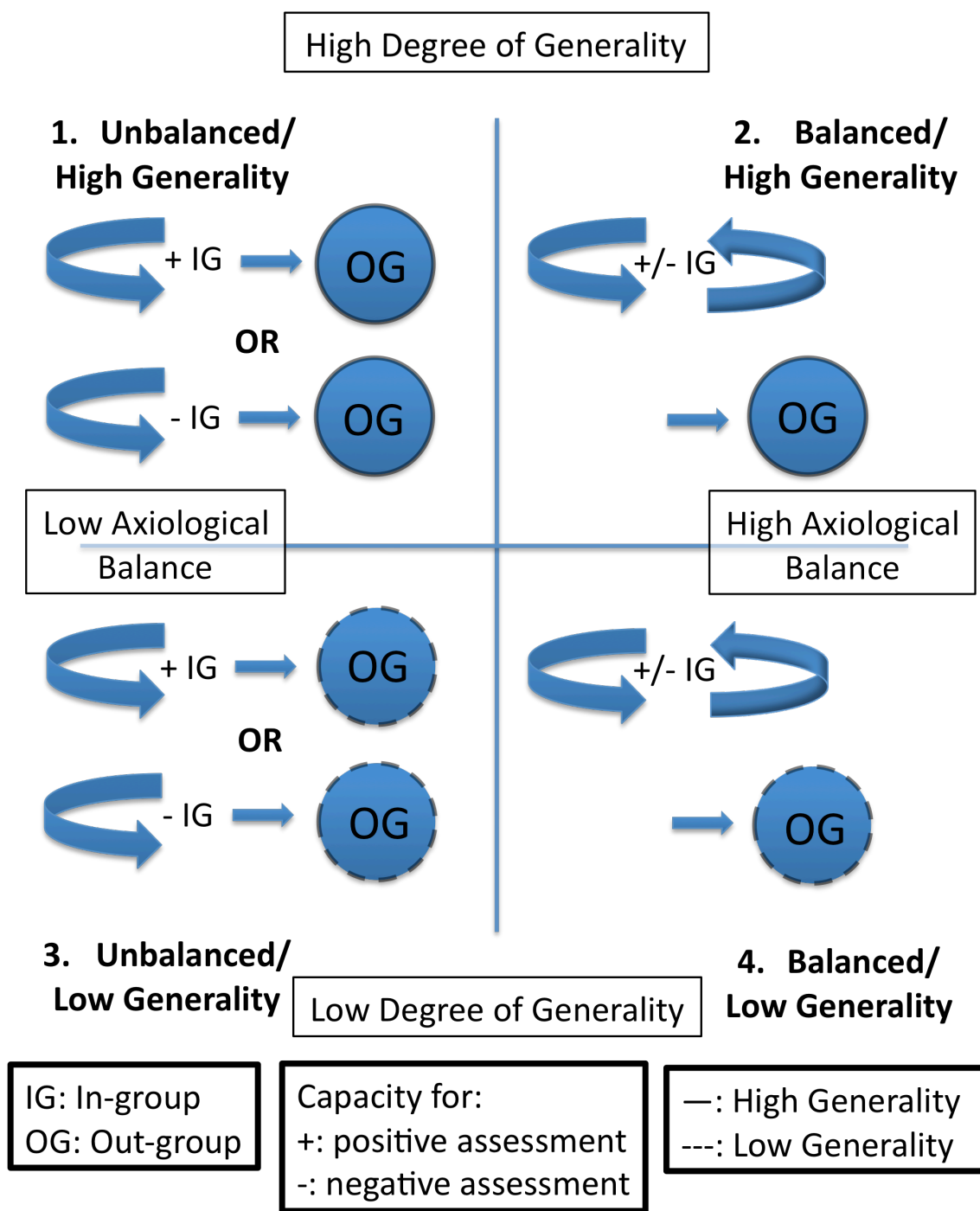


Figure 4.2 Rothbart & Korostelina's Four Types of Axiological Difference

Assessment, Possibilities, and Limitations

The ranges of collective generality and axiological balance can be observed in Figure 4.2²³¹ above. The positive (+) and negative (-) symbols represent an in-groups' capacity for self-assessment as it relates to developing identity. The horizontal arrows denote in-group (IG) projections of the out-group (OG), and the solid and dashed lines bordering the out-group circles represent high and low generality, respectively. Take note of the nuance allowed for by this model. Quadrants 1 and 3 allow for in-groups with either positive *or* negative identities, whereas Quadrants 2 and 4 allow for in-groups to exhibit *both* positive and negative identities when they function from within a balanced axiology. Quadrants 1, 2, and 3 each represent a type of axiology that corresponds to conditions for conflict. However, *Quadrant 4—Balanced/Low Generality—is the ideal.*

While the authors' diagram lists the quadrants from top-to-bottom, left-to-right (or counter-clockwise), I opted for the reverse order. The effect is nominal and merely switches the places of Quadrants 2 and 3. I felt this was helpful for two reasons. First, it is my experience that humans frequently discover their own possibilities and limitations only *after* they are confronted with the strangeness of the Other. (Reasons for this are detailed in the subsequent chapter on hermeneutical theory.) If this is accurate, then the more advanced *lower* generality should tend to occur prior to shifting to a more advanced axiological balance, and, therefore, all else being equal, Quadrant 2 (as I have labeled it) should more frequently occur before Quadrant 3. Of course, the authors do not seem to imply a linear progression with their model, but it is easily inferred. Second, and

²³¹ Ibid., 48.

building on this first point, the minor modification in labeling quadrants brings the terminology and sequence of this model's categories into closer proximity and aids comparing it with Fowler's Stages of Faith relevant to individuals in the previous chapter.

Significant implications of Rothbart and Korostelina's study include identifying factors that lead to violent conflict as well as strategies for both avoiding and attending to conflict. First, human beings crave diversity, and when societies lack diversity in the more obvious human categories—ethnicity, religion, gender, age, etc.—humans will “create” diversity through overemphasizing what the authors call “minor differences”. Doing so helps establish in-group identity, but often only by increasing generalization and decreasing healthier relations with out-groups.

First, it is helpful to acknowledge what the authors are *not* claiming their theory and related model can do. While it can help explain causes or modes of conflict, it does not provide fixed and ready solutions to conflicts, which, like identities, are always complex, shifting, and unique. The authors are not claiming their theory replaces nor even improves upon existing theories; one infers that the authors' theory is intended to aid analysis and inform strategic ends, with very little offered in terms of the methods and the means to achieve these ends. Finally, because generality and balance are relative and never static, it seems groups will rarely completely correspond to only one quadrant; while not to the same extent and frequency, it can be assumed that groups overlap the quadrants of this model as individuals overlap Fowler's stages.

On its surface, an assessment of religious-based conflict using the authors' model of Four Types of Axiological Difference may lead one to conclude: *identity* is the

problem. Although a gross overgeneralization, such a conclusion does provide a helpful starting point for analysis. No meaningful analysis of human activity can avoid the elements of identity theory; without the many components that comprise social identity, there can be no society, much less, humanity. Therefore, the logic—identity is the basis or framework upon which human conflict takes shape, so removing identity fixes conflict—is fallacious. However, while *removing* or *replacing* identity is an ontological and existential impossibility, *enriching* and *expanding* a group’s identity is worth considering. An elementary fact of identity theory is that identities—individual and group—are almost always complex. Even when compartmentalized in categories of ethnicity, religion, nationality, gender, culture, etc., identities—like nature—resist fixed, binary labeling. For example, to say that one is Catholic only gives us a starting point from which to examine her religious identity. By itself, *Catholic* (or for that matter, *Buddhist*, *Hindu*, *Jewish*, *Muslim*, or *Presbyterian*) does not provide us sufficient information about one’s normative beliefs, practices, and narratives. The analyst must *always* dig deeper and examine more closely. That said, just as there are secular Jews, Zen-Catholics, and capitalist Buddhists—parties to religious-based conflict informed by different religious traditions can conceivably find shared interests in a larger, more generalized social-identity. Of course, for this to occur, the parties would have to discover how to manage this growth without compromising their most distinctive and esteemed in-group values while simultaneously striving to realize *higher balance* and *lower generality*.

As this theory addresses *group* identity, behavior, and attitudes, one should proceed with caution when considering *individual* factors, and yet the natures of most societies are influenced and shaped by individual leaders. Therefore, a chaplain exhibits prudence to consult both Fowler and Rothbart/Korostelina when assessing religious-based conflict. Most, if not all, groups and the larger societies to which they belong, derive identity from narratives that esteem principles of homeostasis and equilibrium and that correspond to the ideals of Quadrant 4—even while functioning from Quadrants 1, 2, or 3. Realizing and maintaining a Quadrant 4 state-of-being requires an intentional and concerted effort. It requires visionary leaders and loyal members. This will be difficult, and can even seem impossible, because trust and compromise are also required. Unfortunately, societies in Quadrants 2 and 3, and especially 1—and leaders in Fowler’s Stage 4 and especially 3—will resist such compromise, perceiving it as weakness or sin. Practitioners’ greatest hopes lie in the strategy of assisting parties in conflict to identify *from within their respective narrative and normative traditions* the values that correspond to a Quadrant 4 state of being. Having identified these values, and conversely the vices that directly undermine these values, leaders and members ought to be encouraged to discover and design, *also from within their respective traditions*, strategies for attending to the religious-based conflict. It should be noted that identifying a strategy or way forward merely makes the impossible less-so; it does not make it easy. Strategies will be examined more closely in Chapter 6. The authors’ theory and their model of Four Types of Axiological Difference were examined for their potential to assist the practitioner analyzing religious-based conflict because they *seemed* promising. While the theory

cannot provide all the information chaplains will need when assessing conflict, without the information it *can* provide, there is little hope of successfully attending to religious-based conflict. Furthermore, framing strategies and goals for attending to religious-based conflict in terms of *balance* and *generality* is much more respectful to parties than doing so in-terms of *religion* and *faith*. A strong argument can be made that it is within societies maintaining high balance and low generality that religious communities can achieve their highest, temporal ideals—if not those more transcendent. Finally, for purely practical considerations, chaplains would do well to brief and advise commanders on these matters in terms of axiological difference whenever possible as doing so is more general and scientific. This is preferred in military contexts where religion is often considered a personal and a private category of experience.

CHAPTER 5: GADAMER'S THEORY OF HERMENEUTICS

While dialogue is a common method employed by practitioners attending to conflict and interreligious dialogue is an activity with which nearly all military chaplains are familiar, at least in terms of practicality if not formally speaking—few give thought to its justification and grounds (as discussed in Chapter 2) and fewer still to what it is they think is happening while conducting such dialogue. The following chapter explains why it is that whether or not they are intentionally seeking out a conversation partner, when interacting with local religious leaders, chaplains are engaging with the religious Other in such a way that their own views are forever changed. Furthermore, individuals do not merely converse but reveal for their interlocutors the very traditions that inform their complex and developing world views. Dialogue, as we will see, is everything.

Expanding on the work of Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer proposed a philosophy that continues to inform several fields of study beyond its own. In *Truth and Method* (published in 1960), Gadamer described language as "the medium in which substantive understanding and agreement take place between two people."²³² Speaking to ontological concerns, Gadamer claimed that the world is linguistically constituted; it cannot exist apart from language. For all their beauty and significance, even monuments

²³² Gadamer, Hans-George. *Truth and Method. Second Ed.* (New York: Continuum Press), 1998, 384.

and statues cannot communicate or convey meaning without the aid of language. Similarly, Gadamer explained that every language constitutes a world-view, because the linguistic nature of the world frees each individual from an objective environment: "the fact that we have a world at all depends upon [language] and presents itself in it. The world as world exists for man as for no other creature in the world."²³³ Words are not merely important; they are essential, and they are not essential merely because they allow us to communicate, but because they are the very basis of our being—our being as individuals relating to one another.

So much more than a mere hermeneutical method for interpreting and understanding religious and literary texts, Gadamer's work is a phenomenological ontology that informs all other philosophical concerns, especially practical philosophy, ethics, and the social sciences. A Gadamerian approach to understanding the Other has significant implications for practitioners in the field of conflict analysis and resolution. One of these implications and the practical concern of this study is the practice of interreligious dialogue. Virtually everyone concedes interreligious dialogue is essential for improving relationships across traditions, and many engage in the practice. However, few give thought to identifying the aims of dialogue, what it is within their traditions that informs and justifies such activity, or why it is they believe such dialogue is even possible. The following is a summary and critical analysis of hermeneutical theory in the tradition of Gadamer to discover its possibilities and limitations for interfaith dialogue in settings of religious-based conflict.

²³³ Ibid., 440.

Gadamer's Theory of Hermeneutics

Only in the twentieth century, primarily due to the influence of phenomenology and in particular to Heidegger's *Being and Time*, has hermeneutics moved to the center of continental philosophy. Implicit in Heidegger and explicit in Gadamer are the following interrelated assertions: the claim for the *ontological significance* of hermeneutics and the claim for its *universality*. Hans-Georg Gadamer's contributions to human understanding and dialogue can be appreciated, like anything, as not only resulting from but also consisting of his conversation with philosophers past, present, and future. As a student of the young Heidegger, Gadamer began and never ceased engaging Aristotle's ethics and politics. He is also deeply indebted to Platonic metaphysics, not only for its ontological but also for its dialectical and dialogical traditions. Too, one can detect Hegel's imprint at nearly every turn in Gadamer, which is not to imply that Gadamer is Hegelian in every or even in *most* ways. Gadamer's thought can be understood, in part, as a rejection of the Cartesian subject-object dichotomy. And in that same spirit his critiques of Schleiermacher and Dilthey serve as a helpful backdrop against which one can appreciate the historical and philosophical contexts of his theory. He is universally regarded for his fresh and novel approach to hermeneutics that has forever changed the way we talk about the tasks of understanding and interpreting, though few tie the influence to Gadamer. His thought became more robust as a result of a life-long debate with Habermas, his contemporary, much like it has been brought into sharper focus when compared to and challenged by Foucault and Ricoeur—all of whom expressed the highest admiration for

both the man and his contributions. (*As I am dealing with the work of an accomplished philosopher whose aim was to challenge several established philosophies²³⁴ with great precision and nuance, and because my access to his primary text is an English translation of the German, I will rely a good deal upon reputable philosophers' treatment of Gadamer who wrote in English, one of whom shared with him a long-term, personal relationship.²³⁵*)

Prior to Heidegger and Gadamer the field of hermeneutics was limited to the interpretation of works of art, literary texts, and histories. Gadamer's focus broadened or deepened hermeneutics' aim to address what he called the "happening" of understanding. Gadamer was not proposing a new method by which to interpret texts and human activity; he was arguing that his hermeneutical theory explains what is *already happening* through our becoming that is *understanding*. Among his concerns was the modern obsession with method that has led, he argued, to a *distortion* and *concealment* of the ontological nature of human understanding. One of the primary ways Gadamer sets out

²³⁴ Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics is a result of his ongoing engagement with Aristotle, Descartes, Kant, Hegel, Schleiermacher, and Heidegger.

²³⁵ Richard J. Bernstein is the Vera List Professor of Philosophy at The New School. He worked very closely with many of his contemporary philosophers including Hannah Arendt, Jürgen Habermas, Richard Rorty, and Jacques Derrida, a fact which makes the following statement all the more impressive: "Gadamer is the best listener and conversational partner that I have ever met" (Bernstein xvi). Admittedly anecdotal, it is this statement and the frequent care Bernstein exhibits in his treatment of Gadamer, especially when they disagree, that helps me feel confident about my choice to rely on his understanding. While Bernstein reveres Gadamer, he expresses sympathy with Gadamer's readers: "Because the range of Gadamer's interpretations is staggering in its scope and subtlety, one sometimes feels that in order to understand him one must already have the *Bildung* that he talks about." Bernstein, Richard J. *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics, and Praxis*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press), 1983, 114. I rely on Georgia Wernke too, though to a lesser extent.

to correct this distortion and concealment is by reclaiming and clarifying the *interrelatedness* of dialogue, debate, conversation, and communication. What was previously a concern for method within the human sciences, hermeneutics in the hands of Gadamer became an ontological focus on “understanding . . . [as] a primordial mode of being of human life itself.”²³⁶

Bernstein explains why the context in which Gadamer’s *Truth and Method*²³⁷ was published is essential to understand why it resonated with so many. In the Anglo-American intellectual tradition, the disciplines were categorized as either the natural sciences, the social sciences, or the humanities. However, in the continental tradition, the disciplines were dichotomized as belonging either to the *Naturwissenschaften* (natural sciences) or the *Geisteswissenschaften* (moral sciences). In the Anglo-American tradition the social sciences were viewed not in differing with the natural sciences in the *kind* of science, but in *degree*. Because the continental tradition saw the social disciplines as a moral science, the implication was “a proper understanding of the range of the social disciplines requires us to recognize the[ir] essential hermeneutical dimension.”²³⁸

Recognizing this is more than mere ascent to the responsibility of a practitioner to acknowledge ways of understanding alien cultures and texts without imposing or projecting upon them her own prejudices. It is “precisely in and through an

²³⁶ Ibid., 34.

²³⁷ Because one only appreciates the significance of Gadamer’s title *after* she understands the thrust of his argument, most balk at it. Bernstein proposes a better title might have been, *From Epistemology to Hermeneutics* and elsewhere *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism*. (See Bernstein, 111, 115.) Similarly, Georgia Warnke proposed *Objectivity and the Limits of Method*. (See Warnke, 3.)

²³⁸ Ibid., 34.

understanding of alien cultures that we come to a more sensitive and critical understanding of our *own* culture and of those prejudices that may lie hidden from us.”²³⁹

Underneath Gadamer’s explanation for the “happening” of understanding is his critique of (and solution to) the Cartesian subject-object split. Refining Heidegger’s own critique of Descartes, Gadamer rejects the inherited and near universally accepted model of understanding as comprised between a knowing subject and a knowable object. Knowledge, according to this predominate model, is objective. According to Descartes, the knowing human subject is capable of *completely* freeing herself of all bias, prejudice, and tradition. This is the foundation of objective knowledge. Having become free of bias, the subject is able to apprehend her object. Upon the “firm foundation of knowledge” is built the “edifice of a universal science; the belief that by the power of self-reflection we can transcend our historical context and horizon and know things as they really are in themselves.”²⁴⁰ Gadamer’s critique was not only of Descartes’ view of knowledge, but *reason* as well. By juxtaposing reason *and* tradition, reason *and* prejudice, and reason *and* authority Enlightenment thinking has distorted our understanding of each of these. Reason is not a faculty or capacity that can simply free itself of its historical contexts and horizons. Reason is always situated within history and gains what distinctive power it has through a *tradition*. The human contexts of *tradition* and *history* do not limit reason but give it its essence and force. And yet Gadamer does not merely raise epistemological objections to Cartesian claims, again, his concern is

²³⁹ Ibid., 36. [Emphasis is mine.]

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

primarily ontological. The Cartesian tradition is “based on a misunderstanding of being, and in particular upon a misunderstanding of our being-in-the-world.” And while indirect, “Gadamer’s critique is radical[ly] devastating.”²⁴¹

A primary result of the distortion of the subject-object split and the capacity for objectivity, Gadamer argues, is modern society’s tendency to exaggerate the role and authority of the expert. Our “longing” to forfeit our own authority to those we call *experts* results in “an awful deformation” of *praxis*; it is misunderstood as mere application of science to technical tasks, rather than ethical and human concern and “degrades practical reason to technical control.”²⁴² We achieve, Bernstein explains, “an even more penetrating understanding when we pursue the intimate relations between hermeneutics and *praxis*.”²⁴³ Gadamer is forceful in assessing the problem and proclaiming the solution:

The *chief task of philosophy* is . . . to defend practical and political reason against the *domination* of technology based on science. . . . It corrects the particular *falsehood* of modern consciousness: the *idolatry* of scientific method and of the anonymous authority of the sciences and it *vindicates* again the *noblest* task of the citizen—decision making according to one’s own responsibility—instead of conceding that task to the expert.²⁴⁴

Gadamer’s critique also criticizes Kant for unwittingly influencing what he called “the subjectivisation of aesthetics”. The first part of *Truth and Method* is titled: “The Question of Truth as it Emerges in the Experience of Art” wherein Gadamer laments the prejudice that has led to the common assumption that art and beauty have nothing to do

²⁴¹ Ibid., 118.

²⁴² Ibid., 39.

²⁴³ Ibid., 40.

²⁴⁴ Ibid. [Emphasis is mine.]

with knowledge and truth. Asking whether there is a common faculty of taste leads to relativism so that it is exceedingly difficult to retrieve any idea of taste or aesthetic judgment that is appreciated as anything more than personal preference. It was only a matter of time, Gadamer warned, before the same claim would be leveled against all judgments of value, including moral judgments.

Gadamer uses the concept and activity of *play* to tie together his claims about ontology and art's ability to reveal truth—something that at first seems odd. But this is no mere metaphor, as indicated by his description of *play* as “the clue to ontological explanation” and his argument that as such, *play* allows us to understand both “the ontology of the work of art *and* its hermeneutical significance.”²⁴⁵ Gadamer begins with the type of *play* involved in children's games and then moves to that of the performing arts. Children's play requires one to lose herself in the act of playing. Similarly, in a theatrical production, the players are neither subjects nor objects, but the conduit through which the audience (which, in a sense, *includes* the players) and the play itself (which, in a complex way, includes the players, the audience, and the entire cultural, literary, and historical tradition with which it is in conversation) fuse into something altogether new. This dynamic interaction is dialogical. Any work of art is incomplete in the sense that it requires an interpreter, who is not detached, since the work of art makes a claim upon her. Spectators at a play—like participants in a dialogue, or humans in life (to draw broader the concentric circles of human *being*)—are present in the sense that they

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 120. Bernstein cites Gadamer's *Truth and Method*, 91, 97.

participate in the art. This use of *play* also helps explain how Gadamer characterizes art, like understanding, not as a thing or an object, but as an event or a happening.

To further clarify Gadamer turns to what he calls the “reproductive arts” or dramatic and musical performances. Performances of the same piece of music vary as they are played in different settings and times and performed by different artists and appreciated by different audiences. Both performance and interpretation vary. It is not the case that “only the effect varies . . . The viewer of today not only sees in a different way, but he sees different things.”²⁴⁶ While it makes no sense to speak of the *single* or the *correct* interpretation of a work, neither does Gadamer allow for relativism when it comes to the truth of art, or anything else. We can still distinguish between better and worse performances. Not to put too fine a point on it, we not only recognize that different musicians will interpret and perform a work differently, but that they will perform it differently on different occasions. This does not warrant a description of relativism as to think that all performances are of equal merit. Even though we acknowledge that there will be conflicting evaluations of a performance, it is inaccurate to describe the act of making judgments of better-and-worse to be akin to personal preferences. Gadamer concludes this point by expanding outward from aesthetics: “Understanding must be conceived as the part of the process of the coming into being of meaning in which the significance of all statements—those of art and those of everything else that has been transmitted—is formed and made complete.”²⁴⁷

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 123. Bernstein cites Gadamer, 140-41.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 125. Bernstein cites Gadamer, 146.

The centrality of *praxis*'s role in Gadamer's theory is brought to light in his several debates with Jürgen Habermas. Habermas, working from a Hegelian-Marxist paradigm, argued the social and political sciences demanded a hermeneutical dimension. Habermas was skeptical of hermeneutical philosophies' universalistic claims. Missing in the discussion of culture and society was what he called a "depth hermeneutics" to add to the quest for language and communication a concern for the roles of *work* and *power*. Habermas argued for a dialectical model that sought to synthesize empirical-analytical science *with* hermeneutics; the result, he argued, would be a critical theory of practical import that would liberate our thinking and enrich our understanding. For Gadamer all understanding implies application. The fusion of hermeneutics and *praxis* "becomes the most central theme in Gadamer's analysis of philosophical hermeneutics."²⁴⁸ While Habermas praised Gadamer for linking hermeneutics and *praxis*, he rejected Gadamer's particular understanding of *praxis*, where he was influenced by Aristotle's concept of *praxis* as the model for understanding the human sciences. To be clear, both men agreed society's idolatry of science led to confusing, deforming, and reducing practical and human concerns with scientific technicality and an overreliance and over-confidence in method. Both also sought to liberate the autonomy and legitimacy of *praxis* as distinguishable from *technē*. Their primary disagreement can be summarized as what this distinction actually means and what are the consequences we experience as a result.

Gadamer chose to emphasize *praxis* in terms of the diversity or plurality of human possibility; it was the "highest form of human activity manifested in speech and deed and

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 141.

rooted in the human condition.”²⁴⁹ Method’s ominous consequences impact *praxis* by means of pretense; it pretends to be “an innocent, epistemological neutral ideal [when] it is a ‘proposal for shaping the mind.’”²⁵⁰ Once entrapped within a subject-object paradigm of understanding that prioritizes objective knowledge, virtually anything subjective is dismissed as private, idiosyncratic, arbitrary, even relative and therefore of little value to the pursuit of *real* knowledge. Because they cannot withstand the rigors of objective standards, even values are treated as noncognitive emotional responses or personal preferences—a sad state of affairs for what Gadamer esteemed as the “highest form of human activity”.

Under Gadamer, hermeneutics is no longer conceived as a subset of the humanities or as a method of the human sciences but as the primary ontological concern pertaining to questions of what humans really are. If we are to understand what it means to be human we must seek “to understand understanding itself, in its rich, full and complex dimensions”.²⁵¹ On the surface, at least, one might think of Gadamer’s hermeneutics as a fusion of the classical concerns of both *ontology* and *epistemology*—and for that matter, *ethics* too. Gadamer rejects *understanding* in the traditional sense as the activity of a subject; it is better to think of understanding as a happening, as an event.²⁵² Understanding is *universal* in that Gadamer argues its proper role as underlying and pervading *all* activities.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 44.

²⁵⁰ Ibid., 45.

²⁵¹ Ibid., 113.

²⁵² It would be interesting to compare Gadamer’s hermeneutic as an implicit ontology

The role of *prejudice* in Gadamer's hermeneutical theory is a corrective of both the Cartesian distortion of understanding and also the further disfigurement caused by those attempting a similar corrective. Responding to both the German philosophical school but also to the British, French, and Russian literary and musical traditions of the same name, Gadamer takes issue with the Romantic premise that the subject can transcend history and grasp the intentions and aims of the author, historian, or artist by means of a psychological empathy.²⁵³ Neither meaning nor understanding are associated with psychological states of mind. We cannot abstract ourselves from our own historical situations and leap into the minds of others; all events are intrinsically linguistic. The meaning of any text, of any event, is not self-contained—something out there that is to be mined and discovered.

describing the event of human understanding as the basis of being human with Alfred North Whitehead's *actual entity*, which is not an enduring substance but a process of becoming; such is his explanation of reality as comprised of *occasions of experience* that overlap one another in time. For Whitehead humans are in the process of becoming aware or becoming human. The following are promising leads for future research and demonstrate my inquiry, while peculiar, is anything but unique: Doud, Robert. "Fusing The Horizons Between Whitehead And Gadamer". *Existentialia*. 15(3-4): 249-263 (2005); Nemeč, Rastislav. "Gadamer's *subtilitas applicandi* versus Whitehead's Symbolic Reference". *Filozofia*. 64 (1):18-27 (2009). It is particularly interesting to me that in the process of being human, the two also critique the prioritizing scientific method over all others. According to Lucas, "While he shares the interests and concerns for a broader interpretation of facts and values, [Whitehead] denies the fundamental distinction of scope or method between the scientific and humanistic disciplines." In this, Whitehead "offers a close parallel to the challenge posed to the conventional understanding of hermeneutics in European thought by advocates of a 'universal hermeneutics,' including Rorty, Mary Hesse, and Foucault." Lucas, George R. *The Rehabilitation of Whitehead: An Analytic and Historical Assessment of Process Philosophy*. (Albany, NY: SUNY Press), 1989, 204. Obviously, this would include Gadamer.

²⁵³ Pinker, Hunt, and Armstrong's notions of empathy as value (see Chapter 1) should not be equated with the Romantic notion of empathy that is more ontological and epistemological in aims than it is ethical.

Gadamer addresses a similar criticism to the other side of the philosophical spectrum: what he calls the Enlightenment's "prejudice against prejudice".²⁵⁴ In today's academic parlance, it might be more accurate to translate Gadamer's quality of being as *pre-judgment*, since both *prejudice* and *bias* now have negative connotations because of the very perversion Gadamer is addressing. Consequently, neither is the term *pre-understanding* very helpful, as it would imply that something occurs *before* understanding, which would not correspond to Gadamer's theory. Prejudices are not inherently harmful, in that they inevitably distort the truth. *Prejudices*:

Constitute the initial directedness of our whole ability to experience. Prejudices are biases of our openness to the world. They are simply conditions whereby we experience something—whereby what we encounter says something to us. This formulation certainly does not mean that we are enclosed within a wall of prejudices and only let through the narrow portals those things that can produce a pass saying, "Nothing new will be said here." Instead, we welcome just that guest who promises something new to our curiosity.²⁵⁵

It is neither recommended nor possible that one bracket and overcome all prejudices. They are reference points for knowledge; there is no understanding without them. *We cannot begin with complete doubt.* For as we begin, it does not occur to us that we can question them. While Gadamer distinguishes between what he calls *blind* prejudices and *justified* or enabling prejudices, he is clear that both types of prejudices constitute our being. Once again, distinguishing *for ourselves* between blind and just prejudices is a Cartesian myth; not only is pure-self reflection an impossibility, there is no knowledge *without* prejudices. Therefore, it is only through our encounter with texts, art, culture,

²⁵⁴ Bernstein, 127 (Bernstein cites Gadamer's *Truth and Method*, p. 240.)

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 127 (Bernstein cites Gadamer's *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, p. 9.)

and people (and how each is contextualized in traditions) that we gain knowledge or experience understanding, including understanding that enables us to distinguish between these two types of prejudice. Gadamer makes clear it is “only in and through the dialogical encounter with what is at once alien to us, makes a claim upon us, and has an affinity with what we are that we can open ourselves to *risking* and *testing* our prejudices.”²⁵⁶ One should not understand that she will ever complete such a process; there is no Hegelian culmination at which point one experiences complete transparency any more than one will ever complete the process of understanding. To risk and test our prejudices is a constant task not a final achievement.

Closely related to *prejudices* are Gadamer’s concepts of *authority* and *tradition*. Here too, the Enlightenment thinkers denigrated the principle of authority when implying that obedience and the abdication of reason are one’s proper response to experts’ titles, offices, and positions. On the contrary, a person’s authority is based on her superior judgment and insight, which happens (or becomes evident to her interlocutors) in discourse. Properly understood, authority has nothing to do with blind obedience, coercion, or arbitrariness. Traditions function for societies and groups of people much the same as prejudices function for individuals. All *expressions of reason* function within their respective traditions. Traditions are not the dead weight of bygone eras. Traditions are living in that they are always informing who we are but also in the sense that they are always reconstituting; they cannot remain stagnant. To speak of the preservation of tradition is to speak of its transformation in response to its dialogue with freedom and

²⁵⁶ Ibid., 129. [Emphasis is mine.]

reason. Traditions are affirmed, embraced, and cultivated as we engage them. But they do not stand outside of us anymore than our knowledge of a thing is outside or distinct from us.

An illustration of how one distinguishes between *blind* and *justified* prejudices is Thomas Kuhn's experience. He discovered that his initial perplexity with Aristotle's physics was a result of his prejudices for modern mechanics. The realization allowed for adjustments, and the perplexities suddenly vanished. The experience helped him recognize more clearly the phenomenon Gadamer and others refer to the *hermeneutical circle*. In turn, this led to another and deeper level of understanding. He explains:

When reading the works of an important thinker look first for the apparent absurdities in the text and ask yourself how a sensible person could have written them. When you find an answer, I continue, when those passages make sense, then you may find that the more central passages, ones you previously thought you understood, have changed their meaning.²⁵⁷

With similar import, Charles Taylor explained: "it may not just be that to understand a certain explanation one has to sharpen one's intuitions, it may be that one has to change one's orientation—if not in adopting another orientation, at least in living one's own in a way which allows for greater comprehension of others."²⁵⁸ When Gadamer speaks in terms of being in dialogue with texts, art, or people, and that these, in turn, speak to us, he is not employing metaphor or projection; he is expressing what he "takes to be the most fundamental ontological character of our being-in-the-world."²⁵⁹ We must open ourselves to the risk that involves awareness of our prejudices and allowing them to form

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 132.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 134.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 137.

the meeting place into which we greet the newness of the Other. But rather than bracketing our prejudices, it is by allowing them to *play* off our experience of the Other that we better understand both the Other *and* our prejudices. Such understanding informs a more responsible distinction between blind and justified prejudices, where the former develop as a result of the exposure of encounter. As our prejudices are contextualized in our *traditions*, in our inherited histories handed down to us, in our very being—traditions too are party to this dialogical and dialectical happening, this process of becoming. And so it is that *meaning* is always coming to us in the happening of understanding.

Gadamer's sense of *tradition* is one more way he resists *total* relativism. Enlightenment's historical objectivism "conceals the involvement of the historical consciousness (the dialogical aspect of humans and their traditions) itself in effective-history."²⁶⁰ We belong to our traditions before they belong to us, as they are constantly determining what we are becoming in the process of understanding. Our becoming is not relative in any universal sense—where a particular becoming is just as good or as desirable as the next, or that through the act of will one could simply chose what is true—because our understandings are shaped by our traditions, our histories, and their defining values. And this shaping is not merely in a sense that they leave on us their traces, but there is no time when they are not shaping us, nor we them. Each tradition's inherent reasoning is at work when differentiating between and developing our traditionally informed prejudices. Relativism only makes sense as a dialectical antithesis to objectivism; as we weigh its claims and find them wanting, so too are we lead to question

²⁶⁰ Ibid., 142. Bernstein cites Gadamer's *Truth and Method*, 268.

“the very intelligibility of relativism.”²⁶¹ While it is accurate to say we are constantly in the process of modifying and shaping what we are becoming through dialogue with the Other, we “cannot escape from the dynamic power of effective history.”²⁶²

Gadamer describes the realm of one’s unfolding understanding as a *horizon*, one of Gadamer’s most fundamental technical terms. Each person has her own horizon; while it is limited and finite, it is not closed. Just as one experiences the visual phenomenon, one’s hermeneutical horizon changes as she moves. All happenings of understanding, all events in dialogue—whether individuals or traditions—are contextualized in their respective horizons and remain limited, finite, changing, and fluid. In the dialogical process, our horizons fuse with one another and become enlarged and enriched. For Gadamer, the medium of all human horizons is linguistic. The language we speak and that speaks through us is open to understanding alien horizons. Through the fusion of horizons we risk and test our prejudices, leading to the expansion of our horizon. Again, it is “only through others that we gain true knowledge of ourselves.”²⁶³ It must be emphasized that *understanding* is “the primordial mode of being of what we most essentially are”, and also that *language* is the medium of all understanding and tradition—not merely a tool that we use, but “the medium in which we live.”²⁶⁴

Phronēsis, or ethical-know-how, requires an understanding of others and, for Gadamer, is grounded in Aristotle’s notion of friendship. The person with understanding

²⁶¹ Ibid., 167.

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ Ibid., 144.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 145.

does not know and judge as one who stands apart from other individuals or from traditions as if she were somehow unaffected by them. Rather, she is “as one *united by a specific bond* with the other [and] *thinks with the other and undergoes the situation with him.*”²⁶⁵ By *judge* Gadamer means humans interpret appropriate precedents and *law* to each new particular situation—very much like a judge does in societies’ courts of law. But just as individuals do not stand apart from one another but are involved with one another, so too do *traditions* play off one another; therefore, to think of them, to judge them, independently is an abstraction. Bernstein uses to exemplify Gadamer’s sense of *phronēsis*, Gadamer’s own dialogical encounter with Aristotle. Gadamer does not advocate a nostalgic return to Aristotle but rather an appropriation of his insights into our own historical situation. And so it is that we can benefit from Aristotle’s own confrontation with the professional lawmakers of his time, who were revered as the experts of his day, and better *understand* the problems we confront in our own contemporary situation.²⁶⁶

The more practical applications of Gadamer’s theory can be understood in the progressive relationship between *dialogue*, *reason*, and the type of *community* that comes into being as these receive fuller expression in their interplay. In equating the logic of understanding with the structure of dialogue we appreciate that participants in dialogue are led beyond their initial, traditionally-formed-prejudices toward a consensus that is more differentiated and nuanced than the separate views with which the interlocutors

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 147. Bernstein cites Gadamer, 288.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 148-49.

began. In some places Gadamer speaks of consensus as substantive agreement or an agreement of what is true or valid, rather than a critical synthesis into something new. Elsewhere, consensus refers to the fusion of horizons that *is* dialectical but it is not only a “third” or “new” position, but also a deeper understanding of the matters in question. Here, even if one holds to her initial point of view, she has nevertheless to deal with the objections, considerations, concerns, and counter-examples introduced by her interlocutors. Therefore, *whether or not she changes her position or maintains it, her horizon is more developed than when she and her interlocutors began*. Each party’s position is now *informed*, one might even argue *inspired*, by the others. As such, the particular positions and the horizons in which they take form “acquire greater warrant, they are less blind or one-sided and, to this extent, more rational than they previously were.”²⁶⁷ For Gadamer, this is precisely how dialogue and discussion are not only constituted by the reason of their traditions but promote its progress.

Experience remains a form of reason as justification we encounter through dialogue. Precisely through our openness to the implications of the dialogue do we acquire both more warranted beliefs *and* an increased capacity to discriminate between our prejudices and what *is* and *is not* warranted. The attitude of remaining open to risk, what seems like a classical form of humility, is required if one is to enjoy the fullest benefits of dialogue. Encountering with humility alien beliefs and presuppositions is precisely what allows one to see her own inadequacies and transcend them. Addressing the same concern but in broader context, Warnke explains:

²⁶⁷ Warnke, 169.

Any tradition that establishes a set of canonical problems also incorporates standards of truth and rational justification. . . . the solution the tradition provides will sometimes appear inadequate and at these times rationality will require an openness to the guidance another tradition may provide. To this extent reason is not itself tied to any one tradition. What a culture takes as rational or irrational will depend upon its history, assumptions, and other beliefs. . . . rationality requires a willingness to revise, perhaps radically, traditional views and “metanarratives”.²⁶⁸

The willingness to admit the existence of better options while encountering the Other is a prerequisite to rational progress.

Gadamer’s concept of *Bildung* describes the process by which individuals and traditions’ horizons fuse to create the *gibildete*: a more accessible and resilient community. Such a community understands its place within the larger world-community. To the extent that this community learns from other communities and takes a more differentiated view of themselves and others, they can acquire sensitivity, subtlety, and a capacity for discrimination. Warnke explains, “In becoming cultured we do not simply acquire better norms [and] values. We also acquire the ability to acquire them. In other words we learn tact, taste and judgment.”²⁶⁹

Analysis & Critique

Warnke frames her case for the relevance of Gadamer’s theory today despite the fact that “positivism . . . is no longer generally accepted” and that “many of us are . . . post-positivists”.²⁷⁰ While this may be Warnke’s experience as a professor of philosophy at UC Riverside in 1987, such an assumption glosses over the reality that Gadamer’s

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 172.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 174.

²⁷⁰ Warnke, 4.

theory remains significant in all contexts of human activity, most of which, I would counter, remain informed by, if not entrenched within, positivist assumptions of knowledge and truth. And while Warnke demonstrates a thorough, if not an overly favorable, understanding of Gadamer's theory she seems to limit its appreciation to the field of philosophy at the expense of the remaining fields of human activity. I imagine she and others might dismiss my concern as a mere detail, but I believe her framing undermines the ultimate and universal significance of Gadamer's claim: namely that his theory describes what it means for each human to be human.

The more common criticisms leveled against Gadamer concern his ambiguous treatment of *truth*, his nuanced appropriation of Aristotle's *phronēsis*, and that his dialogue is far too general or universalized to have the positive impact on our world he claims it can. Although basic to Gadamer's entire concept and listed in the title of his *magnum opus*, *truth* receives a rather elusive treatment; Bernstein complains that the term is not even listed in Gadamer's index. Gadamer recognizes the claims of *truth* that works of art, traditions, and people have upon us as we enter into dialogical activity with them, and also that such truths enable us to go beyond our own historical horizons by means of fusing with others' horizons—something that is essential to avoid slipping into relativism—but he does not flesh out for us the nature of this truth. The concluding paragraph of Gadamer's 447 page tome ends with these strong claims for truth: “what the tool of method does not achieve must—and effectively can—be achieved by a *discipline*

of questioning and research, a discipline that *guarantees truth*.”²⁷¹ ²⁷² And yet, Gadamer’s audience remains uncertain of his specific use of *truth*. To be fair, Gadamer frequently describes truth in negative terms: what it is *not*. Like Hegel and Heidegger, Gadamer insists truth is not correspondence, yet he rejects almost everything else Hegel has to say about truth, especially truth as “the whole” or absolute knowledge that finally overcomes experience in the culmination of history. Warnke sees Gadamer’s concern for *validity* as a rough equivalent to others’ sense of truth.²⁷³ But there is a sense in which, for Gadamer, truth is experienced in dialogue; it is something that is handed down to us in our interaction with tradition. But this is not to imply that truth is ultimate or that it transcends history in such a way that it is free from competing claims to truth. On this issue, it seems likely to me that Gadamer is uneasy discussing truth *qua* truth, and instead opts to discuss reason, authority, tradition, and freedom. The truth, if you will, is implied throughout the work itself; it is found in the ontological claims of what it *means* to be humans experiencing *understanding*. In other words, *truth* is becoming. But even if this is accurate, I anticipate it will no more satisfy Bernstein and Warnke’s demands for clarity than the rest of Gadamer’s statements on truth.

²⁷¹ Bernstein., 151. Bernstein cites Gadamer, 447.

²⁷² After completing the first draft of this study I discovered, tucked between Bernstein’s endnotes and bibliography, a tiny, four-page appendix containing a letter Gadamer wrote to Bernstein in 1982 in response to critical questions Bernstein sent to Gadamer. (Gadamer’s letter, written in German, and its translation are provided in parallel.) On this point Gadamer offers Bernstein the following clarification I believe confirms my response to Bernstein’s critique at the end of the paragraph above. The relevant part of Gadamer’s letter to Bernstein is quoted here: “This is a misunderstanding. Here I mean ‘discipline’ in the moral sense of the word, and by ‘guarantee’ definitely not methodic achievement.” Bernstein, 263.

²⁷³ Warnke, 41.

Bernstein also faults Gadamer for what he sees as his failure to adequately clarify *praxis* and what type of discourse is useful when discussing competing universal norms or truth claims. In such situations, should all affected have a voice? Bernstein argues that if we follow Gadamer's claims to their logical conclusions, if we are really concerned with what is feasible and correct in the here and now, then we must turn our attention to the formation of communities required for the further development of *phronēsis*. However, at the heart of Gadamer's treatment of *praxis* is a paradox. On the one hand he laments the deformation of *praxis* in the contemporary world, and yet on the other hand, he seems to suggest that *phronēsis* is always a possibility. There is, claims Bernstein, "something almost *unhistorical* in the way in which Gadamer appropriates *phronēsis*."²⁷⁴ The implications concern Gadamer's claim that all reason and understanding is historically constituted, and that this refutes total relativism; and since, at least in this case, Gadamer seems to contradict himself, he re-exposes himself to the charge of relativism. While I understand Bernstein's argument, I cannot detect warrant for his narrow reading of Gadamer's *phronēsis*.

Many criticize Gadamer's hermeneutics for its universalizing impulse, that by absorbing all other concerns and seemingly appropriating the rest of philosophy Gadamer's theory becomes too vague and generalized to *mean* anything. While Bernstein in no way agrees with this criticism, he can sympathize with those who struggle to understand Gadamer. Contrary to these criticisms, Bernstein argues that in the most important and practical ways, Gadamer simply does not *go far enough*. That

²⁷⁴ Bernstein, 158.

while he presents an understanding of dialogue that captures the best of the Platonic Dialogues and blends these with his appropriation of Aristotle's *phronēsis* for a relevant and accessible claim for communities bound by more responsible ethical commitments, there are strong practical and political implications Gadamer fails to pursue. Bernstein asks:

If the quintessence of what we are is dialogical—and if this is not just the privilege of the few—then whatever the limitations of the practical realizations of this ideal, it nevertheless can and should give practical orientation to our lives. We must ask what it is that blocks and prevents such dialogue, and what is to be done . . . to make such dialogue a concrete reality.²⁷⁵

While I appreciate Bernstein's disappointment that Gadamer did not say more, (and expect Bernstein finds what he is looking for in Habermas' response to Gadamer) I believe there is good reason for this. Saying *more* would be to speak to the specific application of his theory. This implies methodology, if not *sociology*. And while he refutes the primacy placed on "experts" and the scientific method, Gadamer does not reject the need for and benefit of method. Method merely needs to be a product of people asking questions within their traditions while informed by the laws of reason inherent to those traditions. I understand Bernstein wanting Gadamer to do what Gadamer would claim *Bernstein must do for himself*.

Regarding the criticism that Gadamer's theory is too general in its scope to offer anything of substance, I would counter with the claim that such is the case of all theories and systems proposing an ontology. One difference between most of them and

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 163.

Gadamer's is that Gadamer makes room for his theory *within* his theory. Gadamer seeks authority for his theory in the act of arguing for it in the company of his peers and the public at-large, both dialogical expressions. His many conversations and debates with Heidegger and Habermas exemplify this. While it is the case Gadamer's theory makes certain truth claims upon us, and that these claims are contextualized and in dialogue with their inherent social, cultural, and historical traditions, Gadamer would claim that we can only access them by means of genuinely seeking to listen and understand what he has to say and by openly risking and testing our own prejudices against his, which are made available to us in such an encounter. To the extent Gadamer, his tradition, and the reasoning associated with his tradition compel us to see and perhaps fuse our own horizons with his own, we can interpret this as an event wherein we exercise our freedom in the exchange. Here, we acknowledge his authority on the matter—to at least some degree, though possibly not at all.

My major concern, informed by my post-modern normative leanings, is that by proposing a universal hermeneutic, Gadamer defines and dictates human language as if it is a monolithic phenomenon merely taking different expressions. While it remains possible this is accurate, it seems short-sighted, if not arrogant, to insist all humans everywhere and at every time experience language, and, therefore, being, in the same way. (To be fair, there are times when this seems to describe Gadamer's thought, and then there are other times where he absorbs and dismantles such criticism in his grand scope.) My resistance on this point may seem reminiscent of Lindbeck, Griffiths, and Heim's—theologians within Knitter's acceptance model—critique of the enterprise of

comparative religion. And yet just as I believe these thinkers go *way too far* when they reject nearly every possibility for interreligious dialogue and knowing the religious Other, so too do I think it an error to jettison Gadamer's overall theory simply because of its implicit arrogance. What system of thought attempting to describe something as grand as Gadamer's *does not* convey a sense of arrogance? I am loathe to throw out the baby with the proverbial bathwater, when the baby has such promise, such hope.

Further research is needed to examine more closely the most recent advances in the field of hermeneutical theory. Paul Ricoeur and John D. Caputo, especially Caputo's *Radical Hermeneutics* and his follow-up volume, *More Radical Hermeneutics*, are relevant resources for how Gadamer's theory might be complemented and improved upon, the anticipation of which is also built into Gadamer's theory. In the introduction to this second volume Caputo writes: "I am not interested in a wholesale critique of Gadamer, to whom I owe much, but in pushing his hermeneutics a step further, into a more radical hermeneutic and this by means of pushing it through the passion for the impossible, the passion of the secret and of non-knowledge."²⁷⁶

Application, Speculation & Conclusion

For me the implications of Gadamer's theory related to the practice of conflict resolution are of greater immediate value than his more abstract concern for recovering the hermeneutical dimension of the sciences. Unlike Bernstein, Warnke, Caputo and other professional philosophers, I am not required to develop an academic reputation by

²⁷⁶ Caputo, John D. *More Radical Hermeneutics: On Not Knowing Who We Are* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP) 2000, 8.

criticizing and synthesizing the theories of my predecessors so that my peers might accept (even esteem) me for my own contributions to the field. While I remain deeply indebted to the many who have sacrificed a great deal in order to contribute to the Meaningful Conversation that is philosophy itself, I am not constrained by their professional standards. I am free to borrow what I please, synthesizing any two aspects and disregarding a third. Granted, I remain accountable for my choices—and to be clear, criteria addressing coherency, integrity, accessibility, and value still apply. But I have the luxury of taking the *cafeteria approach*. In this case, there is a great deal about Gadamer’s theory that might inform the practice of dialogue in a context of religious-based conflict.

One example of Gadamer’s theory informing interreligious dialogue is not dialogue in the traditional sense, but is no less Gadamerian. In a study of diverse Muslim scholars’, Irene Oh (mentioned in Chapter 3 on Fowler’s Stages of Faith) draws on Gadamer’s hermeneutical theory and refines her position with Habermas’ concerns for power. Oh makes a case for improving the human rights dialogue by including these Muslim scholars’ voices. Oh ever so briefly summarizes Gadamer’s work thus:

Gadamer’s position is that we all see from a particular vantage point that he calls a “horizon”. Truths, which have traditionally been sought through scientific methods, can only be understood through a dialogical process that assumes the subjectivity of *both* the inquirer and the object of inquiry. . . . True understanding arises *not* from the imposition of a method onto an object, but rather from a dialectical process in which the “object” of inquiry *also asks questions* of the inquirer. Moreover, this dialogical process should not be viewed simply as a tool for humanistic understanding, but rather as *the way in which humans actually exist in the*

world. The dialogical process, in other words, defines the being, *the ontology*, of humans.²⁷⁷

Oh explains the implications of Gadamer's theory for her task at hand. Because every human enters being, enters dialogue, from a unique social and experiential context, she must carefully consider her own vantage points (prejudices). Understanding occurs as horizons meld. Relevant to both human rights and dialogue, an inherent principle in Gadamer's philosophy is the *equality* between participants.

Oh turns to Habermas to help promote equality as an aim in dialogue. Often, the oppressed (in this case the less-developed, post-colonial, Muslim-majority nations) may not see themselves as capable of engaging as equals. Even if those representing oppression are not conscious of the skewed and tilted conversation field—for the “negative effects ‘are not the result of the misinterpretation or misunderstanding. Rather these negative effects are carried, as it were, by the tradition, by the conversation itself.’”²⁷⁸ Perhaps more than any other, Habermas' ideal of true consensus is entirely dependent on the conditions of equality and freedom. Habermas presents the “ideal speech situation” to serve as a model, *never intending* it as a goal in which a conversation between two parties is moderated by a bias-free facilitator. Such a tool would be useful because “it places into question the conditions under which existing human rights norms were created and demands sensitivity to differences in the perception of human rights on

²⁷⁷ Oh, 14. [Emphasis is mine.]

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 17.

the basis of cultural and historical backgrounds.”²⁷⁹ Because Habermas brings into focus the power differentials of those involved in a conversation on universal human rights based on Gadamerian principles, Oh argues, “one can increase sensitivity to both religious views and political contexts.”²⁸⁰

For Oh “humanizing the authors of foreign ideas minimizes the objectification that prevents genuine dialogue from occurring.”²⁸¹ She humanizes her subjects—Maududi, Qutb, and Soroush—by respecting the religious, political, and cultural contexts from which they produced their writings. All three flourished in the twentieth-century, the first two within Sunni and the third Shi’a contexts, and from India/Pakistan, Egypt, and Iran, respectively. Both their similarities and differences are equally worthy of respect. She also provides some detail of the colonial dynamic at work in her subjects’ home countries, as both colonialism and “its aftereffects permeate these thinkers’ writings”.²⁸² And yet, make no mistake, their concerns “extend beyond their geographical and temporal boundaries”.²⁸³

Through Oh’s work, these thinkers are brought into a sort of dialogue with one another. For each, democracy is a human right—though each defines it differently, according to his own horizon, comprised of religious, historical, and political views. The same is true of the notions of freedom of conscience and tolerance. It is readers’ task to

²⁷⁹ Ibid., 19. Oh cites Shapiro, Susan E. “Rhetoric as Ideology and Critique: the Gadamer-Habermas Debate Reinvented,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*. 62:1 (1994), 128.

²⁸⁰ Ibid., 20.

²⁸¹ Ibid., 36.

²⁸² Ibid., 53.

²⁸³ Ibid., 50.

“accept[] their views of democracy [etc.] as arising out of traditions different from our own. We also bring to this dialogue sensitivity to the historical circumstances that may affect their visions of democracy and Islam.”²⁸⁴ As such, readers succeed if they appreciate that each thinker writes from a particular time and location about wrestling with democracy “in Muslim nations that are freshly independent of colonial rule and eager to distinguish themselves from Western culture.”²⁸⁵ A non-Muslim, Oh demonstrates that however difficult it may be, the ongoing process of understanding others can only be achieved when we begin by carefully examining our own prejudices and beliefs in the process of engagement and dialogue.

Looking to the role of a chaplain in the context of religious-based conflict is another opportunity for examining possibilities and limitations for dialogue informed by Gadamerian principles. As an active duty Army chaplain a key professional task is serving as a liaison for her commander while engaging with local religious leaders in a combat area of operations. As mentioned in Chapter 1, I have done this during two combat deployments, the second, and most noteworthy, was in 2007-08 before and during the Anbar Awakening that helped turn the province from the acclaimed headquarters of Al-Qaeda in Iraq to a locally governed, Islamic democracy. Over the course of several months I met with provincial and tribal imams for informal dialogue and structured planning meetings. In our meetings we designed joint training exercises that addressed, for instance, religious accommodation issues related to the observance of

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 55.

²⁸⁵ Ibid., 55.

Ramadan for Iraqi military and police working with coalition forces at critical security checkpoints along the main supply route between Syria and Baghdad. We worked together to help train coalition forces' ability to recognize and respect cultural sensitivity and values. We did the same with the Iraqis. We also designed, planned, and executed humanitarian missions that involved coalition and host-nation military forces as well as local community and religious leaders. The initiatives that involved school supplies, drinking water, and gardening centers not only empowered the local leaders but also helped restore soldiers' fading confidence that their combat service had meaning beyond mere survival. To be clear, while meaningful and successful, these initiatives were not without problems and paradoxes. To be candid, some elements were awkward and even messy. But the recognition of their lasting success has, in no small way, led to my next appointment as the World Religions Instructor at the United States Army Chaplain Center and School, where I will help teach my fellow chaplains the necessary skills, methods, and even theory for successfully engaging local religious leaders in the area of operations.

While chaplains must be willing to provide religious support in religiously diverse contexts, few are actually trained and prepared for this. All have graduate and seminary training, yet few can articulate what it is within their respective traditions that justifies and informs engaging those outside their traditions. If this is true for Southern Baptist Chaplains working with their Catholic and Mormon counterparts, then it is especially the case when they are working within an area of operations alongside Iraqi imams, Afghani mullahs, or Ukrainian Orthodox priests. The first order challenge is two fold—and this is

the area in which Gadamer is most relevant to the conversation—first, how does a chaplain remain faithful to her tradition while, second, respecting the tradition of her interlocutor? More specifically, what within her tradition *justifies* her activity with the religious Other, and what does her tradition have to say about *how she is to relate* to the religious Other? Gadamer's theory denies the very presumption informing these questions: my interlocutor and I seem to stand apart from one another in every ontological sense. I might only develop my horizon of understanding (or my becoming) as I am open to the risk of learning from my interlocutors and their traditions, which, in turn, is the only way for me to better understand my self and my own tradition. Where traditional, positivist-based ontologies frame the question in terms that one might naturally achieve one or the other, but not both—Gadamer's ontological claim insists that one can only achieve the first as she simultaneously achieves the second—*learning more about ourselves is only and always dialogical and dialectical*.

I am compelled to view *all understanding*, in general, and my experiences with others, in particular, through a Gadamerian lens, but I do not imagine I could convince many of my fellow chaplain students to adopt the same views. The theory is both complex and nuanced. It frames common concerns in terms that traditionally belong to entirely unrelated categories of human experience: ontology in terms of art and language, for example. The majority of chaplains come to my courses with decades of formal educational and professional ministry, and while most may exhibit a respectable degree of humility or teachability, it is difficult to imagine anyone coming to a professional military education course in religious area analysis or religious leader engagements, who

is prepared to have her prejudices examined and her ontological assumptions challenged. I can practice and continue to refine the manner in which Gadamer's theory informs my professional practice, yet if Gadamer's theory will do more than merely inform my own ontological perspective, I suspect I will have to translate and re-package Gadamer's fundamental principles as concepts already accessible within my students' faith traditions. (In Fowlerian terms, I will have to reframe my Stage 5 aims to align with Stage 3 values, and do so as genuinely as I am able.) The following are only a few examples:

- *Human understanding as becoming* (which is linguistically constructed) has strong parallels with *logos* or Word theology and its derivatives, such as humans created in God's image and who, like God, are able to create/encourage and curse/disempower. Jewish and Muslim theologies also share these affinities, though to a lesser extent.
- *Every tradition is historically constituted and has inherent systems of reason* is similar to Jewish and Christian notions of dispensations and covenantal history. It also shares similarities with the Qur'anic notion that the religions have their origin in God.
- *Jesus' dictum* to respond to the one who asks you to walk a mile with her by walking with her for yet another, and even more the *Parable of the Good Samaritan*, presuppose one's interlocutor has claims upon her time, energy, and wealth—so why not conversation?
- *The notions of loving one's neighbor as oneself* and that one's neighbor could conceivably be one's enemy (whom one must also love), speak to both the task to reclaim or heal the subject-object split but also the possibility of seeing others as one might see herself.

I think it is right to say that such translation activity is faithful to Gadamer's principle that reason is always contextualized within its corresponding tradition. As a perpetual student of the world's religions I feel a degree of confidence in being able to translate Gadamer's theory in a manner that is faithful to the reason of his tradition and also in a way that is at least accessible to the reason of my students' various traditions. It

is expected that some details will be lost in the translation, but it is hoped that the major points will retain their integrity and value for application.

As I will be serving as an instructor in a hierarchal, military culture I would do well to remember that any attempt to understand self and others is deeply problematic. Such meaning must occur within the contexts of horizons, or *horizontal* spaces, which will likely result in dissonance for those deeply informed by the military's rather *vertical* culture. Remembering and making adjustments for this becomes a real challenge. And yet it is virtually impossible to make adjustments that restore balance or horizontal parity while representing an intimidating and fearsome military force in my duties to engage with local religious leaders in the area of combat operations! For such a task I have no answer except to acknowledge that what it is that I risk in such a situation is no basis for my understanding of what it is my interlocutors must also risk. The only way to begin understanding this is to engage them in dialogue. In the meantime, I will have to remain open to the possibilities for better understanding. We discuss these very possibilities and limitations in the following chapter.

Finally, if Gadamer's hermeneutical theory is to be practical and relevant one wonders how it might influence current religious-based conflict. For instance, is it possible for the U.S. government to be in dialogue with ISIS/ISIL? While the current U.S. foreign policy precludes negotiation—the United Nations, European Union, the United States and many other countries consider ISIS a terrorist organization—Gadamer would contend that ISIS and these other nations are already involved in dialogue. (It must also be granted that while formal dialogue and negotiations are off the table, there

are frequently third parties participating in (classified) vicarious correspondence in scenarios like these.) Gadamer would also charge that nations, like individuals, must carefully examine and re-examine their prejudices over-and-against their values and national enduring principles. Such examination would surely lead to discovering ways to engage ISIS in dialogue without legitimizing its actions. Of course, it is assumed ISIS would agree to such dialogue. Furthermore, it is assumed that ISIS' concerns and reservations to dialogue would also need to be addressed. Gadamerian hermeneutics is highly optimistic of dialogue bridging similar boundaries, such as Shia-Sunni, Palestinian-Israeli, and Protestant-Catholic, etc.

Turning for a moment to Rothbart & Korostelina's model, we might say that ISIS' actions and communicated values currently best correspond to Quadrant 1—unbalanced-high generality—and that the U.S. government²⁸⁶ might in rare instances reflect the ideal of Quadrant 4—high balance-low generality, but it much more frequently reflects Quadrants 2 and 3 (with positive, rather than negative, capacity for in-group assessment). Of course, when dealing with a nation, especially one as large and as complex as the United States, it would be helpful to use axiological difference to assess representative organizations such as brigade combat teams, State Department groups, or Central Intelligence Agency field offices.

Looking to my interaction with Sheikh Abdullah provides a more concrete opportunity for examination. Initially, Abdullah and I both took risks while our

²⁸⁶ As a reminder, this model is not evaluating individual citizens (many of whom *do* exemplify balance and low generality). Therefore, it can be accurate to assess a group in one way and a minority of its members in another.

respective groups exhibited a more defensive and cautious posture. As we continued to meet and work together and back brief our different “groups” on the potential and challenges of cooperative endeavors, we laid the foundation for taking calculated risks in the pursuit of greater stabilization in Ramadi. While a military unit of about 6,000 soldiers is not a “group” in the same and more accurate way that the smaller Sunni dowry and more general al Anbar provincial government are, there were still multiple instances when greater balance and less generality were exhibited in decisions, policy, and attitude of leaders. It seems quite possible, even likely, had I conducted my duty with a mindfulness of Gadamer’s hermeneutic and the other instruments examined herein, our “progress” might have occurred sooner. Furthermore, while our activities were informed by values and traditions authentic to Anbari (Muslim) values, such could have been more explicitly stated as the commander’s intent at higher echelons and may have resulted in an even more resilient and longer lasting Anbari government. Such intent reflects the ideals we saw above in Novak, Fowler’s Stage 5, Rothbart & Korostelina’s Quadrant 4, Gadamer’s understanding, and as well will see in Chapter 7, Freire’s preconditions of trust and meeting one’s interlocutor on her own ground, in her own concerns.

CHAPTER 6: A CONTEXT FOR PRACTICE

All theories and their methods require input or data from parties in conflict. To some extent, even the data gathering involved in the three instruments for assessment—theologies of the Other, Fowler, and Rothbart & Korostelina—employ a type of dialogue informed by Gadamer’s hermeneutics, though nothing close to its fullest expression. For example, Novak, all the theologians in Knitter’s models, and Sachadina had to develop their positions while simultaneously in conversation with their own traditions *and* their interlocutors on the outside. Just as Irene Oh, to a limited extent, was in dialogue with her three Muslim scholars and their traditions (not to mention positioning them in quasi-dialogue with one another through a critical, comparative analysis) so too can all formulations of positions be understood as dialogical, whether formal or non-formal, intentional or haphazard, conscious or sub-conscious. Gadamer’s theory takes on more concrete form in the thinking and practice of Marc Gopin, who admonishes practitioners in contexts of religious-based conflict to discover “the rich texture of hermeneutic possibility . . . and the way in which hermeneutical observation is intimately related to the believer’s horizon and psychological context.”²⁸⁷ Adding yet another example of Gadamer’s utility in the field, Gopin simply acknowledges, “I use Gadamerian concepts

²⁸⁷ Gopin, *Holy War*, 10.

throughout my work.”²⁸⁸ Gopin moves beyond Oh’s utilization of Gadamer—again, who brought together as interlocutors her three individual subjects of comparative analysis—and engages *whole* traditions in the Gadamerian sense, but also in the more common sense of the word. Within the broader context of Jewish-Muslim tensions, and more specifically the mythic interactions between Hagar and Ishmael that inform Muslims’ pilgrimage to Mecca, Gopin asks: “Is there room here for a *hermeneutic reading of both traditions*, Arabic and Jewish, in terms of mothers and sons, the pain of mothers in the threats of violence to their sons, but also the violence that mothers may encourage toward other or rival sons and mothers?”²⁸⁹

As our positions are more consciously formed in accord to Gadamerian ideals, our aims will lead to maximizing ethics and values to the extent our activities mend the breach between subject-and-object, familiar-and-strange, and friend-and-foe. These ideals include *risk*, examining and re-examining our *blind* and *justified prejudices*, and seizing or reclaiming from experts the *freedom* to practice the wisdom of our traditions in the quest to understand both the Other *and* ourselves. The following is a summary of the more significant limitations and possibilities for the theories examined above to serve as instruments in the hands of a chaplain practicing in the context of religious-based conflict.

Theories do not function in isolation from one another. Regarding the theories examined in this study, there are similarities and differences, overlapping and repelling

²⁸⁸ Ibid., fn.13, 232.

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 11.

borders wherein the limitations and possibilities are most visible. Because theologies are framed in the language of philosophical traditions (not to imply that either theology or philosophy can be separated from the other, or that one predates the other) we can examine the theologies in Chapter 2 over-and-against the theories in Chapters 3 and 4. Fowlers Stages 3 and 4 and Rothbart and Korostelina's Quadrants 1, 2, and 3 correspond to impulses to discover meaning through categorization, definition, and correspondence. We see the same in Knitter's *Replacement* (exclusivist) and *Acceptance* (relativist) models, and to a degree in Novak's justification. This quest for certainty and absolutes is rooted in Aristotle and shaped by the Cartesian traditions, to include scientific positivism. In these we frequently observe an overriding concern for security. Conversely, Fowler's Stage 5 and Rothbart & Korostelina's Quadrant 4 correspond to yearnings to maintain connection with the stranger, the Other. We also see this in Knitter's *Fulfillment* (inclusivist) and *Mutuality* (pluralist) models and also in Sachadina. In these we observe awareness that the greatest meaning and highest values (to include security) are bound to reciprocal relationships with outsiders.

Gadamer's theory corresponds to all elements of Knitter's model, save the *Total Replacement* model, while still providing those in all other models the means or strategies by which to engage those in the Total Replacement model. (That is to say, while it is accurate to describe those functioning from within the Total Replacement model as relating dialogically with all others, their refusal to examine their blind prejudices or recognize the goodness and beauty in other traditions greatly limits them from the benefits of an expanded horizon.) Furthermore, Gadamer's theory allows for the

possibility to construct strategies that, on the one hand, are authentic to each community initiating the dialogue, and on the other hand, that allow them to frame the Total Replacement Other in terms by which she would recognize herself—as Novak’s minimal criterion for interreligious dialogue demands. As mentioned in Chapters 2 and 5, Gadamer’s theory even corresponds with the rigid and difficult Acceptance (relativist) Model.

These theories’ limitations are both general and specific. One of the more general limitations refers to the tendency within the broader field (and akin to Gadamer’s critique of a scientific focus on method at the cost of eliminating all other forms of wisdom) to use a singular instrument and paradigm for assessing and attending to conflict. Each, some, or none of the instruments examined in this study may be appropriate for a given context of religious-based conflict. For example, while a chaplain might use the *Conflict Strategies Inventory (CSI)*²⁹⁰ as a self-awareness tool when conducting officer professional development training or counseling married couples in conflict, by no means is it the *only* instrument she uses. Even though the *CSI* guides participants to use the results responsibly, the methods of categorization, prioritization (1-5), and selection (top 2) become problematic for real world conflicts. Furthermore, the *CSI* is linguistically and culturally constructed and lends itself to further problems. And yet it remains a useful tool so long as it is not the *only* instrument upon which a practitioner relies for assessing and addressing conflict.

²⁹⁰ *Conflict Strategies Inventory*. (King of Prussia, PA: Human Resource Development Quarterly), 2004.

Another general limitation is that these theories are framed in theological, philosophical, and scientific terms. Obviously, this is not a problem for U.S. Army chaplains, but these theories' technical nature prohibits chaplains from easily sharing them across cultural, ideological, and linguistic boundaries. As practitioners of conflict resolution do not normally discuss the technical details of their profession and strategies with parties in conflict, this may not be a significant issue, but there *are* instances when doing so could assist conflict resolution. Similarly, *all* these theories, even Sachadina's,²⁹¹ are *western* theories. They will invariably run up against obstacles and possibly even dead ends. The categories might only partially correspond across cultures and lead to frustrating results. A chaplain working with Christian ministers and Buddhist monks in South Korea, for example, may mistakenly think that the monk's universalizing language and expressed value for peace place him in Fowler's Stage 5, when these are merely fundamental principles of virtually *all* Buddhists. Overlooking or missing the monk's absolutist claims for the *Sutras* and triumphalist views over Christianity as a newcomer faith that is little more than an oppressive instrument of former colonialists prevents the chaplain from seeing the monk more rightly corresponds to Fowler's Stage 3 (and that any group the monk represents may more closely correspond to Quadrants 1, 2, or 3 than 4). Similarly, the savvy Christian minister may actually be undergoing a crisis

²⁹¹ Even though Sachadina has been trained in Shia seminaries in Iraq and Iran—his Ph.D. from the University of Toronto, teaching and research out of the University of Virginia, and professional associations in the west have influenced him to frame his concerns, however Islamic, in western terminology, such that translation from English to Farsi is a real challenge. See the Foreword to Sachadina's *The Islamic Roots of Democratic Pluralism*.

of faith and acting under extreme discretion, making it difficult or unlikely for the chaplain to detect his strong, Stage 4 leanings (and therefore impossible the chaplain will understand the minister's views *do not* represent his group's values). Clearly, the possibilities are endless. The point here is to illustrate that while instruments for assessment might provide general (though still valuable) information to the chaplain, she must take care to listen well and test her hypotheses before reaching an initial conclusion.

A specific limitation of using Fowler was already mentioned and relates to its limited representation, but also corresponds to Armstrong's critique of western democratic societies' insistence that religion can be separated from the rest of human activity. One must exercise extreme caution when using Fowler in non-western contexts such as communist and Muslim-majority nations. For example, one might miscategorize communists as Stage 4 simply if they identify as atheists, when either Stage 3 or 5 could be just as likely, according to Fowler's more universal parsing of faith. Similarly, though a Stage 5 political leader may have surrounded himself with like-minded staff and cabinet members, his public may be overwhelmingly Stage 3, leading to an assessment corresponding to Rothbart and Korostelina's Quadrants 1 or 2. *This is something a chaplain might overlook if she fails to consult the theories and models together.*

Finally, the more ideal Stage 5, Quadrant 4, and the Mutuality model seem to have in common a characteristic that assumes the Other has something of value *even before* engagement occurs. Presuming individuals and groups can maintain these worldviews while experiencing positive social identity and enjoying security, then theirs is an exemplary philosophy that can inform *nearly all* communities, of whatever religion

and ideology. And yet, if for only practical reasons, the practitioner's goal cannot be to assist in *changing* individual and group ideologies before she has a relatively clear idea of the individual and groups' *starting point*. The challenge is how to assist parties of religious-based conflict to understand the value of relationship where there is currently conflict. And so it is that while somewhat dialogic in nature, the instruments examined in Chapters 2, 3, and 4 are largely beneficial in assessing the starting point of religious-based conflict transformation. This requirement is not merely to prevent the chaplain from putting the cart before the proverbial horse, but more importantly to attend to the criteria of ensuring the conflict is assessed and attended to in terms *chosen by the parties themselves*; the framing and strategies must be authentic. Parties must trust the practitioner *and* one another. This is just as true during the assessment process as it is during the transformation or attending stages. *Attending* to conflict is better served by theories that challenge and develop participants' paradigms of threat and Other, in this case, Gadamer's hermeneutical theory of dialogue.

Building and maintaining trust ought to be a primary goal of the practitioner throughout the process. Indeed, such trust is implicit in all theories examined in this study, and especially Gadamer's. However, the philosopher-activist, Paulo Freire, perhaps *best* articulates the theoretical role of *trust* in the contexts of dialogue and conflict. Freire's teleology and anthropology are fused; he insists our "vocation [is nothing higher than] becoming more fully human."²⁹² Freire's senses of dialogue (and anti-dialogue) help articulate the humanist ends that correspond to the mutual,

²⁹² Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York City: Penguin), 1993, 26.

conjunctive (Stage 5), balanced and low generality (Quadrant 4) ideals examined above. Here, *faith* is a precondition to dialogue and is paramount: “Whereas faith in humankind is an *a priori* requirement for dialogue, trust is established by dialogue. Should it founder, it will be seen that the preconditions were lacking.”²⁹³ While I reject Freire’s hard-and-fast oppressor-oppressed, problem-solution, and human-animal dichotomies (as much as I do his related quasi-positivist framings of conflict that he borrows explicitly from Marx and implicitly from Comte), I find compelling his articulation of the need to allow one’s interlocutors to describe for themselves their own experiences and situations. “Critical and liberating dialogue”, he argues, “. . . must be carried on with the oppressed *at whatever the stage of their struggle* for liberation . . . and *at the level at which the oppressed perceive reality*.”²⁹⁴ Indeed, any endeavor to participate in liberation necessitates that one “respect the particular view of the world *held by the people*”, and that the “. . . starting point . . . must be the present, existential, concrete situation, reflecting *the aspirations* of the people.”²⁹⁵ A delicate matter is that there are conflicts that may seem unrelated to religion, especially in societies that do not entertain the possibility of separating religious from other forms of human activity, in which a practitioner must, herself, be aware of the religious context as best she can. Of this task Marc Gopin writes the following:

It is essential to be schooled in how the myths, laws, or metaphysical assumptions express in the minds of believers their deepest feelings. . . . Thus, even if the roots of the conflict are economic disenfranchisement,

²⁹³ Freire, 72.

²⁹⁴ Ibid., 47. [Emphasis is mine.]

²⁹⁵ Ibid., 76. [Emphasis is mine.]

the revolt against the status quo may in fact express itself in religious terms. This necessitates an intervention strategy that can acknowledge and utilize the role of religion.²⁹⁶

This is especially difficult when the parties' aspirations, at least in the eyes of the chaplain, fall far short of what she hopes will occur.²⁹⁷ A developed self-awareness and self-restraint are indispensable here. Marc Gopin considers self-examination no mere prerequisite to conflict resolution; rather, it is "the original space of all peacemaking, and that is the individual and his or her heart."²⁹⁸ Candid peer assessment from trusted advisors is no less valuable.²⁹⁹ Although there will be opportunities when parties invite the practitioner's input and guidance, she must tirelessly encourage and assist parties to discover insight, understandings, and strategies that are not only consistent with parties' respective normative traditions, but grounded and informed by them as well.

One of Gadamer's primary principles is the willingness to risk. This will sound much more manageable to the religious leader or parishioner in a peaceful and stable context than it will to one who perceives the Other as a threat. Peacebuilder, theologian,

²⁹⁶ Gopin, Marc. *Between Eden and Armageddon: The Future of World Religion, Violence, and Peace Making* (New York City: Oxford UP), 2000, 14.

²⁹⁷ I am reminded of an instance relayed by Professor Korostelina where practitioners in Afghanistan were stunned to discover the women they were striving to help had no higher hopes for their daughters than that they married well, a status that could be achieved if they had quality cooking utensils on hand!

²⁹⁸ Gopin, *Holy War*, 224.

²⁹⁹ I have discovered no better tool to explain and address the need for others' input to maximize professional and ethical ends than Jorahi's Window, which explains that all available information or insight falls into one of four quadrants: 1) What I know and share with others (open), 2.) What I know and keep to myself (hidden), 3.) What others know that I do not (blind), and 4.) what neither party knows (unknown). The goal is trusted communication, vulnerability, and progressively and cooperatively uncovering the unknown. See: <http://www.mindtools.com/CommSkill/JohariWindow.htm>

and professor John Paul Lederach has succeeded in grounding the concept of risk in his professional practice. “Step[ping] into the unknown without any guarantee of success or even safety”³⁰⁰ (Lederach’s definition of *risk*) is a tall order, but so is the challenge of a chaplain in combat. In responding to the tough question—“How do we transcend the cycles of violence that bewitch our human community while still living in them?”³⁰¹—is itself an expression of risk that seeks to “explore the *moral imagination* as the capacity to imagine something rooted in the challenges of the real world yet capable of giving birth to that which does not exist.”³⁰²

Inline with Gadamer’s fused horizon, Gopin extends Lederach’s imagination into a concrete sense of the immediate future. When growth and the expansion of horizons occur, the “moral imagination is allowed to freely construct *a new future*, and, to the degree to which the latter is wedded to *a new construct* of coexistence, one can *create* the bedrock of a moral society.”³⁰³ A chaplain who embodies and expresses risk *behind* her imaginative listening and seeking understanding will demonstrate for parties a “conviction of underlying spiritual unity [that] provides a psychological foundation for compassion, humility, and sympathetic awareness of the other.”³⁰⁴ When parties begin to practice this particular sense of risk for themselves they are simultaneously informed by

³⁰⁰ Lederach, John Paul. *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace*. (New York City: Oxford UP) 2005, 39.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 5. [Emphasis is mine.]

³⁰² *Ibid.*, 29. [Emphasis is mine.]

³⁰³ Gopin, *Holy War*, 36. [Emphasis is mine.]

³⁰⁴ Appleby, Scott. *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield), 2000, 143. Appleby cites Marc Gopin. “Religion, Violence, and Conflict Resolution,” *Peace & Change* 22:1. 1997, 23.

their tradition and moved *beyond* the borders of their community: as a Christian might say when referring to the experience of the *Holy Spirit as Comforter*: “The Comforter has called me *outside* my *comfort-zone*.” Here too, Gopin provides a concrete example: “One can trace the roots of their [Mennonite] peacemaking methods, especially the elicitive method, to the commitment to adhere to Mennonite values, even as these peacemakers *now enter, cautiously, the unredeemed world* that so many of their ancestors had rejected.”³⁰⁵ In these we observe a risk that leads to the re-examination of prejudices that allows for a fusion between horizons.

Finally, opportunities for appreciating the limits and possibilities of the theories examined can be found in the case introduced in Chapter 1. In 2007 when I first met Sheikh Abdullah I was unaware of these theories, or at least that they might have application to my duties as a chaplain engaging local religious leaders in al Anbar.³⁰⁶ Granted, while the enterprise was largely successful, engaging Sheikh Abdullah was messy and problematic, and I presume some of these problems may have been avoided if my practice had been more intentionally informed by theory.

³⁰⁵ Ibid., 149. [Emphasis is mine.] Appleby cites Marc Gopin. “The Religious Component of Mennonite Peacemaking and its Global Implications,” in Sampson and Lederach, eds. *From the Ground Up*, (New York: Oxford UP) 2001, 189.

³⁰⁶ I was familiar with Knitter’s *models*, but they seemed irrelevant. Fowler’s *Stages of Faith* was a concept I associated with Christian education and Sunday School, certainly not with imams in the Middle East. I am embarrassed to admit that while I owned Gadamer’s *Truth and Method*, I purchased the volume thinking it would provide *methodological* guidance for responsibly exegeting sacred text. Disappointed, I set it aside until picking it up again more than a decade later. Rothbart & Korostelina’s *Axiological Difference* was entirely new to me.

We should pause here to consider the nature of chaos—as it were—and its impact on a practitioner. So-called *wicked problems*, I have observed, are far more common than the simpler ones we hope life will send us. And while these are truly difficult, if not impossible to solve, wrestling with them is a fantastic opportunity for growth and discovery. Similarly, wicked problems are sometimes exacerbated, if not caused, by forcing analysis and resolution through traditional or linear paradigms, when more intuitive, on-the-fly, but no less sophisticated and professional, modes of analyses are available. This, of course, says nothing of the wealth of the world’s *wisdom* traditions already mentioned. Donald Schön describes an unexpected challenge is often that “the actual practice of phenomena [is] complexity, uncertainty, uniqueness, and value-conflict.”³⁰⁷ Responsibly addressing the professional challenge requires us to be open to “the non-technical process of framing the problematic situation that we may organize and clarify both the ends to be achieved and the possible means of achieving them.”³⁰⁸ Because important crossroads, or as Lederach calls them, turning points, can occur without warning, the responsible practitioner learns to be reflective while on her feet and re-frame on-the-move. Schön calls this highly prized, professional skill *reflecting-in-action*, and when performed well, leads to a *reflecting-in-practice*. This is far more complex than what the military trains its professionals to achieve, what it calls *muscle memory*: training so rigorously that when “bullets fly” one need not pause and think in order to act; she thinks-and-acts reflexively. Schön explains, “When intuitive

³⁰⁷ Schön, Donald. *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action* (New York: Basic Books), 1983, 39.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 41.

performance leads to surprises, pleasing and promising or unwanted, we may respond by reflecting-in-action.”³⁰⁹ Like the highly talented baseball pitcher and jazz musicians (in Schön’s example³¹⁰), practitioners in religious based-conflict can achieve a similar degree of performance consistent with Schön’s ideal of “reflecting-in-practice”.³¹¹

Returning to the case of al Anbar province in 2007, we can understand some of the relevant limitations to chaplains working with local religious leaders. For this, we might turn again to Freire to help us understand an obstacle to the attitude or quality of *respect* presupposed in Gadamer’s theory. To be clear and to be fair, Freire assumes a social context that is largely incomparable with a fluid and transitional military sub-culture or society. He neither has in mind for his theory the hierarchical structure of a military sub-culture nor that it could participate, to any degree, in dialogue with foreign, non-military populations. And yet, if we can set this aside for the moment, and acknowledge that whether or not the scenario corresponds to Freire’s ideal of dialogue, it nonetheless corresponds to Gadamer’s explanation that all understanding is happening, and is, therefore, dialogical. If so, Freire’s theory can help us identify the limits for a chaplain engaging local, religious leaders on the battlefield. Such dialogue—whether it takes place at the local leader’s mosque, community center, or home, or even at the chaplain’s camp or patrol base—occurs within a context and overwhelming presence of

³⁰⁹ Ibid., 56.

³¹⁰ Ibid., 54-56.

³¹¹ Ibid., 60.

military force and firepower.³¹² Aware of this dilemma in the case of Abdullah and his subordinate imams, I strove to minimize intimidation and maximize my interlocutors' sense of assurance. I asked those providing me security to remain outside of our meeting places. I removed all my protective equipment. These practices were unconventional and compromised my teams' physical safety, which was also a professional risk, as doing so could conceivably elicit a rebuke from my commander. I reasoned my interlocutor was risking no less, and, as it turned out, my commander would later agree. And yet, my uniform, the nearby American soldiers manning their ominous weapons systems, and, of course, the overall presence of coalition military forces in the province was simply too much to ignore. Even though Abdullah was, in military parlance, "a friendly"—the context raises serious doubts as to whether any significant degree of either Freire's *faith* or *trust* could be established, in the first place, and then whether any lasting impact could occur from dialogue conducted in such a context. And yet, it seemed as though we had no choice; if we were to succeed in our mission, the dialogue had to happen.

³¹² Gopin echoes this concern in the following: "Asymmetry also may express itself in the nature of the encounter I would argue that dialogue itself, as a method of peacemaking, is culturally charged, maybe even biased, and may not satisfy or correspond to the best cultural methods that a group may possess for peacemaking and the transformation of enemy relationships." Gopin, *Holy War*, 88. Where Gopin is clearly addressing the more generally understood *practice* and *form* of dialogue, I fully concur. Obviously, in Gadamerian terms, dialogue is *always* happening, whether or not we acknowledge it.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

Chaplains remain one of commanders' most prized resources when it comes to mission success in the context of religious-based conflict. Chaplains who are proficient in utilizing instruments to analyze and attend to conflict are more likely to build relationships of trust. They are more likely to work alongside local religious leaders to understand challenges and discover ways forward that are informed by local values. Just as the most skilled craftsman or talented artist has at her disposal a wide variety of tools or mediums, so too does the gifted chaplain make use of many instruments and theories relevant to religious-based conflict. A few of the most promising will be examined in the following chapters.

Contrary to what Freire required, but Gadamer anticipated, relationships of respect began to form between me and Sheikh Abdullah and led to the beginnings of what Freire might be forced to admit were the seeds of “love”, “faith” and “trust”—and possibly even “hope”.³¹³ I patiently endured the lengthy customary rituals that prefaced our dialogues, such as greetings, drinking chi (or tea), and small talk—eventually coming to understand through experience that *all of this* is an essential aspect of the dialogue itself. Though we had a few formal discussions concerning religion, and shared some of our personal and family history, after a few visits we began to discuss the more

³¹³ Freire, 70-73.

immediate concerns relating to his community's security and stabilization. I was intentional to press Abdullah about his own ideas and resources, desiring to avoid a material dependency that could easily skew the already limited mutuality we experienced. As mentioned in Chapter 1, our strategies were squarely grounded in Abdullah's religious and normative values. Abdullah was loathe to stand back and allow his more junior imams to take center stage, as I had encouraged our most junior level military leaders to do in their respective areas of operation while conducting the many humanitarian missions that coincided with Ramadan. My initial sense was that Abdullah's behavior of remaining on "center stage" was driven by his ego; over time I came to appreciate that his political, if not existential, survival depended on a convincing and persistent show of force, albeit with a balanced benevolence. I was content to witness Abdullah restored to a position that enabled him to do good for others. However limited that good seemed to me from my value system, it was substantially better than what was *happening* (yes, in the Gadamerian sense of the word) only a few months earlier.

Unfortunately, the nature of the mission did not leave room for sustained *on-the-ground* relationships—yet another limitation—and though the stabilization lasted for several years, I write this as news releases report that the citizens of Ramadi have fled and ISIS has taken control. Freire would rightly lament that this dialogue never realized the state of *critical thinking* (or values made real) and, as such, was never actually dialogue: "Only dialogue which requires critical thinking is also capable of *generating*

critical thinking.”³¹⁴ And so it is that I will continue to think critically and reflect on these experiences of dialogue while I move forward with a consciousness that as far as Gadamer is concerned, I remain perpetually in dialogue. As a person, but more precisely as a chaplain engaging local religious leaders on the battleground, I am in a better position to appreciate my interlocutor as the only one capable of describing her situation and naming her experience. I am reminded of the need to willingly risk encounters with strange people and traditions, and that through dialogic encounter I have the opportunity to enlarge my horizon. Indeed, explicit in Gadamer’s theory and implicit in the ideals of the other theories examined here, is a call for all professionals to act wisely, informed by our normative and professional values and covenants, while also resisting their tendency to confine and prevent us from discovering new and foreign wisdom. As humble students of the past, present, and future we do best when remembering where we stand in relation to the Other, and that we are at our best and stand most nobly *when we kneel*.

³¹⁴ Ibid., 73.

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BIOGRAPHY

Chaplain (Major) James “Nathan” Kline is the World Religions Instructor at the United States Army Chaplain Center and School, Fort Jackson, SC for academic years 2015-2018.

Nathan served a two-year enlistment in the US Army as a tanker with the 3rd Armor Division in Germany from 1988 to 1990. He was in Berlin when the Wall came down and witnessed the reunification of Germany. From 1990-1992 Nathan served a two-year, full-time mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Manila, Philippines, including six months in remote villages on the island of Palawan in the South China Sea.

In 1998, Nathan graduated *magna cum laude* from Florida Southern College, majoring in English, Religion, and Philosophy. In 2003 he was awarded the Master of Divinity, with honors, by The Divinity School, University of Chicago, where he was also awarded the J. Coert Rylaarsdam Prize for his efforts in guiding Jewish, Christian, Muslim relations. Nathan served as a student pastor of the United Church of Hyde Park: a single congregation comprised of members whose denominations are United Methodist, Presbyterian USA, or United Church of Christ. While teaching World Religions at Prairie State College, Nathan also ran a consulting business working with religious and government leaders around the world.

Nathan entered the US Army Chaplaincy in 2004. Assigned to the 3rd Infantry Division (Fort Stewart, GA) as a battalion chaplain, Nathan twice deployed to combat zones for a total of twenty-seven months: once with 1-3 BTB “Desert Cats” in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom III to Takrit, Iraq, and again with 3-69 Armor BN “Speed & Power” for OIF V to Ramadi, Iraq. As a religious leader, Nathan’s service here included a role in the Anbar Awakening in 2007-08. Nathan is also a graduate of the US Army’s Command and General Staff College. Twice awarded the Bronze Star Medal, Nathan has also been awarded the Airborne (Parachutist) and Combat Action Badges.