

Spiritual Diversity: What Makes Us Different?

A Presentation Based on the Research of
W. Paul Jones

by Alice Tremaine, M.Div.
Chaplain

Hospice of the Bluegrass
atremaine@hospicebg.org

Introduction

- Not about what people believe, but what's behind our beliefs, way we worship.
- Personal theology
 - Meaning-making frames
 - Assumptions and beliefs mostly held unconsciously
 - Theology is autobiographical

Theological Worlds/ Spiritual Orientation

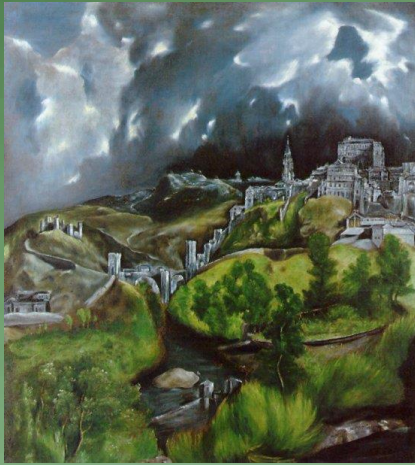
- W. Paul Jones' "Theological Worlds": Spiritual Orientation
 - Five dominant groups
 - 10 years of research with Protestant students and clergy; may be applied to other traditions
 - Self-assessments
- Alternative, viable clusters
 - How we describe life, God – how we “see it”
 - Rhythm between basic need/ primal yearning (“obsessio”) and resolution (“epiphania”)

Theological Worlds (Modified) Self Assessment

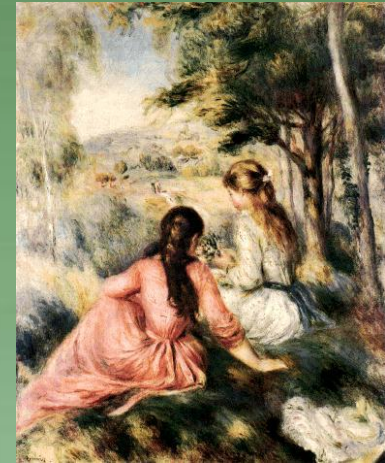
- “Colorful World” by Cece Winans;
Courtesy of PureSprings Gospel and Little
Pooky's Music



Theological Worlds by W. Paul Jones



Museum of Modern Art, New York



World One: Separation and Reunion



World One: Separation and Reunion

- Characteristics:
 - Human problem is isolation
 - Overwhelming cosmos; sense of abandonment
 - Life is a gift, and is also arbitrary. Emphasis on mystery.
 - Sensing that one was made to belong to something or someone.
 - Death is part of life's rhythm
 - Ecologically sensitive
 - Sympathetic to Eastern thought and unity of religions in general
 - May overlook destructive problems as insignificant

World One: Separation and Reunion

- Spiritual Needs/ Resources:
 - Essential question: Where am I?
 - General feeling is longing; identity of an orphan; tend to feel alone
 - Sin means taking one's relation for granted
 - Need Gentle invitation
 - Sacramental worship
 - Prayer as contemplation
 - Intentional silence
 - Interested in the poetic, metaphoric and symbolic
 - May become individualistic
 - Resolution emphasizes reunion, being special to someone, belonging (mystery, unity, peace).
 - For some it focuses on the vantage point of another place (heaven); for others it is a unifying experience.
 - Death can become an expression or metaphor for reunion.
 - Resolution from (images): fall, separation, illusion
 - Comforting words at funeral: "home at last!"

World One Illustrations

*When you see my procession,
don't cry, "Gone, Gone."*

*For me it is a time of meeting and
reunion.*

*As you lower me into the grave,
don't say, "So long."*

*The grave is a veil before the
gathering of paradise.*

*When you see that lowering down,
consider a rising.*

*What harm is there in the setting of
sun or moon?*

*What seems a setting to you is a
setting is a dawn.*

Rumi

*Grandfather, look at our
brokenness.*

*We know that in all creation
Only the human family
Has strayed from the Sacred Way.*

*We know that we are the ones
Who are divided,*

*And we are the ones
Who must come back together
To walk in the Sacred Way.*

*Grandfather,
Sacred One,*

*Teach us love, compassion and
honor*

*That we may heal the earth
And heal each other.*

Ojibway Indians of North America

World One Illustrations

*You could have golden treasure
buried beneath your feet, and walk
over it again and again, yet never find
it because you don't realize it is there.
Just so, all beings live every moment
in the city of the Divine, but never
find the Divine because it is hidden
by the veil of illusion.*

Chandogya Upanishad

*Swing low, sweet chariot
Comin' for to carry me home!
Swing low, sweet chariot
Comin' for to carry me home.*

Harry Thacker Burleigh

*In my Father's house are many
dwelling places; if it were not so,
I would have told you; for I go to
prepare a place for you. If I go
and prepare a place for you, I will
come again and receive you to
Myself, that where I am, there
you may be also.*

John 14:2-3

World Two: Conflict and Vindication



Museum of Modern Art, New York

World Two: Conflict and Vindication

- Characteristics:
 - Human problem is oppression, chaos (history as chaotic)
 - Conflict is the heart of life; drama of winners and losers
 - We are caught in evil system, inside and out
 - Death viewed as the final enemy; there will be change or protest as long as one lives
 - Feel driven to reform; only hope is if future is significantly different
 - God on the side of the oppressed
 - Commitment to cost of discipleship
 - May experience self-neglect, self-righteousness
 - Emphasis on activism

World Two: Conflict and Vindication

- Spiritual Needs/ Resources
 - Essential question: What can be done?
 - General feeling is anger; identity of a warrior
 - Sin is external evil disrupting relation; tend to have strong social conscience
 - Use of intercessory prayer, contend with God through dialogue
 - May be raging with God or at God
 - Emphasis on this world
 - Have difficulty enjoying life; focus on doing more than being
 - Resolution is rooted in vision of a new heaven, new earth, or liberation within history.
 - Leads to: promise, vision, commitment, focus
 - Comforting words at funeral: “fought the good fight!”

World Two Illustrations

*Blessed be the Lord, my rock,
who trains my hands for war,
and my fingers for battle; my
lovingkindness and my fortress,
my stronghold and my deliverer,
my shield and He in whom I take
refuge, who subdues my people
under me.*

Psalm 144:1-2

*We shall set up scales of justice
for the day of Judgement, so
that not a soul will be dealt with
unjustly in the least. And if there
be (no more than) the weight of
a mustard seed, We will bring it
(to account); and enough are
We to take account.*

Sura 21:47

*I have fought the good fight, I
finished the race, I have kept
the faith. Now there is in store
for me the crown of
righteousness, which the Lord,
the righteous Judge, will award
to me on that day – and not only
to me, but also to all who have
longed for his appearing.*

2 Timothy 4:7-8

World Two Illustrations

We are often tempted to “explain” suffering in terms of “the will of God.” Not only can this evoke anger and frustration, but also it is false. “God's will” is not a label that can be put on unhappy situations. God wants to bring joy not pain, peace not war, healing not suffering. Therefore, instead of declaring anything and everything to be the will of God, we must be willing to ask ourselves where in the midst of our pains and sufferings we can discern the loving presence of God.

Henri Nowen

Exercise the right to dream. You must face the reality that ought to be, that must be. Live beyond the pain of reality with the dream of a bright tomorrow. Use hope and imagination as weapons of survival and progress. Use love to motivate you and obligate you to serve the human family.

Jesse Jackson

World Three: Emptiness and Fulfillment



World Three: Emptiness and Fulfillment

- Characteristics

- Human problem is self-estrangement or lost potential
- Mystery of living is growth, expansiveness, fulfillment
- Suffer from lack of self-confidence due to emphasis on unfulfilled self, and awareness of possibilities
- Sins of omission; not venturing in relation
- Focus on self-discovery, self-growth and self-risk
- Death is part of life's process
- Internal problem
- Integration of body and mind
- Tendency to overlook negative impact of systems
- For some this world comes out of a situation such as divorce, unemployed self, or forced time alone.
- Fear of being forgotten
- Regrets centered on time being short, one life not enough.

World Three: Emptiness and Fulfillment

- Spiritual Needs/Resources
 - Essential question: Who am I?
 - General feeling is ache or void; identity of an outcast
 - Evil is squandering life's potential
 - Healthy regard for vitality, deep sharing, living
 - God experienced as present
 - Christians: emphasis on humanity of Jesus
 - Prayer as meditation
 - Stories are deeply appreciated
 - Tendency to identify success with personal effort
 - Resolution entails being set free, being awakened to one's possibilities – usually with support and promise of caring friend or group.
 - Leads to: belonging, assertiveness, self-realization
 - Comforting words at funeral: “will not be forgotten;” celebration of life

World Three Illustrations

People say, what is the sense of our small effort. They cannot see that we must lay one brick at a time, take one step at a time. A pebble cast into a pond causes ripples that spread in all directions. Each one of our thoughts, words and deeds is like that. No one has a right to sit down and feel hopeless. There's too much work to do.

Dorothy Day

Risk must be taken, because the greatest hazard in life is to risk nothing. The person who risks nothing, does nothing, has nothing and is nothing. She may avoid suffering and sorrow, but she simply cannot learn, feel, change, grow, love. Chained by his certitudes, he is a slave. He has forfeited freedom. Only a person who risks... is free.

Author Unknown

You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything... You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket... Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

Matthew 5:13-16

World Three Illustrations

*Do not go after the past,
Nor Lose yourself in the future.
For the past no longer exists,
And the future is not yet here.
By looking deeply at things just as
they are,
In this moment, here and now,
The seeker lives calmly and freely.
You should be attentive today,
For waiting for tomorrow is too late.
Death can come and take us by
surprise --*

*How can we gainsay it?
The one who knows
How to live attentively
Night and day
Is the one who knows
The best way to be independent.
Bhaddekaratta Sutra*

*Go to the ant, O sluggard,
Observe her ways and be wise,
Which, having no chief, officer or
ruler,
Prepares her food in the summer
And gathers her provision in the
harvest.
How long will you lie down, O
sluggard?
When will you arise from your
sleep?*

Proverbs 6:6-9

*Teach us to number our days,
that we may present to You a
heart of wisdom.*

Psalm 90:12

Hospice of the Bluegrass

World Four: Condemnation and Forgiveness



World Four: Condemnation and Forgiveness

- Characteristics
 - Human problem is powerless to temptation, falling short
 - Centers on power of demonic upon one's will; longing to be pure, perfect innocent
 - Sin is desecration of relation; willful, intentional, chosen
 - Life is unending chore
 - Emphasis on self-sacrifice
 - Strong distinction between believer and nonbeliever
 - Emphasis on repentance and commitment
 - Use of power to keep unrighteous from prevailing
 - Guilt-ridden, possibly exhibiting incapacitating self images

World Four: Condemnation and Forgiveness

- Spiritual Needs/ Resources
 - Essential question: Who can restore me?
 - General feeling is guilt; identity of fugitive
 - Prayer as confession and absolution
 - Emphasis on proclamation
 - Resolution takes place when one is broken; possible only through God's intervention
 - Centering in gift of forgiveness (need for atonement)
 - Leads to: feeling accepted, adopted, claimed
 - Comforting words at funeral: "Trusting God's promise" (of forgiveness, atonement, acceptance)

World Four Illustrations

O God, the God of my ancestors, hear my prayer. Forgive me for the sins I have committed during my lifetime. I am ashamed of all those things I have done wrong. Please accept my suffering and pain as an atonement and forgive my sins, for I know it is against You that I have sinned. (...) May my death be an atonement for all the sins, errors and transgressions that I have committed against You. May You grant me a portion of Gan-Eden and in the world-to-come.

From Vidui: Jewish Prayer of Confession

Through your blessing, grace, and guidance, through the power of the light that streams from you: May all my negative karma, destructive emotions, obscurations, and blockages be purified and removed. May I know myself forgiven for all the harm I may have thought and done. May I accomplish this profound practice of phowa and die a good and peaceful death, and through the triumph of my death, may I be able to benefit all other beings, living or dead.

Phowa Practice

World Four Illustrations

Our Lord! We have heard the call of the one calling (Us) to Faith, 'Believe ye in the Lord,' and we have believed. Our Lord! Forgive us our sins, blot out from us our iniquities, and take to Thyself our souls in the company of the righteous.

Sura 3:193

For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate. But if I do the very thing I do not want to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that the Law is good. So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. For the good that I want, I do not do, but practice the very evil that I do not want... Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?

Romans 7:14-24

World Five: Suffering and Endurance



World Five: Suffering and Endurance

- Characteristics
 - Human problem is meaninglessness experienced as engulfment
 - Life is a predator (heaviness to daily living)
 - Distrust often is the best defense against being done in.
 - Endurance of suffering as refining fire
 - No hope for change; nothing can be done
 - Focus on one day at a time
 - Deep empathy for others
 - Generosity

World Five: Suffering and Endurance

- Spiritual Needs/ Resources
 - Essential question: Can I make it?
 - General feeling is overwhelmed; identity of a victim or refugee
 - Suffering is central; God suffering with us
 - Patience, determination; travail can bring healing (suffering with integrity)
 - May become overextended, burned out
 - Change may present a crisis of faith
 - Not about quantity of life but quality of living
 - Have trouble asking anything for themselves
 - Resolution varies on the theme of resoluteness, steadfast will, integrity and tenacity.
 - **Leads to: being annealed, befriended, strengthened**
 - Comforting words at funeral: “It is finished” (lived with integrity)

World Five Illustrations

There is a freedom from desire and sorrow at the end of the way. The awakened one is free from all fetters and goes beyond life and death. (...) Like a bird in the air, he takes an invisible course, wanting nothing, storing nothing, knowing the emptiness of all things.

Dhammapada

But as he has been freed from this sorrow-stricken shelter and has turned his face toward... the Kingdom... therein lies the consolation of our hearts.

Abdu'l Baha'

Ye who believe! Seek help with patient perseverance and prayer, for God is with those who patiently persevere. (...) Be sure we shall test you with something of fear and hunger, some loss in goods or lives for the fruits (of your toil), but give glad tidings to those who patiently persevere, Who say, when afflicted with calamity: "To God we belong, and to Him is our return": They are those on whom (Descend) blessings from God, and mercy, and they are the ones that receive guidance.

Sura 2:153-157

World Five Illustrations

*I am tired and weary but I must toil
on
Til the Lord come to call me away
Where the morning is bright and the
Lamb is the light
And the night is fair as the day
There'll be peace in the valley for me
some day
There'll be peace in the valley for me
I pray no more sorrow and sadness
or trouble will be
There'll be peace in the valley for me*

Thomas A. Dorsey

*We also exult in our tribulations,
knowing that tribulation brings
about perseverance; and
perseverance, proven character;
and proven character, hope; and
hope does not disappoint,
because the love of God has
been poured out within our
hearts through the Holy Spirit
who was given to us.*

Romans 5:3-5 (NASB)

Putting it Together

- World 1, 2, 5: external struggle
 - World 1: Paradox
 - World 2: Resistance
 - World 5: Resignation
- World 3, 4: internal struggle
 - World 3: Self-realization
 - World 4: Self-sacrifice

Acknowledgments

- Theological Worlds research published by W. Paul Jones in *Theological Worlds: Understanding the Alternative Rhythms of Christian Belief*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989, and *Worlds Within a Congregation: Dealing with Theological Diversity*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000. Modified self-assessment used with permission of the author.
- Writings, sacred texts, and poem selections from *Ceremonies of Passage: Readings and Rituals to Enrich the Dying Experience, Hospice and Palliative Care of Louisville*. Reprinted with permission.
- “Colorful World” song courtesy of PureSprings Gospel.