

# **Building Cultures of Trust**

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### **PLTS Founders' Day 2009**

#### **Keynote Summary**

All the media bring us daily stories of trust-broken, threatened, and sometimes even kept! A quick scan of headlines and stories will demonstrate that. Trust is weakened or shattered on many levels of politics; the financial crisis is in no small measure a crisis of trust. The worlds of entertainment and celebrity, of marital life and relationships among covenanted people provide further evidence. Certainly the church is not exempt from scandal and broken trust.

What to do? It would be silly to suggest that we have a “solution” or a “plan” to set the United Nations, the US Government, and the economy in order. But the church can make some contributions. Rather than whine, whimper, moan, groan, lament, complain, or accuse—all of them understandable reactions—we can be faithful to the Gospel and the commitments we make. The best approach is “incremental” and “ameliorative.” One builds sub-cultures of trust, in church, home, community, work place, school, voluntary associations, and transactions, and thus regains some confidence.

All trust involves risk. No risk? No need for trusting. How to minimize risk and maximize trust is the endeavor.

Today’s keynote will focus on trust in discourse, with a sub-specialty in the languages where science and religion meet. Some theories and practical addresses to the conversation between these two realms and discourses will be presented as a case study, with particular attention to the theological and practical dimensions.

#### **Outline & Notes**

The choice of the theme of trust — I will provide a few illustrations from the news.

- a) Current crisis perceived thus.
- b) Where theology and public life meet (e.g. terms like “mission,” “vocation,” “stewardship,” “trust.” Aurelius.

Globally, post-Cold War, current crisis seen as religious, problem of trust

Domestically, economic, “from Enron to Madoff” and beyond:

Ecclesiastically, trust. “false ads,” clergy abuse or misuse of funds

Personal, e.g. divorce rate and broken trust

Is it worse now than before? Not necessarily, but awareness is; the sprawling media

Exploitable in internet era; technology of surveillance; collapse of structures

Attacking the crisis: three levels of strategy:

galactic: remote media, government, academe, business, health (exaggerated?)

intimate, autochthonous, Robert Frost, “the only kind of revolution that is coming,” and its limits  
medium and mediated, segmented but interrelated sub-cultures, “symbiotes”

Defining “culture,” key words being “regularities in behavior” and “assemblage” Seven spheres of “risk” and “trust” mutual engagement

1. the self, trust and the “soul,” (Aristotle, Kass)
2. relate to the “other” (Levinas)
3. text, (N. Frye).
4. company (Stendhal)
5. interactive beyond (hospitable)
6. association (Burke)
7. telling of stories (MacIntyre)

A. Necessary for cultural formation, endurance, nurture, propagation: scripts or scriptures (e.g. J.J. Pelikan on Constitution and Scripture hermeneutics)

Poises ministry and religious figures well: custodians of the vocabulary of trust

See S. Guthrie for prompts:

1. begins with “speaking and hearing” as basis for trust (Rosenstock-Huessy)
2. premised on boldness and risk, “hermeneutics of testimony” (Ricoeur)
3. the zone of confidence: biblical understandings of trust in God only
4. communal aspects, Book of Acts, analogies in other trust agencies
5. giving and receiving signs
6. fear and awe and trust (Jerome Miller)
7. ambiguous status of trust as faith “that”

Next: relate this heightened trust to human character: “it is not natural to be trusted”

Original sin? Rahner’s “not as they ought to be,” Stein’s “people are no damn good”

How build a “hermeneutics of trust?”

B. Humanistic (humanities-style) discussions of basis of trust:

Key: Plato's Glaucon and Gyges: how show that we do not trust, and what we do because of that

Key: Hobbes and Hume (and Kant?) and what moderns thought and did about it

The need for habituation:

My story of two fisher-people, well, in this case, fishermen

Risk and rationality in trust

Deontology and praxis: what if two trusts collide?

Kierkegaard and making it practicable

Ortega on creencias and vigencias

"That isn't done around here. . ."

If there's time: a case study of vocational, professional, personal trust

A matter of spheres or universes of discourse

The case of a scientist, a religionist, "category mistakes" fatal and lead to irrelevancies, failure to take advantage of opportunity.

The case of Basil Fawlty. Modes of experience and trust: the case of Francis Collins

This comes to focus in "public life" and especially in politics

Warren and Company on the nature of political trust, risk, and benefits

Has this been "how to?"

How to put this to work . . .