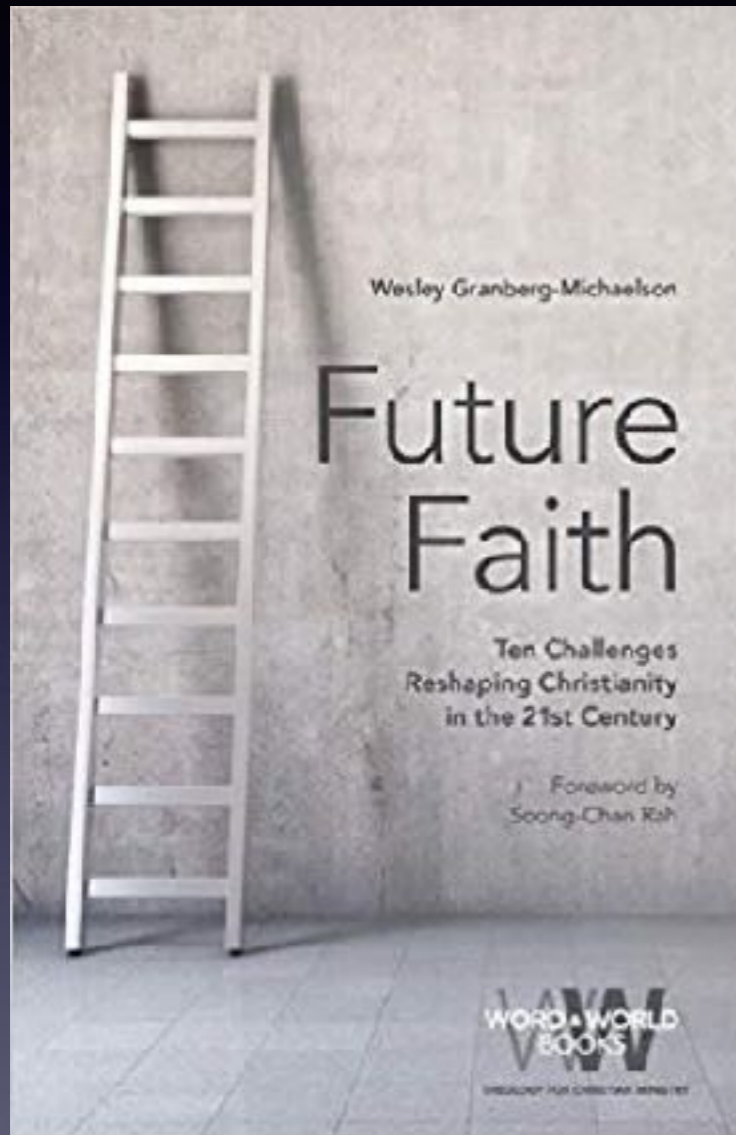


# Future Faith



Holy Manners Bookstudy 44  
ACTS - Winter 2020  
St David's United Church, Calgary

## Session 9

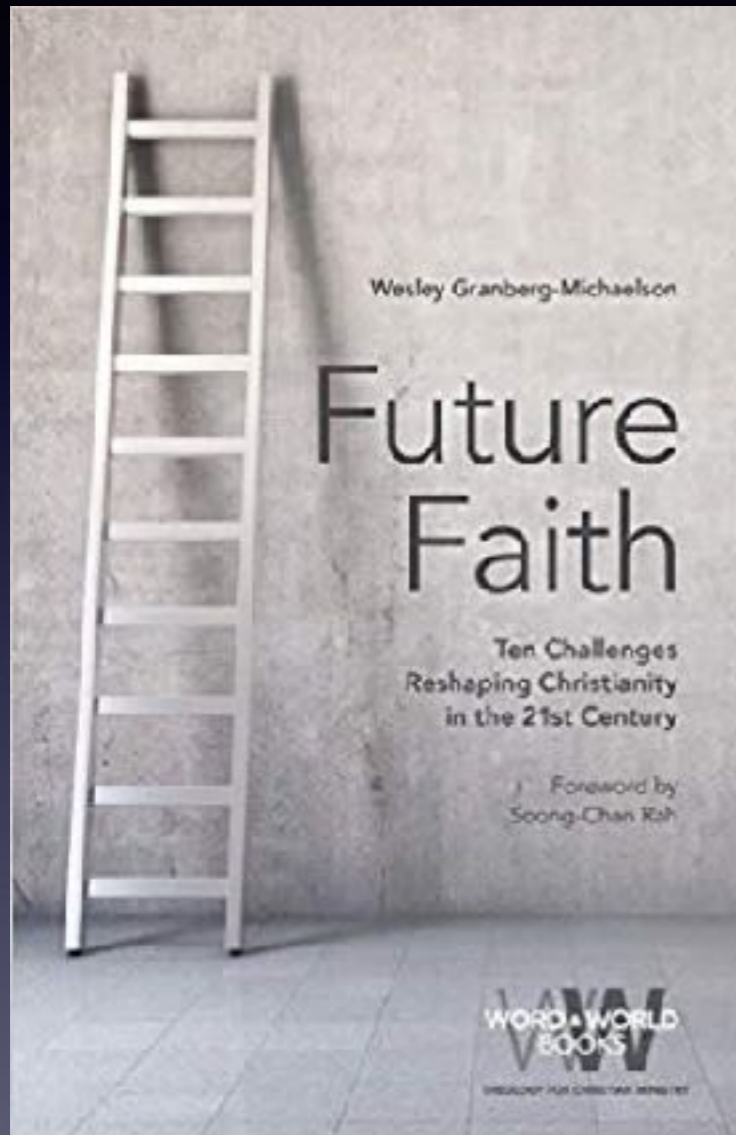
### Challenge 9: Belonging Before Believing

25 Mar 2020

# Session # 9

## (Corona Quarantine - Online only)

- Housekeeping
- Opening
- Mike Grammer's Question
- Ch 9 Development
- Closing
- Appendices
  - Appx 1 - Mike Grammer's Notes



## Housekeeping - Jock

Unable to meet due to the pandemic, we invite you to discussion on the St. David's Forum.

Just go to any SDForum message in your email and edit for conversations and send. All replies go to all 106 persons on the list.

To join the SDForum, just drop me an email  
Jock McTavish <mctavjoc@shaw.ca>

# Opening



Corona Virus Anxiety Meditation

7M

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UYAEaECtqcl>



## Opening Question:

After reading chapter 9 - "Belonging before Believing"

What do you think is special about our Monday Night Studies?

Some possibilities -  
connection, enrichment, empowerment (p.199)  
accompaniment (p. 207).



**How Our Quest for "authority" and "life guidance" has shifted.**

## **Wikipedia & Britannica** Two kinds of knowledge sources

Michaelson discusses how technology has radically changed the way people relate to information.

This image also has implications for how people relate to organized religion and the local church.





## How Our Quest for "authority" and "life guidance" has shifted.

- Wayne reflected on how he would consult with "authoritative sources" when, as a young person, he looked for "answers" to life's questions.
- During his quest was for spiritual meaning, he would consult with "religious authorities" starting with his local minister/pastor.
- This expanded to where he sought denominational affiliation.



## How Our Quest for "authority" and "life guidance" has shifted.

Now, his quest is quite different.

- He looks for people with whom he can "relate" and where he feels he "belongs" and is accepted.
- His "authorities" are often to be found on the computer screen.
- He is also influenced by his experience in Christian community.
- Inherited authority has often proved unavailable or unhelpful.





## How Our Quest for "authority" and "life guidance" has shifted.

What has your faith journey taught you about the "authority" you need?

'The power of individuals to have boundless, personalized access to information (and support) is transforming their relationships to established organizations and structures.' (p.194)



## How Our Quest for "authority" and "life guidance" has shifted.

- Religious organizations still serve a good purpose, but the model for such structures needs alteration. (p.198)
- Current changes in the United Church of Canada reflect these realities.
- Creative denominational structures will capitalize on their ability to create strong relational connections throughout their membership (p. 198)



## How Our Quest for "authority" and "life guidance" has shifted.

Consider - Our localization of theological education

Reflect on what St. David's is doing and how it might enhance its impact.

- discuss



## credo 1 - logos

over the ages we have disputed with integrity - and not,  
we have pondered over holy scriptures - and fought.  
we have laboured to frame our understanding -  
to direct our perspective - and order our living.

i wrote this 11 years ago.  
pondering how religion has  
sought truth so intently it has  
seriously divided us.

credo considers what is -  
after considering what is not.

In this time of urgency, we  
find the great importance of  
noticing, and appreciating  
the blessings of so many  
people. People of quite  
different faith and credo.

jock

in our great fear of life and of tomorrow -  
we do not sleep except remembering our creator.  
yet when dreaming dims we forget this knowing -  
and create with focused hope our tapestries of belief.

what creed or rule or purpose might we respect?  
what shines in us to light another's way?  
what words invite us to better choices?  
what divine energy awakens our conscience?

when jesus called the unfathomable g\_d "father".  
when his living and dying showed us g\_d's intentions.



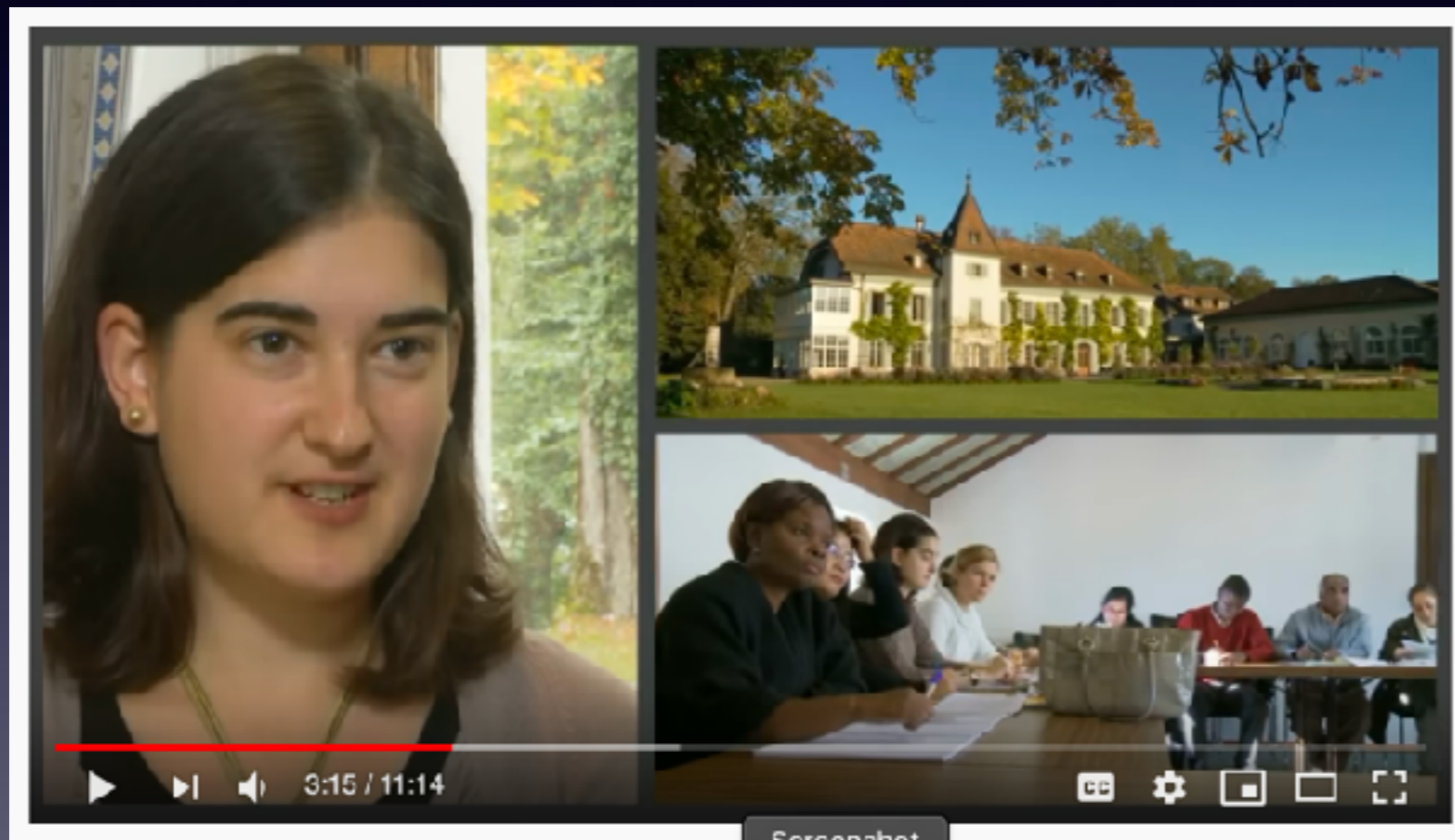
## **Château de Bossey Ecumenical Gathering Centre, near Geneva., Switzerland (p. 204)**



A gathering place established 75 years ago to forge inter-church and inter-faith community rather than to set standards of religious teaching and behaviour. Wayne attended here post-graduate.



## Château de Bossey Ecumenical Gathering Centre, near Geneva., Switzerland (p. 204)



The Bossey experience :  
The Ecumenical Institute of the World Council of Churches  
11M

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZEG2GqvR5yw>



## **Château de Bossey Ecumenical Gathering Centre,**

- Bossey is a "gathering place" for a global community, in an interconnected world of mutual belonging that seek to break down dogmatic walls that separate Christians and non-Christians alike. (p. 206)
- Reflect with Wayne on how Bossey from the beginning, sought to draw people with relational commitments together, rather than to define who was an "orthodox" Christian and who was not. Today, that community seeks to draw to its centre all people of faith and no faith.



## Château de Bossey Ecumenical Gathering Centre,

- Compare "bounded set" versus "centered set" communities
  - A bounded set community attempts to define "who is in an who is not".
  - A centered set includes all, at whatever stage you are in your faith journey.
- Christian faith continues to expand and grow globally. It is no longer conforming to the old wine skins of Western culture and organizational structures. (p. 213)





## Château de Bossey Ecumenical Gathering Centre,

- "Participation in communities nurturing future faith will be driven by relational connections rather than doctrinal divides" (p. 213).
  - We do "relational connections" and "doctrinal inclusiveness" very well at St. Davids --
  - Our challenge is to "think expansively" not "defensively" as a congregation.
- discuss



## **A Question & A Rabbi Belonging & Believing**

- 24 March 2020 - By Mike Grammer, Toronto

- Here is my provocative question in this chapter for St. David's. In my closing for chapter 5, I cited an *\*opportunity\** for the church to step into a gulf that may be forming due to the demise of democracy. Let's move a step further.
- **Is St. David's *\*obligated\**---is it this church community's *\*duty\** to foster the kind of community-based atmosphere and decision-making and inclusion that Granberg-Michaelson speaks of here? Is this the sacred trust that you have been given?**
- One of a congregation's challenges, I think, is endeavouring (maybe wrongly) to answer this question-- "how do we make a difference? What do we do...to a degree, different, separate and apart from the rest of our denomination, from the rest of Christianity...that makes a difference?" Is that pride? Is this a question that you're asking yourself when you are considering your part in St. David's?



## **A Question and a Rabbi Belonging & Believing**

- 24 March 2020 - By Mike Grammer, Toronto

- I also highly recommend taking a look at some of Rabbi Dr. Donniel Hartman's sermons. Rabbi Dr. Hartman is a prolific and worthy speaker. Checkout his Youtube channel <https://www.youtube.com/user/HartmanInstitute>
- I wish I could find the one that directly tackles belonging vs. believing, but here is a sample of his clear thinking on belonging and believing. The Rabbi is spot-on with Michaelson's discussion of boundary sets.
- <https://livestream.com/jcc/jewishidentitybelonging/videos/174237181>  
Donniel Hartman: Jewish Identity, Belonging, and Community in the 21st Century
- See also Appendix for Mike's notes on Ch 9.

# Next Readings

**Session 10 - online**

**Challenge 10:  
Saving the World**

**Study Website**

[sduc.ca](http://sduc.ca)

# Closing



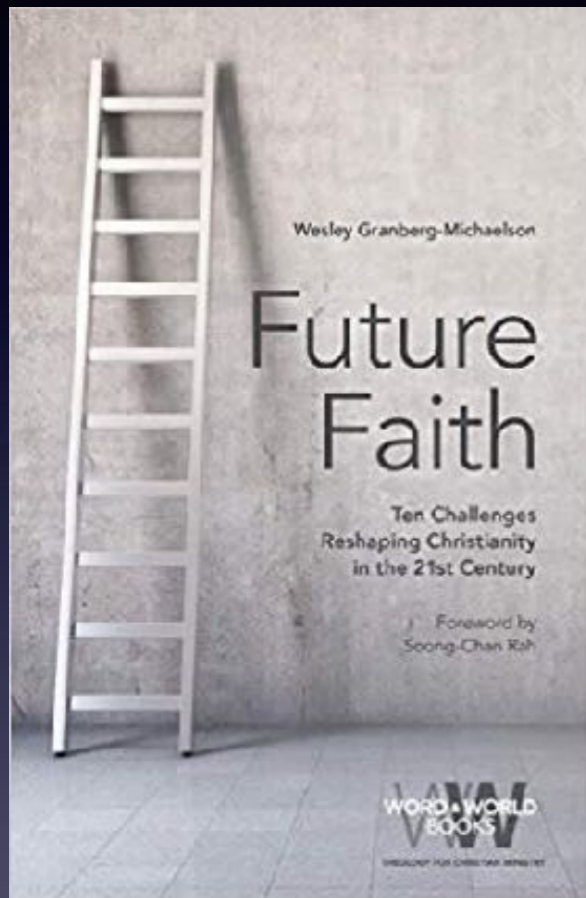
## **The Our Father**

A musical Aramaic rendition  
that moved the pope in Georgia.

5m

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=locW-9S00VU>

# Appendices



Chapter Notes - Mike Grammar - 9



## Chapter Notes - 24 March 2020 - By Mike Grammer, Toronto

### Challenge 9: Belonging Before Believing

- 191, OK, now we're in my bailiwick. Donniel Hartman is one of modern Jewry's giants as a thinker and scholar. He has talked about the Judaism and the Jewishness of believing and the Judaism and the Jewishness of belonging. They are really different things. We all unfortunately have a lot of time on our hands now. I couldn't find the exact video I was looking for, but I commend these two samples of his teachings and sermons for you:
  - <https://livestream.com/jcc/jewishidentitybelonging/videos/174237181>
  - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zPjH4zYZ0as&list=PLLy2\\_y605tof5-vn9cuyV3ZlChxvQLpUn&index=2&t=0s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zPjH4zYZ0as&list=PLLy2_y605tof5-vn9cuyV3ZlChxvQLpUn&index=2&t=0s)
- 192 middle, cute. Dad and I have discussed betimes as to whether Amazon was going to gobble up DHL or not. They're so big that they probably don't need to buy a shipping company----they will get the best rates anyway.
- 192, bottom. Super-topical in our bubblewrap time we have now. I said to Deb that if I had stock in commercial landlord companies, I'd be very worried. Coming out of this, how many businesses will either demand a year's abatement of rent or simply break their leases because they have realized that office space is totally unnecessary to conduct business.
- 194, we're getting *\*very\** far afield here, but you read it here first. The *\*next\** iteration of empire in the Western world is going to be some sort of hybrid between what we do have presently as democratic government and...really, Google Earth and Alibaba World. Because they have all the brains, and they have all the money and that's always where empire has gone. And you are seeing these companies promulgate and follow....social codes, moral codes, environmental codes.
- 195, top to middle. In other words, Judifying Christianity, at least how I view Judaism—as a religion that can be intensely personal and individualized.
- 196-197, no argument from me



## Chapter Notes - 24 March 2020 - By Mike Grammer, Toronto

### Challenge 9: Belonging Before Believing

- 197, middle—if we pull off a zoom meeting for book study, we’ll be precisely living this point
- 199, I’ve mentioned this before. Inspiration is the core business of any religious institution.
- 201 bottom, ah, a meat and potatoes question
- I’ll give you an analogy. From a long-ago entry in the Chronicles on teachers and education, and a transformation from imparters of knowledge to facilitators of discussion:
  - *“Education is basically the imparting of wisdom. I’m the first to acknowledge that wisdom is a complex and multifaceted thing. But at its core, it’s experience, context and knowledge filtered through the educator’s opinions and sense of right and wrong, etc. I should, then, expect more from my own teachers and those of my nephews than my parents’ or those of 400 years ago. Because they theoretically have a bigger database to access. But wisdom is also, to me, the process of <adding> to the base of knowledge out there. Consider then that this obligation is harder and harder to perform with each passing generation. I become curious as to whether educators have(or feel they have) less effectiveness nowadays because they quail from the enormity of the task of generating new knowledge, of even formulating existing knowledge in a novel way, because they’re innately dissatisfied with their, to their eyes, minimal or negligible contribution of wisdom or their impact on their students. In our day and age, I think education, to be most effective, has to become or be a much more participatory, interactive, perhaps even argumentative environment. A tailored environment, where the educator identifies not only the gaps in knowledge of her students but also those areas of knowledge and learning that will fire the desire and curiosity of her students to study, learn and pass the torch of education. Of my many teacher friends, those who seem most successful, those who enjoy it the most, have found the way to get this buy-in from their flock. See, the other dynamic in play is the heightened level of accessibility of knowledge. Which means that the focus of educating (effectively) has to change from content to process---from the what to the how---from the subject matter to the mode of communication. Hmm...what do you know? There’s that C-word again.”*
- 203. Creative chaos. From the Dungeons and Dragons world...chaotic good?





## Chapter Notes - 24 March 2020 - By Mike Grammer, Toronto

### Challenge 9: Belonging Before Believing

- 203, hard question for \*this\* chapter. One of a congregation's challenges, I think, is endeavouring (maybe wrongly) to answer this question-- "how do we make a difference? What do we do....to a degree, different, separate and apart from the rest of our denomination, from the rest of Christianity...that makes a difference?" Is that pride? Is this a question that you're asking yourself when you are considering your part in St. David's? the answer may speak to his comments on page 212. Can you make a difference without doing it differently? Maybe that's the goal?
- 206, I forget when ours was here in Toronto, but Pope John Paul II came to speak and it was a major event in the city and country.
- 208 top, Alysha belonging. So. Here you have it. It is this which has been the central feature of diaspora Judaism and what has transformed it into what it has been for much of the last thousand years. It is an affirmation of a community in many a place. Not Strangers in a Strange Land, but friends and allies in a strange land. There is a very subtle undercurrent to this view. To make it work, everyone has to sacrifice to a degree and not push themselves forward within this community. Not always easy to do....unless it becomes tradition.
- 208 middle, belonging or belief, which comes first. Again, Rav Hartman might say they are not necessarily co-existent.
- 209, bing-bong. I like this church already. I should say something here. I'm never uncomfortable about not coming up for communion or eucharist, but I'm uncomfortable that it makes other people uncomfortable. I'd rather feel that they are curious. If you see me in a Christian service, I will happily sing along with any hymn---leaving out any words that are "Jesus", "the son", "the holy spirit", etc. This is the balance point I personally strike to gain something meaningful out of church services for me...respecting my surroundings and my neighbours, but ALSO respecting \*myself\*
- 210 top. Wow. You really need to listen and watch Rav Hartman's talk on YouTube which I've given the link for. His discussion is \*dead-on\* with this.
- 211, top, the danger with the well-building route is that someone else could build a bigger and more attractive well and lure the cattle away
- 213, in other words, it's moulting—shedding its skin. And turning into...what?



## Chapter Notes - 24 March 2020 - By Mike Grammer, Toronto

### Challenge 9: Belonging Before Believing

1. I think it's very true and permeates so much of our lives now---from "ich uber alles" and the entitlement generation to questing for faith (in my case) being a very personal and customized journey. He gives examples such as AirBnB, Uber and Amazon to see how individuals develop relationships with individuals for their lodgings and goods
2. There is an undercurrent of resistance to structured dogma and services, perhaps. Some churches seem to be responding with more openness, welcoming and readiness to hear ideas from individual congregants. I think I've mentioned that our synagogue on High Holidays has 6-7 different services going at once, all catering to different faith needs
3. The chaos, I think, comes from tectonic shifting, of the large-scale old-school denominational model fracturing under the pressure of all these new ideas. Accepting and fusing the new ideas with the best of what the old was designed for---playing to each side's strengths---will be the key, I think
4. It does ring true and I think it is more common than it used to be, but I do not make the mistake of thinking it is "typical". There is no such thing now, perhaps
5. That is a super-hard question, especially for me, who derives so much of his energy from group interaction and friendships. And yet---I have to believe as a matter of greater importance. I think. Ask me again tomorrow---my answer may be different! I don't think one comes before the other. In fact, I rather just right now think of this as much more of a continuous circle, with one feeding the other.
6. Pinging off my last comment, I don't necessarily agree with his statement. But that's because I don't view the fuel for belief the same as he does (or at least as is characterized in the question---doctrinal understandings). My belief is intrinsically tied into my interrelationships with others, both of my religion and outside of it, who also believe. **THEIR BELIEFS AND ABILITY TO BELIEVE ENRICH MY OWN.**
7. This inspires me a bit to take a closer look at the new initiative in our synagogue, the centre for spiritual well-being.