

Metaphysical Bible Interpretation

Acts – Revelation



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Metaphysical Bible Interpretation - Acts to Revelation

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Introduction and Acknowledgements



Three things provide the foundation for a metaphysical understanding of the books of *Acts* to *Revelation* in the New Testament:

- A consciousness of being grounded in Truth, or God-Mind, not in the Bible. As explained in the next paragraph, “We are grounded in Truth, not the Bible.”
- An openness to the Divine ideas that will surely flow into consciousness once we establish ourselves in Truth study. See the Appendix section entitled “What is Metaphysical Bible Study?”
- A commitment to explore Acts to Revelation with enough focus so that a comprehensive picture is expressed in consciousness. See Chapter One, “Overview: The Period of Peter, of Paul and of John.”

We are grounded in Truth, not the Bible. We are are not *bible students*, rather we who do metaphysical bible interpretation are *Truth students*. Truth students look to perceive, by direct perception with God-Mind, the Divine Ideas that are being expressed in all things, all people and all events. In short, we find Truth all about us. While we look to the Bible to point to Truth as we look at a painting to point to that which is painted, we do not mistake the painting for the that which it depicts.

Why this book? The Unity movement is in process of enhancing its great teaching tradition and to improve the scholarship of metaphysical religion. Scholarship is, by

nature, a dialog in search of truth. It begins with a study or premise and upon that study constructive criticism is made which leads to new understanding. By that process the state of scholarship moves forward. In Unity, we are all scholars. While there are certainly flaws to be found in this study, I offer it as a written and systematic starting point for a dialog about our metaphysical interpretation of Acts to Revelation.

A resource for teachers and students. If you look at the copyright page, you'll see it's released in a way that allows students and teachers to freely copy and reproduce the material for their classes. And I have intentionally printed this on letter sized paper to make it easy to photocopy. If you wish to make an offering to me for this work, please buy a copy for \$20 by going here:

<http://www.truthunity.net/courses/bible-interpretation-acts-revelation>

If you wish multiple printed copies for a class or your bookstore, email me for a quantity discount.

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Thank you. To Donna Loflin, Linda Holmes, Eileen Ramsey, Lois Hootz, Joan Seim, Allison Hornung, Jim Gardner, Craig and Judy Allen, Maggie Slocum, Elizabeth Thomas, Glenda Fairchild, Donna Pennell, Betty Kent, Margo Green, Rick Busby, Darlene Traylor - friends, students and seekers - who helped me understand that not every idea is Divine. To Marika, Vanessa and Stephanie, who never cease to love me.

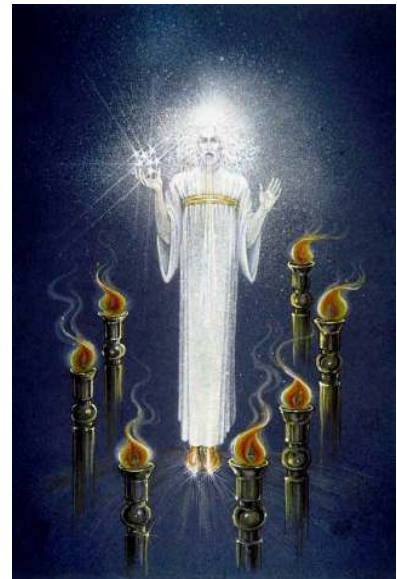
Oops. While I have drawn from Unity traditions, scholarly authors and insightful teachers this book represents my own view how we may metaphysically interpret the Bible. Please let me know how this material can be improved.

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Austin, Texas

October 2010

1 Overview: The Period of Peter, of Paul and of John



If we take a broad overview of the years after the ministry of Jesus, we are able to detect three distinct “periods,” which, for convenience, I will refer to as the *period of Peter*, the *period of Paul* and the *period of John*.

The Period of Peter

30-50 CE

Acts 1-12 and oral traditions

Focus on Jerusalem

Oneness/Mind

Faith

Class #1

The Period of Paul

50-65 CE

Acts 13-28 and the

Seven letters of Paul

Focus on Rome

Flow/Idea

Hope

Classes #2,3

The Period of John

66-100 CD

Post-Pauline letters, other

letters, Revelation to John

Universal Focus

Manifestation/Expression

Love

Classes #4,5

The Period of Peter. We begin our study of Acts to Revelation looking at the first twenty years of the the church after the ministry of Jesus. Our principle source of information for this period is chapters 1-12 of *Acts*, but we must remember that these

chapters were written by Luke after 66 CE and that we must read them from the perspective of a church under great stress by Jewish opposition and Roman persecution. The work and life of the church during this time begins in Jerusalem and gradually spreads to nearby areas throughout Israel and to Syria. This location gives the sense of a spiritual community that is somewhat insulated from the larger world, not unlike our own consciousness that resides in oneness of God-Mind. The stories convey a church that is opening spiritually and coming to understand the significance of the gospel. Peter is the principle character of these stories and we see in him and these stories the metaphysical development of faith, our most important spiritual faculty.

The period of Paul. If you are reading this book as part of a course, then the second and third class will focus on the approximate fifteen years during the active ministry of Paul, as described in Acts 13-28 and in the seven authentic letters of Paul, which were written during this period. The church is expanding through Asia and Greece and the stories convey expectancy and hope, which Charles Fillmore defined as “the expectation of good in the future.” The church is opening to the outer, Gentile world and is actually contemplating a challenge to the supremacy of Rome. This sense of hope and ambition shows a church whose consciousness is not fully mature; one that is still constrained by time and space. Paul is the principle character of this period and we see in him a growing willingness of intellect to serve Spirit, which is one aspect of the unrestricted flow of Divine ideas in consciousness.

The period of John. In the fourth and fifth class our focus shifts to the thirty or so years after 66-70 CE. We will read and interpret the latter letters attributed to Paul, the various other letters and the *Revelation to John*. Peter and Paul had been executed, the temple had been destroyed, Christians had been put out of the Synagogue and it was no longer beneficial for Christians to be identified as Jews in the minds of the powerful Romans. In contrast to the earlier sense of expectancy and hope of Paul, we see in these writings a sense of “letting go” and “allowing God” to do whatever is necessary for the full manifestation, or expression, of Christ. Because the narrative of *Acts* does not continue into this period, we do not have rich stories like we do in the first two periods; but we may say that the principle character of this era is John, writer of *Revelation*, who is metaphysically symbolic of the faculty of Love, which “endures all things.”

2 The Metaphysical Peter



Simon Peter, brother of Andrew, was a fisherman from Bethsaida, a village near Lake Tiberias. He was given the name 'Cephas,' which is the Aramaic equivalent of the Greek 'Peter.' After his confession of faith (Mt. 16.13-20) when he professes his belief that Jesus is the Christ, he receives the promise "Thou art Peter, and on this rock will I build my church", together with the keys of heaven and the power of binding and loosing. But despite his boast that he will never leave Jesus, when Jesus is arrested he denies knowing him three times. *The fact that Peter has the keys to the kingdom of heaven and that he is full of contradictions is the key to understanding the metaphysical Peter.* The following is a summary of the entry for Peter in the MBD:

Metaphysical Interpretation. Peter is the spiritual faculty of faith. This disciple's name, Simon (hearing), signifying his receptivity and ability to discern Truth, was changed by Jesus to Peter which is the Greek for the word rock. This represents faith in God, strong, unwavering, and enduring. This faith is a necessary foundation for the building up of spiritual consciousness, the church of Christ, in the individual.

Why faith is most important. Peter (faith) was one of the first disciples that Jesus called. Faith is one of the first spiritual faculties to be called into expression by every

one who would follow Jesus in the overcoming life ... That Peter today stands at the gate of heaven is no mere figure of speech; he has the "keys of the kingdom of heaven."

The Problem with Peter. Peter represents faith in its various stages of development (Matt. 14:27-31) ... You find that your tools in this new field of labor are your untrained faculties. One of the first of these faculties to be brought under your dominion is Peter, the thinking power ... You can see readily why this faith-thinker, Peter, is the foundation; why the faith faculty should be guarded, directed, and trained. His words are operative on many planes of consciousness, and he will bind you to conditions of servitude if you do not guard his acts closely ... Until faith is thoroughly identified with the Christ you will find that the Peter faculty in you is a regular weathercock.

You are not Peter, you are Jesus. Get clearly into your understanding that you are not the faith-thinker, Peter. You are Jesus; Peter is one of your twelve powers. Before this truth dawns on you, you are a carpenter, a builder in the realm of matter. Peter is a fisherman, one who draws his thoughts from the changeable, unstable sea of sense ... How necessary it is that you know the important place in your consciousness that this faculty, Peter, occupies! You are the free will, the directive ego, Jesus. You have the problem of life before you--the bringing forth of the Grand Man with His twelve powers.

"By the activity of your thinking." Your thinking faculty is the first to be considered. It is the inlet and the outlet of all your ideas. It is always active, zealous, impulsive, but not always wise ... You must stay very close to Peter--you must always be certain of his allegiance and love. Test him often. Say to him, "Lovest thou me more than these?" You want his undivided attention. He is inclined to wander; you say that your mind wanders. This is an error. Divine Mind never wanders. The faith-thinker, Peter, wanders;

We must teach Peter to concentrate. Teach him to center on true words. It is through him that you feed your sheep, your other faculties. Keep him right at his task. He is inquisitive, impulsive and dictatorial, when not firmly directed. When he questions your dominion and tries to dictate the movements of your other powers, put him into line with "What is that to thee? follow thou me."

3 The Metaphysical Stephen



Stephen was the first Christian martyr. He was one of the seven appointed to serve tables in Jerusalem (Acts 6:5) to allow the apostles time to devote themselves to spiritual matters. He went beyond this assignment to preach to perform healings. His preaching was so zealous that he was sent to the authorities, where he gave a great discourse about the irrelevance of the Temple and that the Jews had killed Christ. This so incensed the public that they took him out and had him stoned apparently without formal trial. It is not surprising that Stephen is one of the most popular of the saints. There is something about martyrdom that appeals to our human (not divine) nature.

Stephen was enlightened. The word "Stephen" means encircle with a crown, such as a victor's wreath. Crowns are worn on the head, and the head is the seat of the intellect. Therefore Acts 6:8 means that the intellect has been enlightened and who gets intellectually a clear understanding of the truth of man. The heavens are opened to him; one who has had this experience can see the possibilities of man, far beyond what has been demonstrated.

But it was zeal without wisdom. In short, Stephen was an enthusiast. He was, what Eric Butterworth called, “over read and under done.” He had great intellect and was in fact able to perceive spiritual realities. The problem, according to Charles Fillmore, is that what he sees seems so real that his visions become a moving factor in life and one goes forth preaching them, talking about them as if they had really come to pass, as if all had been demonstrated. In short, he lives in his head, but has no wisdom in his body. Stated another way, Stephen had *zeal without wisdom*.

Zeal is one of the twelve powers. Located at the base of the brain and represented by Simon the Zealot, zeal provides enthusiasm, intensity and exuberance; our inner urge to progress; it is our motivation to achieve. Without zeal, stagnation, inertia, death would prevail throughout the universe. Zeal, when applied to the expression of some divine ideal, is expressed as genius. Although we recognize genius in great people like Mozart and Shakespeare, Charles Fillmore reminds us that we are all called to express the same genius of Jesus Christ, who applied zeal to all his faculties.

The problem with zeal is that it is indiscriminate; zeal works to drive forward whatever manifestation it inhabits. Being indiscriminate, zeal must be tempered with wisdom and this is true even for zeal operating at the spiritual phase of mind.

Wisdom is another of the twelve powers. Also known as judgment or discrimination, wisdom is the faculty by which we appraise, evaluate, and discern in order to make correct decisions. It is our ability to know what is best for us. Anyone who has gone off and eaten a pint of ice cream late at night has lost their faculty of wisdom for the moment.

Fifth Unity Principle applies here. The fifth Unity principle says “Knowing and understanding the laws of life, also called Truth, are not enough. A person must also live the truth that he or she knows.” Putting what we know into practice requires both zeal and wisdom. Filled with zeal, but without wisdom, Stephen became argumentative, and this got him killed. When we are also zealous and without wisdom, we take on too much, become “too spiritual,” become “over read and under done.” The spiritual journey is a lifetime journey. Take it easy on yourself.

4 Acts of the Apostles – Chapters 1 to 12



The following are metaphysical interpretations of the first twelve chapters of The Acts of the Apostles, gleaned from Elizabeth Sand Turner's *Be Ye Transformed* and the *Metaphysical Bible Dictionary*.

Acts 1:1-14. Rest in the Upper Room (Faith Center) in the City of Peace. Jesus told the disciples to stay put in Jerusalem until they were “clothed with power from on high.” Unity knows this as “the secret place of the most high” or “the Silence.” We stay “prayed” up to keep a consciousness of our oneness with God, to keep open the channels of the flow of spirit, and then, eventually, we will begin to express our divine nature.



Acts 1:15. Faith leads. “In those days Peter stood up among the believers.” Peter assumed leadership of the group. We have twelve powers and faith, the ability to perceive spiritual realities, is first and foremost. We call out to faith and rely on faith to lead our other powers.

Acts 1:16-26. Life force is lifted up. Matthias is chosen to replace Judas. Judas is one of our twelve powers, our vitalizing life force,

that which acquires the substance of what we need to live. We must have this life force, but it must be in service to Christ, our higher nature. Matthias (given wholly onto Jehovah) is chosen by lot to replace Judas.

Acts 2. Transformation occurs. Pentecost. So far, in the unfolding of this story, Faith



(Peter) has been placed in charge and the life force (has been placed in service to our higher nature (Matthias). We are now poised for transformation. And transformation comes powerfully. Pentecost is the third great event in Cosmic Consciousness in the biblical story: the burning bush, the Transfiguration of Jesus and, now, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the disciples.

Acts 3. Expansion of faith and love. Healing of the man lame since birth at the Beautiful Gate. Turner writes, “When faith (Peter) and love (John) are foremost in consciousness, we understand the life-giving power of the inner spiritual man.” Faith and love are two of our twelve powers. Faith perceives spiritual realities and love is our ability to embrace all things without judgment or resistance. What happens when we are filled with faith and love?



Acts 4. Dealing with doubts. The chief priests (thoughts of formalism) and the Sadducees (thoughts of materialism) arrest Peter (faith) and John (love). What doubts arrest our faculties of faith and love? Peter and John say “we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.”



Acts 5:1-11. Cleansing the mind. Ananias (conscious thought) and Sapphira (unconscious thought) attempt to find spiritual development while holding worldly thoughts. It doesn't work. The spiritual journey begins with another of the twelve powers, known as “elimination” and represented by the apostle Thaddeus. In Unity, the principle means of elimination is use of a denial, which is “the ability to release the energy and power we have invested in old, outworn, negative attitudes or incorrect beliefs.”

Acts 5:12-40. Allow the Spirit to speak! The Apostles stand up to power and win. The apostles place their spiritual calling ahead of fears and threats. Remember, this story takes place in our consciousness. We are standing up to internal, negative self-talk. In case you have reasonable doubts, look to Gamaliel. Turner writes, “Gamaliel represents a thought of fairness in the mind that is willing to give each idea a chance to prove itself. If an idea belongs to the mortal plane of consciousness, it will be destroyed as the individual progresses spiritually; if is a spiritual idea, it cannot be destroyed.”



Acts 6-7. Zeal can cause resistance. The zeal of Stephen (illuminated intellect) and his stoning. Turner writes, “They do wonderfully effective work in those early stages — but their work is done in the enthusiasm of the intellect ... The intellect is argumentative and often brings about friction ... It is not necessary to be a martyr in the cause of Truth.”



Acts 8. Empowered language. “Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah to them. “ Philip is one of the twelve powers. “Philip represents power, which is energy, vigor, might ... when we are spiritually quickened, our power faculty becomes the means by which we speak the Christ word, first to our own consciousness and then to others.”

Acts 9:1-30. The great light of spiritual understanding. The conversion of Saul. Saul represents the human will (one of the twelve powers) ... the conversion of Saul was preceded by a great light of spiritual understanding (another of the twelve powers) ... The word Saul typifies the will in its personal dominance. After the discovery that there is a wisdom greater than the personal will, the name is changed to Paul, which means little, restrained, lessened, made small ... when the will is acting in harmony with divine law, its work is gentle.

Acts 9:32-35. Strife will paralyze. The healing of Aeneas at Lydda. “Lydda” means strife. “Thought is the oversoul of every bodily function. If there is a part of the consciousness that has not been exercised rightly in harmonious thought, the bodily organ of which it is the oversoul will become paralyzed.”

Acts 9:36-43. Relax a bit, overwork will kill. The raising of Tabitha from the dead. Tabitha lived in Joppa (beauty), but the consciousness of the city was so mindful of failures and lost opportunities that it squeezed the life force from Tabitha. Joppa needs to chill out.

Acts 10-11. Oneness. No one (and no thing) is unclean. There is no separateness. The conversion of Cornelius. Cornelius represents “that in consciousness which, no longer

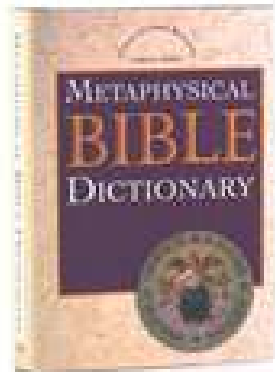


bound by outer show and formality, truly searches after God.” “In this instance the message reveals ... how to open the way for the light of spiritual faith, here typified by his *sending for “Peter.”* “The Jewish leaders ... stand for religious thoughts that are bound by materialism and the forms and ceremonies of religion ... Gentiles symbolize worldly thoughts ... There must be a reconciliation between our spiritual and worldly thoughts ... only

Christ can break down the wall of separation ... Faith (Peter) has to be convinced that there should be no barriers in the mind ... all thoughts (Jew and Gentile) are unified in Spirit.” A consciousness of oneness requires humility: “The Roman centurion ‘fell down at his feet ... Truly I perceive that God shows no partiality.”

Acts 12. Equanimity in times of trouble. Persecution by Herod and the killing of James, brother of John. “When grounded in faith and sustained by prayer, we are calm and at peace even in dire straits (Oneness) ... Such a state of consciousness is a channel through which the Lord can move (Flow).”

5 Exercise #1: Using The Metaphysical Bible Dictionary



The printed Metaphysical Bible Dictionary. To get started with our own metaphysical interpretation, we need to get familiar with the Metaphysical Bible Dictionary (MBD) and to know its limitations. The 3,000+ entries in the MBD are definitions that “have been traced back to their original root ideas” (:4), based on the interpretation of Charles Fillmore or, with his approval, the interpretation of his student, Theodosia DeWitt Schobert (:3). In this entry, and in nearly all entries of the MBD, we see three things:

- **Definition.** Gamaliel is a Hebrew name that means “led of God”
- **Brief sketch.** The person known as Gamaliel, in Acts 5:34, was a Pharisee
- **Metaphysical interpretation.** Gamaliel represents an aspect of consciousness “that will give every idea a chance to prove itself.”

Gamaliel, gǎ-mā’-lī-ēl (Heb.)—*led of God; God’s recompense; reward of God; benefits of God.*

a A prince of the Israelitish tribe of Manasseh (Num. 2:20). **b** a Pharisee, a doctor of the Jewish law. He advised the council of Jews, who had taken Peter and other apostles prisoners, to be lenient with them and to let them prove by their fruits whether their doctrine was true or not (Acts 5:34; 22:3).

Meta. Gamaliel, the “doctor of the law” who advocates that Truth be tested by its fruits, was a leader among the most conservative Pharisees; he recommended common sense and reason. Prejudice and bigotry often blind us to real merit. There is in every one that spirit of fairness which will give every idea a chance to prove itself. “If this counsel or this work be of men, it will be overthrown: but if it is of God, ye will not be able to overthrow them” (Acts 5:38, 39). This is the conclusion of every well-balanced mind, and we should listen to every doctrine with this good judgment to the front.

TruthUnity: The Online Metaphysical Bible Dictionary. An alternative to looking up the entry in the printed version of the MBD is to use our free, online resource at

[[Gamaliel (mbd)]] TRUTH UNITY

Trace: » Gamaliel (mbd)

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Gamaliel, ga-ma'-Il-el **(Heb.)**—*led of God; God's recompense; reward of God; benefits of God.*

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Meta. Gamaliel, the "doctor of the **law**" who advocates that Truth be tested by its fruits, was a leader among the most conservative Pharisees; he recommended common sense and reason. Prejudice and bigotry often blind us to real merit. **There is in every one that spirit of fairness which will give every idea a chance to prove itself.** "If this counsel or this work be of men, it will be overthrown: but if it is of **God**, ye will not be able to overthrow them" (**Acts 5:38, 39**). This is the conclusion of every well-balanced **mind**, and we should listen to every doctrine with this good **judgment** to the front.

www.truthunity.net/texts/asv

The following is the entry for Gamaliel from this online resource. Note that it is identical information, but that some of the text is "hyperlinked" to other terms, such as *God*, *Jewish*, *law*, *council*, and *Jews*, *spirit*, *mind* and *judgment*.

The hyperlinking is not only to other MBD entries; there is also hyperlinking to the *American Standard Bible* (ASB), which

was the Bible used by Charles Fillmore. Note the reference above to *Acts 5:34*. When you click on it, your web browser will open to Acts, Chapter 5 in the ASB. From there, you will see other hyperlinked words, such as *council*, *Pharisee*, *law*, and *Israel*.

By navigating to and from various entries in the MBD and the ASB, you are able to quickly grasp the metaphysical meaning of the passage.

God hath given to them that obey him. ^{5:33}But they, when they heard this, were cut to the **heart**, and minded to slay them. ^{5:34}But there stood up **one** in the **council**, a **Pharisee**, named **Gamaliel**, a doctor of the **law**, had in honor of all the **people**, and commanded to put the **men** forth a little while. ^{5:35}And he said unto them, Ye **men** of **Israel**, take heed to yourselves as touching these **men**, what ye are about to do. ^{5:36}For before these days rose up **Theudas**, giving himself out to be somebody; to whom a number of **men**, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were dispersed, and came to nought. ^{5:37}After this **man** rose up **Judas** of **Galilee** in the days of the enrolment, and drew away **some of the people** after him: he also perished; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered abroad. ^{5:38}And now I say unto you, Refrain from these **men**, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this **work** be of **men**, it **will** be overthrown: ^{5:39}but if it is of **God**, ye **will** not be able to overthrow them; lest haply ye be found even to be fighting against **God**. ^{5:40}And to him they agreed: and when they had called the **apostles** unto them, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the **name** of **Jesus**, and let them go. ^{5:41}They therefore departed from the **presence** of the **council**, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the **Name**. ^{5:42}And every **day**, in the **temple** and at home, they ceased not to teach and to preach **Jesus** as the **Christ**.

6 The Metaphysical Paul



Paul

The entry for Paul in the Metaphysical Bible Dictionary says his name comes from Latin and means *restrained, constrained; lessened; made small; little*. This is surprising, given that he wrote many letters of the New Testament (but not all that are attributed to him) and that he is most responsible for the Christ message reaching the Gentile (non-Jewish) world. There are three things we need to know in order to understand Paul, both historically (Crossan :x-xiv) and metaphysically (MBD :506-7). These are his *mission*, his *strategy* and his *vision*.

Paul's mission for conquering Rome (the will and intellect). Luke, the writer of Acts of the Apostles, makes it appear that Paul's mission was to convert the Jews who lived outside of Israel. This is a distortion made for political expediency at the time the book was written. We learn from Paul's own letters that his actual mission was to the Roman Gentiles (non-Jews). When Paul declares in Acts 25:11 "I am appealing to the emperor," he is not just talking about the unjust treatment he has got from the political

system, he truly believes that he can demonstrate to Rome the Truth of the new world order that has come into his consciousness. This shows the true missionary zeal of Paul. When the governor says “You are out of your mind, Paul!” Paul replies “I am speaking the sober truth” (26:24). Paul, like Jesus before him, questioned the entire world order as it appeared at that time. *Rome* was not just a political empire but rather a civilization, which provided people an entire set of beliefs and rules that established what is normal. And, Paul, having become conscious of a new order of being, set out to challenge that civilization. As Jesus had proclaimed that the reign of God challenged the normalcy of the Jewish religion as it was being practiced, Paul so challenged the reign of Caesar.

The metaphysical equivalent of challenging Rome is challenging the reign of the will and the intellect (or understanding) in consciousness. The MBD says “the entrance of Paul and his companions into Europe is symbolical of opening up the word of Truth in parts of consciousness where it has never before been realized (:506).” These new areas of opening are the will and the understanding, two of the Twelve Powers, which are often experienced in the front forehead. Paul's original name, *Saul*, comes from the central idea that we use our will to attain that which we need. As Roman civilization used will to impose its rule over conquered people, so do we, in consciousness, attempt to use our personal will to impose ourselves over things in the physical world. A central message of Paul is that the will, when it is “acting in harmony with divine law, is gentle” (MBD :506). This is why the *metaphysical* Paul is *restrained, constrained; lessened; made small; little*.

Paul's strategy of missionary journeys (journeys into the depths of the soul). In the Acts of the Apostles we learn that Paul embarked on three journey's throughout present day Turkey and Greece to convert the Jews who lived outside of Israel. But we know that Paul's true focus was on the Gentiles. What he was actually doing, according to Crossan and Reed, was *convert poaching* (:38-40). While it is true that Paul's base of operations was the Jewish synagogue, he went there, not to convert Jews, but to convert Gentiles who had been previously converted to a luke-warm form of Judaism, those who he referred to as “God-worshippers.” Converted Gentiles were low-hanging fruit for two reasons – their familiarity with the Jewish message made it easy for Paul to convey the Christ message and also their resistance to the restrictions of Jewish

customs (especially circumcision) made it Paul's Christ message more practically appealing.

The metaphysical understanding of Paul's journeys is explained by Elizabeth Sand Turner.

spiritually interpreted, Paul's missionary journeys represent the activity of the word of Truth in the mind and heart of the individual ... even as the mission of Paul was to spread the Christ teaching throughout the world of his time, so it is the mission of our awakened consciousness to redeem our entire being. 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel' is the Christ command. When our soul is afire with the Christ light, we enthusiastically preach His gospel throughout our individual world of mind and body (:64).

We see a pattern in the journey when we read about these journeys in the *Acts of the Apostles* (chapters 13-20), in *Be Ye Transformed* (:64-111) and in the entries for each city he visited in the *Metaphysical Bible Dictionary*. Paul's strategy is to convert that which can be converted (God-worshippers) and to avoid that which is closed to the word of Truth (such as Athens and the Jews). Metaphysically, Paul is building faith for the eventual conversion of the entire soul. This pattern is useful for our own spiritual development - when we open our soul in areas where we are ready, and, with non-resistance, to allow God to work, and keep in consciousness the truth that although we are not yet perfect expressions of our divine nature, we will one day be fully in harmony with divine law - then we are truly "preaching the Gospel." The MBD says this about Paul's strategy, "when guided by Spirit we are led to develop along the lines of least resistance and where the conditions are most favorable" (:507).

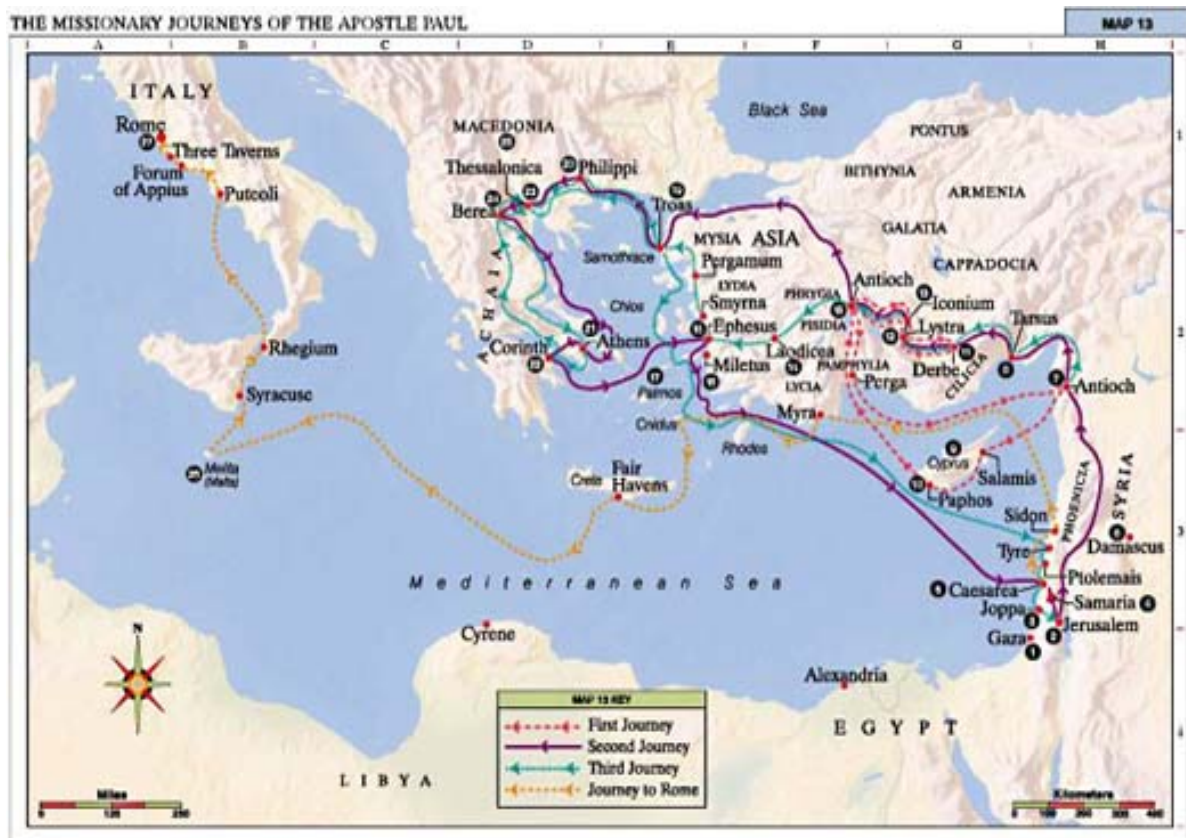
Paul's vision for a new reign of God (Oneness with all in Spirit). To learn of Paul's vision for a fully converted Roman civilization we must look to his letters. But this can be a problem, because many of the letters attributed to Paul were written by others (we are confident of this because the grammar, vocabulary and logic of these other letters differs so much from those we know are written by Paul). Here is a passage from the Letter to the Galatians, which is certainly from Paul.

For in Christ Jesus you are all children of God thorough faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus (3:26-29).

Just as Jesus had preached to tax collectors and prostitutes, Paul was happy to work with any who would receive the Christ message. For Paul, there was no social hierarchy within the body of Christ. In contrast to Roman civilization, Paul actively sought partnership with women, slaves, Jews and Gentiles. Crossan and Reed point out that the picture shown at the start of this chapter is of Paul and Theoklia, partners in leading the Christian community in Ephesus, and they are of the same height, with the same raised hand of blessing and the same open, perceptive eyes. This fresco is additional evidence of Paul's true vision of a classless social order in the body of Christ. Someone, however, has scratched out the eyes and hand of Theoklia, defacing her image and reducing her status to subordinate to Paul. This same reduction in power was perpetrated by the writer of Ephesians 5:22 who wrote "wives, be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord." Paul, contrary to what some of the writings attributed to him may suggest, was perhaps as radical as Jesus in his vision for an open, non-hierarchical society.

It is very easy to grasp the metaphysical truth of no distinction, in consciousness, of male and female aspects of our soul, of Jewish aspects of our soul (Divine ideas or spiritual consciousness), of gentile aspects of our soul (worldly thoughts, thoughts pertaining to the external, or thoughts that function through the senses). As Paul had a vision of a new reign of God leading to complete freedom and harmony in Roman civilization, Paul also had a metaphysical vision, in consciousness, of a new reign of God leading to freedom and harmony of all aspects of our soul. Metaphysically, we call this vision *Oneness*. It may be referred to psychologically as *integration*. Developmentally, it may be what we call *bonding*. Regardless, what Paul is accomplishing metaphysically is a consciousness of one power and one presence in the universe and the shared divinity of all things in union with that Oneness.

7 Acts of the Apostles – Chapters 13 to 28



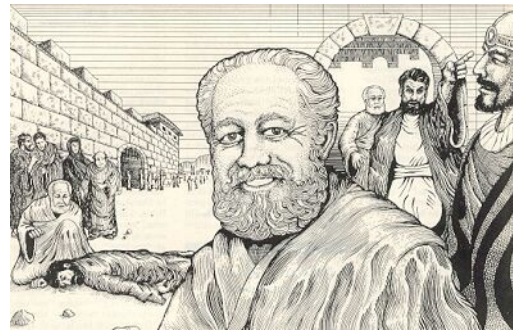
This chapter summarizes metaphysical interpretations of second half of The Acts of the Apostles, chapters 13 through 28, gleaned from Elizabeth Sand Turner's *Be Ye Transformed* and the *Metaphysical Bible Dictionary*. I've previously said that there is a pattern to be found in the journey's of Paul, which is to convert that which is ready to be converted and to avoid with non-resistance that which we are not yet able to change. This is a good strategy for any of us on the spiritual path. There is, however, an even more detailed pattern to be found in these stories. Look for the following:

- Notice that Paul yearns for each journey to take him in areas (of consciousness) where he has not yet visited. Only when he is in new territory is he able to find

new potential converts, or, metaphysically, new areas of consciousness to open to Christ awareness. Ultimately, Paul longs to go to Rome.

- Whenever Paul makes a convert or performs a healing there is a response in the physical realm. If he poaches a Jewish convert, the Jews respond with fury; if he heals a valuable slave, the slave owner brings charges against Paul to the authorities. Metaphysically, there can be no interior, spiritual change without an expression in our outer lives.
- This furious response most often leads to a riot, or imprisonment or some kind of accusation against Paul. Metaphysically, we know this as chemicalization. If Paul and his companions maintain a consciousness of faith, all is well; if they respond in a fearful way, they find themselves mistreated in some way.
- Finally, when Paul and company keep their cool, they experience progress on the spiritual path.

Acts 13-15. First Missionary Journey and Jerusalem conference. Paul's companion on this journey is Barnabas, the man who defended Paul many times and who, metaphysically, is “the imagination brought into expression through association with the word of Truth (Paul).” Barnabas knew how to encourage people, to speak to them in ways that made them comfortable and inspired. He was fair and open-minded, likeable and imaginative. The MBD says Barnabas was “the right companion for Paul, who represents the word of the Spirit of Truth ... Spiritual imagination and fairness of mind cause us to realize and acknowledge the changes that take place in our thoughts as we turn from the fighting, resisting attitude to one of receptivity to Truth” (:98).

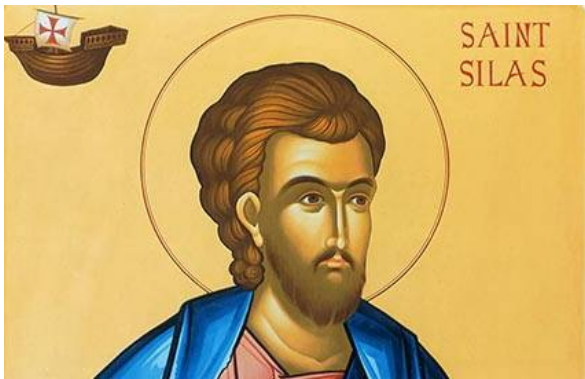


The journey starts out in Cyprus, “a fair, frank, honest, just, unbiased state of mind” which is where we need to be as we begin our spiritual journey. They quickly made their first convert, Sergius Paulus, the Roman ruler of Paphos, who represents the “reasoning faculty in man searching for things of Spirit” (MBD :583). The journey continues in present-day Turkey, where they meet resistance in Antioch, where religious thoughts are antagonistic to deeper truths, then on to Iconium, where the emotional aspects of our soul can be a problem, to Lystra, where Paul's provocative

preaching fomented resistance, and finally on to Derbe, a place where wounded feelings led to receiving the word of Truth.

The journey concludes with Paul and Barnabas going to Jerusalem to defend the idea that in Christ one is not subject to the formalities of Jewish law. Turner comments that “this decision represents the activity of judgment ... which reveals that it is the spirit of the law which is essential, not the letter of it” (:74).

Acts 16-18. Second Missionary Journey. Paul's principle companion on this journey is



Silas, which means “wooded” and he represents “a rugged state of mind and understanding” (BYT :75). They are later accompanied by Timothy, who had a Greek father, representing intellectual reasoning and a Jewish mother, representing the spiritual qualities of faith and love. These companions help us see how our soul shifts from its need for

the simple encouragement of Barnabas to a deeper and more complex need for strength, critical reasoning, faith and an opening of the heart.

There is an excellent example of how metaphysical bible interpretation is done in the MBD entry for *Silas*. Study how metaphysical interpretation can reveal the deeper meaning of a seemingly confusing sentence:

Meta. The rugged state of mind (woody) that goes well with the Paul consciousness (Acts 15:40). In Acts 16:25 Paul and Silas represent the will and the understanding in their work of clearing up the consciousness. The verse, “But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul was constrained by the word, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ” (Acts 18:5), is explained metaphysically as follows: *When fired with perception (Silas) from on high, and with zeal (Timothy), and the fervor of the soul (Macedonia), Truth is pressed by the word to proclaim that Jesus (I AM) is the Christ (the saving power).*

It is on this second missionary journey that the Paul and Silas cross over from present-day Turkey to Europe (northern Greece), a deepening of the faith journey in consciousness in to new territory. In Philippi, they poached a wealthy convert woman named Lydia and healed a slave girl. We see the boldness of Paul and Silas when they

are arrested and mistreated by the negative reaction of the slave girl's owner and the authorities, an indication that the journey is leading to chemicalization and spiritual growth. The journey continues with visits to Thessalonica, Beroea, Corinth and Ephesus, where similar events occurred – poaching, healing, physical reaction, chemicalization and growth. Note that Thessalonica, metaphysically interpreted, is a major feeling center, “the burning or heated zeal of the soul in its desire for Truth, but at this phase of unfoldment it is without a sufficient thinking balance to give tolerance and wisdom” (MBD :653).

Acts 19-20. Third Missionary Journey. Paul embarks on his third journey by himself, an indication of how own spiritual self-reliance. Most of the content of this part of Acts is concerned with the city of Ephesus, which, according to the MBD represents a *sense state of consciousness of desire*. Paul's work in Ephesus is primarily healing and, metaphysically, the healing is of the appetite of the body. From Ephesus, Paul continues his journey, revisiting cities in Macedonia and Greece, then returning to Jerusalem, where he will be arrested and ultimately sent to Rome.

Three Missionary Journeys as missions to head, heart and body. If we revisit the stories in these three missionary journey's of Paul and his companions, we can discern that they appear to be attempts by the word of Truth (Paul) in consciousness to convert to Christ consciousness areas represented by the major centers of the visit: head (Cyprus), heart (Thessalonica) and body (Ephesus). We may then glean from these stories an understanding of how our own spiritual unfoldment may occur.

Acts 21-28. Paul's arrest in Jerusalem and trial at Rome. Like Jesus before him, Paul is aware of the danger of bringing the word of Truth to Jerusalem, a city dominated by the formalities of Jewish law. The MBD says he proclaims the I AM doctrine because, at this point in Paul's development, he knows only Truth (:507-8). Metaphysically, this means that Truth cannot be held hostage. Paul will be held for two years in Caesarea and then sent to Rome for trial. In Caesarea and in Rome he is treated well and given some freedom to continue his ministry. The *Acts of the Apostles* ends with Paul awaiting trial. Later sources, written about 30 years later, say Paul was released in Rome, traveled to Spain, and was later martyred by Nero in Rome in 67 CE.

8 Exercise #2: Interpreting Paul's Conversion



We now have an overview of the Acts of the Apostles and we have gained a few insights into its metaphysical meaning. Let's now try to put this insight into practice by metaphysically interpreting the well-known story of the conversion of Paul. Remember that the creative process is *Mind-Idea-Expression*. We will begin by establishing a consciousness of oneness with **God-Mind**, then we will allow **Divine Ideas** to flow into consciousness and we complete the process by allowing those divine ideas to **Express** themselves in our finished interpretation.

GOD-MIND

1. Pray, Meditate, Center

2. Read the story.

¹²"With this in mind, I was traveling to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests, ¹³when at midday along the road, your Excellency, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining around me and my companions. ¹⁴When we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It hurts you to kick against the goads.' ¹⁵I asked, 'Who are you, Lord?' The Lord answered, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. (Acts 26:12-18)

IDEA

3. Paraphrase the story in your mind. Our mind retains information in pictures and images. By paraphrasing the story we enhance our ability to perceive the flow of divine ideas that God-Mind sends into our consciousness.

4. Chart or list all of the important nouns and verbs. Divine ideas are not “grasped;” rather, they “flow.” Which words seem to be speaking to you? Look closely at the nouns and verbs and try to pick out those words that may have special metaphysical meaning. Put these in the left column.

5. Define the words metaphysically. Take each word individually, without regard to the whole story. What does each word seem to be conveying to us in our higher consciousness? Use the MBD or The Revealing Word to see how Charles Fillmore understood the words. Do these interpretations ring true for you? If not, insert your own interpretation. Place them in the center column.

EXPRESSION

6. Create clunky interpretation from definitions. As with step 3, the clunky version allows us to “play” with the metaphysical meaning of the story without the need to translate it into literary form. Using what you have placed in the left and center column, write out a clunky version in the right column.

7. Create a refined version and include a bottom line statement.

Keep the following in mind. When interpreting the Bible there is an “intersection” between the story and the metaphysical meanings of the words with one’s own state of consciousness. This means two things. First, all persons are capable of interpreting the Bible metaphysically when they allow the Bible story to dwell in their higher consciousness. Second, there are no incorrect interpretations.

Truthunity, an online Metaphysical Bible Dictionary. You may find the following Internet resource very helpful in looking up terms from the Metaphysical Bible Dictionary and The Revealing Word: wiki.truthunity.net

Noun, Pronoun, Place, Action	Metaphysical Definitions	Clunky Version
With this in mind,		
I was traveling to Damascus		
with the authority and commission		
of the chief priests		
when at midday along the road		
I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun		
shining around me and my companions		
When we had all fallen to the ground		
I heard a voice saying to me		
in the Hebrew language		
Saul, Saul		
why are you persecuting me?		
It hurts you to kick against the goads.		
I asked, 'Who are you, Lord?'		
The Lord answered,		
I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.		

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

9 The Authentic Letters of Paul



In Chapter Seven we looked at Paul, the person, metaphysically. In this chapter we will take a broad view of Paul's writings. We will dive deeper into his writings in the next chapter. To get the broad sweep of things, we need to separate Paul's authentic writings from how he has been “framed” by what others have written about him. If we focus on the seven letters that most scholars believe are authentically written by Paul (the center column below) and set aside Luke's account in Acts (left column) and the six letters written after Paul's death in his name (right column), then we discover a very consistent metaphysical message to the churches.

Luke's Account of Paul

Acts of the Apostles

Paul's Letters

1 Thessalonians
1 Corinthians
2 Corinthians
Philemon
Philippians
Galatians
Romans

Pseudepigraphs

Ephesians
Colossians
1 Timothy
2 Timothy
Titus
Thessalonians

Paul's First Proclamation of Truth

First Thessalonians. This letter is the oldest part of the New Testament, written about 50 CE, some 20 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus to the church Paul founded in Macedonia during his second missionary tour. This is a letter of encouragement. Paul's beloved companion Timothy had visited Thessalonica and came back reporting that things were good, but they seemed somewhat discouraged when some believers died before the promised "second coming" of Christ. By proclaiming the gospel Paul hopes to encourage them to keep the faith. In this first "proclamation of the gospel," Paul writes (parenthesis are my insertions),



For the people of those regions report ... how you turned to God from idols (oneness), to serve a living and true God (flow), and to wait for his Son from heaven (expression) (1:9-10).

Metaphysically, Thessalonica represents "the burning or heated zeal of the soul in its desire for Truth, but at this phase of unfoldment it is without a sufficient thinking balance to give tolerance and wisdom." Its ancient name is *Thermae*, which means hot springs. We learned in our overview of Paul's journeys that Thessalonica is symbolic of the emotional nature of Paul's second missionary journey. Apparently, from Timothy's report, this burning zeal is beginning to wane. Paul seems to understand that the best one can do in such a situation is to simply proclaim Truth and allow it to do its work.

Letters to the Body of the Church

First Corinthians. In about 53 CE, three years after founding the church in Corinth, Paul writes to them in an attempt to restore harmony and unity among many different factions. It was a cosmopolitan, somewhat crass city, located not far from Athens, filled with a cross-section of people, and this was reflected in the church, where there was a great deal of jealousy and animosity. Paul writes to bring unity and harmony. In this letter we have two of Paul's best known chapters.

First is chapter twelve, where Paul says that the church is one body with many members who have a variety of spiritual gifts, which are “activated by the one and the same Spirit” (12:11). This may be a metaphysical expression of the church's faculty of *order*, by which it establishes harmony, balance, right adjustment, and right sequence of action (among the various gifts).

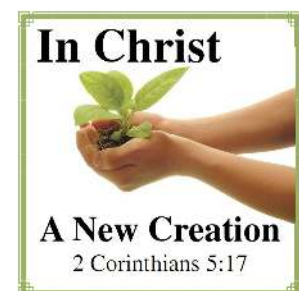


Second is chapter thirteen, where Paul talks about the gift of love. When he writes that that love “bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things” we may be hearing Paul's understanding of the church's expression of the faculty of *strength*, by which it has steadfastness, dependability, stability, and capacity for endurance.

Second Corinthians. Paul's “second letter” to Corinth is a combination of parts of three letters that have been somehow fragmented and later assembled by an editor, which makes the letter difficult to follow. The date of these letters is difficult to determine, but they fall before and after the first letter. Even though they are fragments, all three were written by Paul to the same church. There are some consistent themes and, as with Paul's first letter to Corinth, these themes center around the need for unity and harmony in the body of the church.

Let's begin with the need for forgiveness and reconciliation on the occasion of having been offended by someone within the church. Paul tells the church to forgive an offender who has attacked Paul, “anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive” (2:10). In chapter five Paul says that the ministry of reconciliation has been given by Christ through whom “God was reconciling the world not himself, not counting their trespasses against them” (5:19). Paul's call for forgiveness may be an appeal to the church's *faculty of elimination*, which allows the church to release false beliefs and accomplish a mental cleansing.

Another theme found in the letter is “new life” and abundance, exemplified by two great verses: “So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see everything has become new!” (5:17) and “God is able to provide



you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work” (9:8). These passages remind us of the church's *faculty of life*, which is the faculty of movement, vitality, wholeness, and creativity. It is the expression of the pure, eternal life of God within us.

Letters to the Feeling Nature of the Church

Philemon. When Paul writes, presumably in about 52 CE, to Philemon (“phi-LEE-mon”), who has been wronged in some way by Onesimus (“o-NEE-see-mus”), he uses his best persuasive abilities, wisdom and love. The traditional view that Onesimus is a run-away slave may be true, but it is disputed by some scholars today. Regardless, Onesimus is in debt to Philemon and Paul writes to get Philemon to forgive the debt.

The Metaphysical Bible Dictionary says that Philemon represents “a thought that belongs to the love nature in man, and becomes deeply attached to the Christ Truth” and Turner says, “the epistle expresses to the fullest the apostle's compassionate spirit” (:135). obviously, Paul is appealing to the *love faculty* of Philemon, which is the attracting, harmonizing, unifying faculty of mind; it is the constructive, building force of Spirit and our power to comprehend Oneness.



When Paul writes “formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful both to you and to me” (1:11) and “if he has wronged you in any way, or owes you anything, charge that to my account” (1:18),” Paul is appealing to Philemon's *faculty of judgment*, which is the faculty by which we appraise, evaluate, and discern in order to make correct decisions.

Philippians. Many scholars today believe that both this letter to the Philippians and the letter to Philemon were written when Paul was in prison in Ephesus, after his third missionary journey, perhaps around 52 CE. Both letters refer to the presence of Epaphras and both letters are exceptionally heart-centered in tone. *Perhaps no other*

letter of Paul is more frequently quoted in New Thought churches than this letter to the Philippians. This is for two reasons.

Paul is in chains, but he only sees the positive and good. He writes, “what has happened to me has actually helped to spread the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to everyone else that my imprisonment is for Christ” (1:13) and declares that “Christ will be exalted now as always in my body, whether by life or by death” (1:20). Obviously, Paul is expressing *zeal*, which is the faculty of enthusiasm, intensity and exuberance that provides our inner urge to progress and our motivation to achieve.

Many verses in Philippians have found their way into New Thought affirmations, such as “I am confident the one who began a good work among you will bring it to

Finally, brethren,

whatsoever things are **TRUE**,
whatsoever things are **HONEST**,
whatsoever things are **JUST**,
whatsoever things are **PURE**,
whatsoever things are **LOVELY**,
whatsoever things are of **GOOD REPORT**;
if there be any **VIRTUE**,
and if there be any **PRAISE**,
THINK ON THESE THINGS.

Philippians 4:8

completion” (1:6), “Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus” (2:5), “Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God” (4:6), “The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (4:7), “Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is

any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things” (4:8), and “I can do all things through him who strengthens me” (4:13). Affirmations are expressions of the *faculty of power*, which enables us to have authority over our own emotions (feelings), inspirations, and thoughts and to bring forth Divine ideas.

Letters to the Thinking Nature of the Church

Galatians. Paul’s letter to the Galatians, written about 55 CE, is written to dispute the teachings of some Jewish Christians who has been telling the Gentile converts at Galatia that they had to be circumcised and conform to all the rules of the Jewish law.

Metaphysically, the Galatians were “babes in Christ” who faithfully held to pure, but simple truths” (MBD :222) and the “Judaizers” were sophisticated “thoughts that arise out of the subconsciousness, binding man to external forms of religion without giving him understanding of their real meaning” (MBD, Pharisee :521). Paul's passionate response will become a central treatise on the the justification by faith. This letter expresses two essential qualities of Paul and the church.

First is the *imaginative* way that Paul escapes the intellectual argument of those who teach formalized religion. He appeals to their consciousness of Spirit, and he asks “did



you receive the Spirit by doing the works of the law or by believing what you heard?” (3:2). He tells them that, by believing what they heard and by receiving the Spirit, they are already justified, just as was Abraham, who “believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.” Paul's use here of the *faculty of imagination*, which is the formative power of mind that shapes

thoughts based on Divine Ideas into mental images, has given him a way to convey that it is the Divine idea of justification, not the physical form, which is important.

If, as the MBD says, that the Galatians were “babes in Christ” who needed “simple truths”, Paul delivers exactly that in this great passage,

I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Gal 2:19-20)

This is no rhetorical or sophisticated argument. Paul expresses, with simplicity and humility, what he sees as both the central argument and core experience of the gospel: *I am Christ and I am loved*. This simple message is an expression of our *faculty of faith*, which is our ability to perceive the reality of God's kingdom of good and Divine ideas, despite evidence to the contrary, and then to use this to mold and shape substance.

Romans. The last of Paul's seven authentic letters was probably written about 57 CE in anticipation of his visit to Rome. Paul had not yet visited Rome, although a church had been established there for some time. Turner says that Paul was concerned that the Gentile converts might fall victim to the same “Judaizers” who caused so much trouble in Galatia. She says Paul wrote to “protect them from those who insisted that compliance with the Jewish law was necessary for Christians” (:105).

Recall from an earlier chapter that the mission of Paul was the conquering of Rome, which, from Paul's perspective, must be subordinate to the kingdom of God established by Jesus. Metaphysically, Rome is understood as the “seat of the dominating personal will, and also of the intellect in man; to the outer man these are the seat of all strength and power” (MBD 561). For Paul, therefore, metaphysically conquering Rome is the submission of the personal will to Christ and the shift of the central power from the head to the heart, which is represented by Jerusalem.

Paul begins with the big picture,

For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith (1:16-17)

He then explains that eternal Truth, which humanity has always known by understanding, has not been understood by “those who suppress the truth,”

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 knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools. (1:20-23)

Paul is appealing to *spiritual intelligence*, which is the *faculty of understanding*, by which we receive enlightenment and insight. It is our capacity to gain direct perceptions of Truth.

Paul continues his argument through chapter 3, explaining that both Jew and Gentile are equally guilty of immoral behavior because of their lack of understanding, and concluding that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (3:23). In chapters

four through eleven Paul writes about what happens when faith reigns. We become justified before God (oneness, chapters 4-5), free from the law of death, sin and inner conflict (flow, chapters 6-7), and express a new life of love, glory and salvation in the Spirit (expression, chapters 8-11).

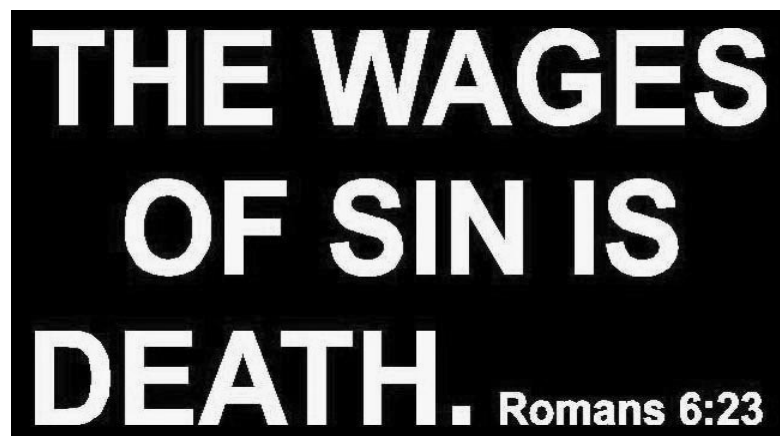
Paul begins his conclusion to the letter with this most well-known of his writings,



I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God —what is good and acceptable and perfect (12:1-2)

Why should we be “transformed by the renewing of our minds?” It’s a subtle, but central message of the letter to Rome: so that we may discern the *will of God*. For Paul, the entire gospel comes down to our personal will (Rome) and the will of God. *Will is is the decision making, direction, choosing faculty of the mind*. It moves all the other powers (faculties) to action. Only when we are transformed by the renewing of our minds is our personal will able to align with the will of God.

10 Divine Ideas in Paul's Writings



Now that we have a broad sweep of Paul's writings, let's drill down into the writings themselves. Interpreting Paul's letters can sometimes be difficult for a number of reasons. Unlike the stories in Acts, Paul's letters seem to convey concrete, literal instructions on how we should live our lives. Paul's letters can also be difficult to interpret because we seem to be bombarded with images like the one shown above and we seldom question them from a metaphysical perspective. Regardless of the difficulty in interpreting the letters of Paul, we must try. The Bible quote shown above is a fairly modern, correct translation of the writing of St. Paul. The terms in the Bible are not going to change. If one wants to read the Bible, one must deal with terms that are in the Bible, and if those terms seem to be literal instructions or if they have been distorted by religious fundamentalism, we must find a way to uncover the metaphysical meaning.

Four Divine ideas in the religion of Paul. Before starting, let's remember that we are metaphysicians, meaning that we look for the underlying Truth behind all phenomena. This means that if the religion *of* Jesus, the religion *of* Paul and *our* religion are authentic spiritual experiences, then there should be common Divine ideas behind these events, regardless of the differences in how they are expressed by Jesus, by Paul or by us. What might those Divine ideas be? Marcus Borg (:243-58) has

identified four that appear time and again in Paul's writings. In the following sections, I will describe these ideas and match them to our understanding of metaphysical Christianity.

To help guide our reading, here is a summary of the points I will make:

Paul's writing	Metaphysical Equivalent	Divine Ideas in process
"Jesus is Lord"	Oneness in God-Mind	Sin: Separation from God-Mind
"In Christ"	Flow of Divine Ideas	Judgment: Constriction of Ideas
"Justified by Faith"	Perfect Expression	Death: Imperfect Expression
"Christ Crucified"	Metaphysical Freedom	Redemption: Spiritual Rebirth

After reading the information below, we should see that the well-known verse from Romans 6:23, *"The wages of sin is death,"* may be understood as *"when I think of myself as alone and separate from God, then I find it difficult to express my higher, Christ nature."* Doesn't that sound better?

"Jesus is Lord": Oneness in God-Mind

"Jesus is Lord" We saw, in Chapter Seven, that Paul's true mission is not just converting Jews or Gentiles, but rather converting all of Rome, for Rome symbolized a world order that could not stand in light of the new world order (of oneness) established by Christ. According to Borg, when Paul declares that "Jesus is Lord" he is implicitly declaring that "Caesar is not Lord," neither are the masters of slaves, and that there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile. But all of these, including Caesar, are part of the one reign of Jesus Christ.

Separation from God, "Sin." If Paul's principle concern is acknowledging the oneness of the entire cosmic order in Christ, then the term he uses to convey separateness from that new cosmic order is *sin*. Sin has been generally understood to mean a state of separation from God. For the traditional Christian, this separation is an inescapable fact except for the grace of God or the church.

Metaphysical sin, consciousness of separateness with God-Mind. We saw in the first chapter, on Metaphysics, that establishing a consciousness of oneness with God-Mind is the principle goal of one who does metaphysical work and is the starting point

for the creative activity we know as *Mind-Idea-Expression*. Metaphysically, we know this as Christ consciousness, the harmony of all our faculties in service to our true Self, the I AM. For the metaphysician, there can never truly be a separation from God, only a *consciousness* of separateness from God; sin is merely a mistaken belief of that separateness. Regardless of this distinction, there is no reason why, when we hear a reference to sin, sinfulness or sin-full nature, we are not able to hear the speaker conveying a sense of separation from my true Self.

“In Christ, In the Spirit”: Free Flow of Divine Ideas

“In Christ,” “In the Spirit.” Borg says that Paul uses the term “in Christ” 165 times in this letters and another twenty times he uses the synonymous term “in the Spirit.” These terms convey what Borg calls Paul's “vision of the Christian life.” In other words, they speak to how we should live. When Paul speaks about living “in Christ” or “in the Spirit” he is speaking about being free from sin, which means it is how we live when there is no separation from God. For the metaphysician, a life lived with no separation from God-Mind results in the flow of Divine Ideas into consciousness. I will describe that flow in a moment.

“In the Flesh,” “In Adam,” “Judgment.” In contrast to a life “in Christ,” Paul describes another way of living, separate from God and one of bondage to sin, which he refers to as life “in the flesh” or “in Adam.” Since traditional Christianity views the separation from God as being inescapable, the traditional view of *bondage* to sin is also inescapable, meaning that overcoming a life in the flesh is not a matter of will power. Paul writes in Romans, “I am of the flesh, sold into slavery under sin. I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate” (7:14-15).

If sin is the term that conveys separation from God, then judgment is the term that conveys living in bondage to sin. There is a difference. *Sin* is a state of separation. *Judgment* is what happens to us when we remain in that state. John has Jesus saying “anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life, and *does not come under judgment*, but has passed from death to life” (John 5:24). We will get to passing from death to life in a moment.

Metaphysical “judgment,” the constriction of Divine Ideas. Judgment, for the metaphysician, is known as “compensation,” which is an immediate and absolute constriction or tightening of our soul, preventing the flow of Divine Ideas from God-Mind. The flow of Divine Ideas into our soul corresponds to our sense of oneness with God Mind. Emerson writes,

See how this rapid intrinsic energy worketh everywhere, righting wrongs, correcting appearance, and bringing up facts to a harmony with thoughts. Its operation in life, though slow to the senses, is at last, as sure as in the soul. By it, a man is made the the Providence to himself, dispensing good to his goodness, and evil to his sin. Character is always known.

Divine Ideas are, for the metaphysician, our source of well-being, health and prosperity. Charles Fillmore writes,

Divine ideas are man's inheritance; they are pregnant with all possibility, because ideas are the foundation and cause of all that man desires. With this understanding as a foundation, we easily perceive how "all . . . mine are thine." All the ideas contained in the one Father-Mind are at the mental command of its offspring. Get behind a thing into the mental realm where it exists as an inexhaustible idea, and you can draw upon it perpetually and never deplete the source. (Christian Healing :13)

By constricting the flow of Divine ideas into our soul, sin, the state of consciousness of being separate from God, brings on what the Paul called living “in the flesh” and the traditional Christian calls *judgment*.

“Justified by Grace Through Faith”: Perfect Expression

Justification by grace through faith. The third great theme of Paul's understanding of the Christ experience is what Borg calls “justification by grace,” which Paul places in sharp opposition to “justification by works of the law.” Borg says “life under the law is the life of 'measuring up' in which our well-being depends upon how well we do” (:254). Being a legal term, we sense that this distinction of “works” versus “grace through faith” will determine the quality of our daily life.

Death. “How well we do” means whether we prosper or struggle and, ultimately, whether we live or die. So the ultimate penalty for our inability to be “justified” before God is death.

Metaphysical death: imperfect expression of our Christ nature. Metaphysically, we can never die, for our essence is a Divine idea, continuously expressed by God-Mind. However “metaphysical death” may also be thought of as a less-than-perfect expression of that which is our perfect Divine idea. This may ultimately mean our physical death, but, as metaphysicians, we are always concerned about fully expression our full Christ nature at all times. Anything less can be considered a type of death. Paul found that “works of the law” were never sufficient to cause full expression of our Christ nature. He taught that it could only be achieved by “grace through faith.”

Justification by grace though faith, not by will-power. Paul came to his understanding of “justification by grace through faith” because of his inability to achieve a perfect expression by will and intellect. He was a good Pharisee, but he knew that his life was not sufficient to achieve the full expression of his true nature. The will is one of the Twelve Powers, our decision making faculty that moves the other faculties into action. The problem with the will is that it cannot see the reality of Divine ideas. So, as we said in the chapter on the Metaphysical Paul, Paul's mission was to conquer the will and intellect (symbolized by Rome) and to place it in service to his Christ nature. Paul's discovery is that the it is the faculty of faith, our ability to perceive the reality of the oneness of God and the flow of Divine ideas, that enables us to achieve perfect expression.

Works of consciousness. The power behind justification by grace through faith, or perfect expression, is what metaphysicians know as “works of consciousness,” that is, our work in consciousness with the Divine Ideas given by God-Mind, primarily through affirmations, prayer and what Eric Butterworth called keeping “in the flow of life.” Such works can't help but express our Christ potential. Trying to be perfect by our own will-power doesn't work.

“Christ Crucified”: Metaphysical Freedom

Centrality of the crucifixion of Jesus. Given what we have said about death, we should also ask about the crucifixion of Jesus. Why was Christ crucified? Traditional Christianity has given a variety of answers, sometimes declaring that Jesus was a scapegoat for our sins, sometimes saying that “God so love us that he sacrificed

himself for us and sometimes accusing Rome or the Jews of spiritual blindness. But none of these answers are truly satisfying for modern day spiritual seekers. We get a glimpse of the meaning Paul placed on the crucifixion of Jesus in the the following well-known passage from Galatians:

“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Gal 2:20)

Note a few things. First, *it is Paul who is crucified*. Second, it is Paul who is crucified *with Christ*. Third, *Paul is transformed*, not in his status before God (he still lives “in the flesh”) but rather in his new reliance on faith. Finally, Paul is *aware of being loved*.

All these point to one inescapable conclusion: that the path to declaring “Jesus is Lord!” (oneness), the path to a life “in Christ” (flow) and the path to “justification by grace through faith” (expression) is the path of spiritual rebirth and spiritual rebirth only occurs by being *crucified with Christ*.

Metaphysical rebirth: crucifixion of error thoughts. Metaphysically, crucifixion is our experience of letting go of error thinking, some cherished aspect of our personality or of our personal life, in order to unfold more of our spiritual potential. Paul writes in his letter to the Romans,

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect. (12:1-2)

There is perhaps no other passage in all of Paul's letters where he so clearly reveals his own metaphysical understanding of the sacrifice of Christ. Paul believes we are a living sacrifice, not for the forgiveness of sins, or for martyrdom, but rather for the “renewing of our minds.” Our mind is where we establish our oneness with God by declaring “Jesus is Lord!” Our mind is where we allow the flow of Divine ideas to enter by living “in Christ.” Our mind is where we are justified by grace through works of consciousness of our faith faculty. And, ultimately, our mind is where we are transformed into new life by embracing our crucifixion with Christ.

11 Exercise #3: Interpreting Pauline Verses



Now that we understand some of the Divine ideas in Paul's writings, we should be able to metaphysically interpret some of the well-known verses from his writings. Refer back to Chapters Three and Nine for the process. The process is the same, except that these verses are short and have few, if any, names and places to look-up in the Metaphysical Bible Dictionary. Instead, we will look for the Divine ideas that Paul is expressing. Using the example from the last chapter, do the following:

Verse	Divine ideas	Interpretation
The wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23)	Sin, separation, death, imperfect expression	when I think of myself as alone and separate from God, then I find it difficult to express my higher, Christ nature

Verse	Divine ideas	Interpretation
Since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Rom 3:23)		
But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us (Rom 5:8)		
So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! (2 Cor 5:17)		
For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain (Phil 1:21)		
which is Christ in you, the hope of glory (Col 1:27)		
Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen (Hebrews 11:1)		

12 After Paul: Christianity in the Balance



So far we have covered seven of the earliest writings in the New Testament, which are the seven authentic letters of Paul, written approximately during the decade from 50-60 CE, and we have covered the Acts of the Apostles, which was written after Paul's time. We now turn to the historical developments of the next 40-50 years, during which most, if not all the other books of the New Testament were written, which include the remaining letters, the four Gospels and the Book of Revelation.

The situation at the end of Paul's ministry. We've covered quite a bit of historical material so far: how immediately after the end of Jesus' ministry the disciples congregated in Jerusalem, how Paul first persecuted those disciples and then experienced a transforming conversion, that he was called to bring the Christian message to the Gentiles and that his ultimate mission was to "convert Rome," that he embarked on several missionary journeys and that he sought to convert the "God-fearers" (Gentiles who were following Judaism) and that he was met with fierce resistance by both Jews and Jewish-Christians. To understand the next developments, we need to know a few more things.

Two expressions of Judaism. Judaism was very popular among the Gentiles in the cities where Paul preached. The Gentiles, who were dissatisfied with the confusion and licentiousness of Greek religion, found in Judaism a monotheistic view of the cosmos, strong moral ethics and a closely organized spiritual community. Gentile-Jewish converts who lived outside of Palestine were generally prosperous and cosmopolitan in their outlook. While they resisted complying with some of the more onerous Jewish laws, such as circumcision, they found great benefit in the following the world's first monotheistic religion. But Judaism, as practiced in Jerusalem, was quite different because of its historical baggage. In Jerusalem, there were the additional burdens of the enormous business of sacrifices in the Temple, the political intrigue of Jewish leadership and the backward looking, conservative world view that entirely rejected Greek culture (Hellenism). In summary, Judaism, as practiced outside of Israel, was more free from its historical baggage than in Jerusalem. We will see later why this difference is so significant to the eventual success of Christianity.

Two expressions of the Jesus movement. This same difference affected Christianity. The Jewish-Christian leaders in Jerusalem saw things much differently than did Paul and his Gentile converts. Was Christianity a Jewish sect or was it a new religion? By 60 CE, at the end of Paul's life, it was not clear that Christianity would ever be more than a Jewish sect. If that were so, then Christianity would eventually have run its course and the entire movement would have folded back into becoming a footnote in Jewish history. Paul's work to bring the Christian message to the Gentiles was accommodated, but never embraced, by the Jewish-Christian leaders in Jerusalem (Peter and James). According to Paul Johnson (*A History of Christianity* :33), "the leaders of the movement in Jerusalem were much closer to Judaism than Jesus," meaning that James and Peter were happy to have the Gentile converts and the funds they provided, but they continued to insist that converts comply with all of the Jewish laws. Thus, says Johnson, "the whole movement was in danger of being first contained, then reabsorbed."

The failure of Paul's mission. While Paul met with ambivalence from the Jewish-Christian leaders, he got nothing but fierce opposition from non-Christian Jewish leaders (Pharisees and Sadducees) who clearly saw Christianity as a troublesome Jewish sect and wanted to stamp it out. These leaders never held Paul's mission of the conversion of Rome and they certainly never held to his vision of a new world order

with no social hierarchy. Their reaction to Paul was the same as was their reaction to Jesus; someone who needed to be first contained and then eliminated. We read in Acts 21-28 that the Jewish leadership harassed Paul for two years in Jerusalem, which led him to appeal to Rome, where he met his ultimate fate. So they were able to rid themselves of Paul and they were happy to see the end his ministry.

Gnosticism. In the first century CE, there were many new spiritual movements besides Christianity. One of the most notable was Gnosticism, which might be viewed as the “new age” of its day. Gnosticism was an esoteric belief in a world that is so dominated by good and evil powers that the the only way for the believer to successfully navigate life is to acquire a secret knowledge about those powers. Gnosticism kept popping up everywhere there were people with an interest in esoteric things. Gnosticism was “new age” in two respects. First, it had the ability to adapt to established teachings, offering the “esoteric version” of whatever teaching it was adapting. Second, Gnosticism never built its own movement, but rather attached itself to, and infiltrated into, established religions. These “new age” characteristics of Gnosticism gave it a tremendous advantage. We will see that, just as Paul had gone to the Jewish synagogue to find sympathetic potential converts, Gnostics began to make their way into Paul's communities as well.

Delay and reframing of the return of Jesus. The first generation of Christians fully expected Jesus to return and establish a new kingdom *within their lifetime*. Paul's response to the delay in the return of Jesus was, as we read in 1 Thessalonians, to remain confident and faithful and be assured that Jesus will soon return. After Paul's death, which was some 30 years after Jesus, this argument was more difficult to accept. The difficulty led to a reframing of the return of Jesus from an *imminent* return to an *eventual* return and it also led to the establishment in the church of institutional structures and ethical norms to maintain unity over the long haul.

Revolt of the Jews and the destruction of Jerusalem. As previously mentioned, there were several reasons that Judaism was an attractive religion for Gentiles. It may be said that culture was ready for monotheism and Judaism clearly offered that. Rome was exceptionally tolerant of Judaism, allowing its practice in exchange for a Jewish ritual honoring Caesar. In Paul's lifetime there were few drawbacks, social or political, to becoming a Jew. But, as also previously mentioned, the mentality in Jerusalem was

quite conservative and backward looking. The Zealots, Jews who resisted the dominance of Rome, were able to lead an uprising in 66 CE, which led to a series of events that resulted in the destruction of the Temple (and to an end to the entire sacrificial system) by 70 CE. The uprising and the destruction led to many significant changes.

First was that it was no longer advantageous to be a Jew. Rome was now suppressing Judaism and therefore, after 66 CE, Christian writings written for Gentile readers tend to distance Christianity from Judaism. We see this in Luke's accounts in Acts, where we get the sense that Luke is saying that all Paul's difficulties were caused by the Jews, not the Roman authorities, which was not true. Other Christian writings, written for Jewish readers, tend to distance Christianity from the sacrificial system and the Temple activities. We will see this in the letter to the Hebrews. In another course, we will see that, after 66 CE, this necessity of writing for either a Jewish or Gentile audience caused the writing of two gospels, Matthew, for the Jews and Luke, for the Gentiles.

Second, and most important, after 66 CE there was no longer any Jewish-Christian leadership in Jerusalem attempting to pull Christianity back into Judaism. The entire Jewish-Christian leadership was killed or run out of Jerusalem. The synagogue in the diaspora became the focus of Jewish life and, given what had happened in Jerusalem, they had no tolerance for the Christians at all, even if some of them were "closer to Judaism than Jesus." Johnson notes that the Jewish-Christians, which had accused Paul of heresy were now being themselves accused of heresy by the Jews in the synagogues. Johnson writes that "Around 85, the judgment was incorporated in the synagogue liturgy: 'May the Nazarenes and the heretics be suddenly destroyed and removed from the book of life.'"

Johnson writes that "what ensured the survival of Christianity was not the triumph of Paul in the field but the destruction of Jerusalem, and with it the Jewish-Christian faith." Peter and James were gone and Paul and his followers were run out of the synagogues. This caused the final break between Judaism and Christianity. From that point on, Christianity was on its own. So, even though Paul was unsuccessful in separating Christianity from Jewish custom and law, the separation did occur as a result of the revolt of the Jews in 66 CE.

13 Six Letters Attributed to Paul



Ephesians and Colossians. These letters have similar vocabulary and similar structure. While most scholars believe they were written after Paul's death by a disciple, the both have much in common with Philippians and Philemon, letters that also reflect the zeal, power, love and wisdom, for both letters convey the *essential spiritual principle of oneness and unity, both in the church and in consciousness*.

Ephesians appears to be a compilation of Paul's thought, filled with short, beautiful passages commenting on the *oneness and unity of the church*: “for by grace you have been saved (2:8),” “For he is our peace (2:14),” “creating a new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace (2:15),” “making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (4:2).” It may be that, after the destruction of the Temple and the final split between Judaism and Christianity, the writer is attempting to unify Jewish-Christians and Gentile-Christians.

Both Ephesians and Colossians describe a *oneness and unity in consciousness* with repeated reference to the term *mystery*, such as “*the mystery that has been hidden throughout the ages and generations but has now been revealed to his saints. To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory*” (Col. 1:26-27). The mystic is “one who has intimate, firsthand acquaintance with God ... Jesus was the greatest mystic of all ages” (Revealing Word, *mystic*). Many scholars believe that these references were subtle arguments against the encroachment of Gnosticism in the church, which taught a form of duality.

2 Thessalonians. According to the commentary in the *New Interpreter's Study Bible* (:2123), most scholars believe 2 Thessalonians is “written in the style of 1 Thess by a disciple of Paul who wanted to update Paul's teaching on the parousia, the future coming of Christ. The first generation of Christians expected the parousia to occur during their lifetimes ... When it did not occur, it was necessary for them to rethink their nature of the parousia. 2 Thess represents an attempt to do just that.”

But the writer makes a fundamental, metaphysical mistake in updating Paul. The writer, confronted with a church that metaphysically represents “the burning or heated zeal of the soul in its desire for Truth, but at this phase of unfoldment it is without a sufficient thinking balance to give tolerance and wisdom,” reframes the imminent return of Jesus by speaking of the “day of the Lord,” which is a term from Hebrew scripture that describes a *future judgment*. Metaphysically, we see here the use of strength (faculty of endurance) and wisdom (or judgment) to counter balance an immature faculty of zeal. The metaphysical mistake is that sublimating zeal with strength and wisdom is not sustainable. We've got to let go and let God.

What is the “second coming” and when is it going to occur? We get a glimpse in 2:2, where someone is claiming that “the day of the Lord is already here.” *The Revealing Word* defines the *second coming* as “the result of building the principles of Being into the soul of man, where they begin to express through him ... the second coming is right upon us. The Spirit of the Lord Jesus is here right now.” The second coming, metaphysically, is the realization, in consciousness, of the Christ spirit within. While it may be useful for the zealous spiritual seeker to rely on strength and wisdom until that realization in consciousness is “expressed,” we need to affirm that the presence of Christ is, as 2:2 says, “already here.”

I Timothy, II Timothy, Titus. These three letters are known as the Pastoral Letters because they all encourage the reader to resist adopting false teachings and to maintain strong ethical standards. We see in these letters some of the most disturbing teachings regarding the role of women in the church (1 Tim 2:11-15) and a concern for institutional structure. Given that the social status of Jews and Christians had fallen after the revolt in 66 CE, the writer is concerned with advocating, as the NRSV commentary states, “respectable behavior in the church and beyond to enhance its mission and image in the larger world” (:2129).

14 The Letter to the Hebrews



This letter is actually a sermon written to be read in Jewish-Christian communities sometime near or after the Jewish revolt and the destruction of the Temple. After being expelled from the synagogue, Jewish-Christians found themselves “excommunicated” from their spiritual home and they felt pressured to abandon Christianity and to return to Judaism. The *Letter to the Hebrews* acknowledges Judaism's great teachings, such as on angels, Moses, the Sabbath, and the priesthood, and then shows how Christian teachings build and improve upon these Jewish teachings. The writer encourages these Jewish-Christians without offending their Jewish sensitivities by showing how the Christian message *builds on Judaism* rather than claiming that Christianity *replaces Judaism* (as did Paul). Speaking of Jewish law, Jesus said, “I have come not to abolish but to fulfill” (Matthew 5:17).

Preconceived ideas and prescribed forms. According to Turner (:162), the metaphysical lesson in Hebrews is about the inner process of letting go of *preconceived ideas* and *prescribed forms* of religious. Ideas and forms are metaphysical terms; and the message is that we hold in consciousness many ideas which no longer serve our best interest and that these ideas are often expressed in outdated forms for religion. When the letter was written, the idea of the law and the sacrificial system to achieve oneness with God had become no longer useful because of the destruction of the Temple. In our time, many of our ideas about sin, judgment and redemption have become no longer useful because of a similar destruction of an

outdated world-view by modern thinking. Are we, like the writer of Hebrews, able to acknowledge the wisdom of our Christian heritage and go forward to embrace the richer divinity that God is revealing to us today?

A Consciousness of Faith. If so, the letter to the Hebrews shows that the way forward is by faith, not by following a church and its prophets, nor a Bible and its teachings, but by following something far more intimate. The letter opens, “Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son.” This “Son” is the Christ within, which is superior to angels (chapters 1-2) and to Moses and the priests (chapters 3-4). The letter takes the reader back to a form of faith practiced by Abraham that predates Moses (representative of the law and the sacrificial system), and which was practiced, not in the Jewish temple but rather in the heavenly sanctuary of consciousness. Pay attention to two key passages, which open chapters ten and eleven:

The perfection of faith. “Since the law has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered year after year, make perfect those who approach” (Hebrews 10:1). The writer is saying that the sacrificial law is an imperfect expression of the perfect Divine idea of Oneness with God through faith and that, regardless of how many times it may be repeated, it can never approach the perfection of faith.

The realization and demonstration of faith. “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). Note the terms *assurance* and *conviction*. In Greek, *assurance* means “[gives] substance [to].” This is the process of shaping and forming things in consciousness before they are expressed in our physical world. Metaphysically, this is known as *realization*, and it forms the basis for Unity's third principle, “we create our experiences by the activity of our thinking.” Realization is an understanding that what we are assured of is in process of expression, even though we do not yet see its manifestation. The other term, *conviction*, means in Greek “a proving [of].” This is the process in consciousness that occurs after realization, known metaphysically as *demonstration*, which, metaphysically, is “the proving of a Truth principle in one's body or affairs.” In summary, faith bridges the heavenly realm of consciousness and the material realm of physicality.

15 The Letter of James and the First Letter of Peter



The Letter of James. This is another letter intended to be read in Jewish-Christian communities, written sometime after 75 CE. A quick reading gives the impression that it's a stern admonishment to a life of good works. A closer look will bring to mind many similarities with Jesus' teachings in the Sermon on the Mount because, like Jesus, the writer appears to be calling us to a standard of perfection. But the writer also gives us the key to moral perfection, which is the metaphysical concept of *wisdom*. Read this way, the letter of James becomes much more valuable. How does wisdom lead to perfection?

Metaphysically, wisdom is a spiritual understanding of our inner Truth. More specifically, wisdom provides us the ability to discriminate between what is in our best interest and what is not for us. Similar to the ability of our body to intuitively know that which is nutritionally best to eat, wisdom is an ability of our soul to know intuitively that which is the correct decision. The writer makes three key points about wisdom: wisdom is a gift from God (1:5), it is always rooted in a consciousness of faith (1:6) and it operates, without exception, when we chose to do any act of generosity (1:17). In other words, when we chose, in faith, to live a life of perfect oneness with God and love of our neighbor, wisdom will inexplicably appear. The key is making the decision in faith for oneness and love, and not attempting to figure out ahead of time how such a decision may be implemented – the way will be known.

The First Letter of Peter. The first letter of Peter was written sometime between 75 and 100 CE to encourage Christians who were suffering from local and sporadic attacks by non-Christians and the government authorities. Although there was no official persecution by Rome, some local authorities pressured Christians to renounce their faith and offer a sacrifice to the emperor. Failure to comply was considered being obstinate and punishable by death.

Is this letter relevant in a world with little or no religious persecution? Recall that, metaphysically interpreted, all of the Bible takes place in our own consciousness. When interpreting 1 Peter, we may look for some aspect of our mind that persecutes another aspect of our mind which has chosen a higher path. What might that be? The writer gives few clues, except perhaps the statements in 2:12, “conduct yourselves honorably among the Gentiles, though they may malign you as evildoers” and 2:13, “accept the authority of every human institution, whether of the emperor ... or of governors.”

Regardless of the source of persecution, the writer's solution, metaphysically, is a call to integration of all aspects of the personality. From 1:13 through 2:12 there is a call to “be holy, for I am holy.” Taken metaphysically, holiness can be “wholeness in Spirit, mind, and body. In this state of consciousness man is aware of the all-pervading glory of God” (*The Revealing Word*). From 2:13 through 3:7 there are some objectionable passages concerning the writer's exhortations to slaves and wives. Again, metaphysically, we may read from these passages a call to integration of masculine and feminine aspects of our soul. Later passages may be similarly interpreted, such as those on suffering in 3:8 through 4:19, which can be read as symbolic of the process of chemicalization, which is “a condition in the mind that is brought about by the conflict that takes place when a high spiritual realization contacts an old error state of consciousness.”



16 Letters Against False Teachings



The remaining five letters of the New Testament - The *Second Letter to Peter*, the Three *Letters of John*, and the *Letter of Jude* - were written in opposition to the work of certain traveling teachers who have spread false ideas and ideas of "immorality" in Christian churches. They are perhaps the latest of the New Testament writings, most likely having been written between 90-110 CE.

What is a false teaching? It may be that there is truly only one false teaching: that which leads to a consciousness of separation from God and from the world. The term *religion* derives from the Latin *ligare* which means "to bind, connect" and, with the prefix *re* (again), forms *re-ligare*, "to reconnect." Religion connects us to God and overcomes separation. Heresy is any teaching that causes a sense of separation. The picture shown above is part of a sculpture by Pierre Legros is appropriately entitled "Religion Overthrowing Heresy and Hatred," which is exactly what religion does.

The fundamental metaphysical construct of *Mind-Idea-Expression* is a form of binding or bridging all Reality from the ineffable God-Mind through spiritual, Divine ideas to the manifest expressions of those ideas in our physical world. This implies that, at least from a metaphysical point of view, any form of teaching that denies the reality or at least the potential goodness or divinity of physical expression is by definition a heretical teaching. While it may be true that physical expression is always changing

and perhaps its appearance is disconcerting, it always possesses the potential to manifest what philosophy has called “the good, the true and the beautiful.”

As a side note, the term *spiritual* most commonly refers to that which is *immaterial in reality*. Those who express a preference for being “spiritual, but not religious,” may be mistakenly declaring that they enjoy living in a Divine world of thought but have no interest in connecting these beautiful thoughts to their physical reality.

What is Truth? If false teaching is a consciousness of separation, then Truth is a consciousness of only one reality, the nature of which is good. In Unity, we know this as *one power, one presence, God the good*. Charles Fillmore defines the basic *principle of Truth* as “that the mind of each individual may be consciously unified with Divine Mind through the indwelling Christ ... by affirming at-one-ment with God-Mind, we eventually realize that perfect mind which was in Christ Jesus.” In summary, we may assume that any teaching that denies at least the possibility of full *physical* expression of the perfection of God is not in accordance with Truth or the truth principle.

The Letter of Jude. The Letter of Jude has only one chapter of 24 verses. It is a letter written to address the danger of the false teachings of someone who has come into the community and taught that the moral law is unnecessary. Turner (:191) implies that the false teaching so over-emphasized faith over the law that there was little regard for ethics at all, which led to dishonesty, injustice and greed. The reason these qualities are considered heresy, and not just unethical, is that they are rooted in a belief that what matters is Mind and Idea, but not Expression. In other words, dishonesty, injustice and greed only exist in a consciousness of separation.

Jude was one of the twelve disciples of Jesus and was also known as Thaddaeus (Matt. 10:3; Luke 6:16; Jude 1). Metaphysically, Thaddaeus (or Jude) represents our ability to release false beliefs and to accomplish a mental cleansing. We may read the *Letter of Jude* to strengthen help us release any sense of separation from God or any sense of the reality of evil.

The Second Letter of Peter. This letter is probably the last part of the New Testament to have been written, probably between 90-110 CE (recall that 1 Thessalonians was the earliest). We don't know who wrote this letter, but the three chapters

of this letter are quite similar to verses 5 through 16 of the *Letter of Jude*. In fact the theme and content is almost identical to that of Jude. It is a fierce attack on false teachers, resorting at some points to crude proverbs and prophecies that God will deal with these teachers as God dealt with Sodom and Gomorrah. An example of this diatribe is:

These are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm; for them the deepest darkness has been reserved. For they speak bombastic nonsense, and with licentious desires of the flesh they entice people who have just escaped from those who live in error. They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption; for people are slaves to whatever masters them (2:17-10).

The reference to “waterless springs,” is an image which emphasizes that, metaphysically, false teachings are incapable of producing a flow of Divine ideas. This may be the most useful phrase of the letter for our spiritual understanding.

The First Letter of John. This letter is written in the same style, vocabulary and theological perspective as the *Gospel of John*. These two, together with 2 John, 3 John and *The Revelation to John* form what are known as the *Johannine* books of the New Testament. The letter addresses false teachings. The nature of these false teachings is unclear, but we can assume from the counter argument of the letter that the writer believed they conveyed a distorted sense of the nature of love and an incorrect sense of the nature of light and darkness. To refute these errors, the writer says “whoever says, ‘I am in the light,’ while hating a brother or sister, is still in the darkness” (2:9). These themes of love and light indicate that the probable false teaching was Gnosticism. Gnosticism taught that darkness had a separate existence from light (was not just an absence of light) and therefore taught a form of separation. Gnosticism also taught that overcoming darkness required secret knowledge; the writer of this letter counters that argument by saying that overcoming darkness requires love.

While the specific metaphysical problem with Gnosticism is duality (teaching the consciousness of separation), the practical implication of this teaching is *elitism*,

the belief or attitude that some individuals, who supposedly form an elite — a select group of people with, intellect, wealth, specialized training or experience, or other distinctive attributes — are those whose views on a matter are to be taken the most seriously or carry the most weight or those who view their own views as so; whose views and/or actions are

most likely to be constructive to society as a whole; or whose extraordinary skills, abilities or wisdom render them especially fit to govern (Wikipedia).

Elitism is most commonly expressed today by those who claim a higher or more evolved state of consciousness. This is, of course, just another form of a consciousness of separation. The prescription for this metaphysical and practical problem is love, which is impossible for one with a consciousness of elitism to express.

The Second Letter of John. As Turner points out (:189), the *Second Letter of John* is the shortest book in the Bible, a letter written to a women and her family to warn against false teachings about Jesus only “appearing” to be fully incarnated “in the flesh.” This implies that the false teaching was *Docetism*, which comes from the Greek word *dokeo*, (“to appear”), and which says that Jesus only appeared to be human.

Metaphysically, the error in Docetism is that, by denying that Jesus was fully human, we hold that Divine ideas from God-Mind are never expressed physically. In other words, Docetism holds that physical expression is always separate from the perfection of God-Mind and Divine ideas. Docetism may be recognized today by thought systems that characterize all physical embodiment as illusions of the mind or some aspect of the mind, such as the ego. Metaphysics, as developed by New Thought, has never denied the expectation that physical embodiment is, rather than being an illusion, both one with God-Mind and also carries the essence of divinity.

The Third Letter of John. The writer of the *Third Letter of John* is possibly an itinerant preacher who makes a living by visiting and teaching in Johannine congregations and he is writing to thank Gaius, the leader of a church, for his hospitality. The writer also complains about Diotrephes, another church leader, who does not extend to him the same hospitality.

Metaphysically, Gaius represents “the acceptance by the body consciousness (of the earth, earthy man) of the truth pertaining to the divine law, or Lord. This acceptance of Truth by the seemingly earthy phase of man's being works with Paul (the activity of the word of Truth) in bringing about the redemption of the body; great gladness and rejoicing are thus realized by the individual.”

17 Exercise #4: Maieutically Interpreting Col. 1:25-27



The maieutic process for spiritual growth. The following is a 3-step Story Interpretation process developed by Elizabeth Howell, William Doles and Walter Wink and published in *Awakening the Fire Within*.

We will explore the following passage from The Letter to the Colossians, 1:25-27.

I became its servant according to God's commission that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, the mystery that has been hidden throughout the ages and generations but has now been revealed to his saints. To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

1. What does the story evoke within me? This step is about exploration. Think (and feel) the passage with different lenses. Get into a contemplative state. Rather than asking what does it mean?, ask what do I think? Or how does it feel? The central question is "what does the story evoke within me?"

2. How is this story happening in the world around me? “This question serves as both a bridge to the subjective and spiritual interpretation, and a way of beginning to see the collective and cultural expression of the issue. By encouraging a wide variety of response in more objective terms, a richness begins to come to consciousness in terms of the individual. Drawing on intuition rather than logical analysis, the second question asks how the pattern is on the front pages of the morning newspaper and in the TV news – in political, social, economic, as well as religious arenas.”

- What does this passage mean to my present day life?
- How can the Truth it teaches be put into practice?

3. How is the story an event in my life? What does it mean for me? Contemplation and meditation are great companions with this question.

“This question invites the participant to consider the story as an ongoing event in his or her life. This generally begins with identification with only one character. This invitation offers great possibility.”

- How does it relate to me?
- How is the story an event in my life?
- What changes does it call forth within me?
- What do I need to release in order for this Truth to be actualized in me?

18 The Revelation to John



On one warm Saturday night, about 60 years after the time of Jesus, a crowd of about 25 people, most of them middle-class families with kids in tow, have gathered for the blockbuster performance that has finally come to town, *The Revelation to John*. This is a one-person play, on its first stop in a seven-city tour of Asia Minor (modern day Turkey). The performance will last about two hours and the crowd has heard that it's a suspenseful cliff-hanger. The buzz of chitchat is heard as the crowd eagerly awaits the opening episode. Because of the incendiary nature of the presentation, the performance is being secretly held in the home of a prominent church member and there has been no publicity except by word of mouth. For security purposes, no one is admitted except trusted church members and everyone has pledged to keep the evening's performance to themselves.

The church minister opens the evening's with a prayer and to introduce the presenter. After her prayer, she makes a few opening remarks,

I welcome you to our opening performance of *The Revelation to John*! I was so inspired when I first attended this performance at our regional gathering in Patmos. I walked away knowing

that God is on our side and that, although it may take some time, we will be victorious! But only if we remain confident and keep our eye on our goal.

I'm aware that these past few years have had some challenges. Not everyone approves of our beliefs. Twenty years ago, when the government shut down the Temple and ran our parents out of Jerusalem, we had hoped to find refuge in our Synagogues out here in Asia. But, as we know, some of our "best friends" and even our relatives kicked us out of the Synagogue. They turned their backs on us and some of them began making false allegations about us to the authorities. And the authorities! What can we say about this "don't ask, don't tell" policy of Rome and the unfair way it's implemented by our local officials! What hypocrisy! We're hard-working, tax paying, law-respecting people and the governor knows it! But no sooner will some greedy, sneaky thief try to intimidate one of us by making a secret allegation than will the two-bit sheriff report us to the prosecutor. I'm confident that they're going to get their due, as you will see when we get to the seventh episode of tonight's performance!

I'm also aware that some of you think it's ill-advised to be holding tonight's performance. While things are difficult, they aren't nearly as bad as it was thirty years ago when Emperor *you-know-who* blamed us for the fire in Rome. We lost Peter. And we lost Paul. Thankfully, those days are behind us. But we can't get too complacent. There's one message in tonight's performance that I hope we keep in mind: *don't get too comfortable!* When our day comes, it's going to come fast! Way too fast! We've got to keep eye on the prize, living in the present, knowing that at any moment we may find ourselves gloriously transformed!

A word about the secrecy around tonight's event. We all know that the real king in our life is Jesus Christ. The emperor is not king, and we know things in Rome are crumbling fast. The political back-stabbing of that arrogant tyrant in Rome is unimaginable! He can only be compared to cold-hearted lizard or an unfaithful whore! He's worse than a lizard, in fact he's a ten-horned, seven-headed lizard! But, you know, we can't openly say that. And we certainly can't put it in writing. If word were to get out then we would be putting ourselves in even more jeopardy. So, to protect ourselves, you'll find lots of innuendo in tonight's presentation. I know who the beast is and you know who the beast is, so there's no need to expose ourselves to danger. Let's just refer to him as the beast and keep the innuendo to ourselves.

Everyone else will think that all the symbolic innuendo is about esoteric predictions of the far distant future! They think they're so smart! But God has confused their minds! They look so closely at the details that they can't see the Truth that is before their very eyes! While they search for hidden meanings about the distant future, let's enjoy the fact that the story we're about to see is in fact quietly unfolding in our present day. Be assured that these events will become public news very soon, perhaps only days or weeks from now!

Since tonight's presentation has so much symbolism, there may be a point or two where we,

ourselves, get a bit confused. While we get the big picture, there may a few things that aren't clear, that seem to cross over from the Truth we know to some fantasy that we sense is not true. You'll hear a lot about earthquakes and plagues. Are these for real or are they just symbolic for the catastrophe that is presently unfolding throughout the empire? Keep in mind that they're almost always symbolic. And they're not only symbolic of what's happening *around* us, they're also symbolic of what's happening *within* us. We have earthquakes and plagues in our own minds!

I need to forewarn you that tonight's performance has some extreme scenes. You may want to keep the kids close by. Life, like drama, has its ups and downs and this presentation conveys both good and evil in full force. Keep a couple things in mind. First, the story you're about to witness is meant to be experienced in one sitting. It's a drama, and, like all drama, things get bad before they get better. So if you're distressed by some of the early scenes, rest assured that in the end God will be victorious. If we leave before it's over then we miss the big picture, which is that there is only one true power in the Universe, God. Don't focus on some gory detail and don't try to read too much into some violent scene; if you do then you're no better than those arrogant intellectuals who think they know future events by reading esoteric literature. As I've said, and as Jesus repeatedly said, our glorious transformation will come quickly and quite unexpectedly! Don't fall into the prophecy trap!

Having said this, we need to keep in mind that things often get unbearable before we are rescued. We saw this in the story of Daniel and the book of Enoch. While we would like to see things get progressively better, the fact is that God works in mysterious ways. The Romans are control freaks; we trust God! Often it seems that things are going downhill fast and that our situation is hopeless. Or, to put it another way, sometimes things just have to hit rock-bottom before they get better. If so, take heart! That's the very moment that God often acts! So be encouraged by some of the disturbing scenes in what we're about to see tonight. They just may indicate that God is about to act. Let go and trust that God is sure to deliver us.

Before we get started, let me give you a brief outline about what we're about to see and a few hints at what it's all about.

The story opens with an introduction of the angel of Jesus Christ speaking to John on the island of Patmos about things that must soon take place (Rev. 1:1-3). John is then given a vision of the risen Christ (Rev. 1:4-20) in the midst of seven golden lamp-stands. This sets the scene for the entire story and lets us know that what is revealed in heaven is soon to be revealed on earth.





The bulk of the drama is in seven episodes. Episode One describes the opening of seven letters to seven churches in Asia Minor (Rev. 2:1-3:22) and each of these letters seems to describe the benefits and weaknesses of different states of thinking. These states seem to be desire, abundance, intellectualism, zealousness, power, love and deciding. John cautions what can happen when we enter into these states from sense awareness.

Episode Two begins with John being transported to heaven. He then describes a vision of the opening of seven seals (Rev. 4:1-8:1) and each of these seals describes what often happens as the soul is being transformed from mortal consciousness to spiritual consciousness. The first four seals seem to tell us something about strong beliefs, one of which is Christ, symbolized by a rider on a white horse. But watch out for the other three because they represent belief in war, lack, death. As we'll see, spiritual transformation can be difficult and some of these scenes contain really disturbing images. The fifth seal describes the suffering we experience when we buy into these ideas of war, lack and death and it continues with an earthquake in the sixth seal, which is our mind in turmoil!



Episode Three describes what happens when the seventh seal is broken (Rev. 8:1-11:19), which is the appearance of seven angels sounding their trumpets. Each of these trumpets symbolize the advance of spiritual development. While much of the imagery appears destructive, try to remember that it's really a cleansing process of destroying that which is false in us. I'll leave it to you to figure out what these false beliefs may be, but let me give a preview of some of the images that will show up: hail and fire, a great mountain thrown into the sea, a star falling into the rivers and poisoning the water and the sun and the moon going dark. Don't sweat it! Worse things than these take place in your own mind! Letting go of these false ideas takes time

and can be painful. By the time the seventh trumpet is sounded, we are coming into a real transformation.

Episode Four describes another view of our spiritual unfolding, but this time it is described in three stages instead of seven stages (Rev. 12:1-17). First is the birth of the Christ child, represented by a woman clothed with the sun, the moon under her feet and upon her head a crown of twelve stars who is about to give birth to the Christ child. Next is the resistance we put up in the form of the anti-christ, which is portrayed by the great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, who threatens to devour the Christ child. But evil can only threaten good, it can never actually harm the Christ child. In the end both the woman and the Christ child are given safety in places in consciousness that are prepared for us in meeting challenges; the Christ child is taken up to heaven and the woman flees to the inner secret place of the most high. So we see that, regardless of any threat, the soul is always protected.



Episode Five is a warning to all of us who have achieved spiritual maturity to not be too complacent (Rev. 15:1-16:21). Even though we have become mature, we do not yet have a final victory and there will be seven things that continue to plague us if we do not keep vigilant. Our presenter will describe in this episode how we draw to ourselves spiritual tests to strengthen our desire to

know God. These tests may seem like God's wrath and appear like a series of plagues, but they are actually for our own benefit.

Episode Six describes the beginning of the final victory of Christ as a rider on a white horse. The rider overthrows Rome as symbolized by a beast and the whore of Babylon. Do you know what's cool about this episode? Remember Nero, the emperor who killed Peter and Paul many years ago? The story has it that he's the beast! And rumor has it that he's coming back to kill the whore of Babylon, and we all know who that is!

The episode then continues by describing a thousand year reign of peace for those loved ones of ours who have already died (Rev. 17:1-20:15). These thousand years, or what is commonly referred to as *the millennium*, honors those who remained faithful but never lived to see Jesus coming back as promised. And, in my humble opinion, another purpose of the millennium is to mess with the minds of all the tele-evangelists who so they've got something to talk about. Isn't that awesome?



Episode Seven portrays the final triumph of Christ by describing the New Heaven and the New Earth (Rev. 21:1-22:5), a place and time where God will wipe away every tear from our eyes and death will be no more.

At the conclusion we will hear a few final warnings from Jesus (Rev. 22:6-21) about the need to stay focused and faithful. He will warn us that our job is to stay vigilant and not to be trying to use these prophecies to our own advantage.

If, after the performance, any of you wish to have more information, you can hear and download a detailed four hour audio presentation by a very knowledgeable speaker at:

<http://www.truthunity.net/teachers/giudici/revelation>

May this presentation inspire and bless us! On with the show!

19 Exercise #5: Interpreting with New Thought Principles

1. *God is absolute good, everywhere present*
2. *Human beings have a spark of divinity within them, the Christ-spirit within. Their very essence is of God, therefore they are also inherently good.*
3. *Human beings create their experiences by the activity of their thinking. Everything in the manifest realm has its beginning in thought.*
4. *Prayer is creative thinking that heightens the connection with God-Mind and therefore brings forth wisdom, healing, prosperity and everything good.*
5. *Knowing and understanding the laws of life, also known as Truth, is not enough. A person must also live the truth that he or she knows.*



Applying New Thought principles to bible interpretation. So far we have learned a metaphysical and a maieutic method of interpreting scripture and we have tried out applying some theological concepts to better understand passages from Paul's letters. As truth students in the New Thought tradition, let's try using some New Thought principles to interpret a well known passage from the *Revelation to John*.

In the final chapter, there is a very interesting and somewhat mysterious passage that begins the epilogue of the book, verses 22:8 through 22:12. Here's the text:

I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me; but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your comrades the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God!"

And he said to me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near. Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy."

"See, I am coming soon; my reward is with me, to repay according to everyone's work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."

What is being said about God being absolute good, everywhere present?

Does this quicken my inner Christ nature? If so, how so?

What are the Divine ideas that flow into my thinking when I read this passage?

Is there an affirmation or prayer in this passage?

What in my life is trying to be expressed by this passage?

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Appendix – What is Metaphysical Bible Study?

Metaphysical Bible Study is self-discovery. Most people understand that self-discovery is an intuitive process. Metaphysical Bible Study is a particular intuitive process that uses the underlying essence of biblical stories, known as Divine ideas, to help us achieve self-discovery and spiritual growth. The actual process for doing this will be learned in the many exercises in subsequent chapters. Here's the underlying philosophy of why it works.

Metaphysical Bible Study is direct perception of truth. A metaphysician, or “truth student” is one who desires to directly receive Divine Ideas from the Mind of God. This impacts how we read the Bible. While the Bible may point to “truth” by illustrating how Divine Ideas were once expressed in the lives of biblical characters, it does not contain “the truth.” The truth comes from God-Mind and it comes to us direct. Therefore as metaphysicians, or “truth students,” our objective in studying the Bible metaphysically is establishing a direct connection to God-Mind, opening our heart enough so that *Divine Ideas* may flow into our consciousness, and meditating on these ideas until they are expressed in our everyday lives.

Truth in the Bible is the expression of Divine Ideas. The key to metaphysical bible interpretation is the perception of the Divine Idea that lies behind the particulars of the story or character. This practice has been around for a long time. The early Greeks did it when they read about some of the outrageous stories in Greek mythology. And many early Christians also did it when they read Old Testament account about child sacrifice and God wiping out entire cities. The story may be gory and expressed in a “God awful” way but the Divine Idea, if perceived correctly, can teach us what we need to know.

Why study Divine Ideas expressed in the Bible? Because Divine Ideas, expressed in the Bible are also expressed in our own consciousness. Interpreting the Bible enables us to interpret what is going on in our own minds.

Divine Ideas expressed the Bible that are also expressed in our own consciousness. The following are a some examples of how metaphysicians have come

to understand biblical characters and places that share Divine Ideas that play in our own consciousness.

- The characters and places in the Scripture represent different phases of our consciousness.
- Israelites represent our awareness when we are looking toward God.
- The story of Cain and Abel, interpreted metaphysically, is the story of conflict between our physical and spiritual aspects of human nature.
- Moses represents our development in consciousness of the law of being.
- Animals, fish, birds, and inanimate objects in the Bible represent our thoughts and ideas.
- Adam's wife, Eve, signifies the mother of our living, feeling nature, and the mother principle of God in action in our life.
- Abraham represents our awakening of faith.
- King David represents our consciousness of love.
- King Solomon represents the unification of love and wisdom in us
- John the Baptist represents our high intellectual perception of Truth
- Mary, the mother of Jesus, represents our intuition, the divine motherhood of Love, and the soul
- Jesus represents God's idea of you and me in expression
- Christ is that idea of you and me in the absolute
- Jesus Christ represents the embodiment of all divine ideas
- Jehovah of the Hebrew Scriptures is equivalent to the Christ in the New Testament

The Bible as the story of the spiritual development of our soul. Remember that New Thought teaches that all things we experience in life had their origin in thought; “we create our experiences by the activity of our thinking.” Metaphysical Bible students, therefore, relate each Bible story, and the characters and places in those stories, to their own development as spiritual beings. Charles Fillmore wrote, “Apart from being a book of great historical and biographical interest, the Bible is, from Genesis to Revelation, in its inner or spiritual meaning, a record of the experiences and the development of the human soul.”

The “theater” is in our consciousness, not in the biblical lands. Although the historical biblical story occurred long ago in the faraway biblical lands, when we do a metaphysical bible interpretation, all the action occurs in our consciousness. We do

not metaphysically interpret historical events! What we metaphysically interpret are events in consciousness, in a belief that what occurred centuries ago is an expression of the same Divine Ideas that are now expressing in our own consciousness.

The Twelve Powers. Unity co-founder Charles Fillmore perceived twelve energy centers in the human body which he believed shared the same Divine Idea that was expressed in the twelve disciples of Jesus. I have arranged them as I view their correlation to what we know know as head, heart and body energy:

- Faith – Peter – center of head, pineal gland.
- Imagination – Bartholomew, or Nathanael – between the eyes.
- Will – Matthew – center front brain.
- Understanding – Thomas – front brain.

- Zeal – Simon the Canaanite – lower back head, medulla.
- Power – Philip – root of tongue.
- Love – John – back of heart, cardiac center.
- Judgment – James, son of Zebedee – in lower part of solar plexus.

- Strength – Andrew – small of back.
- Order – James, son of Alphaeus – navel.
- Elimination, or renunciation – Thaddaeus – lower part of back.
- Appropriation or life conservation – Judas – generative function.

The Twelve Powers are faculties, or aspects of mind. As we will see in the many biblical stories, they can cause trouble if they are not transformed to serving our higher purpose. As we read in the Bible about the transformation of each of the twelve disciples in service of Jesus Christ, we get clues about how our own twelve powers can be transformed in service to our own Christ nature. The twelve powers come up time and again in Unity teachings.

Our Christ Nature. A typical Unity church blesses children each Sunday with the phrase “I behold the Christ you are.” We do this in recognition of the second Unity principle which states, “Human beings have a spark of divinity within them, the Christ spirit within.” Metaphysically, our Christ nature is another expression of a Divine Idea

and therefore it must have a similar biblical character that expressed the same. That biblical character is Jesus.

However this association we make with our inner consciousness and the biblical character of Jesus is different from all the associations discussed up till now. We are no longer speaking of allegory or metaphysical interpretation. We believe that Jesus was perhaps the first human being to fully express his Christ nature - in a historical sense. Similar to Roger Bannister breaking the four-minute mile, Jesus was the first to achieve a full awareness of his divine nature. This is why we refer to Jesus as our "wayshower." As Emerson said, "he was the first to know the full stature of man." He understood our divine potential. Our ultimate objective in metaphysical bible study is the full expression of the Divine Idea that is our true self - The Christ within.

Appendix – Interpreting the Bible Metaphysically

Interpreting the Bible Metaphysically. The following process was developed and written by Rev. Paul Hasselbeck, Dean, Spiritual Education and Enrichment, Unity Village.

When faced with a change or challenge, many people use the technique of closing their eyes and randomly opening the Bible, pointing to a scripture, and then reading it to find some guidance. Much comfort can be found in simply relating to the story as it is; other times it might not make any sense at all. Knowing how to metaphysically interpret a scripture can add more depth to scripture that is already literally understood and perhaps give meaning to those scriptures that, on the surface, do not make sense. There is an extra bonus too! If a person can metaphysically interpret a scripture, then other books, movies and even songs can be metaphysically interpreted. The possibilities are endless.

Take, for example, the African-American spiritual, “Go Down Moses.” That song, based on Exodus 5:1 is rich in meaning, which might not be fully appreciated initially. Here are some of the words:

Go Down Moses
Go down Moses
Way down in Egypt land
Tell ‘ole pharaoh to
Let my people go!
When Israel was in Egypt land...
Let my people go!

A person randomly selecting these words by the “open-and-pick” method might not get anything useful from the literal understanding of the words. However, a metaphysical interpretation of these words results in a goldmine of meaning.

One method of Metaphysical Bible Interpretation uses a straightforward seven-step process:

1. Center into the awareness of Oneness (meditation or prayer) putting God first; this puts Christ Nature first.

2. Read the passage.
3. Paraphrase using your own words, if necessary, to create a simple framework and flow to the text. At this point all the minute details are not necessary. These may be added later to fill out the interpretation.
4. Place the nouns and pronouns and the action words into a metaphysical interpretation table (see example).
5. Look up the meanings of the words and put them in the table. A useful tool for the names of places and people is the Metaphysical Bible Dictionary, written by Charles Fillmore. Another tool from the Charles Fillmore Reference Library Series, The Revealing Word, gives meanings for more common words such as mountain, river, house, for example. These meanings are a starting point much like the meanings one can find for aspects of dreams. Other meanings of the words might occur to as you go along.
6. Read and/or write down a “clunky” version of the interpretation by simply reading down the interpretation column. Reading the words aloud can be helpful at this point.
7. Refine the interpretation.

In the example of the song, “Go Down Moses,” it really was not necessary to paraphrase the passage as it is pretty simple just as it is. However, a bit more had to be added because some of the information is implied; for example, someone is speaking to Moses. And, who are “my people” in the phrase? Also, since we are familiar with the story, we know that the people are being held captive in Egypt by the Pharaoh.

Noun, Pronoun, Place, Action	Metaphysical Definitions	Reading down the column on the left
[God] (implied)	God Nature Christ Nature Christ Consciousness	Christ Consciousness tells, directs
[said] (implied)	Tells, directs, informs	
Go down		Go down Denial Draw forth Draw out
Moses	The “thou shalt not” side of the Law (denial) Draw forth Draw out	
Way down in		Way down in Material/sense consciousness
Egypt land	Material consciousness (a state of mind based on the belief in the reality of materiality, or things as they appear) Sense consciousness (a mental state that	

	believes in and acts through the senses)	
Tell		Tell long-term ruling thought of material/sense consciousness
'ole pharaoh	Ruler, executive faculty Long-term ruling thought (of Egypt–material/sense consciousness)	
to let	To release	To let, to release, Christ ideas, Spiritual thoughts, true ideas about Being Go.
my people [the people of Israel]	Christ Ideas Spiritual thoughts The thoughts of reality or the true ideas about Being that have to be brought out in every part of man's consciousness.	
go.		

Employing a graph in which key words from scripture are listed (left column) and then given a metaphysical definition (middle column), one can understand these passages with new insight (right column).

To get the “clunky” version, simply read the far right column out loud from top to bottom. Next, try to make some sense of it from your own level of consciousness and understanding. And, this is important: This story—all the characters, places and action—is taking place within your own consciousness! This is the exciting part because you are creating the meaning for yourself that makes the most sense for you. In a way, there is an intersection between the literal words, their meanings, and your state of consciousness. There are metaphysical interpretations of many stories that Unity has published. And, there is not a single right interpretation. The only requirement is that you keep to the story line and its components.

Indirectly, this song based on scripture tells us that spiritual thoughts can be held captive by our material/sense consciousness. This happens simply by what we focus on and give our attention. When the song is metaphysically interpreted it can now be understood as a method of how to release Spiritual thoughts that have become entrapped by material/sense consciousness. In a refined version it can mean something like this:

Use Christ Consciousness to direct the use of denials deep into material/sense consciousness to root out, deny giving power to, an old “ruling” belief that has been holding spiritual thoughts (or true thoughts of Being) captive.

Let’s look at another very familiar example from Matthew 18:20 from *The New Interpreter’s Study Bible, 2003*: “For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.” Many of us have taken much comfort from this scripture that instructs us to gather together in the name of Jesus and, when we do, he will be

there.” Even more meaning and helpful instruction can be gleaned from this scripture when it is metaphysically interpreted. Again, this one really does not need to be paraphrased and like the one from the Hebrew Scriptures, we have to add information. We have to add two or three what—people. And, who is speaking “in my name” and “I” referring to? Jesus Christ.

Noun, Pronoun, Place, Action	Metaphysical Definitions	Reading down the column on the left
Whenever	Whenever	Whenever two or more thoughts are gathered in Christ Nature
Two or three [people]	Two or three thoughts	
Are gathered in	Are gathered in	
My name	After Jesus Christ nature	
There shall	There will	There will Christ Nature Be
I	Jesus Christ	
Be	Be	

Again, read the right-hand column out loud from top to bottom. Then make some sense out of it to create a refined version. It might be something like this:

Whenever two or three Christ-like thoughts come together, Christ Nature is there.

We could refine it even more since we know that Christ Nature is always present; it is just that we have put our attention elsewhere. So, we could say,

Whenever two or three Christ-like thoughts come together, Christ Nature comes into my awareness.

This is very useful information! This is a method of getting out of negative thinking, error thinking, and sense consciousness. The moment we are aware, all we have to do is string together two or three Christ-like thoughts (affirmations) to shift awareness from negative thinking to the awareness of Christ Nature.

Metaphysical Bible interpretation is an effective tool to learn about our own states of consciousness and how to apply Spiritual Truths and Laws in order to rise to a higher state of consciousness. In these two examples it is easy to discern how denials and affirmations can be used to raise to a higher level of consciousness.

Appendix – Course Description

This material is available as a classroom course. The following is information about the *Metaphysical Bible Interpretation – Acts - Revelation* course:

Class Description

Five classes exploring Unity's method of exploring the Bible to open insights into the human soul. This course is aimed to open a new channel of insight into the Bible and the soul using a method known as metaphysical bible interpretation. It will be especially useful for two groups of people: those with no knowledge of the Bible whatsoever and those those who have given-up on the Bible. The class may be taken for credit with the Unity Institute Spiritual Enrichment and Education program.

Taught by Mark Hicks, Licensed Unity Teacher, and a former instructor in Public Speaking and Human Relations for the Dale Carnegie© organization.

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More information at:

<http://www.truthunity.net/lessons/mark-hicks/bible-interpretation-acts-to-revelation>
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