

The Samaritan Institute

at

The Sunshine Cathedral

***The Bible As Allegory**

A Six Week Course

***Course curriculum designed and prepared by**

The Reverend Dr. Durrell Watkins

"The Sunshine Cathedral is a different kind of church where the past is past and the future has infinite possibilities."

Sunshine Cathedral

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The Bible As Allegory
Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins
The Samaritan Institute at Sunshine Cathedral

Required Text: Bible, any translation

LESSON 1

Allegory = ⁽¹⁾ a representation of an abstract or spiritual meaning through concrete or material forms; figurative treatment of one subject under the guise of another; ⁽²⁾ a symbolic narrative (www.dictionary.com)

Spiritual Understandings Symbolized by Certain Phrases in the Bible

(Sources: Rocco Errico's *Treasures from the Language of Jesus* and *Let There Be Light*; Rocco Errico is an expert on Aramaic culture, language and idioms and teaches the bible in light of his understanding of Aramaic, which was the language Jesus spoke)

In Jesus' Name

"For wherever two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there among them." Matthew 18.20

"In my name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will handle snakes; and if they should drink any poison of death, it will not harm them; and they will lay hands on the sick and they will be healed." Mark 16.17-18

"...anything you may ask of God in my name, God will give it to you." John 16.23

Dr. Errico says that to cast out demons means to cure mental illness (a widely held view). He further states that "handle snakes" means to deal with opponents, and that drinking poison without harm means, "they will overcome vicious gossip and attacks against their character." As for the meaning of "in my name," Errico writes:

The Aramaic expression BESHEMI, 'in my name,' means 'in my way, method, or system of doing things.' And to help illustrate the meaning more clearly, let us consider the work of Albert Einstein. By using Einstein's system, his 'formula,' scientists learned how to split the atom. However, scientists do not speak to the atom and say, 'In the name of Einstein: atom, split!' Yet many sincere believers use Jesus' name in this very manner and expect something magical to take place. Sometimes things do happen for those sincere believers. Then again, other people have prayed using Jesus' name and have wondered why nothing happened at all.

Merely saying his name will not bring about the desired results any more than saying the name of Einstein will cause the atom to split. What produces results is practicing and understanding Jesus' 'formula,' or method...The so-called secret of 'Jesus' name,' then, is to realize, to experience, and to understand [what Jesus understood]: THAT GOD...IS A LOVING PRESENCE; AND THAT THIS PRESENCE IS EVERYONE'S SOURCE OF ALL GOOD AND ALL JOY; THAT EVERY INDIVIDUAL IS FULLY CAPABLE OF DEMONSTRATING THE GOOD HE/SHE TRULY ANTICIPATES FROM THAT VERY SOURCE.

From Treasures from the Language of Jesus

The Needle's Eye and a Camel

"...It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter in the kingdom of God." Matt. 19.24

In Aramaic, the word GAMLA, has three meanings: 'a camel,' 'a rope,' and 'a beam.' The proper translation is determined by its context, and in this passage Jesus' reference to 'needle' clearly establishes that context. Interestingly, Eastern women often refer to a very thick thread as a rope.

Among Aramaic-speaking people of the Near East...say, 'When we met, it was like a rope passing through the eye of a needle, '[they mean] 'We had some difficulty seeing eye to eye.'

Jesus in this particular statement taught that the wealthy must learn to share their riches in order to enter the kingdom of God, However, he knew that it would not be easy for many of them to do this. Therefore, he used the term 'rope' to suggest difficulty, and not 'camel' which would imply impossibility.

Treasures...

Son of Man and Clouds of Glory

Jesus is said to have identified himself as "son of man" (a term used in Ezekiel and in the book of Daniel), and in Matthew 26 he tells the High Priest, "from now on you will see the son of man sitting on the right hand of power and coming on clouds in the sky."

The Aramaic term BAR-NASHA, literally translated 'son of man,' means a 'human being,' 'humanity,'...and an ordinary [person]...

'Sitting on the right hand of God' is a figurative expression which signifies 'total power and authority.' As a general rule, the queen is given the seat at the right hand of the king. When the queen is absent, this place is occupied by the princes and [nobles] of the realm as a token of appreciation and great honor.

'Clouds of the sky' is another Aramaic expression which means 'great glory and honor' and 'the highest achievement and success.' Jesus was to be successful even though the [authorities] had intended to put an end to his life.

A paraphrased translation from the Aramaic text would be rendered...: "Jesus said... 'from now on you will see this ordinary person with total power and authority achieving the highest honor.'" In a matter of four or five generations the power and truth of Jesus...spread throughout the world with tremendous authority. His teachings shook the world!

Treasures...

Second Coming

The bible does not speak of 'two' comings, for the proper biblical term is 'the Coming of Christ.' It is interesting that Matthew reports that Christ never left the world [Matt. 28.20]...The powerful, transforming presence and consciousness of the living Christ is always with those who love truth and who practice the simple teachings of Jesus.

Treasures...

Errico also points out that Jesus' disciples asked him, "What is the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" (Matt. 24.3). Errico says that his "coming" is the success of his teachings.

The Aramaic term 'coming' in this passage implies in English 'to come into your own.' The disciples were wondering when Jesus would begin his [political reign]. At that time his disciples did not see or comprehend the spiritual mission of their lord, nor did they realize that his kingdom was spiritual. They reasoned in literal and political terms and understood everything materially, not spiritually. The apostles envisioned themselves reigning in the messianic, political kingdom with their [teacher] as king and themselves as twelve typical Eastern princes with large harems. Because they were very zealous to see King Herod dethroned, Rome defeated, and the messianic kingdom established, they asked Jesus for the sign of his success (coming).

Treasures...

New Tongues

This can mean that early church leaders learned the languages and dialects of the Empire (necessary for spreading their message beyond their remote region), and that such learning would be a spiritual gift implies that God would somehow help them learn these languages easily (at least well enough to communicate effectively).

Dr. Errico also suggests that "new tongues" can have a second meaning.

...in the East when news of peace or a joyful and wonderful declaration is proclaimed, it is often called 'a new tongue' – a loving, peaceful, and gentle message full of hope...

The Apostle Paul also made use of this idiom when he said, 'Thought I speak with the tongues of [humans] and angels, and have not love in my heart, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal' (1 Cor. 13.1)... 'Tongues of [humans] simply means 'common, ordinary speech.' 'Tongues of angels' refers to 'a truthful, sincere language' or 'speech without deceit or deception.'

...Paul [is telling] us that love is what gives a genuine quality to our words and deeds.

Treasures...

Bread of Life

When Jesus speaks of himself as the bread of life, he refers to the...goodness of his teachings, which nourishes the hearts and souls of [humankind], bringing peace, prosperity, and a living, loving relationship with God who is Life Itself.

Let There Be Light

Daily Bread

In the Lord's Prayer, or Model Prayer, or Prayer Jesus Taught Us, there is the phrase "Give us today our daily bread." Bread represents food in general which is a symbol of provision, nourishment, the meeting of basic needs.

The daily bread is a reminder of God's presence which is ever with us and provides for all our needs.

Let There Be Light

Book of Revelation

In *Let There Be Light*, Dr. Errico tells us that the Aramaic word for Revelation is *Giliana* which means vision or dream. "It's root is GLA, which means 'to uncover'...'to show...' Dr. Errico further emphasizes that the visions in the book of Revelation should not be taken literally. "The Eastern imagery used by the author is symbolic representation of spiritual and historical events."

In A Fish

Dr. Errico says in *Let There Be Light* that the story of Jonah is meant to be viewed as a dream (not something that historically occurred). He also writes that in Eastern dream interpretation "a fish symbolizes trouble or sorrow." He continues, "The Semitic idiom, 'to be in a fish,' means 'to be in a quandary or a dilemma'...Our English equivalent to describe Jonah's plight would be, 'He's in a pickle,' 'in a jam,' 'in hot water,' or 'he is in over his head.'" Dr. Errico also

points out that Ninevah (the city Jonah was sent to against his wishes by way of a great fish) is a word derived from the Assyrian fish god, Ninos. One of the Assyrians gods was a fish. The point of the Jonah story is “to reveal the universal presence of God...God wants justice, love and peace for all people.” And so the dream, or vision, or fantasy of Jonah being called to Ninevah and then finding himself transported there by a fish when he tried to refuse is to show that God loves all people and wants all people to live blessed lives. When we don’t share God’s universal vision of goodwill for all people, we find ourselves at cross purposes with the divine will, which is to say, we are in a pickle, or in the belly of a fish!

Assignment – answer the following:

1. Which biblical reflection from Lesson 1 was the most interesting, profound, exciting, or challenging for you? Briefly explain why.
2. Think of a biblical story not mentioned in Lesson 1 and try interpreting it based on some of the information in the lesson.
3. Did you learn something from Lesson 1 that you found empowering or liberating? If so, explain.
4. Using Dr. Errico’s understanding of what “in Jesus’ name” means, re-state the verses at the beginning of this lesson (Matt 18.20, Mark 16.17-18, John 16.23) to reflect what they might mean in light of Dr. Errico’s teaching.

LESSON 2

Spiritual Meanings of Biblical Words

(From the Glossary in Mary Baker Eddy's *Science & Health With Key to the Scriptures*; MBE was the founder of Christian Science)

Notice each word used in a bible verse after the definitions.

Notice how biblical images can have meanings beyond simplistic or literal understandings.

Angels = God's thoughts passing to humanity, inspiration of goodness

*"He had a dream in which he saw a stairway...reaching to heaven, and the **angels** of God were ascending and descending on it."*
Genesis 28.12

Ark = safety

*"So they set out...and traveled for three days. The **ark** of the covenant...went before them during those three days to find them a place to rest."* Numbers 10.33

Babel = a kingdom divided against itself, which cannot stand

*"...it was called **Babel** – because there the LORD confused the language of the whole world."* Genesis 11.9

Baptism = Purification by Spirit, submergence in Spirit

*"Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be **baptized** by John."* Matthew 3.13

Day = the spiritual idea of Truth & Love

*"God called the light **day**..."* Genesis 1.5

Death = an illusion, the lie of life in matter

*"...she prodded him day after day until he was sick to **death** of it."* Judges 16.16

Devil = a lie, error (See also Lesson 3)

*"Then the **devil** left him and angels came and attended him."* Matthew 4.11

Eyes = spiritual discernment

*"Then the **eyes** of both of them were opened and they realized they were naked..."* Genesis 3.7

Fire = affliction purifying and elevating humans

*"There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of **fire**..."* Exodus 3.2

Gethsemane = Love meeting no response but still remaining love

*"They went to a place called **Gethsemane**, and Jesus said to his disciples, 'Sit here while I pray.'" Mark 14.32*

Good = Spirit, omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, omni-action

*"God saw all that had been made and it was very **good**..."* Genesis 1.31

Heart = mortal feelings

*"...let the **hearts** of those who seek the Unnamable One rejoice."* 1 Chronicles 16.10

Heaven = harmony, bliss

*"Creator in **heaven**, hallowed is your name..."* Matthew 6.9

Hell = suffering and self-destruction, self-imposed agony

*"...You travel over land and sea to win over a single convert and when you have succeeded you make them twice as much a child of **hell** as you are."* Matthew 23.15

I AM = God, divine Principle

*"Moses said, 'Here **I am**.'" Exodus 3.4*

Miracle = that which is divinely natural but must be learned humanly

*"God performs...**miracles** that can't be counted."* Job 5.9

Oil = prayer

*"The priest is to pour some of the **oil** into the palm of his left hand and with his right forefinger sprinkle some of the **oil** from his palm seven times before the Divine."* Leviticus 14.26-27

Pharisee = self-righteousness

*"For I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the **Pharisees**...you will certainly not enter the realm of heaven."* Matt. 5.20

Resurrection = material belief yielding to spiritual understanding

*"...they can no longer die for they are like the angels. They are God's children, since they are children of the **resurrection**."* Luke 20.36

Rock = spiritual foundation

*"God is my **rock** and my salvation...I will never be shaken."* Psalm 62.2

Spirit = Divine substance, divine Principle, all that is good, infinite

*"Where can I go from your **Spirit**? Where can I flee from your presence?"* Psalm 139.7

Spirits = hallucinations

*"Do not rejoice that the **spirits** submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."* Luke 10.20

Temple = Body, life, shrine of love

*"I called out to God. From the sacred **temple**, God heard my voice."* 2 Samuel 22.7

Valley = depression

*"...I saw a great many bones on the floor of the **valley**, bones that were very dry."* Ezekiel 37.2

Wilderness = loneliness, doubt

*"God led you through the vast and dreadful **wilderness**..."* Deuteronomy 8.15

Wind = might of omnipotence, encompassing all things

*"Now a **wind** went out from God..."* Numbers 11.31

Wine = inspiration, understanding

*"...drink your **wine** with a joyful heart..."* Ecclesiastes 9.7

Assignment – Answer the following:

1. Do any of the spiritual/symbolic understandings of words listed in Lesson 2 make the words more relevant or useful to you? If so, how?
2. Using the spiritual definitions of each word in Lesson 2, interpret the verses beneath each definition.
3. In the story of the burning bush (Ex. 3), what do you think the following might symbolize:
 - a. The bush that burns but doesn't burn up
 - b. Mount Horeb
 - c. The angel of God's presence
 - d. Holy ground

LESSON 3

Spiritual Meanings of MORE Biblical Words

(From Charles Fillmore's *The Revealing Word*; Charles Fillmore, with his wife Myrtle, founded the Unity School of Christianity)

Notice how biblical images can have meanings beyond simplistic or literal understandings.

Notice how Fillmore's interpretations are similar to and/or different from the interpretations of Mary Baker Eddy and Rocco Errico.

Notice each word used in a bible verse after the definitions.

Adam = Adam was created from the dust of the ground (Gen. 2.7). Dust represents earth or substance. When our spiritual reality (I AM) enters into this substance and makes use of the God ideas inherent in us, we bring forth our innate perfection. "Adam was first perfect as an idea in elemental divinity."

"Adam...felt no shame." Genesis 2.25

Adversary, the = The vain imagination that there could, in reality, be anything opposed to Divine Mind or that could separate us from It. "We find that the various names – Satan, Devil, Adversary, Accuser, carnal mind...all refer to the consciousness that we have built up in our ignorance of our true estate."

*"...The LORD rebuke you **Satan!**..." Zechariah 3.2*

Age = the measurement of the life or existence of a person or thing. It is based on the false concept of time as reality.

*"...what will be the sign of your coming and the end of the **age**?" Matthew 24.3*

Altar = the place in consciousness where we meet the divine.

*"I wash my hands in innocence, and go about your **altar**, HOLY ONE." Psalm 26.6*

Anointing = pouring out of the spirit of love on one who has faith in God.

*"...**anoint** your head, and wash your face." Matthew 6.17*

Antichrist = that which denies or opposes the idea that the Christ dwells in and is the true self of each individual.

*"...the **antichrist** is coming, even now many antichrists have come." 1 John 2.18*

Apostles = those sent forth; [also], active spiritual thoughts: "Christ has twelve powers of fundamental ideas, represented in the history of Jesus by the Twelve Apostles. So, each of us has 12 faculties...to make manifest, to bring out." Jesus apostles (and the spiritual ideas they represent) are: Peter (Faith), Andrew (Strength), James the elder (Wisdom), John (Love), Philip (Power), Bartholomew (aka Nathaniel, Imagination), Thomas (Understanding), Matthew (Will), James the younger (Order), Simon the zealot (Zeal), Thaddeus (aka Jude, Elimination), Judas Iscariot (Conservation of Life).

*"Jesus chose twelve whom he designated as **apostles**." Luke 6.13*

Ass = The characteristics of the ass are stubbornness and persistency. To ride these is to make them obedient to one's will.

*"Balaam was riding upon his **ass**..." Numbers 22.22*

Atonement = the uniting of our consciousness with the higher consciousness (*at-one-ment*)

*"How shall I make **atonement**...?" 2 Samuel 21.3*

Baptism of the holy Spirit = a quickening of the spiritual nature

*"There is one who will **baptize** you with the **holy Spirit** and power." Matthew 3.11*

Bethesda, pool of = represents the realization in consciousness that our life is being constantly purified, healed.

*"Now there is...a pool, which in Aramaic is called **Bethesda**..." John 5.2*

Bible characters = the characters of the bible represent ideas in one's own mind. When this symbolism is understood one can follow the characters in their various movements and thus find the way to solve all one's life problems.

Birth, new = our awakening to a consciousness of our unity with the one universal Spirit.

*"You must be **born again**." John 3.7*

Bless = to call forth good.

*"May God **bless** you and keep you." Numbers 6.24*

Bread = representative of universal substance.

*"Jesus took **bread**, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples..." Mark 14.22*

Camel = symbol of power, endurance, strength, and patient perseverance.

*"John wore clothing made from **camel's hair**..." Mark 1.6*

Candlestick = intelligence, receptacles of spiritual light.

*"...I saw seven golden **candlesticks**." Revelation 1.12*

Christ = the divine idea. Christ abides in each person as potential perfection. The Christ/Messiah/Anointed One is the living principle working in us. (See also Lesson 5)

*"...you are of **Christ**, and **Christ** is of God..." 1 Corinthians 3.23*

Christ in you = the true light

*"**Christ in you**, the hope of glory." Colossians 1.27*

Church = the individual's consciousness is the house of his or her God, and assembled within it are groups of ideas (thought centers).

*"...a radiant **church**, without stain...or any blemish..." Ephesians 5.27*

Communion = sharing the deep aspirations of our heart with the indwelling Divine Presence and listening to the still small voice.

*"...the **communion** of the holy Spirit be with you all. Amen." 2 Corinthians 13.14*

Darkness = ignorance, undeveloped capacity, lack of love

*"The light shines in the **darkness** and the **darkness** can never extinguish it." John 1.5*

Demons = (also devils) negative thoughts which reject the good.

*"...I do not want you to participate with **demons**." 1 Corinthians 10.20*

Egypt = mental bondage

*"The LORD rides on a swift cloud and is coming to **Egypt**..." Isaiah 19.1*

Emmanuel = means "God with us." Represents the consciousness that God is with us and we are one with God.

*"...they shall call the new born **Emmanuel**..." Matthew 1.23*

End of the world = this does not refer to the physical world, but to an era or an age; individually, to the end of a certain state of consciousness. "End of the world" is sometimes translated "end of the age" which gives a clearer meaning of the phrase. The old order of things shall come to an end and pass away; and the new world, the new age will be established.

*"...at the **end of the world**. The angels will come..." Matthew 13.49*

Evil = that which is unlike God; unreality; error thought; negativity; a product of a fallen human consciousness.

*"...deliver us from **evil**." Matthew 6.13*

Fiery furnace = a purifying process, error is destroyed

*"The God that we serve is able to deliver us from the **fiery furnace**." Daniel 3.17*

Fires, tongues of = illumination of thought, demonstration of Spirit's presence and power

*"They saw what seemed to be **tongues of fire**." Acts 2.3*

God's name = representation of wholeness, perfection. God is omnipresent. When we think of God as being anything other than whole, perfect, everywhere fully present we are taking God's name in vain.

*"We will walk in the **name of our God** forever." Micah 4.5*

Grace = good will, favor

*"We have all received **grace**..." John 1.16*

Heal = to bring forth the innate perfection within us

*"...I will **heal** you..." 2 Kings 20.5*

Holy = whole, unimpaired innocence

*"In your strength you will lead your people to your **holy** dwelling." Exodus 15.13*

Incense = symbolizes prayer

*"When anyone brings an offering...They are to pour oil on it and put **incense** on it." Leviticus 2.1*

Lion = courage

*“Saul and Jonathon – in life they were loved and admired, and in death they were not parted.
They were swifter than eagles; they were stronger than **lions**.” 2 Samuel 1.23*

Money = materialization of spiritual substance

*“Dishonest **money** dwindles away, but whoever gathers **money** little by little makes it grow.” Proverbs 13.11*

Ointment = peace, calm, relief, gladness

*“I bathed you with water...and put **ointment** on you.” Ezekiel 16.9*

Prayer = communion with God. Prayer is more than supplication. It is an affirmation of Truth (even Truth that has not yet come fully into consciousness). Here are 7 steps of effective prayer: Recognize God the true Source; Acknowledge oneness with God; let the prayer be “within” rather than directed outward; remain focused on the Good (refuse to focus on negative thoughts or fears or conditions); believe that in God there is all good so as you have prayed in faith you will receive; let go of any unforgiving thought or attitude; release the prayer to God (let go and let God)...

{This 7 step process is a restating of Fillmore’s formula, there are others including:

visualization;

affirmations;

ask-believe-receive;

simply sit in the Silence and trust that all is well;

Recognize God – Acknowledge unity – Deny there is anything that can oppose your good – Affirm your good – Give thanks – Release;

Dr. F. Bernadette Turner's 5 Step Prayer Process: Know you are a Cosmic Being - Listen to Inner Directives - Release Responsibility - Cooperate with Cosmic Forces - Express Gratitude...

There are various other formulas, but all agree that recognizing and trusting the divine presence and believing there is good for us that is already ours by divine right is the effective way to pray...the various formulas are just meant to get us to that trusting and receptive attitude}

*“...God answered our **prayer**.” Ezra 8.23*

Repentance = a change of mind, change of direction

*“In **repentance** and rest is your salvation.” Isaiah 30.15*

Rod = God’s power

*“...your **rod** and your staff comfort me.” Psalm 23.4*

Scribes = thoughts that come to us from the outer world; Spirit inspires from within

*“Your righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the **scribes**.” Matthew 5.20*

Seven = fullness, perfection

*“**Seven** years of great abundance are coming...” Genesis 41.29*

Sheep = pure, gentle, innocent (our true state); positive, good, loving, optimistic, empowering thoughts are sheep (as opposed to stubborn, selfish, fearful, anxious thoughts are goats).

*“Water the **sheep** and take them back to pasture.” Genesis 20.7*

Speaking in tongues = symbolizes increased ability to express Truth clearly and freely.

*“They heard them **speaking in tongues** and praising God.” Acts 10.46*

Spirit = principle of life, divinity as the moving force in the universe, breath of life of all creation, creative intelligence

(See also Lesson 5)

*“The **Spirit**...will give...understanding, wisdom, insight, strength, knowledge, reverence, and goodness.” Isaiah 11.2*

Tithe = literally, “a tenth”; percentage giving to spiritual work as a way of acknowledging God as the source of supply.

*“The **tithe**...belongs to the ETERNAL and is holy.” Leviticus 27.30*

Twelve = metaphysically, twelve refers to spiritual fulfillment.

*“Elijah took **twelve** stones...and built an altar in the name of the Divine.” 1 Kings 18.31-32*

Assignment

How would you spiritually (allegorically) interpret the following passage? Use the definitions provided by Errico, Eddy, and Fillmore to guide your work. Use your own imagination to decide what “desert” and “test” and “40 days” might represent.

“Right away [following his baptism], God’s Spirit made Jesus go into the desert. Jesus stayed there for forty days while the Devil tested him. Jesus was with the wild animals, but angels took care of him.” Mark 1.12-13

Key words: Adversary, Angels, Baptism, Christ, Demons, Devil, Spirit

LESSON 4

Interpreting the Narratives

Notice how biblical images can have meanings beyond simplistic or literal understandings.

Quotations by Ada Fay (Divine Science), R.C. Douglass & Joseph Perry Green (Divine Metaphysics), and Ernest Holmes (Religious Science)

Let's look at this famous saying from **Job 1.21**:

"The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

Dr. Fay says,

This statement has become a fixed formula in many systems of religion. We do not believe the Lord ever takes away anything. Yet was it not better for Job to say that than to complain of God? In a degree that was good, but later he says, "I have uttered things which I understood not." That is one of them.

The Lord is changeless and does not take away. God is always giving, but the turning is on our side, our attitude, the soul's attitude toward God.

D.S. Bible Textbook

{Meister Eckhard once said, "God is at home; it is we who went out for a walk."}

The birth of Jesus (by Ada Fay, author of the *Divine Science Bible Textbook*) – see also Lesson 5

There is something higher than the mystery of Jesus' birth. Imagine someone today becoming conscious that all life is Divine. Mary seems to be the first to whom this Divine revelation came. It came within her own consciousness that the Holy Ghost, Divine illumination, should come to her.

The first necessity of all creation is light, the first creative word was 'Let there be light' [Gen. 1.3]. Every child is a creation, a Divine creation.

Divine illumination came to Mary's inmost consciousness; first the light, understanding, inward illumination, then next 'the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee.'

...The birth of Jesus was a natural birth and Mary was the first who perceived the divinity of it.

...Jesus had no advantage over us from God but from his mother. Mary was a consecrated soul. The divinity is what is born of God and that means every child.

Atonement

Reconciliation, or the reconciling of our thoughts to the consciousness of agreement everywhere between all things, is at-one-ment. Jesus did not make the atonement or at-one-ment, he revealed it. At-one-ment is an eternal verity...

In the light of the at-one-ment, that which was supposed to be 'twain' is seen as one; the veil of separation is 'done away' between God and God's expression and manifestation, between the universal [human-being] as Spirit, and the individual [human-being] as living soul and body. The inner and outer are now known as one; the Spirit and the body now known as one and the sacredness of the body begins to be realized.

D.S. Bible Textbook

Lord's Prayer

Jesus spoke Aramaic. In Aramaic, the Lord's Prayer is a present tense (affirmative prayer):

*Abba which art in heaven,
hallowed is thy name.*

Thy kingdom is come; thy will is done on earth as it is in heaven.

Thou givest us each day our daily bread.

Thou forgivest our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

Thou leadest us not into temptation but doest deliver us from all evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever.

Let's contemporize the language:

Heavenly God, the names by which we know you affirm your goodness. Your presence is here with us and your will for our lives is that we should have a heavenly experience of joy, abundance, and fulfillment. You provide for our every need and you heal our error thinking as we choose to see your light in all people and all creation. You never tempt us to live in fear or to believe in lack or limitation but instead, you offer us the ability to rise above all that is unlike your Truth; for you are omnipresence and all power and the eternal light of life. Amen.

The following allegorical interpretation of a bible passages comes from “Metaphysical Interpretation of the Bible” (a self-study course written by Dr. R. C. Douglass and Dr. Joseph Perry Green):

John 2 – **Wedding Feast at Cana** (Water Turned into Wine)

The individual (Jesus) and ‘the mother of Jesus’ (Divine Feminine) and ‘the disciples’ [twelve powers of mind spiritually interpreted] are at the marriage [completion], that is, the Total Individual with all his [or her] powers, is there, all ‘called’ to the ‘marriage feast.’ This is the soul receiving its highest honors – wedded to the Christ...

There is no quickening-wine for the soul until the Christ appears; without the Christ-Word all remains purely human; and the great Divine Feminine (motherhood spirit) sees the ‘want’ and says: ‘They have no wine.’

...There were ‘six stone jars filled with water’; five of these represent the five-sensed intellect with human conceptions. The sixth contains higher conceptions, called intuitions. At the Word of the Christ, the Eternal Miracle takes place by the alchemy of Divine Mind. In the chemistry of the soul, thought is now quickened with Divine inspiration of a Christly character. There is now established a New Consciousness – the Christly (or Masterful) Consciousness. The quickening power of the Christ in human thought is now the new characteristic of those whose souls are married to the Christ.

As wine imparts a quickening to the human tissues, just so the ‘wine’ of the alchemic Christ quickens with Divine power the whole [person] into a Divine Consciousness, imparting to the physical the glow and beauty of health.

M.I.O.T.B.

*This allegoric...tale
The Gospel’s mission tells and shows the power,
In symbol rites, of Christ in human hearts;
The Universal miracle of Soul;
Where the Spirit changes water into wine,
When the Word of Christ is spoken in the heart.
...As the Spirit inter-permeates the mind,
Transubstantiating its ‘water into wine’...
Here ‘water’ is the tide of human thought;
And ‘wine’ the Cosmic Tincture, the quickening life.
...Christ the Sixth Sense, Intuition flows!
Then quaffs thy soul the nectar of God,
Enduing thee with the Consciousness Supreme,
And all its Wisdom....*

M.I.O.T.B.

New Wine/Old Wine Skins

“No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch will pull away from the garment, making the tear worse. Neither do people pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.” Matthew 9.16-17

Interpretation

In saying ‘no one puts a piece of new cloth on an old garment or new wine into old bottles,’ Jesus was teaching a lesson in religious development. We are continuously living a new life, and when the old and the new do not fit nicely together, the old – being no longer able to contain the new – should be discarded. Continually we must expect new revelations of old truths. We should never lose sight of the fact that the soul is on the pathway of an endless and ever-expanding experience, and that only by expansion can it evolve. This does not mean that we should cast away any good the old has to offer, but that we convert it into a greater good. Accepting the lessons and experiences of the past, and taking the best from everything, we should press boldly forward, looking ever for the Truth, and ever ascending higher and higher into the heavens of reality.

There is no limit to the possibility inherent in all [people]. Let the timid soul put its complete trust in good and press bravely on.

The Science of Mind (Ernest Holmes)

Heirs of God

“The Spirit testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ...” Romans 8.16-17

Interpretation

The inner Spirit, which is God, bears witness to the divine fact that we are the [children] of God...We are heirs to the heaven of reality; joint heirs with Christ. This means that we are all one in Christ as we are one in God. Christ typifies the Universal Son, of which each is an individual member.

Our expectation looks for a more complete manifestation of our own inner divinity. Evolution will bring this about, as it does all things. We are an unfolding Principle of life...We wait for a more complete unfolding of our inner life. It is already within, the perfect way and the eternal Truth.

The Science of Mind

Evil in High Places

“We struggle not against flesh and blood, but against...the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” Ephesians 6.12

Interpretation

Wickedness in high places means an inverted use of the law of righteousness, the misuse of the powers of mind. The mental law is neutral, plastic, receptive and creative. There is a right and a wrong use of this law, just as there is a right and a wrong use of any other law.

The Science of Mind

Assignment – Drawing upon the insights of Errico, Eddy, Fillmore, Fay, Douglass & Green, and Holmes, answer the following:

1. Explain how it might be true that God gives but does NOT take away.
2. Are you encouraged, challenged, or otherwise moved by the idea that the story of Jesus' birth is an allegory for the sacredness of our birth and our lives?
3. Dr. Fay suggests that God gives all to all. So Jesus wasn't given any advantages by God who "shows no partiality" (Acts 10.34) but by Mary's enlightened consciousness. Have you considered that your spiritual growth blesses and benefits others?
4. Do you understand atonement to mean at-one-ment? If so, explain what that means to you?
5. How is the Lord's Prayer different for you when prayed as an affirmation in the present tense?
6. How might the story of turning water into wine represent the evolution of the one who learns to speak as a child of God, turning mundane thoughts into enlivening, spiritual consciousness where divine unity is realized?
7. Does Mary represent the Divine Feminine to you?
8. What else might Mary symbolize?
9. The Apostle Paul says we are the children of God...not step-sons and step-daughters, but the cherished children of God; heirs of all that God is and all that God has, joint heirs with Christ. How does this idea encourage or empower you?
10. Explain "evil in heavenly realms" in terms of misusing our mental powers.

LESSON 5

From Literal to Literary

Notice how biblical images can have meanings beyond simplistic or literal understandings.

Quotations from James Rowe Adams' book, *From Literal to Literary: The Essential Reference Book for Biblical Metaphors*. Adams is an Episcopal priest and the founder and past president of The Center for Progressive Christianity.

Abomination = is the English word used to translate four different Hebrew words in the bible, the most common being *to'evah*. The word is used to describe an object or practice that evokes disgust, loathing, or revulsion. Until the 17th century, the English word contained an "h" (abomination). With the old spelling, the word more closely resembled the Hebrew meaning; it suggested something inhuman.

"People throughout history have used such terms to differentiate themselves from other religious groups or cultures and to show their superiority to them." To'evah appears in Genesis and Exodus describing the attitude of the Egyptians toward the table manners of the Hebrews."

J.R. Adams

"Egyptians could not eat with the Hebrews, for that is an abomination to the Egyptians." Genesis 43.32

Just as the Egyptians wanted to keep themselves distant from the foreigners in their midst, the Hebrew-speaking people attempted to differentiate themselves from the Canaanites among whom they had settled.

"You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination." Leviticus 18.22

"You shall not eat any abominable thing..." Deuteronomy 14.3

"Ahaz...made his sons pass through fire, according to the abominable practices of [other] nations..." 2 Kings 16.3

In the verses we've looked at so far, *To'evah* means something culturally taboo or offensive to the sensibilities of a particular group. Later in scripture, *To'evah* is used not merely to suggest cultural feelings but to suggest a divine attitude toward unethical behavior. For example, Proverbs 3.31-32 tells us that violence, dishonesty, arrogance, and cheating in business are all described as loathsome to God.

"In more recent times, some Christian groups...in order to show their superiority to gay and lesbian people...pick and choose among the practices that were abominations for the Hebrews living among the Canaanites. They may see nothing wrong with wearing silver jewelry with Native American symbols or eating pork, but they denounce love-making between [same-gender loving people]. They often ignore the biblical context of the abominations that had to do with ritual purity rather than with morals."

J.R. Adams

What we find loathsome or revolting (or what we imagine God would find loathsome) is usually the result of cultural conditioning. For example, in the US, many people eat beef, but Hindus in Asia would find that loathsome; Anglicans and Catholics have no problem consuming wine in sacramental rituals, but fundamentalist Christians would find that abominable. In Victorian England, showing arms or legs would have been thought to be abhorrent. What we find acceptable or unacceptable is very much of the result of conditioning and does not mean that what we find distasteful is intrinsically evil. What is evil is an attitude or behavior that oppresses or injures others.

Adam = *adam* can have several meanings. It can be the color red. It can be the name of a mythological character who represents the beginning of humanity. *Adam* can also stand for humanity in general, for men and women (both) of the species. The feminine form of *adam* – *adamah* – means earth or soil. Ancient storytellers would have chosen *Adam* for their character in the creation myth because it can clearly mean earth-beings or the entirety of the human race. *Adam* is a metaphor for all human-beings.

Sometimes Adam and Eve are translated as "the man and the woman" but there are clearer words for man and woman – *ish* and *ishah*. "Nearly always, *adam* appears to mean the whole human race, both male and female." - JRA

In the myth of Adam and Eve (Gen. 2), the whole of humanity is one (*adam*)...there is no gender difference or separation or hierarchy...there is just *adam*. Adam falls into a deep sleep and Eve is created from his rib; so, Adam is created from the earth and Eve from Adam...interconnectedness between man, woman, and planet. The creation myth in Gen. 1 also suggests unity as in that story man and woman are created simultaneously out of no-thing. In any case, the best way to understand *adam* is as a metaphor for the entire human family.

Ascension = *Anabaino*, the Greek word translated "ascend", originally meant to walk upward (ana, up + baino, to walk).

By the time St. Paul employed the term, he could use it in either the original sense of walking uphill or in the metaphorical sense of drawing close to God, whose dwelling place was thought to be above, that is, in heaven...All four of the gospels frequently use the word in the original sense of going upward, but John alone uses the anabaino metaphor to indicate the perception of the disciples that Jesus developed a particularly intimate relationship to God...A story in the Acts of the Apostles, although it does not include the word anabaino, draws a vivid picture of ascension...For a small fee, visitors to Jerusalem can

enter a mosque and see a rock that supposedly bears the imprint of Jesus' foot, the result of the tremendous heat generated by his ascension. Impressive as the achievement of Jesus' ascension may be for some believers, it pales in significance when compared with that of Mohammed who was accompanied by his favorite horse on his direct, physical ascent to heaven. Neither Jesus nor Mohammed was the first in tradition to have gone bodily to heaven. That honor belongs to the prophet Elijah. The Hebrew uses the verb alah, which like anabaino had a variety of uses but generally suggested 'going up.'

J.R. Adams

Christ = English of the Greek *Christos*, a literal translation of the Hebrew *mashiach*, or messiah. Both the Greek and Hebrew mean to anoint with oil, a ritual used for commissioning religious and political leaders. In scripture, Aaron, David, the Persian king Cyrus, and others are anointed to their priestly or royal positions. Christic, messianic, anointed figures are not exactly rare.

At some point, either before or after the death of Jesus, his disciples began to use the anointed metaphor to indicate something about their relationship to him. Some scholars argue that many Judeans were looking for God to commission a new leader, someone like Saul or David, who could lead them to freedom from the oppression of the Roman empire. Others think that those who looked for a new messiah represented only the lunatic fringe of first-century Judean society.

Neither analysis of the evidence, however, explains how the disciples came to regard Jesus as the one appointed by God for their benefit. He made no pretention of functioning as a priest like Aaron. He made no bid for political power like Saul or David. He did not present himself as a conqueror like Cyrus. If the disciples thought of Jesus as a mashiach or christos, they must have experienced in him a freedom different from the kind promised by priests and kings...

People attracted to the life and teachings of Jesus, but who are put off by the Christ and Messiah language, might find the original anointed metaphor useful if they think about Jesus as one commissioned on their behalf. It is as if God appointed Jesus to the role of setting them free from whatever stands in the way of their finding confidence, insight, and direction for their lives.

J.R. Adams

Holy Spirit = the energy, power, or activity of God.

"None of the [biblical] writers...equates Holy Spirit with God. That was a post-biblical development." – JRA

Since early times, "spirit" has often been understood as one of the divine manifestations. Power, wind, breath, life...these are often associated with a divine Reality.

In a world where people believed they were surrounded by spirits, it's not surprising that in time some identified the spirit of God as a spirit of holiness or wholeness, the spirit of infinite goodness.

Holy Spirit is only used about three times in the Hebrew Scriptures, but is used many times in the New Testament.

"Holy Spirit was a such a popular metaphor among Jesus followers that, by the fourth century, many were using the term to refer not simply to an agent of God but to the Lord God of Israel..." – JRA

Over time, the spirit metaphor was applied not only to God but also to Jesus. In 325 CE the doctrine of the Trinity was codified, where divinity was supposed be experienced in/as the God of Israel, in/as the Galilean prophet Jesus, and in/as the agent of divine activity in the world, Spirit. This very non-Semitic understanding of God as three but still somehow one appeared to some as the worship of three gods and this made Christianity vulnerable in some areas to the advances of Islam which preaches a doctrine of absolute monotheism.

"Holy Spirit as a metaphor conveys valuable insights about the way human beings experience God – as an unseen, empowering presence." - JRA

Sin = In both Hebrew and Greek, the word translated "sin" is based on a metaphor taken from hunting, referring to a hunter missing what the hunter was shooting at; the arrow fell short of the target.

Read Proverbs 21.4, Ezekiel 3.21, Romans 6.11, Romans 6.23

Star of Bethlehem = in ancient times stars were thought to be living beings. Belief that stars were intelligent beings, perhaps angels, was present within Christianity until the sixth century. It wasn't until 553 CE that a church council decided that stars were not intelligent beings. In Revelation 1.20, stars and angels are said to be the same, "the seven stars are the angels of seven churches."

"If Matthew had an angel in mind in writing the story about the star, the account makes sense in the context of the time." Rather than a star traveling through the sky and resting just a few feet above a dwelling place, the "star" could be a literary image suggesting a light-being, an angel guided the Magi to the Christ child.

Virginal Conception of Jesus = Of all the stories about Jesus in the entire bible, only twice is Jesus' conception and birth mentioned, and those two stories differ in detail. Matthew and Luke tell the story, and both are written more than 50 years after the birth of Jesus by people who did not witness it.

In Matthew's version, he refers to a prophecy in Isaiah. The story in Isaiah says that a "virgin" will conceive. Isaiah was talking about his own time and not predicting the future.

Additionally, Matthew is using the Greek version of Isaiah that uses the Greek word for virgin, but that word was used to translate the Hebrew word for young woman. In Hebrew, the language Isaiah would have originally be written in, the prophecy is that a young woman will have an important child. Matthew's story of a virgin is based on the wrong Greek word for the Hebrew tale!

The egg cell wasn't discovered until 18th century, so ancient views of reproduction differed very much from our own. They didn't know that each parent contributes an equal number of chromosomes to the child.

Also, ancient heroes were often described as having been conceived in miraculous ways. Buddha was said to be born from his mother's side. Lao Tzu's mother was impregnated by a shooting star and carried him for 80 years! The mother of Alexander the Great was impregnated by a lightning bolt. Miraculous, even divine conceptions were common ways of affirming that great heroes were special from birth and were destined to be great.

Both Matthew and Luke trace Jesus' royal ancestry through Joseph, which indicates that even they might not have taken the virgin conception story literally but were simply making a point about Jesus' significance. One early (and notorious) rumor about Jesus' paternity was that he might have been the product of a Roman soldier forcing himself on Jesus' mother.

The point of the story isn't that God is exempt from the laws of nature (the result of God's own creation), but that life is sacred, birth is a miracle, and no matter what one's human lineage if one knows oneself to be a child of God, he or she is greatly empowered. We are all the child of God and our lives are part of the miracle of creation and are innately holy.

Assignment

Whereas Lessons 1-4 used a "metaphysical" or "spiritual" way of interpreting texts, Lesson 5 uses an Historical-Critical method along with linguistic understandings and Literary criticism. But still, even with the more "scholarly" approach, we see how one word or image can be used to mean something else or to have multiple meanings.

Using all the resources you've been given so far, read Acts. 2.1-4 as an allegory. What are the symbols in the story and what do they suggest?

Lesson 6

Think of the story of Elijah ascending to heaven in a whirlwind.

Think of the story of God giving Moses the Commandments.

Think of the story of the Sermon on the Mount (which was probably never a sermon, but a collection of Jesus' sayings later gathered together and presented as if they had been in a single sermon).

Think of Jesus walking water (and Peter attempting to but then sinking and needing to be helped by Jesus).

Think of the story of the Transfiguration.

Think of the story of Jesus healing the man at the Pool of Bethesda.

Think of the story Jesus sending the demons "Legion" into a herd of swine (remember that "legion" was a military term used by the Roman empire).

Think of the story of Jesus' Last Supper where he says bread and wine represent him and he asks to be remembered.

Think of the story of ravens feeding Elijah.

What do these stories mean to you now as allegories?

What are other biblical stories that have interested you which now may take on new meaning when looked at as allegorical tales?