

confession of particular beliefs or by the metaphysical use of words.²⁰

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These three tenets reflect how Unity has informed my understanding of what it means to be a metaphysical Christian. They establish my consciousness of unity with God, my journey with Christ Jesus, and my expression as a human being.

²⁰ More will be said about the experience of union with God in Insight 11, *From Metaphysics to Mysticism*.

2. *Four Bible Foundations, Metaphysically Interpreted*

Scripture contains stories about life and explanations about those stories. They affect our thinking by embedding themselves in our subconscious minds and filtering how we see the world. Good stories with good explanations lead to good outcomes. Bad stories and/or bad explanations lead to bad outcomes.

The problem we have today in Western civilization is that many stories and explanations in the Bible are poorly formulated for a modern mind. We are well aware of bad stories and explanations in the Bible about the cosmos, the formation of the earth, and human nature; about enslaved people and gay people, government, and the role of women (and men); about sickness and disease, natural catastrophes, commerce and economics and many more things that affect our perception of life.

It wouldn't be a problem if we could walk away from these stories and their explanations, as many people want to do. Phineas Quimby, an early New Thought pioneer and spiritual healer, knew walking away was impossible. He discovered stories could be suppressed, but they will continue to drive perceptions from the unconscious mind.

His solution, a metaphysical solution, was to reinterpret the story and give it a new explanation. We must do the same. If metaphysical Christianity is to

emerge as a new era in Christian history, it must offer new interpretations of scripture.

That is why I am devoting most of my efforts to a project called the Fillmore Study Bible and forming a *Fillmore Bible Society*.²¹ It is also why I hyperlinked the Bible text with the *Metaphysical Bible Dictionary*,²² which has served tens of thousands of inquiries each month for over ten years to Bible students worldwide.

For this credo, I want to look at some of the best-known belief-informing Bible passages we encounter today and see if we might formulate new insights or interpret them in new ways. Why? Because we in Unity have consistently held that there is an essential divine idea behind all things, even behind scriptures that may be difficult to comprehend.

Bible scholar Marcus Borg has identified four phrases used most often by St. Paul in his letters.²³ These phrases appear hundreds of times in the New Testament. Most people know them well. You will likely recognize each phrase and have already formulated some interpretation of what they mean. Here are those four phrases, along with how a metaphysical Christian might interpret them in light of a modern understanding of God.

1. "Jesus is Lord": Oneness in God-Mind.

The phrase most commonly used by Paul is "Jesus is Lord." Paul's mission was not just converting Jews or

²¹ Fillmore Study Bible: <https://www.truthunity.net/fillmore-study-bible>

²² *Metaphysical Bible Dictionary*: <https://www.truthunity.net/mbd>

²³ Marcus Borg; *Reading the Bible Again For the First Time*, pp. 243-58.

Gentiles but all of Rome, for Rome symbolized to Paul a world order that could not stand in the light of the new world order (of oneness) established by Christ. The metaphysical equivalent of challenging Rome is challenging the reign of the personal will and the intellect (or understanding) in consciousness.

Rome had a "metaphysic." It was a metaphysic of the will, or, as I call it, "Godless Metaphysics." There is nothing wrong with metaphysics, but there is a big difference between the *Godless Metaphysics* of Rome and the *Christian Metaphysics* of Paul.

Godless Metaphysics is about the supremacy of personal will and "might makes right." Godless Metaphysics may have found its way into some aspects of New Thought or even contemporary politics,²⁴ but it's not the metaphysics I know. *Christian Metaphysics* is not about "might makes right"; instead, it is about establishing a moral order in one's life and society based on Oneness in God-Mind and aligned with a Christ-like moral order. An example is Martin Luther King's 1963 warning to *make straight in the desert a highway for God because ... the glory of the Lord shall be revealed*.²⁵

2. "In Christ": Free Flow of Divine Ideas.

Another commonly used phrase by Paul is "in Christ" and "in the Spirit." Marcus Borg says these terms are

²⁴ Godless Metaphysics. <https://www.truthunity.net/the-human-side-of-unity/godless-metaphysics>

²⁵ *Isaiah 40:3-5 Tell Them About The Dream*. <https://www.truthunity.net/mbsg/isa-40-tell-them-about-the-dream>

synonymous and convey Paul's "vision of the Christian life." Throughout his writings, Paul contrasts life "in Christ" or "in the Spirit" with life "in Adam" or "in the flesh." We have nearly 2,000 years of interpretation to tell us what Paul might have meant. What might it mean for a modern, metaphysically oriented person today? Here is how I contrast being in the Spirit to being in the flesh.

I start with Eric Butterworth's well-known phrase of being "in the flow of life."²⁶ And I continue with Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's study of what it means to be "in a state of flow."²⁷ Both men understood flow as a metaphor for life itself and being in a state of flow as a modern understanding of our quality of life. Flow can be open or constricted. When flow is opened — by spiritual understanding, faith, or love — we experience life. When flow is constricted — by doubt, shame, guilt, or oppression — we experience death.

We might ask, The flow of what? For the metaphysical Christian, what flows are divine ideas. A life lived "in Christ" or "in the Spirit" results in the flow of divine ideas from God-Mind into human consciousness. Let me share two passages from metaphysical Christian literature that describe the opening and constriction of divine ideas and how they give life.

The opening of the flow of divine ideas is, for the metaphysician, our source of well-being, health, and prosperity. Charles Fillmore writes in *Christian Healing*,

²⁶ *Eric Butterworth Speaks: Essays on Abundant Living* #7. <https://www.truthunity.net/pubs/eric-butterworth/eric-butterworth-speaks/1975-09-14>

²⁷ *8 Ways To Create Flow According to Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi*. <https://positivepsychology.com/mihaly-csikszentmihalyi-father-of-flow/>

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.²⁸

This opening is what it means to be alive in Christ. Charles said divine ideas are our inheritance from God.²⁹ Is "in the flow" the same as "in Christ"? It was for Charles, whose favorite Bible passage was Paul's declaration to the Colossians: "Christ in you, your hope of glory."³⁰

The constriction of the flow of divine ideas leads to death, metaphysically speaking. For the metaphysical Christian, the most common cause of constriction is judgment. Why? Because judgment, known as "compensation" for the metaphysician, is an immediate and absolute constriction or tightening of our soul that prevents the flow of divine ideas from God-Mind. Here is how Ralph Waldo Emerson explains it in his essay, *Divinity School Address*:

²⁸ Charles Fillmore, *Christian Healing*, p13. <https://www.truthunity.net/books/christian-healing-7-17#13>

²⁹ *Revealing Word*. Metaphysical meaning of inheritance. <https://www.truthunity.net/rw/inheritance>

³⁰ Colossians 1:27. <https://www.truthunity.net/web/colossians>

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 Providence to himself, dispensing good to his goodness, and evil to his sin. Character is always known.³¹

The opening of the flow of divine ideas in our soul sets our state of being “in Christ” or “in the Spirit.” Conversely, the constriction of the flow of divine ideas in our soul leads to what Paul calls life “in the flesh” or “in Adam.” For the metaphysical Christian, we understand life and death as related to the presence of divine ideas. We experience a life “in Christ” or “in the Spirit” as an eternal flow of divine ideas.

3. “Justified by Grace Through Faith”: Perfect Expression.

The third great theme of Paul’s writings is “justification by grace through faith,” which Paul places in sharp opposition to “justification by works of the law.” Both these terms have the word “justification” — they speak to how we explain our behavior.³² So what Paul is talking about is behavior, what metaphysical Christians would call expression.

³¹ Emerson’s *Divinity School Address*, Metaphysically Interpreted, Emerson’s Ethics (4-7). <https://www.truthunity.net/people/ralph-waldo-emerson/divinity-school-address-4-7>

³² I will have much to say about justifications and our behavior in Insight 23, *Seeing the Christ in Others*.

Paul’s statements seem to ask, Why is it that we can sometimes act in compassionate ways and at other times treat others with contempt and disregard? Or, metaphysically speaking, why do we sometimes express in godlike ways and sometimes in a less than human way?

The metaphysical answer is that sometimes we act according to faith, and sometimes we act according to willpower. Acting according to willpower is what Paul knew as “works of the law.” According to Paul, willpower is never sufficient to express our Christ nature fully. The problem with the will is that it cannot perceive our oneness with God nor the reality of divine ideas.

Acting according to faith is what Paul referred to as “justification by grace through faith.” Paul realized that our faculty of faith, which can perceive oneness with God and the reality of divine ideas, enables us to express our divine nature fully.

One important point. Christians have disagreed for a long time about how we are “made right with God,” which is known as justification. Some argue that we are justified by our good works of charity to others, and some say that we are justified by the grace of God, regardless of the works we may do. The metaphysical Christian answer to this argument is that we are justified by “works of consciousness.”³³

Works of consciousness are what we do to raise our consciousness to a higher level where the Holy Spirit can pour its inspiration upon us. We do this by thinking

³³ I thank Tom Thorpe for introducing me to this metaphysical Christian understanding of how we are justified.

about things that are true, honorable, just, pure, and lovely.³⁴ We do this by spending time in Silence, sprinkling our everyday thoughts with affirmations and denials, and blessing people with words of praise.

4. “Christ Crucified”: Metaphysical Freedom.

You might have noticed that the three phrases mentioned above are related to the grand meta-narrative of Metaphysical religion: Mind (Jesus is Lord), Idea (In Christ), and Expression (Justified by Grace).³⁵ As crucial as these phrases are, another phrase is perhaps even more critical. That phrase is “Christ crucified.” People today, particularly in the Western church, seem to be obsessed with the crucifixion of Jesus.

How does a metaphysical Christian talk about the crucifixion? How is it different from what mainstream Christians typically say? Traditional Christians have a variety of answers. Sometimes they blame themselves: Jesus was a scapegoat for our sins; God so loved us that he sacrificed his only son for us. Sometimes they blame others: it was the oppression of the Romans or the spiritual blindness of the Jews. None of these answers are (metaphysically) true nor helpful for modern-day metaphysical Christians.

We get a glimpse of the meaning Paul placed on the crucifixion of Jesus in the following well-known passage from Galatians:

³⁴ Philippians 4:8. <https://www.truthunity.net/web/philippians#4>

³⁵ See Insight 8 for more about Mind, Idea and Expression.

I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I that live, but Christ living in me. That life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me (Galatians 2:20, WEB).³⁶

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

These things point to one inescapable conclusion: the path to declaring “Jesus is Lord!” (God-Mind), the path to a life “in Christ” (ideas), and the path to “justification by grace through faith” (expression) is the path of spiritual rebirth, which only occurs by being crucified with Christ.

Metaphysically, crucifixion is our experience of what it feels like to let go of error thinking or some cherished aspect of our personality to unfold more of our spiritual potential. Paul writes in his letter to the Romans,

I urge you, brothers [and sisters], by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service. Don't be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what is

³⁶ Galatians 2:20, *World English Bible*. <https://www.truthunity.net/web/galatians#2>

the good, well-pleasing, and perfect will of God (12:1-2, WEB).³⁷

There is perhaps no other passage in all of Paul's letters where he so clearly reveals his metaphysical understanding of the sacrifice of Christ. Paul believes we are a living sacrifice, not for the forgiveness or penalty of sin, but rather for escaping from sinful living.

Our mind is where we establish our unity 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.

3. *Why Truth Transcends Culture*

Phil White says culture is a formative factor in belief because no one can escape sharing in their culture's mentality or "climate." Further, culture is foundational in ministry because when we put our beliefs into words so that we might share them with others, "we inevitably must use a language that is the product of our culture if we are to be understood."

What is often forgotten is that our churches have a culture. It is most evident in the way it shapes how we comprehend Truth. A mistake people in Unity often make today is assuming that we all arrive at Truth in the same way. Because Truth is universal and unchanging, we believe that the way we come to know Truth is also universal and unchanging. But that is not so. The Truth we come to know may come to us in at least three ways:

1. For Traditionalists, Truth is REVEALED.

For traditionalists,³⁸ Truth is revealed — by the church or the Bible, through intuition, as taught by the

³⁷ Romans 12:1-2, WEB. <https://www.truthunity.net/web/romans#12>

³⁸ *Traditionalists*. Based on Greek philosophy (Plato), traditional worldview emphasizes esoteric ideas emanating from a divine Mind. What distinguishes the traditional worldview is recognition of a dimension of Reality perceived by intuition, beyond the physical world perceived by the senses. This worldview dominated western thought in the first 1,000 years of Christianity. Traditional values include a conviction that some things are True and that some practices are wrong. These values are deeply illustrated in Catholic social teaching.