

services, repeatedly, until we find the perfect fit for our own private world of self.

How to avoid solipsism.

One final point. I said above that the most important thing one can say about revelation is that it needs to be processed in some form with others, particularly with a religious community, if what drives one's solipsism is extreme idealism. That is true, but the religious community must not be solipsistic itself.

Many metaphysical communities have embraced the importance of diversity and inclusion, notably Unity. That's wonderful. But true diversity is more profound than racial, gender, and ethnic inclusivity. All races, genders, and nationalities have traditional, modern and postmodern individuals. And I am concerned about the marginalization of those with traditional views in Unity today.⁴⁷ We need religion to "bind us together" as a faith community for social justice and to avoid solipsism.

⁴⁷ I will say more about that in Insight 6, Experience, and Insight 21, Prayer Services. A deeper look at how we marginalize others is in *Seven Ways Unity is Not Nearly as Inclusive as We Think*: <https://www.truthunity.net/the-human-side-of-unity/the-biggest-mistake-people-in-unity-are-making-today>.

5. *The Problem with Reason*

Reason is the second internal factor that shapes our religious beliefs. While reason is a human faculty as ancient as humanity, it seemed to flower in many world cultures during the classical era. For those of us in the West, that flowering has come to us in classical Greek and Roman teachings, which are the foundation of our understanding of mathematics, medicine, government, music, architecture, and rhetoric. Metaphysical Christianity draws deeply from these teachings.

Reason did not become an authority in our religious understandings until the Age of Enlightenment in the 18th century. At that point, our understanding of the cosmos shifted from what was revealed by the church to what was discovered by rational thought.

The Enlightenment brought unimagined human progress, primarily through what we know as liberal democracy. Liberal democratic ideas emerged from a desire to overcome the devastation of the religious wars in Europe that followed the Reformation. Looking for a solution to endless religious wars, political philosophers found a workable philosophy of government that could accommodate religious diversity. That philosophy is liberal democracy. It is the foundation of our American system of government.

Liberal democracy recognizes and protects a *lower* standard of human consciousness, based on the *rational* pursuit of happiness rather than adherence to a higher

standard of *revealed* truth. *Within reason*, one has a right to free speech, privacy, and other liberties. By lowering the standard of acceptable belief and behavior, a liberal democracy hopes that diverse people will live peacefully and work constructively for greater prosperity.

At the time this is being written (the early 2020s), problems with our liberal democracy have led to profound social divisions, at least in the United States. I hope this insight explains how metaphysical religion has contributed to these problems and offers some perspective for a way forward.

What is Essentialism?

If you or I were unconsciously harboring thinking patterns that were causing us to stereotype people of different nationalities, races, and physical characteristics, and if the cause of those thinking patterns was rooted in a feature of our particular kind of Christian tradition (Metaphysics), would you be interested in knowing more? I'm sure you would, just as I would. That is why my heart sank when I first encountered the term *Essentialism*.⁴⁸

Essentialism is basically about stereotyping things — attributing to them qualities that are “permanent, unalterable, and eternal.” Once we apply a stereotype to a person, place, or thing, it is separate, categorically different. When applied to our human family, whatever sense of oneness we may desire is gone.

⁴⁸ *Essentialism: How We Stereotype People*. <https://www.truthunity.net/the-human-side-of-unity/essentialism-how-we-stereotype-people>

“Essentialism is the view that every entity has a set of attributes necessary to its identity and function,” says Wikipedia.⁴⁹ Wikipedia continues, “In early Western thought, Plato’s idealism held that all things have such an ‘essence’ — an ‘idea’ or ‘form.’” The essence of ideas is how they play out in life expression. So for an essentialist, the key to understanding life is to know the essential idea behind each life expression.

Many of you will immediately recognize essentialism as the foundation of Greek metaphysics. Early Christianity picked up Greek metaphysical notions as Christianity spread through the Mediterranean world. Much of the influence of metaphysics on Christianity diminished over time. But metaphysical expressions of Christianity, like Unity, have melded metaphysical concepts into our understanding of Christian theology.

Like it or not, because we are metaphysicians, we find ourselves susceptible to essentialism. That can cause problems. Here is an example.

How the wheels come off with Essentialism.

Charles Darwin first recognized that, genetically, there are no “races” within the human species. He understood that essentialism blinded western society to what race is — a social categorizing of people based on what we would call in metaphysics “appearances.” His observation of the diversity of life revealed to him that there are no clear boundaries of when black becomes brown, brown

⁴⁹ Wikipedia: *Essentialism*. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Essentialism>

becomes yellow, and yellow becomes white. It was not until Darwin understood the diversity of life that we could break free from stereotyping people according to physical traits.

Does racial stereotyping of the human race occur in Christian metaphysics? Turn to your *Metaphysical Bible Dictionary* and look up two of these essential “ideas” or “forms” — Ethiopia and Cush — two biblical names for sub-Saharan Africa. You will find there the following:

(1) Ethiopia — “burned faces” *Meta*. The darkened or material thought in which man has held his body and its activities—the seemingly mortal, physical part of himself—as opposed to the Truth; also the result in his body of this error thinking. (2) Cush — “firelike; burned; blackened; combustible” *Meta*. Ham typifies the physical in man, in its very biased, material, sensual expression. The physical has always been looked upon as material and void of intelligence and spirituality. It has been in darkness, and has been given over to ignorance and sensuality, with corruption as its ultimate state. Cush represents this darkened thought in which man has held his body and its activities—the seemingly mortal, physical part of himself.⁵⁰

These entries are disturbing, to say the least. I will leave interpreting them up to you. But my point is that because of its rootedness in essentialism, metaphysics (Christian

⁵⁰ *Metaphysical Bible Dictionary: Ethiopia*: <https://www.truthunity.net/mbd/ethiopia>, Cush: <https://www.truthunity.net/mbd/cush>

and Greek) is highly susceptible to prejudiced and untrue characterizations of people, places, and things.

Godless metaphysics and Christian metaphysics.

There is, fortunately, a fundamental difference between godless Greek metaphysics and Christian metaphysics.⁵¹

Godless Metaphysics. For the Greeks, the basic foundation of Reality (all that is) is not God, nor matter, but Ideas (capitalized as foundational spiritual entities). Ideas contained the “essence” or “pattern” of Life Expressions. Underlying all things we may see in the material world is a spiritual essence that shapes its character. Ideas, or essences, are the basic foundation of Reality.

Metaphysics, as originally understood by the Greeks, is non-theistic. There were gods in Greek philosophy, but they were little more than super-humans. They certainly were not part of the foundational structure of Reality. The lesser gods might have tried to shove around Ideas for their benefit, just like you and I might do, but they could not create them, and they could not transform them into anything but a different expression of the same essential nature.

So the Greek kind of metaphysics is not Judeo-Christian. It’s godless or, as we euphemistically call it today, non-theistic. Because Greek metaphysics is non-theistic, it declares that an immaterial divine *idea*, the basic foundation of reality, leads to the *expression* of

⁵¹ *Godless Metaphysics*. <https://www.truthunity.net/the-human-side-of-unity/godless-metaphysics>

something we know through the senses. To summarize, the meta-narrative is *Idea leads to Expression* or, more formulaic, *Idea -> Expression*. Non-theistic metaphysics exists right now in our individual lives and our culture. That is a real problem for we who look to and teach metaphysics for understanding and authority in religious beliefs.

Christian Metaphysics. The Jewish and Christian faiths brought into consciousness the notion of a transcendent, loving, and moral God. And it was Plotinus, who lived shortly before Augustine, who connected that loving Mind of God to Christian metaphysics.

Christian metaphysics brings God into the metaphysical formula. Christian metaphysics is theistic, and the meta-narrative is *Divine Mind -> Idea -> Expression*. This revised meta-narrative says that the mind of God is the first cause of all things. God-Mind emits divine ideas, which are manifested as Life Expression according to the character of our thinking, speaking, and actions. That is the basis of Christian metaphysics.

The problem with Godless Metaphysics.

What happens when Christian metaphysics becomes non-theistic metaphysics? With non-theistic metaphysics, God-Mind is supplanted by human-mind, reducing the supernatural meta-narrative to the interplay of Divine Ideas and Life Expression without the guidance of God-Mind. Then the human mind is in charge and since all the human mind can do is shove things around,

Divine Ideas become objects for manipulation. There is perhaps no better argument for abandoning godless metaphysics today than the tragedy of climate change. We have been shoving things around in our world for far too long.

Another problem with godless metaphysics is the absence of grace in the *Law of Mind Action*. Mind Action is godless because it causes an effect according to our (human) thinking, leaving God out of the equation. But, as Ed Rabel noted in his 1961 Lenten Lecture, grace transcends cause and effect.⁵² Grace is a quality of law that does not depend on our state of consciousness. Rather it depends upon Grace — God's never failing love and understanding.

How an idea becomes an ideal.

The fundamental problem with all this is hypocrisy. The church has not lived up to its radical claim of equality.

Nor has our country. Hypocrisy also exists in our American society, its government, and the government's founding documents, the Declaration of Independence, and the Constitution of the United States. Our country was founded by men who declared that all men are created equal, but the same men went on to create a form of government that ignored what is evident to us today. You don't need me to explain how.

⁵² *The Grace of God — A Lenten Lecture by Ed Rabel.* <https://www.truthunity.net/people/ed-rabel-the-grace-of-god>

So what do we do when our history contrasts with the ideals of the Metaphysical Bible Dictionary and our democratic government?

My answer came when I read a short passage in a long-since-forgotten magazine named *Clear Horizons*, published by Glenn Clark's Macalester Publishing company from 1940 to 1962. At some point, I will post the full article, named *The Prayer that is Always Answered* (Winter, 1953-1954).⁵³ But let me quote the first five paragraphs:

WE SEE facts with our eyes; we see ideas with our minds; we see ideals with our souls. Whatever we see with our souls is real and permanent and cannot be destroyed.

An idea is a mere figment of the brain, something that today is and tomorrow has passed away. It has no roots, no reality. But see an idea in all its entirety, in all its interrelations with all other ideas, then breathe into it the life of love, and behold, it ceases to be an idea and it becomes an ideal.

The only apparent difference, as far as looking at the two words is concerned, rests in the fact that one word has the letter "I" and the other does not. The letter "I" is a simple letter, the twelfth in the alphabet, and by its addition to the word "idea" it changes it to a five letter word. It seems a very insignificant change, but if I were a believer in the meaning of numbers I would be inclined

to say that four is symbolical of the beginning of a new thing, a new idea, a new era, but that five is symbolical of its fulfillment.

But whatever way we try to explain it, this is a fact: that a man will not spend two minutes over an idea, while he will fight for an ideal, will let his life be governed by it, and if need be, will die for it. Ideas do not often come into manifestation, while ideals always do. We see facts with our eyes, ideas with our minds, and ideals with our souls.

By the mere act of converting an idea into an ideal by seeing it whole, and in its proper relationship with all other ideas, and by breathing love into it, we have lifted it into a place where God can take it and grasp it and bring it to pass. That is prayer in its highest sense. That is the kind of prayer that is always answered.

That all men are created equal is an idea. As Glenn Clark asserts, few people will fight for an idea, and most ideas never become manifest. But with the addition of Love, an idea becomes an ideal, something that is not only manifest but also governs our life.

I learned from Glenn Clark that the best we can inherit from any person, writing, church, or government are good ideas. But when we apply the power of Love, we may be able to not only proclaim but also to express in our life that all people are created equal.

How do we apply the power of Love?

First, we must release our judgments, particularly of those we perceive as having a *lower* standard of human

⁵³ *Finding Truth in Inflammatory Scripture*. <https://www.truthunity.net/mbsg/ephesians-5-finding-truth-in-household-code-scripture-passages>

consciousness. The wars of religion that followed the Protestant Reformation were among the bloodiest in human history. They were caused by intolerance of differences in human consciousness. There is no room for spiritual elitism in a liberal democracy.

Second, as Charles Darwin recognized, we must recognize our tremendous diversity. Just as there are no clear boundaries of when black becomes brown and brown becomes yellow, and yellow becomes white, there are also no clear boundaries when traditionalists become moderns and moderns become postmodern. Nor are there clear boundaries of when Republican becomes Independent and Independent becomes Democrat. It is all too easy and dangerous for us to fall into the trap of essentialism and stereotype people.

Third, we must declare that no human qualities are “permanent, unalterable, and eternal.” People change; they constantly change, and so do cultures and governments. What we learn from the Metaphysical Bible Dictionary entries is what appears to be true today might not be any more than our prejudice. And even if it is true today, it might not be true tomorrow. Love changes things and will change people too, but only if we are open to their transformation.

Fourth, we must allow God-Mind to be the first cause and always be open to the possibility that grace transcends cause and effect. We must resist being godless metaphysicians. We must quit shoving things around. We must put some trust in the idea that God is in charge.

Finally, we must not blame Thomas Jefferson or Charles Fillmore for the state of our current society and government. It is our task, as it is the task of each new generation, to apply the love necessary to bring the *idea* of mind up to the *ideal* of soul and thereby align facts with our highest aspirations.