

THE BIBLE IS WRITTEN IN THE LANGUAGE OF DREAMS

A LOOK AT THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A LITERALIST AND
METAPHORICAL INTERPRETATION OF SOME OF THE MORE WELL
KNOWN PARTS OF THE BIBLE

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INTRODUCTION

Against the Literal

I spent a lot of my early twenties dismantling the literal interpretations of the bible. Arguing against them brought me to some of the most absurd and illogical conversations I've ever had. The amount of contradictions one runs into is astonishing and the cognitive dissonance it requires to maintain such a worldview is jarring if not outright frightening at times.

At some point though, it dawned on me that there is just no way this is meant to be a literal and historically accurate truth. It's too clunky, absurd and contradictory that way. It *must* be symbolic, like a dream.

After a dream you don't wake up thinking, "*Oh my god, I did some crazy things last night, I drove a car that wasn't mine, I'm going to have to report myself to the police but I can't remember where I left it!*" If you're into dream interpretation, you recognise that you interpret the symbols of the dream, the metaphors of the dream, to discern a deeper meaning.

It seems the subconscious lives metaphorically rather than literally. This makes a great deal of sense, as this way, entire concepts and deep insights into oneself can be condensed into a single two-second scene. Perhaps we can view the bible as containing rich, layered information through this same means of interpretation.

THE DREAMING BIBLE

Original Sin

When Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, they were punished by God with banishment from paradise, painful childbirth, toiling in the fields, and lives of hardship.

Seen literally, this is a terrible parent figure tempting two innocent beings, and then punishing them for the rest of their lives for learning. This is hardly an enlightened narrative.

Metaphorically however, this is the story of humankind living in the blissful ignorance of infancy, protected from suffering. Then, as the human ages and becomes curious, it learns of good and evil. When this distinction is made, life becomes a battle between the two. There is preference, resistance, efforting rather than ease, and the blissful ignorance and safety of the 'childhood

paradise' is left behind forever. One cannot go back to that same innocence once the knowledge has been obtained.

The metaphor of the punishing parent is a meta-commentary in a way, as the metaphor is framed from—and read through—the perspective of the infant. The suffering that comes from knowing good and evil appears like a punishment from the point of view of the child, taught by its parents or elders; the world at large.

Human Development

This 'original sin' is then no 'sin' but simply an inevitability of the human condition. It is the 'inciting incident' as they say in storytelling, as it sparks the beginning of the journey of self-realisation. Hence why it is at the beginning of a spiritual book. Even in Genesis 1 when God is 'making' the world, it follows a regular pattern of childhood development.

“...the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters”—*Genesis 1:2 (NIV)*

This could be interpreted as the latent consciousness of the baby in the waters of the womb.

...separated the light from the darkness...—*Genesis 1:4 (NIV)*

Baby humans can't distinguish objects initially, but first learn to distinguish light and dark [\[1\]](#)

Eventually we age into an understanding of time,

...signs to mark sacred times, and days and years—*Genesis 1:14 (NIV)*

and the naming of animals and plants, freedom to eat from the bounty of nature, the trees and the fruits; we are describing the maturation of a child.

Skipping forward a little, we reach the Garden of Eden metaphor. The rite of passage that is the full awakening to suffering and the beginning of the journey back to where we began: blissful paradise, “The Promised Land”.

This time though, the idea is to return in full knowledge of good and evil, not ignorance. This is the arc for the main character: The Human Being.

Jesus as Resolution

The Old Testament now reads like a set of conversations about the human condition through time. Each symbol in each story representing a point of maturity in the dream of life. Then the New Testament comes as an attempt to round off that story with the final chapter.

“All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had said through the prophet...”—*Matthew 1:22 (NIV)*

To *fulfil*, to complete the story, the arc, of the human. The Old Testament leaves it on somewhat of a cliff-hanger in Malachi, a promise of salvation, but no salvation. Jesus is the personification of the resolution.

The Second Awakening

The first awakening was into suffering, the second is into the bliss of unity with and as God. This is marked with a transcendence from the parent-figure image of a god born from the innocence of the child, into an all-encompassing totality, a God that is eternal and ever-present in everything and everyone:

Is it not written in your Law, ‘I have said you are gods’?—*John 10:34 (NIV)*

says Jesus, quoting [82nd Psalm](#) (which is a wonderful bit of poetry in KJV):

I said, “You are gods; you are all sons of the Most High”.—*Psalm 82:6–7 (NIV)*

and of course,

“Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, **the kingdom of God is within you.**”—*Luke 17:21 (KJV)*

This awakening into God as self is the same spoken about all across the East, it is awakening to the Buddha already present in the self, it is the Brahman that is the entirety of all that is, it is the foundation of Zen, it is the Original Face of God.

Then, there is the ‘test’; as, after awakening, Jesus is confronted by the suffering he claims to have transcended. He is tortured and put to death. Will his understanding remain, or will he give it all up in the face of suffering? Does he believe, does he really know, does he really live from the place he preaches to others?

He demonstrates this human maturation clearly and profoundly as he stares into the face of the injustice of his punishment and death itself and says,

...Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.—*Luke 23:34 (KJV)*

This is a cry to all to forgive the ignorant. They are asleep to the truth of God/themselves and so are suffering. Jesus, simple son of man, is God incarnate. God is here not as some ethereal being met in death, but is present in humanity's living self-realisation, represented in the narrative as the symbol of Jesus.

The Character Arc

The arc of both testaments may be simplified like this:

- The blissful ignorance of a child.
- The suffering knowledge of the adult.
- The blissful realisation of the self from within the knowledge of suffering.

Closing Statement

I hope this has given either a different or (I hope) a richer perspective on this spiritual text that has been vilified, glorified, changeably interpreted, used as a political tool, as an excuse for war, and it seems by now, almost everything else.

I don't subscribe to any particular belief system, I just seek truth and a holistic understanding of reality. It seems to me that there is more wisdom in the world if we allow ourselves to be unshackled from the literal, and instead swim in the metaphorical.

Only Love,

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