

Every community that survives and thrives does so partly because it succeeds in positive and negative self-definition: "we" and "they" are conceptually, emotionally, socially discrete, separate, perceptible and lived in the member's hearts and lives. I see Transcultural Allegories as one more tool and technique for achieving and maintaining both of these communal needs. As a Christian, I see in this "TA" a potential for involving adults and children in experiencing the haggadic roots, the process of converting raw experience into celebrated-and-lived meaning-story; and as a biblical scholar, I am experiencing this TA as a way of leading my students, as whole persons rather than just as heads, into the Story so that in a fresh way it becomes *their* Story, as in Pesach-Easter they re-experience, re-present, and so appropriate Exodus and Resurrection, the primordial biblical events of "challenge/response" [Toynbee], "correlation" [Tillich], and liminality-communitas "antistructure" [Victor Turner]. *Simultaneously and in the same process of acculturation to one's own tradition*, I am experiencing this TA as opening "the faithful" to the working of God outside the heritage community: this TA is "ecumenical" in the broadest sense, viz. the *human-humane* tradition....To come at the same conviction from another angle, what we need now in religious education is tools and processes that synergize two sets of values, viz. the communal and the universal. [To symbolize this, for some decades I've called myself "orthodox open" and "evangelical radical."] The dysfunctional extremes are a paranoid tribalism we can no longer get volunteers to teach, and a vacuous globalism too romantic to relate to daily realities and therefore insufficiently motivating for teacher or student. But when the two sets of values converge, as I'm experiencing them as doing in the use of this TA, the paradox is that it's easier to get and hold teachers because *in one process* they can say yes to both their roots and their hopes, and can therefore--without confusion and embarrassment and doubt--"push" both the negative and the positive self-definition of the faith community....Now for a few group procedures using this TA:

**PROCEDURE A:** The "actors" [=those presenting the Allegory] learn and rehearse the Allegory before the session. In the session: (1) Without the Allegory sheet, the drama is experienced--preceded by the usual opening for the group (silence, prayer, or whatever). (2) Members are given the Allegory sheet and asked to write on it whatever comes to mind, with a view to sharing. (3) "A-B" the group [i.e., divide them into couples by lettering A-B around the circle, perhaps separating persons who know each other well], and provide adequate time for 1:1 sharing, beginning with what "A" has written and is willing to share with "B," then reverse. (4) Ask the members to write, on the reverse of the Allegory sheet, personal responses to the questions *What new light, or fresh experience of a neglected truth, has come to me so far in the session? What, then, do I see as needing changing (a) in my life and/or (b) in our life together?* (5) Plenum: Ask that members read what has been written, each noting what, in what is being read, is pertinent to one's own life and the group's life. (6) Open conversation, one person at a time sharing what seems notable and pertinent to action. [For a similar process I use in "Action Bible Study," see #531 (attached).]

**PROCEDURE B:** After the group's usual opening: (1) Distribute the Allegory sheet, and ask that each member try to "get into" the Allegory "with your whole self, body and soul: feel your way in, reading it over and over--first at normal speed, then decreasing speed." (2) On the reverse, "list responses to this question: *In my lifetime, what has happened to me that comes to mind as I've been inwardly experiencing this Allegory?*" (3) Ask the members to sort over the listed experiences to select (a) the one now most disturbing, (b) the one I think most important in the overview of my life, (c) the one I think most revealing of what I should do with the rest of my life, and (d) the one I want to share with the group. [Obviously, the four could turn out to be one!] (4) "A-B" the group, and provide adequate time for sharing; or "A-B-C" the group and allow more time. (5) Plenum-sharing, telling each other's story, with corrections and additions by the person whose story is told (therefore, an exercise is listening as well as speaking). (6) Discussion of *What does all this have to say about our faith, and what does our faith have to say about all this--about how we can better see, and live in, community and world? What difference, if any, can it make on the street? at home? in work? at play?*