

preaching to empower moral imagination

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**Festival of  
HOMILETICS**

**Preaching as  
Moral Imagination**

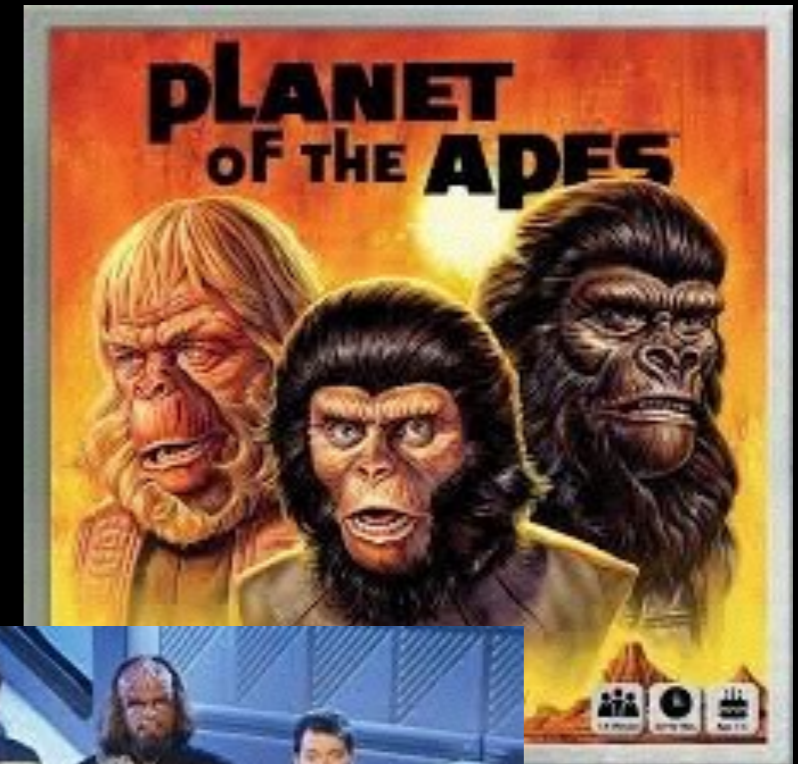
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# utopia and dystopia

preaching as science fiction

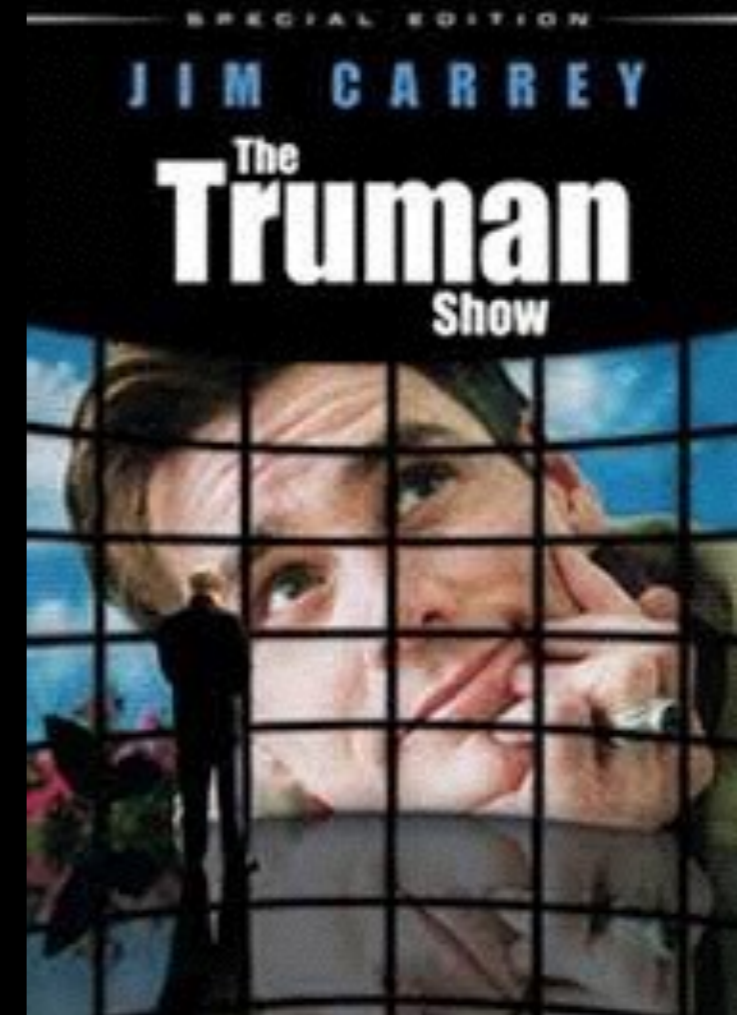


what problem is our preaching trying to solve?

a failure of willpower? intelligence?  
information? character? leadership?  
effort? commitment?



what if our problem is a dome over our imagination?



“It is difficult to get a man to understand something, when his salary depends upon his not understanding it!” - Upton Sinclair



domes and abduction

kierkegaard and butt-kicking



Exile ...  
dry bones live  
deserts bloom  
exiles return  
hearts of stone, heart of flesh  
mourning into dancing



# 3 Minute Meeting:

What is a dome that limits our imagination today?



# Religion as a dome ...

Supremacy (white, Christian, human)

Liberal/Conservative

Orthodox/Heretic

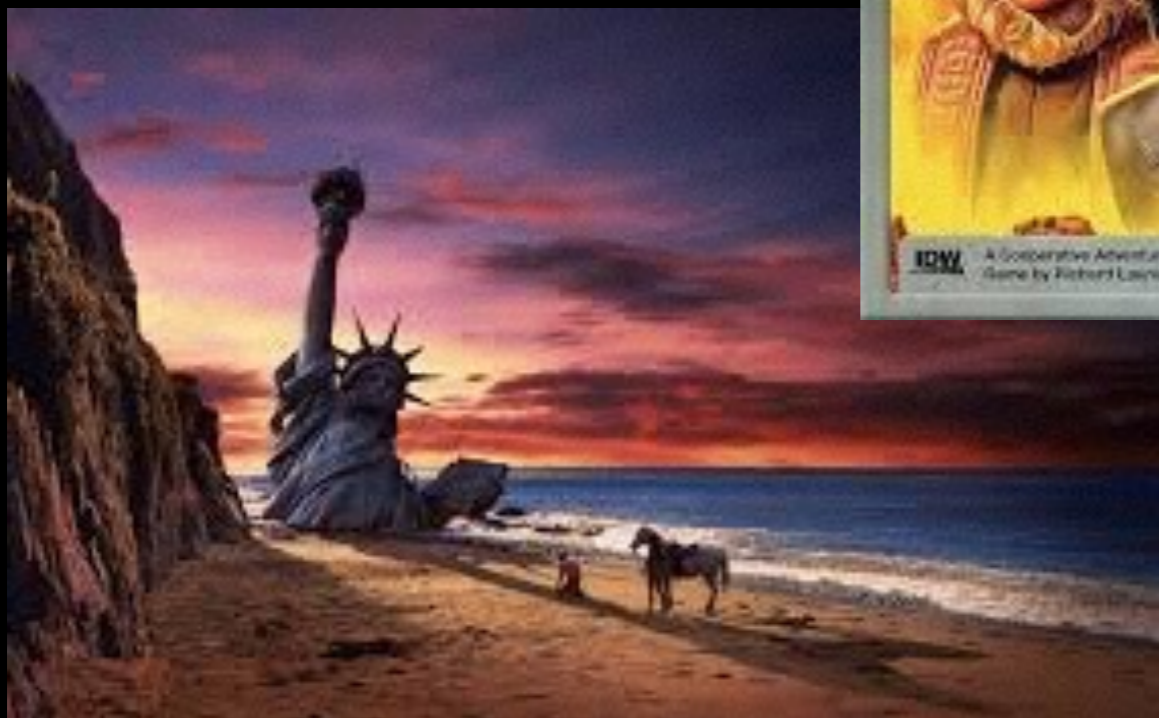
Inerrancy

Patriarchy

Eschatology



# imagining a world beyond the dome of white supremacy (1968)



a world beyond the dome of cold war:  
exploration, not exploitation  
prime directive



# family life in a strange new world ...



Imagine a different way to see the other

Woman caught in adultery

Good Samaritan

Ethiopian Eunuch

Cornelius the Unclean Gentile

All nations before the throne of the Lamb

## 3 Minute Meeting:

I would like to preach sermons to help people imagine getting beyond ...

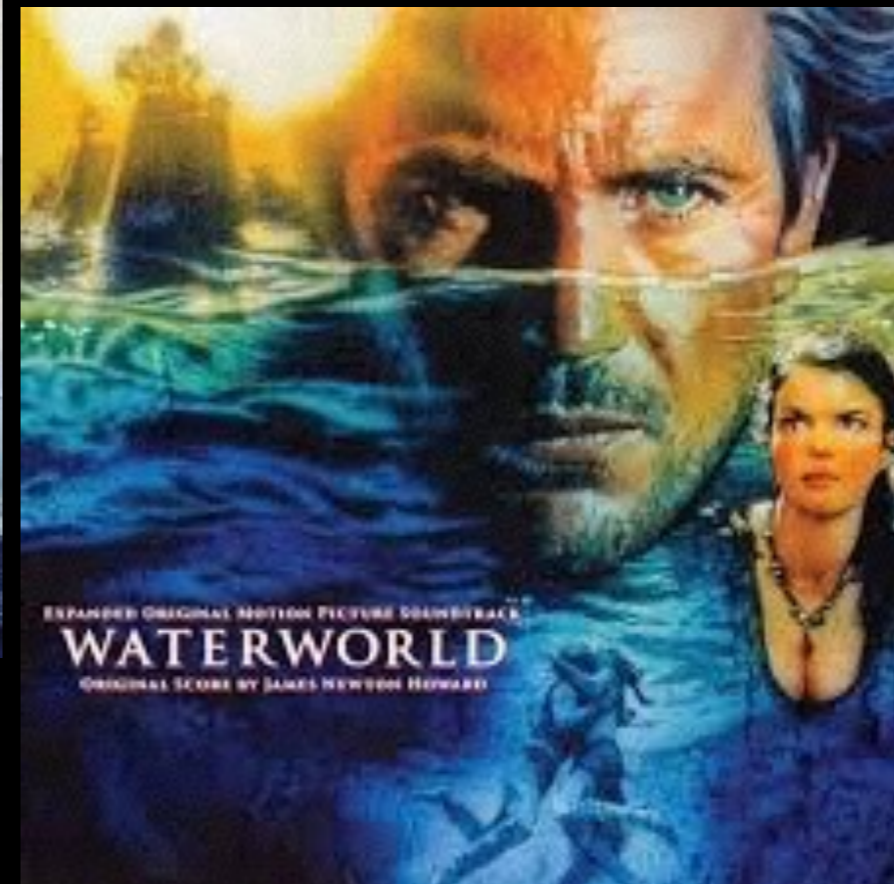
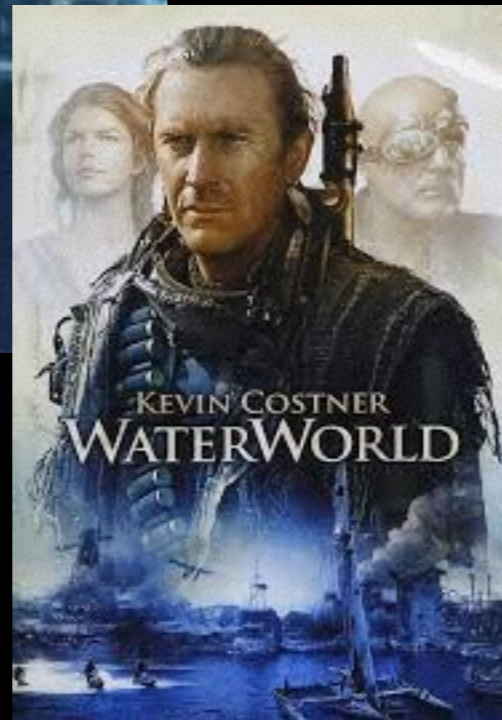
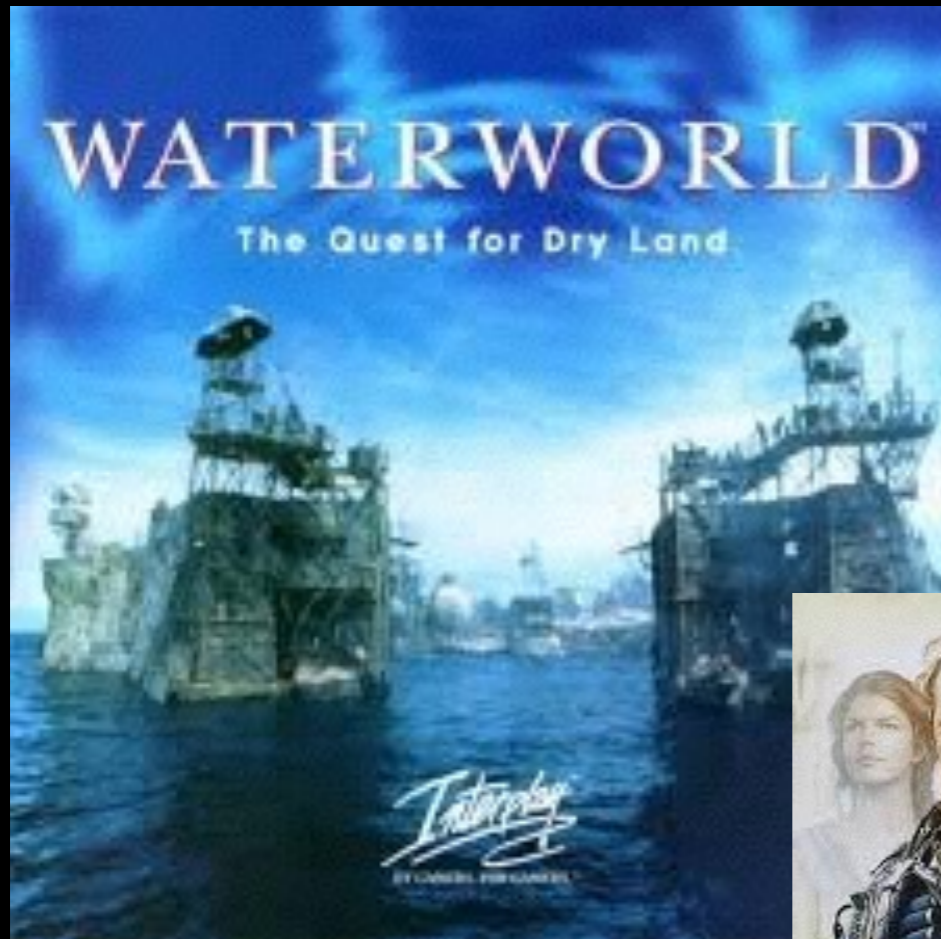
# preaching for recognition



Matthew 21:45 When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they realized that he was speaking about them. 46 They wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowds, because they regarded him as a prophet.

the moment of recognition

# preaching against denial



Slavery in Egypt

Occupation/Exile

Gehenna, Hades, Hell

Weeping and gnashing of teeth

Not mapping the afterlife -

A warning for this life!

## 3-Minute Meeting -

I would like to preach some sermons to help people stop their denial about ...

# imagining breakthrough ...



imagining breakthrough ...



Good Samaritan

Wedding Banquet/New Jerusalem  
Descending

Eucharist, wherever 2 or 3 “in my name,”  
transubstantiating US!

a few final observations ...

the danger of moral indignation

liberal fundamentalism

more woke and outraged than thou

logs in our own eyes? domes in our own  
minds?

maybe it's experiencing,  
not preaching, that counts most?

science fiction and

literature of the oppressed

unsayable is said “sideways”

“beast coming out of the sea”

“whore of babylon”

daniel’s visions

the empire will fall

prophecy as prediction (determinism)

versus

prophecy as warning

prophecy as promise

so that your imagination is unlocked

your denial is broken

your paralysis is healed

your despair is defeated

and the impossible becomes possible

miracle as science trick versus  
miracle as sign that signifies  
miracle as wonder that makes you wonder

literalism - for or against - misses the point!

thus unlocking your imagination so the  
impossible can become possible

the kingdom of God is like ...

a different economy

a different power structure

a different social order

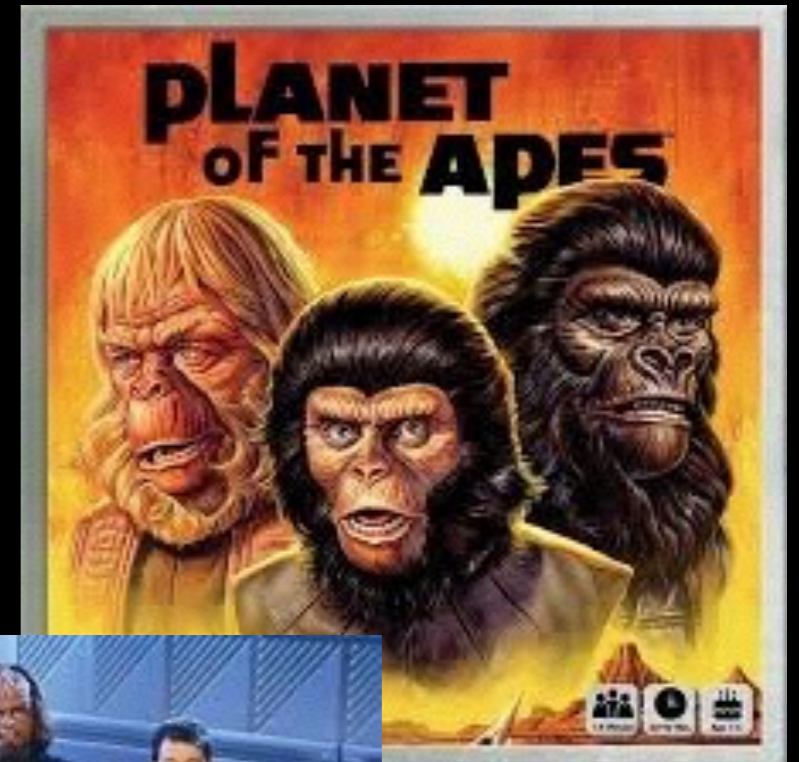
a different way of life

a different standard of success

every parable is an abduction of the  
imagination.

# utopia and dystopia

We need visions of the future - to pursue, to avoid.



we need a new vision of the future ...

yes, for the church.

but more important, for humanity, for  
civilization, for survival.

right when you're most tempted to give up,  
your creative work is most needed.

a brain without fear ... foolish.

a brain without hope ... desperate.

how can we help our people  
see our likely future (fear),  
see a better future (hope),  
and believe it is possible (faith)?

what love will lead us through?

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