



rewilding christianity





a nature-based
vision and the
future of Christian
faith



We honor the First Nations of this land,
including the Beaver, Blackfoot, Chipewyan,
Plains Cree, Sarcee, Plains Ojibwa, Slavey,
Stoney, and Woodland Cree, and their bands
and lodges.



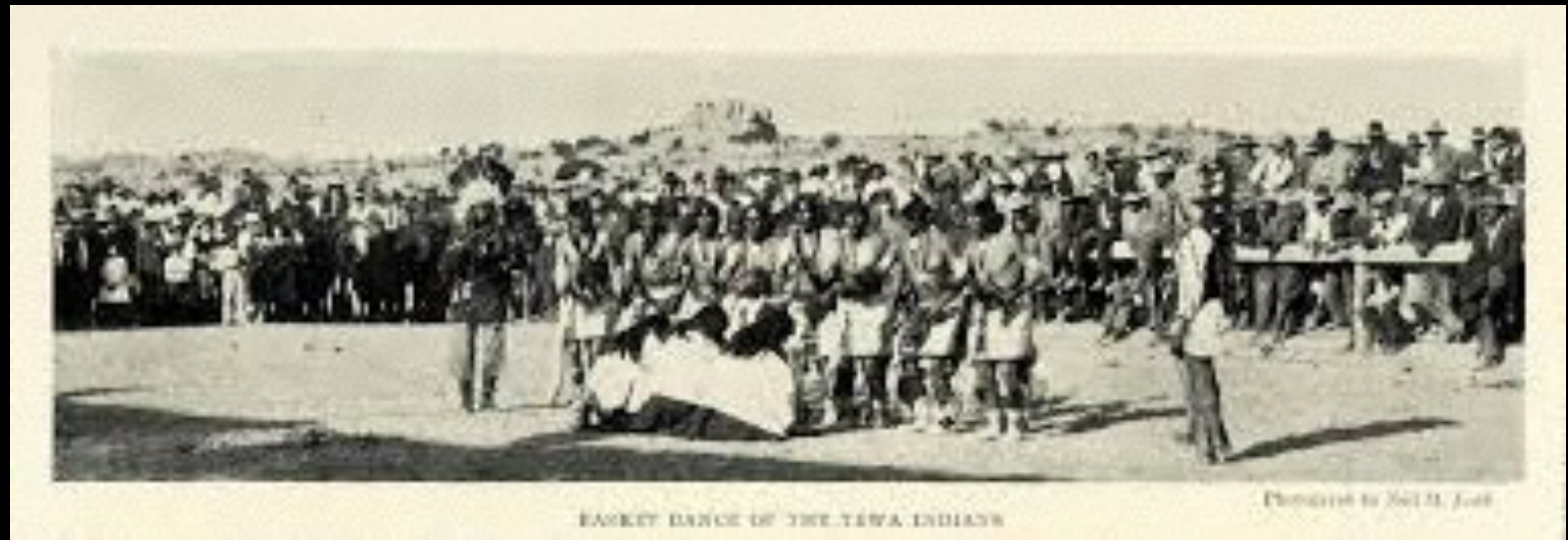
We celebrate their beautiful and diverse cultures, the deep wisdom they have preserved, and the good lives they have lived through the centuries up to this day.



We mourn, lament, and repent of the crimes against humanity done to the original people by European American settlers who often justified their atrocities in the name of God, Christianity, and civilization.



We mourn, lament, and repent of the conspiracy of silence that kept secret these and other crimes and atrocities for so long. We will keep silent no longer about the history of racism, bigotry, arrogance, and greed that continue today.





We commit to create a common memory of our past, so we can create a new and better way of life for our future, in equality and harmony with one another, and in harmony with this precious earth on which all life depends.



Amen.
(Let us observe a moment of silence.)





rediscovering Christian
faith as an outdoor religion,
wild rather than
domesticated, reconnected
with soil, sun, wind, water,
and wilderness



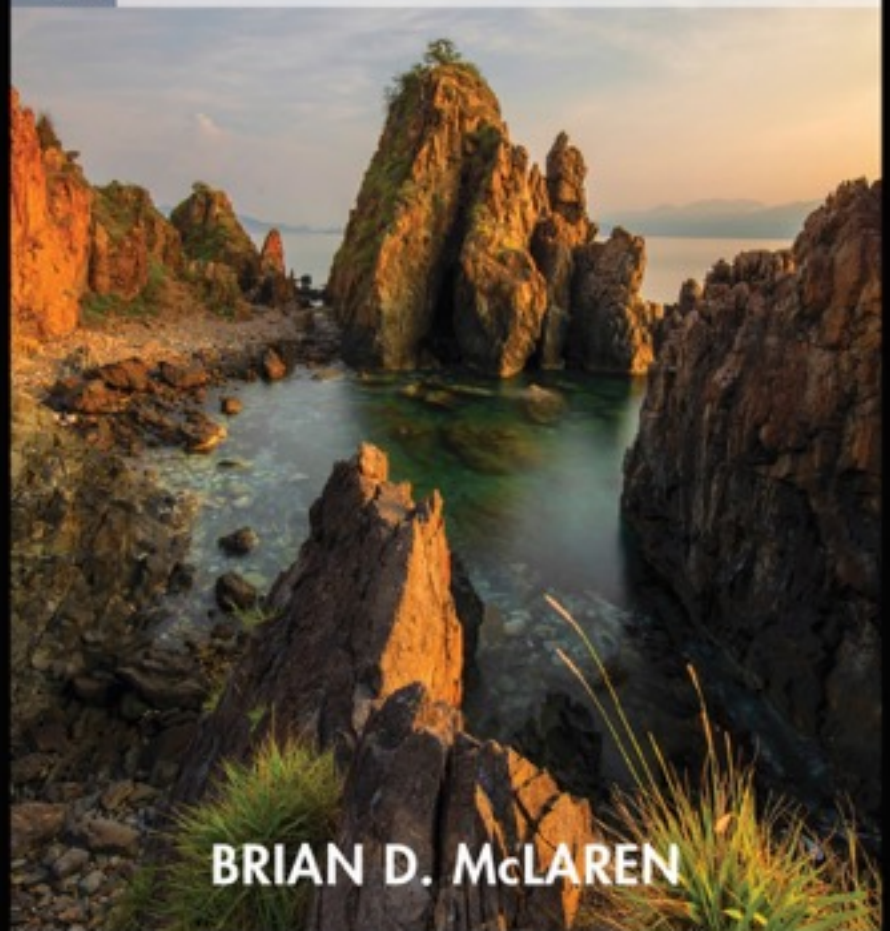


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THE GALAPAGOS ISLANDS

ON
LOCATION

A SPIRITUAL JOURNEY



BRIAN D. McLAREN

Most theology in recent centuries, especially white Christian theology, has been the work of avid indoorsmen, scholars who typically work in square boxes called offices or classrooms or sanctuaries, surrounded by square books and, more recently, square screens, under square roofs in square buildings surrounded by other square buildings, laid out in square city blocks that stretch as far as the eye can see. If practitioners of this civilized indoor theology look out at the world, it is through square windows or in brief moments between the time they exit one square door and enter another. But those outdoor times are generally brief, so these days, this square theology

For a long time, this civilized indoor theology was created and promoted almost exclusively by privileged male human beings of European descent, with at least the appearance of heterosexual orientation and physical and mental abilities deemed “normal.” Thankfully, more and more people are taking part in civilized indoor theology these days, women, people of color, LGBTQ persons, people of diverse abilities, and others without traditional markers of privilege. But even so, apart from the apocryphal donkeys, sheep, and oxen of the Christmas story, or lambs and bulls being slaughtered in the temple, or the “creeping things” of the

There is nothing inherently wrong about civilized, indoor theology. Except this: theology that arises in human-made, human-controlled architecture—of walls and mirrors, of doors and locks, of ninety-degree angles and monochrome painted surfaces, of thermostats and plumbing, of politics and prisons, of wars, racism, greed, and fear—will surely reflect the prejudices and limited imaginations of its makers.

It will differ markedly from theology that arises in conversation with the wild world that flourishes beyond our walls and outside our windows and cities. Yes, indoor,

So, more and more of us are imagining a wild theology that arises under the stars and planets, along a thundering river or meandering stream, admiring a flock of pelicans or weaver finches, watching a lion stalk a wildebeest, gazing at a spider spinning her web, observing a single tree bud form, swell, burst, and bloom. We imagine a wild theology that doesn't limit itself to Plato and Aquinas but also consults the wisdom of rainbow trout and sea turtles, seasons and tides. We imagine a wild theology whose horizons are measured not by thousands of years and miles but by billions of light years. We imagine a wild theology that is articulated in books, yes, but

In all likelihood, it was wild theology that inspired the tribal people to tell the primal stories that were eventually written in the texts that are studied today in heated libraries and interpreted in air-conditioned classrooms.

In all likelihood, wild theology is the mother of civilized theology. And in all likelihood, civilized theology is in the process of killing its mother and acting as if she never existed.

I am a civilized man. I normally live in glass and cement, work among screens and buttons, travel on wheels and immoveable metal wings, breathe air-conditioned air and drink chemically treated water as I move from box to box and square to square.

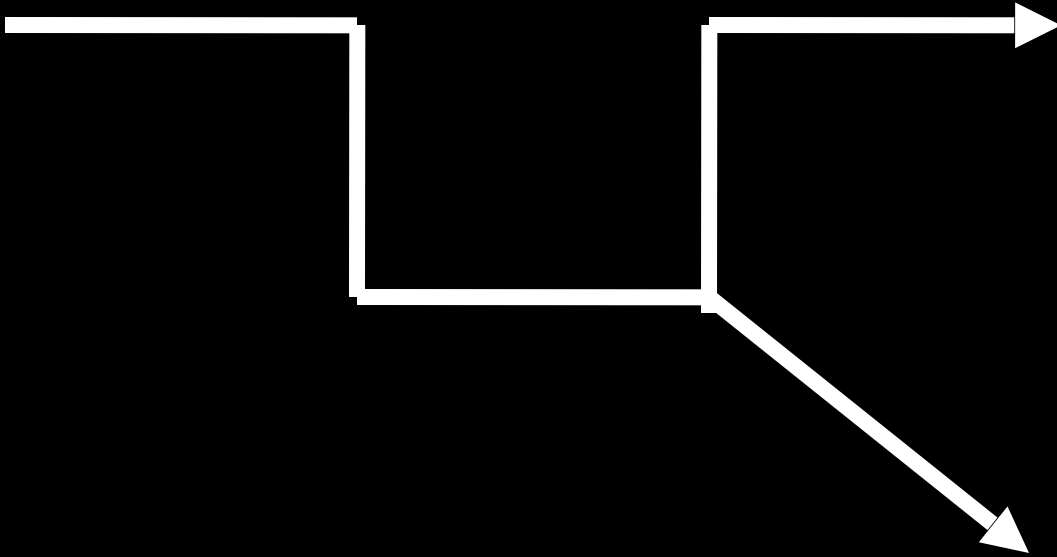
But from my childhood, I have also loved the outdoors. Hiking, camping, kayaking, fishing, birding, gardening, and stargazing are among my greatest joys in life and these passions have given me a vantage

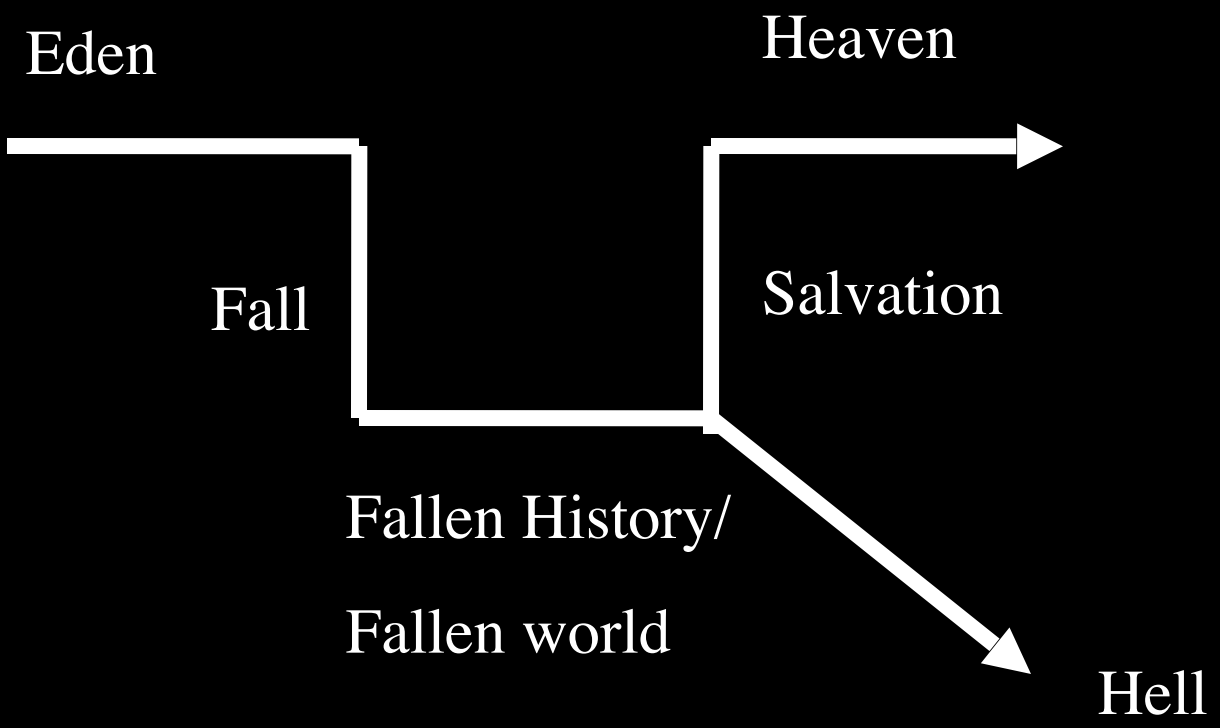
All the more because of the historical and political situation in which I find myself. Like many, I have been heartsick at what's been happening in the so-called civilized world in recent years: environmental insanity and climate-change denial; a resurgence in white supremacy, religious supremacy, and hate crimes; a growing chasm between the majority of us and a tiny minority of super-rich, super-powerful super-elites, along with a redistribution of wealth and power in their direction; all while the arms industry distributes increasingly destructive weapons to more and more fearful and resentful people in unstable nations governed by kleptocrats. (Enough said.)

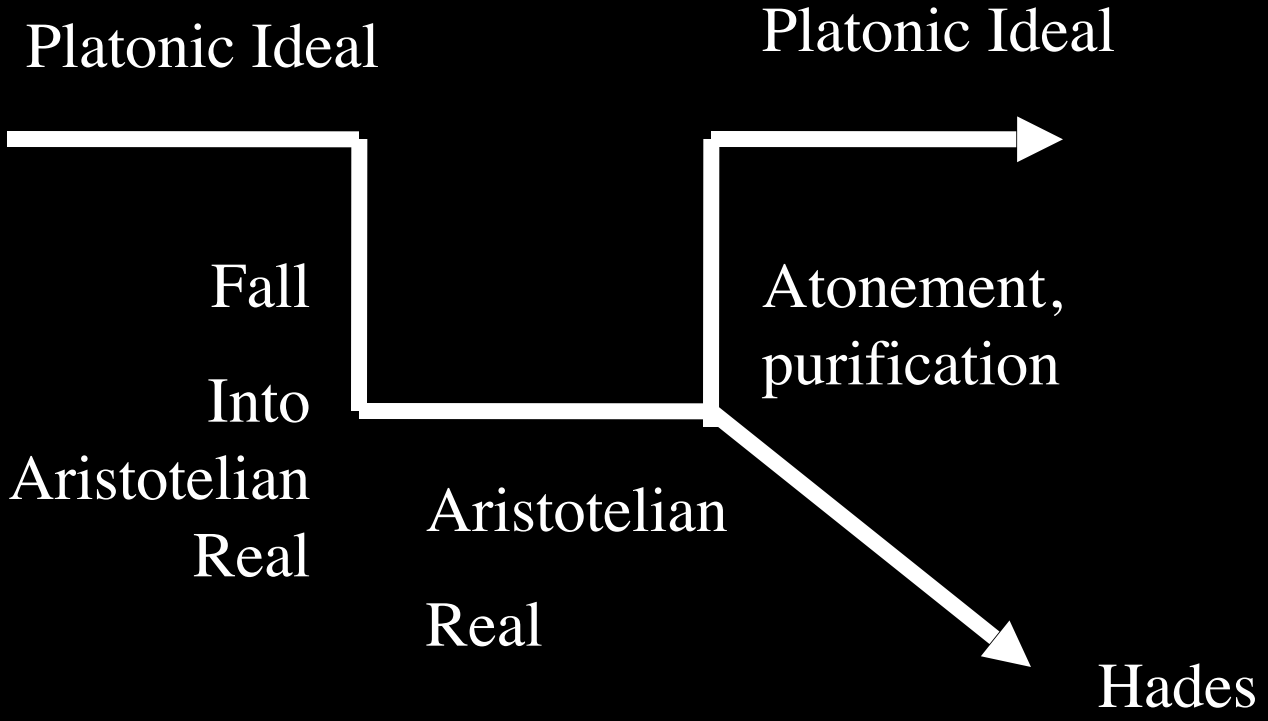
Re-wilding our narrative ...

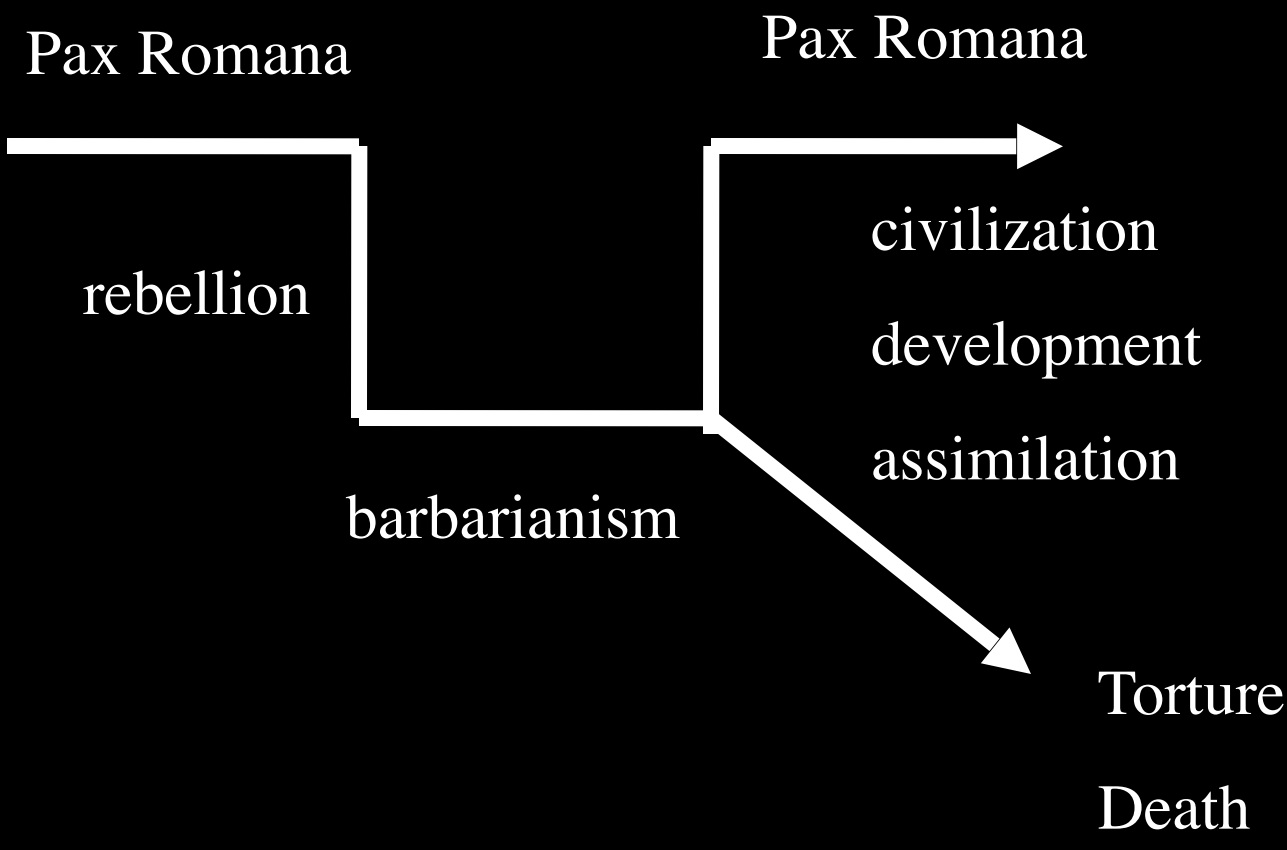


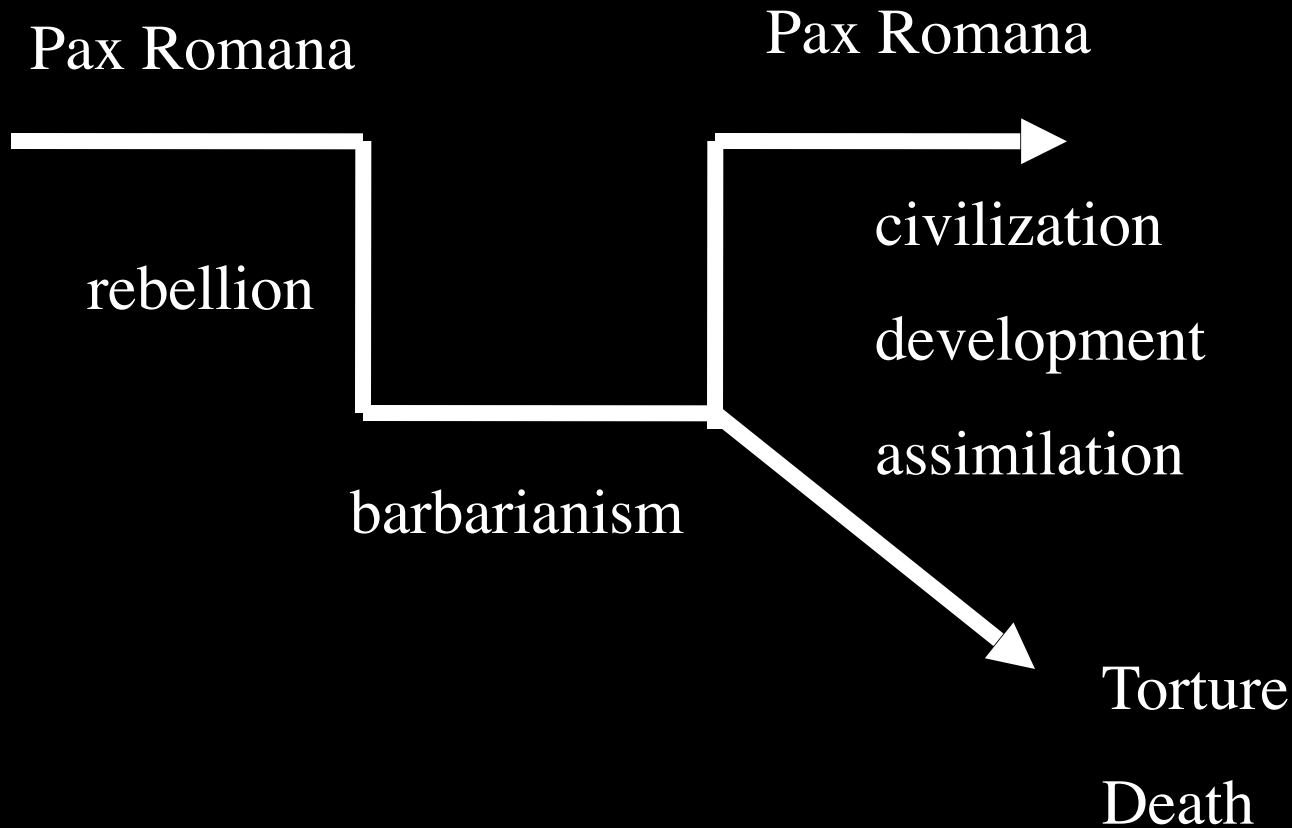
Re-earthing & Re-
wilding the
“Christian”
narrative











This is a “totalizing metanarrative” - an us-them story that legitimates domination, supremacy, racism, enslavement, exploitation, colonization, genocide.

Christendom

Christendom

rebellion

salvation/atonement/redemption

conquistadores, colonization

civilization, culture war

barbarianism

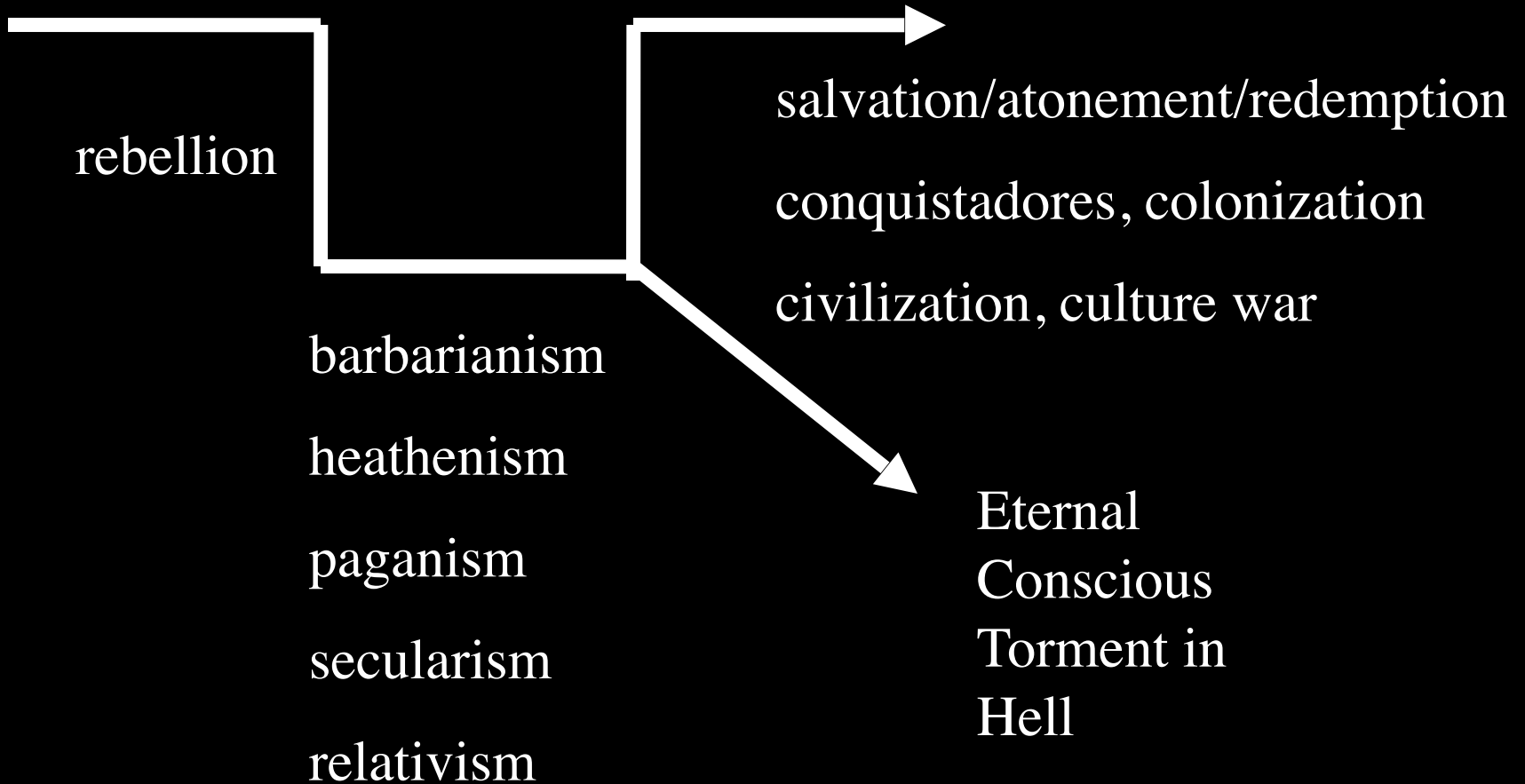
heathenism

paganism

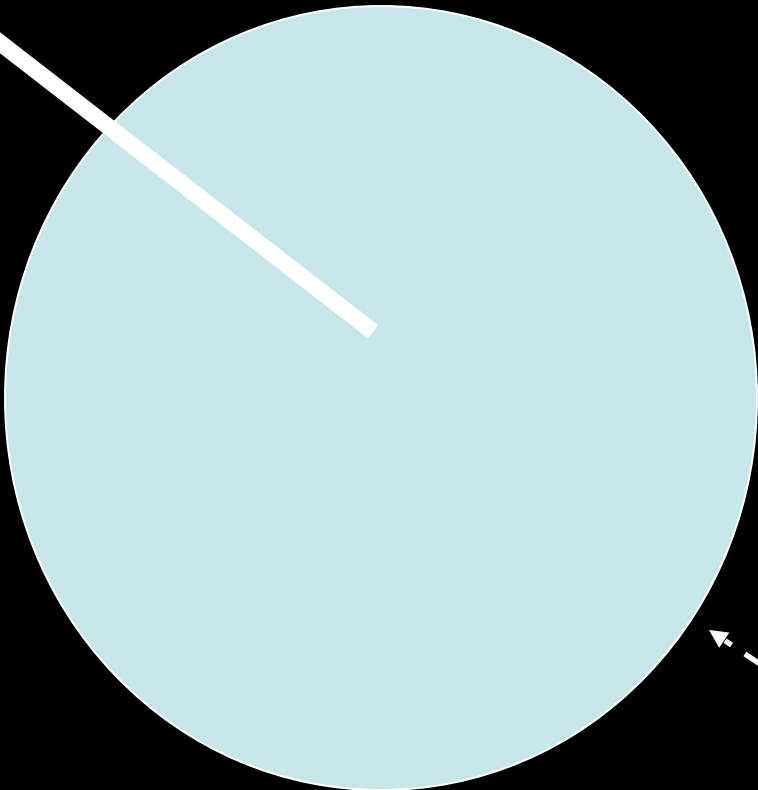
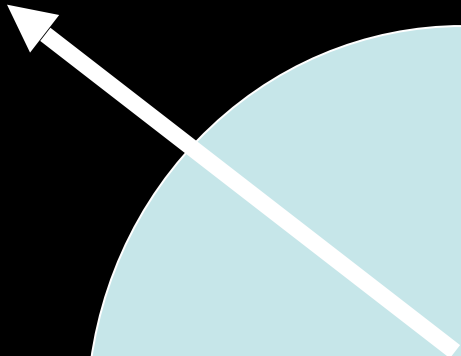
secularism

relativism

Eternal
Conscious
Torment in
Hell

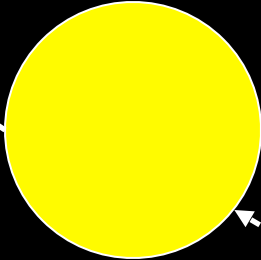


heaven



self

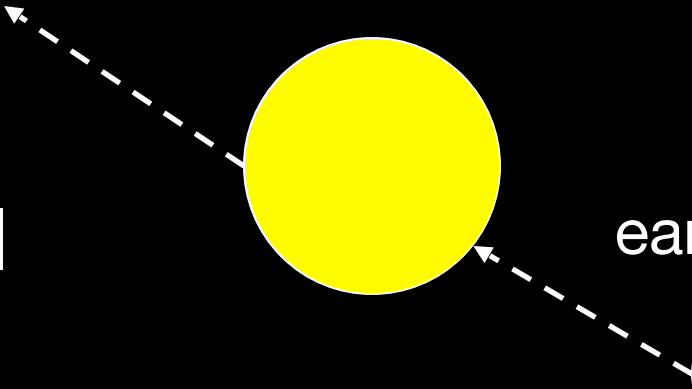
church



earth



evacuation gospel



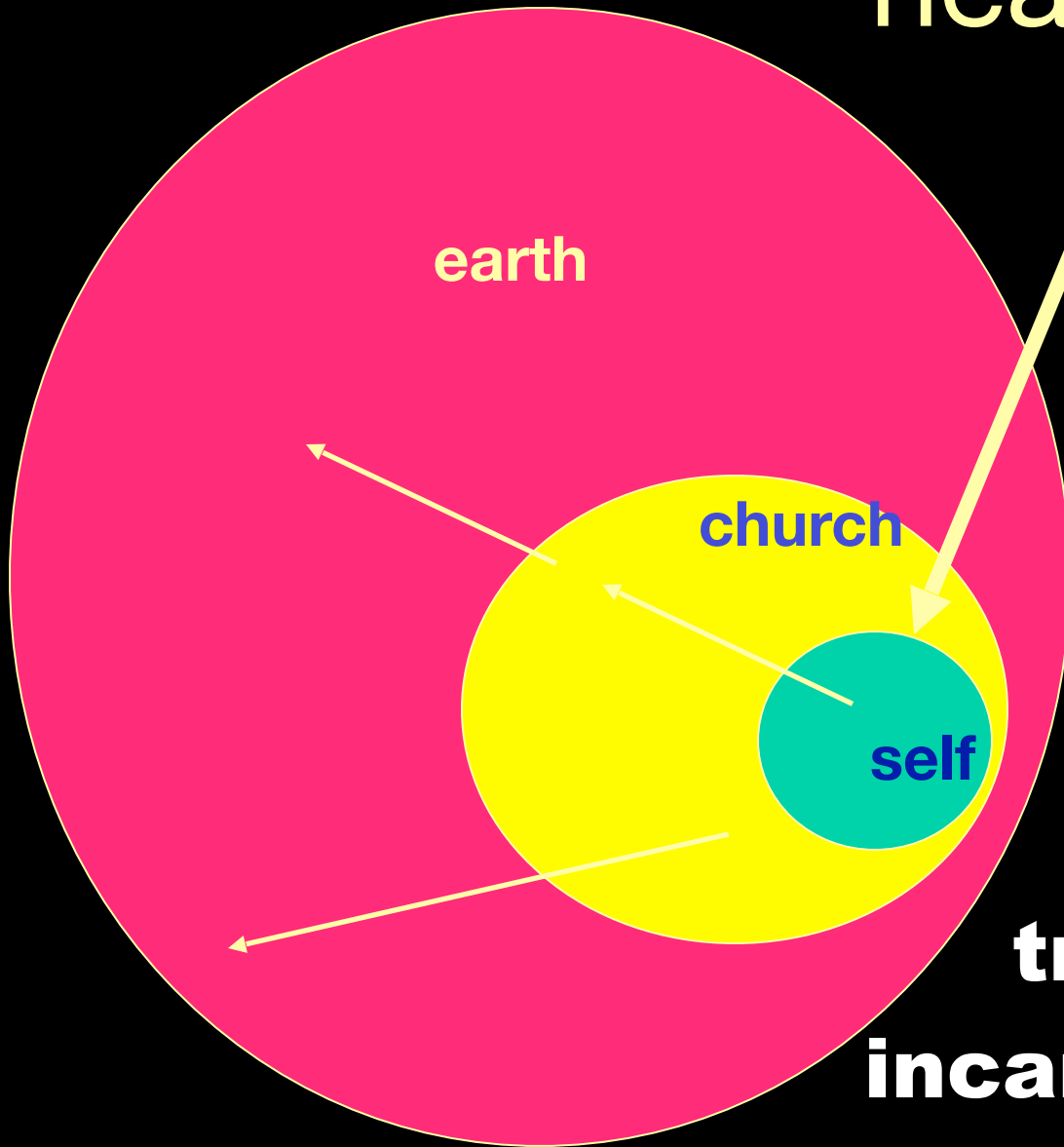
heaven

earth

church

self

**transformation/
incarnation gospel**



in this frame - there is a bias against change
because timeless stasis is the norm.

in this frame - there is a bias against the earth
because the gospel is an evacuation plan.

in this frame - there is a bias towards power
since top-down patriarchy and domination rule

is there an alternative frame?

Genesis: Creation and Reconciliation on a very good Earth

Exodus: Liberation & Formation on a subjugated Earth

Genesis: Creation and Reconciliation on a very good Earth

Isaiah: Peaceable Kingdom - Justice and
Mercy on Rewilded Earth

Exodus: Liberation & Formation on a subjugated Earth

Genesis: Creation and Reconciliation on a very good Earth

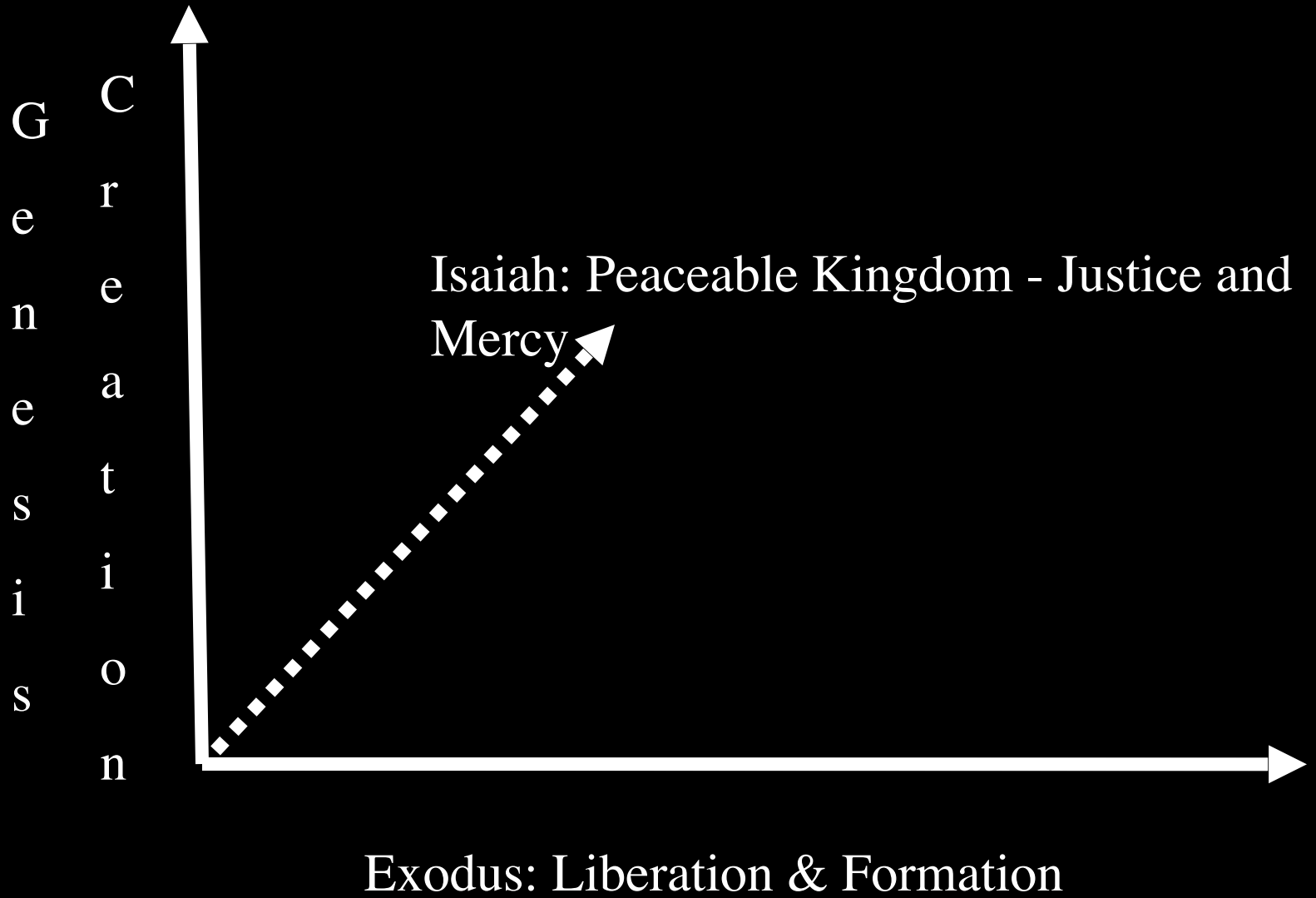
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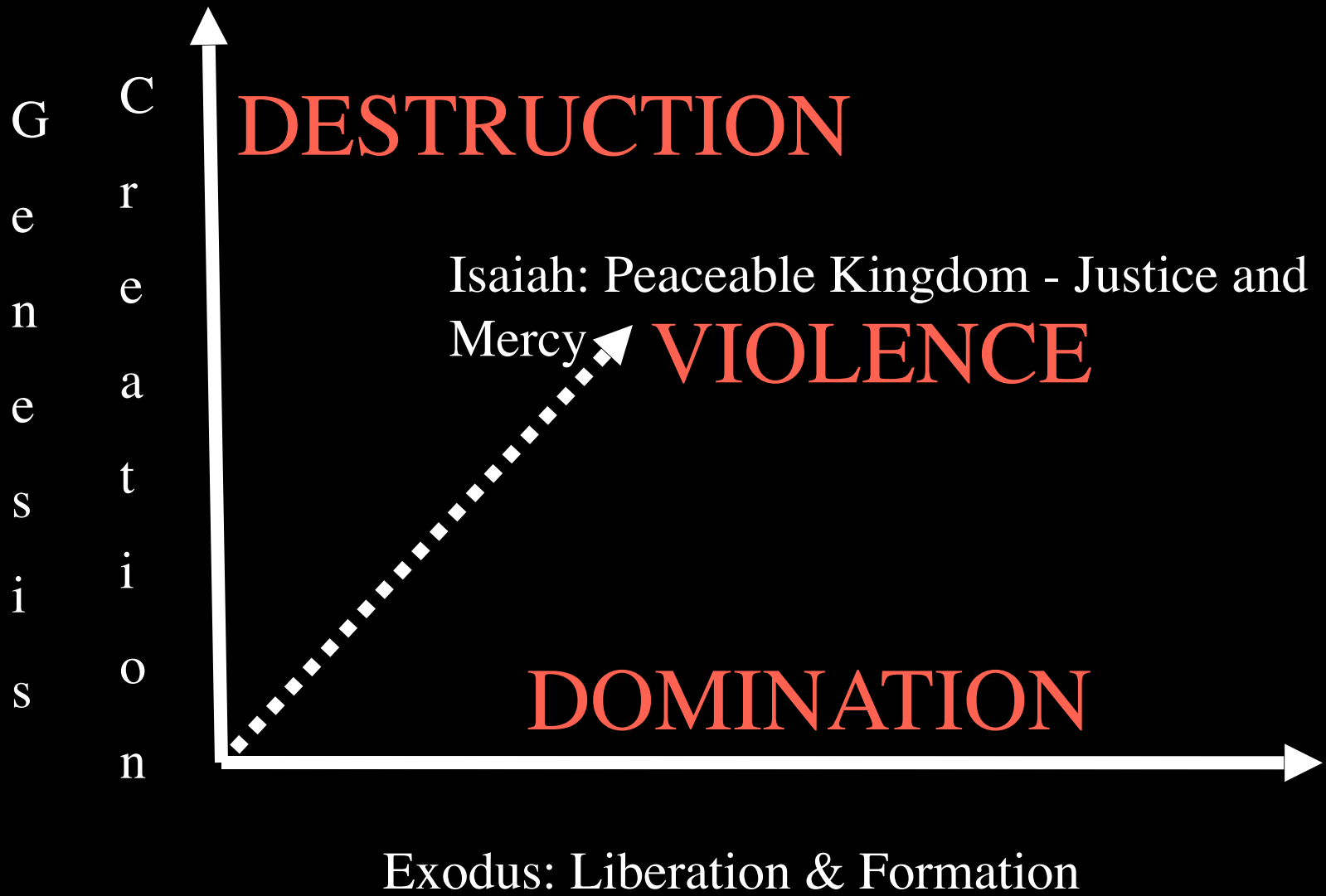
Exodus: Liberation & Formation on a subjugated Earth

Genesis: Creation and Reconciliation on a very good Earth

Not a “totalizing metanarrative”-

But a “multi-narrative” that creates a story-space (not a story-
line) in which a million good stories can emerge.





DESTRUCTION

Isaiah: Peaceable Kingdom - Justice and Mercy

VIOLENCE

DOMINATION

Exodus: Liberation & Formation

G
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Exodus: Liberation & Formation

In light of our current disaster, I understand why many would choose to give up on the Christian story altogether, considering the brand discredited and the story co-opted and ruined.

If that is your choice, I respect it and believe it is a good and necessary path for many.

But for others of us, reclaiming the Wild Christ is a necessity, and here's why:

We face four existential threats:

Planetary crisis

Poverty crisis

Peace crisis

Political/Religious crisis

We need a story that gives us a fresh

Reverence and love for the planet

Solidarity with the poor

Empowerment for peacemaking

Political/Religious vision

We need a story that gives us a fresh

Reverence and love for the planet: Creation, prophets,
Jesus (Lord's prayer), St. Francis

Solidarity with the poor: Torah, prophets, Jesus, St.
Francis, Mother Teresa, Dorothy Day

Empowerment for peacemaking: Creation story,
prophets (Isaiah), Jesus (Beatitudes), Dr. King, Tutu

Political/Religious vision: 10 Commandments, Jesus
(kingdom of God), martyrs

Re-wilding our narrative ...

Rediscovering our wild Christ ...

Birth story ... sky-welcomed,
virgin-conceived, stable-born

Galilee ... Jesus was a country
boy.



John the Baptist ... from
Temple pools to wild river, a
voluntary hunter-gatherer, a
wild-man indeed!

Jesus ... always disappearing
into the wild



Consider his education ...

Genesis

Exodus

Leviticus - Numbers - Deuteronomy

Go to the ant, you lazy
person. Consider its ways and
be wise. (Prov. 6:6)

Ants are people of little
strength, yet they store up
food in the summer. (Prov.
30:25)

God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore. Solomon's wisdom was greater than the wisdom of all the men of the East, and greater than all the wisdom of Egypt. He was wiser than any other man, including Ethan the Ezrahite—wiser than Heman, Calcol and Darda, the sons of Mahol. And his fame spread to all the surrounding nations. He spoke three thousand proverbs and his songs numbered a thousand and five. He described plant life, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of walls. He also taught about animals and birds, reptiles and fish. Men of all nations came to listen to Solomon's wisdom, sent by all the kings of the world, who had heard of his wisdom. (1 Kings 4)

- 6** I have listened attentively,
but they do not say what is right.
No one repents of his wickedness,
saying, "What have I done?"
Each pursues his own course
like a horse charging into battle.
- 7** Even the stork in the sky
knows her appointed seasons,
and the dove, the swift and the thrush
observe the time of their migration.
But my people do not know
the requirements of the LORD.
- 8** " 'How can you say, "We are wise,
for we have the law of the LORD,"
when actually the lying pen of the scribes
has handled it falsely? (Jeremiah 8)

The LORD is good to **all**;

God has compassion on **all God has made**.

All you have made will praise you, O LORD;
your saints will extol you.

...The LORD is faithful to all his promises
and loving toward **all God has made**...

The eyes of **all** look to you,

and you give them their food at the proper time.

You open your hand

and satisfy the desires of **every living thing**.

The LORD is righteous in all God's ways

and loving toward **all God has made**. (Psalm

145: 9 ff)

Consider his teaching ...



Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? **Look at the birds of the air;** they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?

And why do you worry about clothes? **See how the lilies of the field grow.** They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans [i.e. the Romans, i.e. the Westerners, i.e. the "developed nations," the free marketers, the global capitalists and oligarchs] run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.

But seek first **God's kingdom and God's justice***, and all these things will be given to you as well.
(Matthew 6)

***God's sacred ecosystem and God's natural balance of power ...**

"This, then, is how you should pray:
" 'Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done

on earth

as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil." (Matthew 6)



Consider his history with buildings ...

Normally teaches on mountainsides, plains,
beaches, boats in storms.

A home with the roof torn off

A Temple where he turns the tables, predicts
its demise, and which he deems superfluous to
the Spirit

On Easter morning ...



Seen as a gardener.

Re-wilding our narrative ...

Rediscovering our wild Christ ...

Re-wilding spiritual
formation

Re-wilding our interior design

Re-wilding our property ...

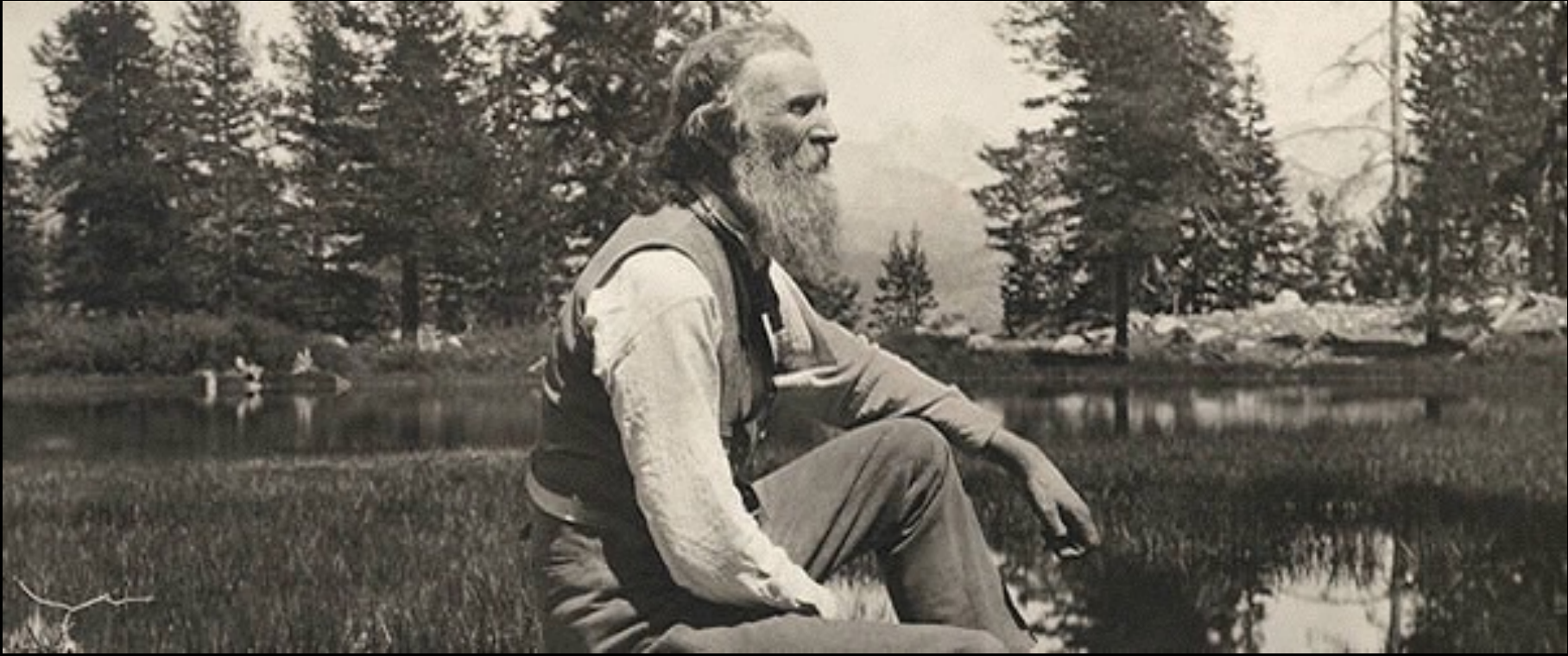
De-centering our buildings ...

Re-emphasizing retreat, pilgrimage, “creatio divina”

Celebrating “wild saints” & mystics







Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where Nature may heal and cheer and give strength to body and soul alike.

I am sitting here in a little shanty made of sugar pine needles this Sabbath evening. I have not been at church a single time since leaving home. Yet this glorious valley might well be called a church, for every lover of the great Creator who comes within the broad overwhelming influences of this place fails not to worship as he never did before. The glory of

I was baptized three times this morning. 1st (according to the old ways of dividing the sermon), in balmy sunshine that penetrated to my very soul, warming all the faculties of spirit, as well as the joints and marrow of the body; 2^d, in the mysterious rays of beauty that emanate from plant corollas; and 3^d, in the spray of the lower Yosemite Falls. My 1st baptism was by immersion, the 2^d by pouring, and the 3^d by sprinkling. Consequently all Baptists are my brethren, and all will allow that I've "got religion."



With the orph



Many years ago, in the spring of 1974, I visited the cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris. There were not many people around, and it was quiet and still inside. I gazed in silent awe at the great Rose Window, glowing in the morning sun. All at once the cathedral was filled with a huge volume of sound: an organ playing magnificently for a wedding taking place in a distant corner. Bach's Toccata and Fugue in D minor.

I had always loved the opening theme; but in the cathedral, filling the entire vastness, it seemed to enter and possess my whole self. It was as though the music itself was alive.

That moment, a suddenly captured moment of eternity, was perhaps the closest I have ever come to experiencing ecstasy, the ecstasy of the mystic. How could I believe it was the chance gyrations of bits of primeval dust that had led up to that moment in time –

-- the cathedral soaring to the sky; the collective inspiration and faith of those who caused it to be built; the advent of Bach himself; the brain, his brain, that translated truth into music; and the mind that could, as mine did then, comprehend the whole inexorable progression of evolution? Since I cannot believe that this was the result of chance, I have to admit anti-chance. And so I must believe in a guiding power in the universe —

in other words, I must believe in God. (xi -
xiii)





1. Saint Francis of Assisi reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us. "Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with coloured flowers and herbs".

2. This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her. We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will. The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life. This is why the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she "groans in travail" (Rom 8:22). We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth (cf. Gen 2:7); our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters.

- From Pope Francis, Laudato Si



rewilding christianity



Wild Earth Litany

We trust and love the Spirit of Creation,
Majestic Presence in space and time,
Energy artist, matter shaper,
Poetry of the universe,
Choreography of spinning galaxies and
whirling atoms,
Sculptor of spheres, wild drummer of
heartbeat and breath.

We trust and love the Spirit of Creation,
Weaver of wonders,
Potter of planets,
Architect of continents,
Master storyteller of our universe,
Dramatist who gives us a part,
Actor, with us and within us in the play.

We trust and love the Spirit of Creation,
Whose wild work-in-progress we are:
Beautiful of color in eyes and skin,
Curious, adventurous, ever-changing,
Speaking a thousand languages,
Dancing a million dances,
Smiling seven billion smiles,
Dreaming dreams upon dreams.

We trust and love the Spirit of Creation

Who calls creation good!

Yes, very good!

Hallelujah!

We trust and love the Spirit of Creation
Who breathes in us the taste for beauty - to
enjoy it, to make it, to live it.

Who invites us to join in the creative
adventure -

In culture and agriculture,

In work and play,

In song and story, art and craft,

Invention and adaptation.

We trust and love the Spirit of Creation
Who creates fertile good, and
When we respond with destructive evil,
Overcomes it with still more good.
So we believe in new creation,
Resurrection, reconnection, transformation,
In the Spirit of Creation's wild, creative joy.
Amen!

