

the
next steps

From attending
to understanding
to engaging
to practicing
to exemplifying
to including ...

This fall - Gathering in
New Mexico

Next winter - Theological
Conversation

2007 - Next large
gathering

Emergentvillage.com

Members of the global emergent community hold in common four values and practices that flow from them. In the language of a religious order, we call these four values our rule:

1. Commitment to God in the Way of Jesus:

We are committed to doing justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly with God, in the power of the Holy Spirit, as the Scriptures teach. As lifelong followers of Jesus, we seek to live by the Great Commandment: loving God and loving our neighbors – including those who might be considered “the least of these” or enemies. We understand the gospel to be centered in Jesus and his message of the kingdom of God, a message of reconciliation with God and among humanity.

We are committed to a “generous orthodoxy” in faith and practice – affirming the historic Christian faith and the Biblical injunction to love one another even when we disagree. We embrace historic spiritual practices such as prayer, meditation, contemplation, study, solitude, silence, service, stewardship, and fellowship, believing that healthy theology cannot be separated from healthy spirituality.

PRACTICES:

- As Christ-centered people, to understand the gospel in terms of Jesus' radical, profound, and expansive message of the kingdom of God.
- As people seeking to be formed spiritually in the way of Christ, to learn historic Christian spiritual practices (disciplines), and to use them for the development of character, integrity, and virtue which flow from true communion with God.
- As participants in the historic Christian faith, to be humble learners and to stimulate learning in others, and to give priority to love over knowledge, while still valuing knowledge.
- As lovers of God and God's truth, to seek wisdom and understanding, which are the true goal of theology, and to engage in respectful, thoughtful, sacred conversation about God, world, and church.

2. Commitment to the Church in all its Forms:

We are committed to honor and serve the church in all its forms – Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Protestant, Pentecostal. We practice “deep ecclesiology” – rather than favoring some forms of the church and critiquing or rejecting others, we see that every form of the church has both weaknesses and strengths, both liabilities and potential. We believe the rampant injustice and sin in our world requires the sincere, collaborative, and whole-hearted response of all Christians in all denominations, from the most historic and hierarchical, through the mid-range of local and congregational churches, to the most spontaneous and informal expressions.

We affirm both the value of strengthening, renewing, and transitioning existing churches and organizations, and the need for planting, resourcing, and coaching new ones of many kinds. We seek to be irenic and inclusive of all our Christian sisters and brothers, rather than elitist and critical, seeing “us” we were used to see “us versus them.” We own the many failures of the church as our failures, which humbles us and calls us to repentance, and we also celebrate the many heroes and virtues of the church, which inspires us and gives us hope.

PRACTICES:

- To be actively and positively involved in a local congregation. We work in churches (as pastors, artists, lay leaders, whatever) seeking to live out authentic Christian faith in authentic Christian community.
- To seek peace among followers of Christ, and to offer critique only prayerfully and when necessary, with grace, and without judgment, avoiding rash statements, and repenting when harsh statements are made. To speak positively of fellow Christians whenever possible, especially those with whom we may disagree.
- To build sincere friendship with Christians from other traditions.

3. Commitment to God's World:

We practice our faith missionally – that is, we do not isolate ourselves from this world, but rather, we follow Christ into the world. We seek to fulfill the mission of God in our generations, and then to pass the baton faithfully to the next generations as well. We believe the church exists for the benefit and blessing of the world at large; we seek therefore not to be blessed to the exclusion of everyone else, but rather for the benefit of everyone else. We see the earth and all it contains as God's beloved creation, and so we join God in seeking its good, its healing, and its blessing.

PRACTICES:

- To build relationships with neighbors and to seek the good of our neighborhoods and cities.
- To seek reconciliation with enemies and make peace.
- To encourage and cherish younger people and to honor and learn from older people.
- To honor creation and to cherish and seek to heal it.
- To build friendships across racial, ethnic, economic and other boundaries.
- To be involved at all times in at least one issue or cause of peace and justice.

4. Commitment to One Another

In order to strengthen our shared faith and resolve, and in order to encourage and learn from one another in our diversity through respectful, sacred conversation, we value time and interaction with other friends who share this rule and its practices. We identify ourselves as members of this growing, global, generative, and non-exclusive friendship. We welcome others into this friendship as well. We bring whatever resources we can to enrich this shared faith and resolve.

PRACTICES:

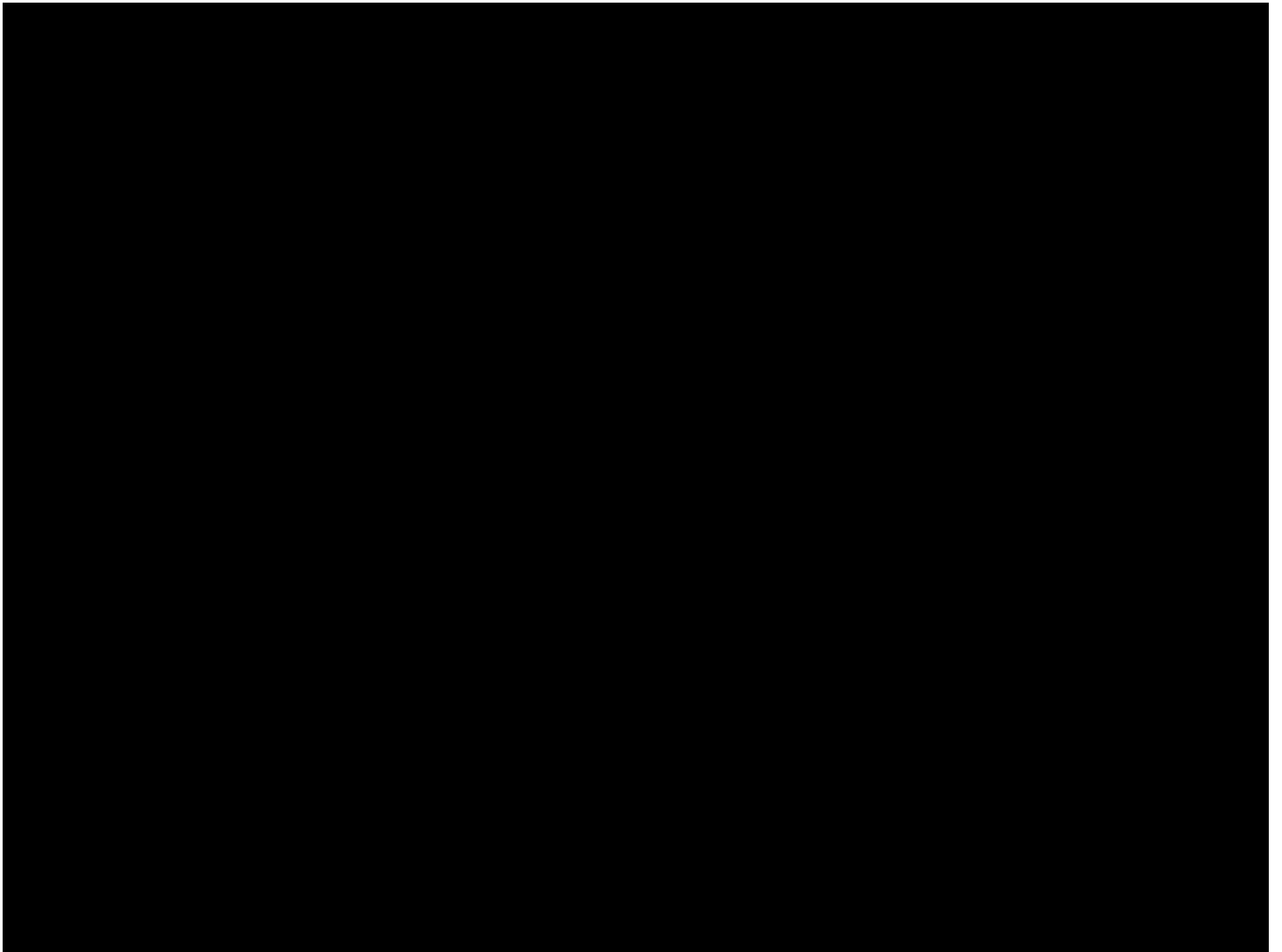
- To make an annual pilgrimage to an emergent gathering; to give one another the gift of our presence at annual gatherings whenever possible.
- To publicly self-identify with emergent where appropriate and to represent emergent well whenever we can; to exemplify the best of what emergent strives to be and do.
- To invite others to participate and welcome new participants.

-To seek to be positive and constructive in caring for the emergent friendship. To find some specific way we can help the circle of friends in emergent - by hosting gatherings, by networking people, by recommending good books or other resources, by writing for our website or other publications, by serving in some behind-the-scenes way whenever we can. To honor “unsung heroes” among us.

-To stay reconciled to one another. To give one another the gift of commitment not to give up on, betray, or reject one another,

but instead, to encourage, honor, and care for one another.

-To stay informed about emergent locally and globally via the website and email updates.



worship as

(spiritual formation)

[disciple-making]

{community formation}

**there has been a lot of
talk about
worship in recent
years....**

traditional

contemporary

blended

postmodern (yucch)

**such labels can be
useful ...**

**and they can be
problematic.**

***Do we need more “market
segmentation?”***

**let's consider all of
these as transitional,
and on a deeper level ...**

**let's consider ourselves
to be moving to a "post-
protestant" era in
worship ...**

**where forms of worship
are not biblically
mandated**

**and where elements of
worship are not
denominationally
proprietary**

**where liturgy is
acknowledged as
universal ...**

**a dynamic tension of
form and freedom,
identity and innovation,**

**and where “evolution”
is seen as normative,
and where one of the
essential functions of
worship is ...**

Spiritual formation:

***The development of people
who “be,” think, feel, work,
relate, and play***

... in the way of Jesus.

...teach them to do
all I have commanded you.

(Matthew 28)

I have give you an example
... love one another as I have loved
you.

(John 13-15)

to be conformed
to the image of God's Son

(Romans 8)

... be transformed
by the renewing of your
minds.

(Romans 8)

...until Christ
is formed in you.

(Galatians 4:19)

In one sense, everything is spiritual formation:

***Listening to Rush Limbaugh, watching
Fox News or South Park or The
Cosmetic Surgery Channel, using
pornography or drugs, choosing one
neighborhood over another, engaging
in office gossip, making charitable
donations, etc.***

**In another sense, spiritual
formation involves intentional
spiritual practices (or
disciplines):**

***Actions within our power which we do
to train ourselves to do things
currently beyond our power, and to
become people we are currently
incapable of being.***

-Running a marathon

-Playing the violin

-Building a bridge

For example, fasting:

- Feeling and acknowledging our weakness in the face of impulses from our bodies.**
- Practicing impulse control.**
- Asserting to ourselves the importance of things other than impulse gratification.**
- Accepting weakness and “poverty” in faith that greater strength and satisfaction can come to us.**
- What benefits could come from this practice?**

10 Spiritual Practices

for

Public Worship

1. Ritual

Doing things I may or may not feel like doing *to bond to the meaning* they represent.

2. Inconvenience:

**Going to a place I didn't
choose**

At a time I didn't choose

For a purpose I do choose.

3. Association

**Associating with some people
I like**

And others I don't like

For a purpose I believe in.

4. Speed

**Altering my pace to see what
I've missed and to feel a
different rhythm.**

Weekly

Seasonal

Annual

Lifespan

5. Hospitality

Using my presence and our space to help “the other” feel welcome in my presence, and in the presence of our community.

6. Attentiveness

**Waiting for what I may receive
only by waiting receptively.**

7. Generosity

**Taking greater pleasure in being
productive (fruitful) than
consumptive.**

8. Modeling

**Exposing apprentices to
masters**

**In prayer, teaching, artistry,
faithfulness, service,
hospitality, etc.**

**Contemplative and charismatic
models ...**

9. Justice & Mercy

Preaching justice

Singing justice

Praying justice

Signifying justice

Announcing justice

10. Catholicity

Quoting others

Affirming others

Praying for others

Inviting others

Some specifics:

Order of Worship:

Take your liturgy (formal and informal) and break it down into components and evaluate them for spiritual formation potential.

***-Arriving, Parking, Entering,
Refreshments, Mingling***

-Prelude, Greeting

-Gathering song

-Welcome, invocation

-Creative element

-Sermon

-Prayer of response

-Confession, creed

-Eucharist

-Stations, music, singing

-Applause, announcements

-Doxology, benediction

***-Orientation, mingling, sign-
ups, goodbyes, departure***

What about your church year?

What seasons do you have?

When is there planned latency?

When is there planned intensity?

Feasting? Fasting?

Inward, Upward, Outward focus?

Planning? Evaluating?

Are there unintended “malformations” happening?

- Revelation sermon**
- “Give us the lost” & “the nations” songs**
- Warfare language, cliches**
- Emotional manipulation/hype**
- Emotional strangulation**
- Racial/Cultural/age exclusion**
- Body acknowledgement**
- Intellectual or political messages**

Six dynamic tensions:

-Charismatic and contemplative

-Regularity and intensity

-Familiarity and surprise

-Ancient and Future

-Planned and spontaneous

-Word and image

Question:

How do we induct or initiate people into our public worship - so they know the meaning we want them to bond to?

Lord, inspire us to read your Scriptures and
meditate on them day and night.
We beg you to give us real understanding of
what we need, that we may in turn
put its precepts into practice. Yet we know
that understanding and good
intentions are worthless, unless rooted in your
graceful love. So we ask
that the words of Scriptures may also be not
just signs on page, but channels
of grace into our hearts.
--Origen of Alexandria (c.186-254)

O Lord, Heavenly Father, in whom is the fullness of light and wisdom, enlighten our minds by your Holy Spirit, and give us grace to receive your Word with reverence and humility, without which no one can understand your truth. For Christ's sake. Amen.

--John Calvin

May your Spirit, O Christ, lead me in the right way, keeping me safe from all forces of evil and destruction. And, free from all malice, may I search diligently in your Holy Word to discover with the eyes of my mind your commandments.

Finally, give me the strength of will to put those commandments into practice through all the days of my life.

--Bede (673-735)

Lord, as I read the psalms let me hear you singing. As I read your words, let me hear you speaking. As I reflect on each page, let me see your image. And as I seek to put your precepts into practice, let my heart be filled with joy.

--Gregory of Nazianzus (329-389)

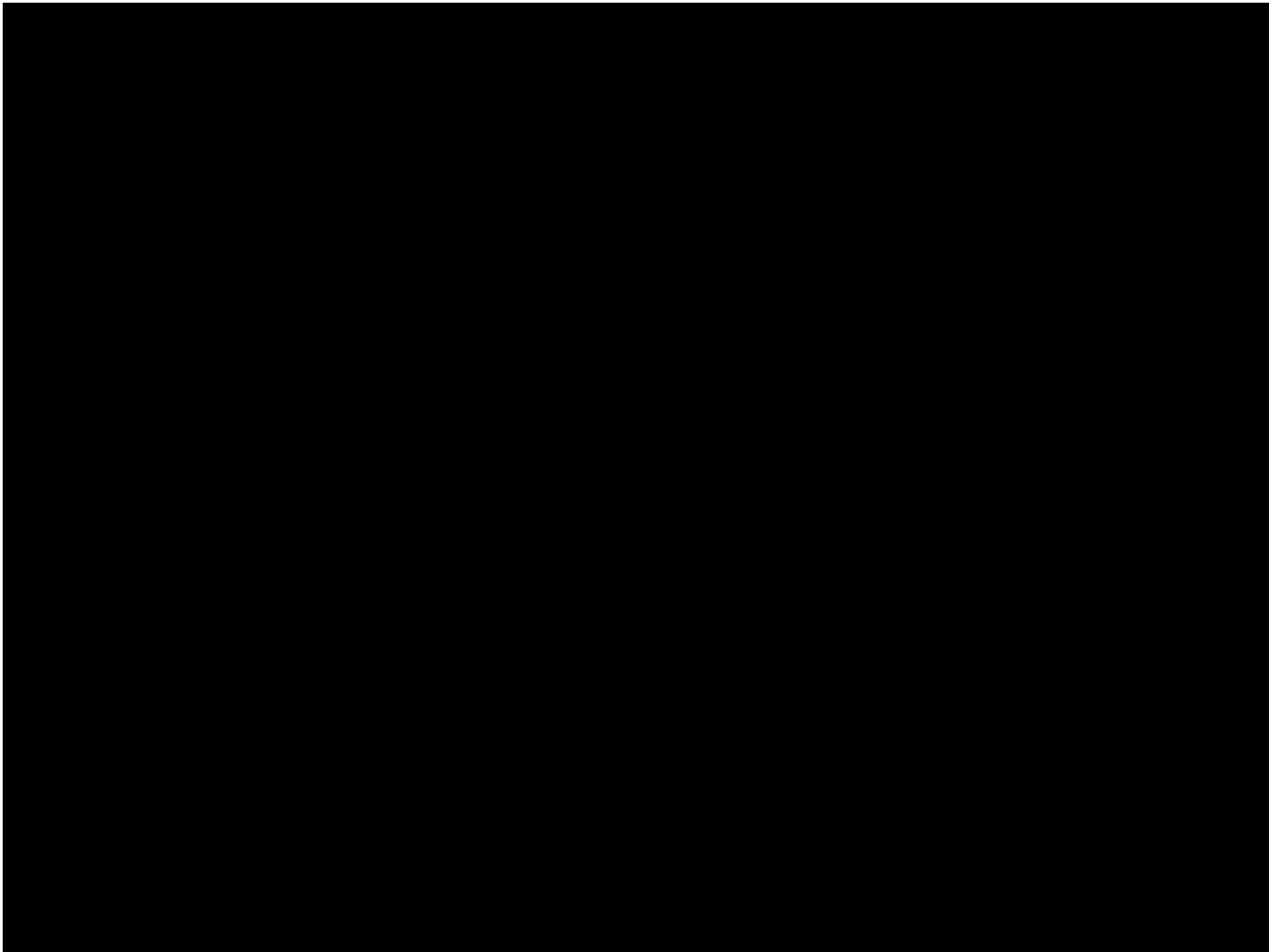
In the sacred books the Father who is in heaven comes lovingly to meet his children, and talks with them. . . . Prayer should accompany the reading of Sacred Scripture, so that a dialogue takes place between God and man.

--Vatican II, "Dogmatic Constitution of Divine Revelation"

Our meditations on the Word who is the Bridegroom, on his glory, his elegance, power, and majesty, become in a sense his way of speaking to us. .

.When with eager minds we examine his rulings, the decrees from his own mouth; when we meditate on his law day and night, let us be assured that the Bridegroom is present, and that he speaks his message of happiness to us.

--St. Bernard of Clairvaux



He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers — all things have been created through him and for him.

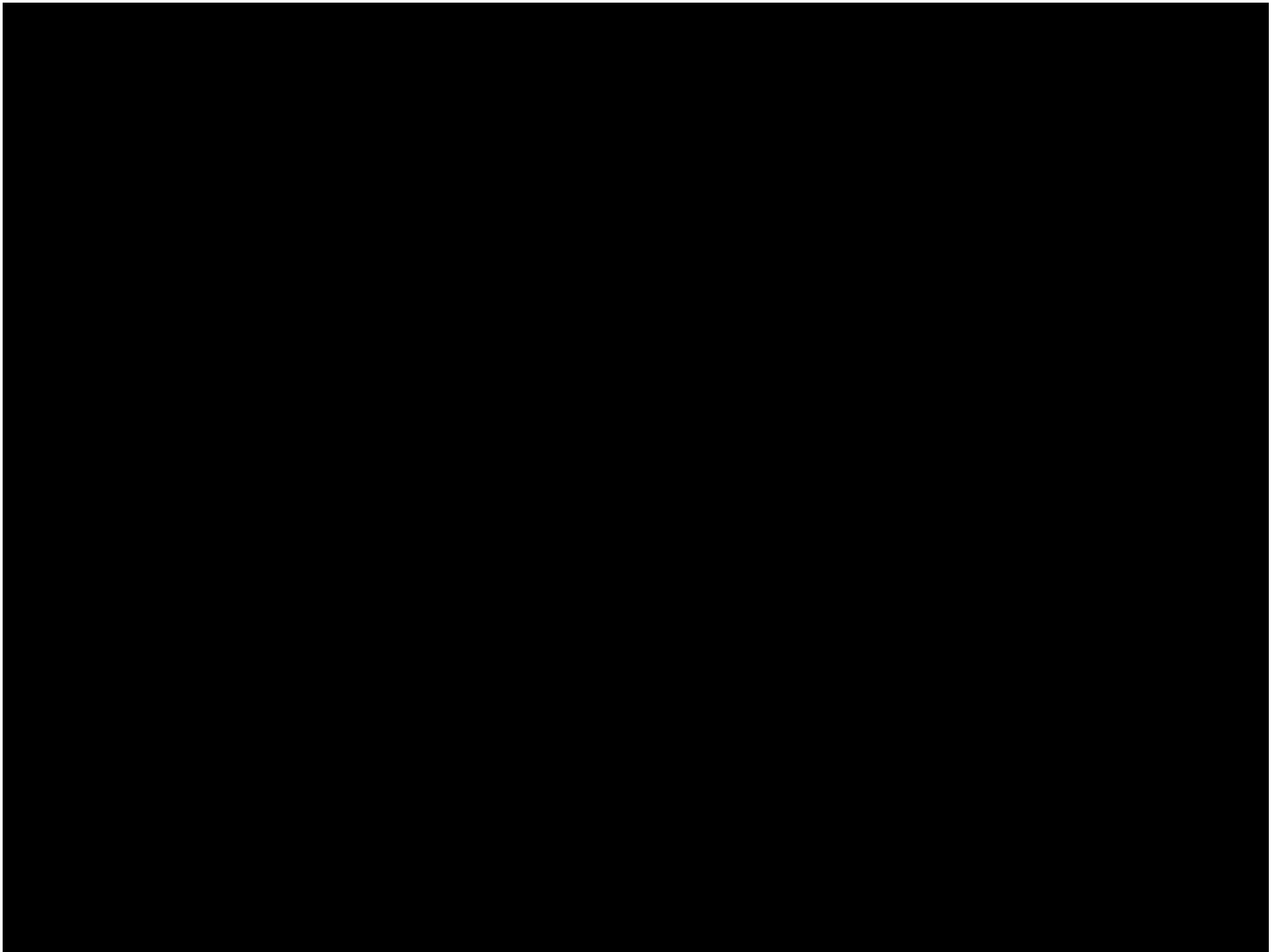
He himself is before all things, and
in him all things hold together.

He is the head of the body, the
church;

he is the beginning, the firstborn
from the dead, so that he might
come to have first place in
everything.

For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things,

whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.



Read often, learn all you can. Let sleep overcome you, the book still in your hands; when your head falls, let it be on the sacred page. . . . Keep close to the footsteps of Christ, and, intent on his words, say, "Did not our hearts burn within us on the road while Jesus opened the Scriptures to us?" (Luke 24:32) . . . Do you pray? You speak to the Bridegroom. Do you read? He speaks to you.

--St. Jerome

All sacred Scriptures should be read in the spirit in which they were written. In them, therefore, we should seek food for our souls rather than subtleties of speech. . . . Curiosity often hinders us in the reading of the Scriptures, for we try to examine and dispute over matters that we should pass over and accept in simplicity. If you desire to profit, read with humility, simplicity, and faith.

--Thomas `a Kempis

**Good Lord, give us your grace
not to read or hear this Gospel
of your bitter Passion with our
eyes and ears in the manner of
a pastime. But may it, with
compassion, so sink into our
hearts that it may serve for the
everlasting profit of our souls.**

--St. Thomas More

--Guigo the Carthusian (d.1188)

Lord you are invisible, except to the pure of heart. I seek to understand true purity of heart by reading Scriptures and by meditating.

Lord, I have read your words and meditated on your person for more years than I can remember. I long to see you face to face.

It is the sight of you, Lord, that I have sought. Over the years the fire of desire to see you has grown hotter and hotter. As I have meditated, my soul has received greater light. And the Scriptures excite my soul more than ever.

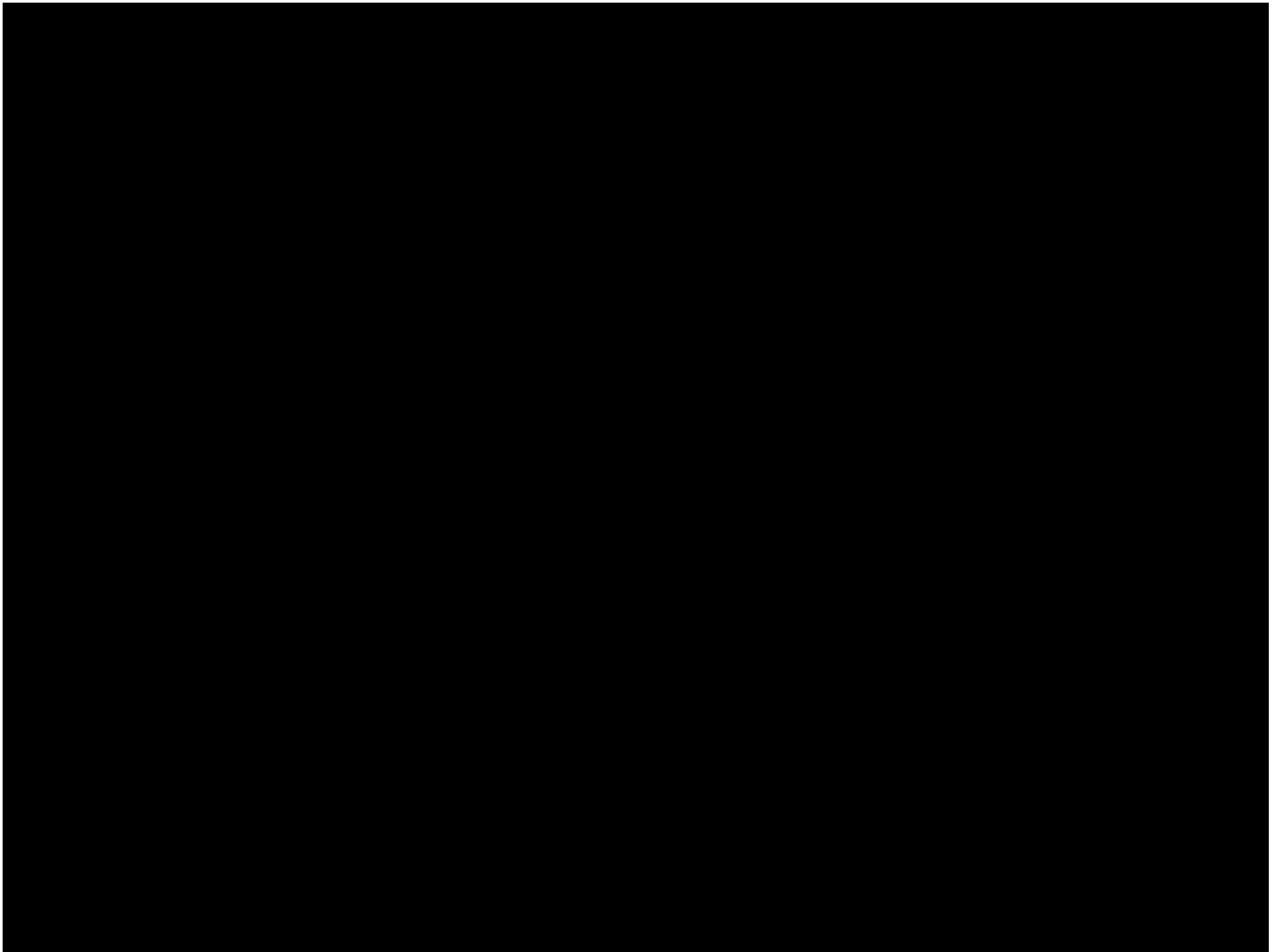
Lord, I do not dare to call you
To reveal yourself now or soon.
But give me a sign, a pledge
To ensure me that one day I will be
rewarded.

Give me a single drop of heavenly rain
To assuage my spiritual thirst.

--Guigo the Carthusian (d.1188)

Take away, O Lord, the veil of my heart while I read the Scriptures. Blessed are you, O Lord: O teach me your statutes: give me a word, O Word of the Father: touch my heart: enlighten the understandings of my heart: open my lips and fill them with your praise. Be, O Lord, in my spirit and in my mouth: in my mouth that lawfully and worthily I may show forth your oracles by the sanctifying power of your thrice Holy Spirit.

--Lancelot Andrewes (1555-1626)



Beyond absolutism, pluralism, and relativism

Let's go back 500 years:

The Roman Catholic Church has a system for preserving moral order.

Truth resides in people – known as THE AUTHORITIES – who are given understanding by God along with the right to tell others what to think and believe.

Martin Luther questioned this system, believing that the individual Christian could understand the Bible rightly, and that THE AUTHORITIES could be wrong.

THE AUTHORITIES believed that this rebellion against the way truth is known would result in anarchy, violence, and atheism.

Were they right?

THE AUTHORITIES believed that this rebellion against the way truth is known would result in anarchy, violence, and atheism.

Were they right?

What if we are in a similar time today?

What if the dominant method of knowing truth is being replaced by a new methodology ...

How will we respond?

Questioning how truth is known and disseminated is not a new problem.

GOING WAY BACK ...

The Sophists (5th century BC): Protagoras, Thales, Critias – skepticism about ancient myths and more recent theories, awareness of individual subjective bias and perspective, pragmatic turn (we can't know what's true – just what works), stimulation for individual thought and exploration.

They energized and yet destabilized philosophy and ethics, paving the way for Socrates.

Going Way Back:

Socrates – searching for absolute and universal goodness and justice – so all acts may be evaluated, chosen, rejected, or judged by a reliable, objective standard. (There is no good, better, or worse unless there is a standard to evaluate by.) A theory of ethics.

Plato – searching for the absolute and universal essence of all things – so all things may be truly known. A theory of being/reality (ontology) and knowledge (epistemology).

The search for the idea, the ideal, the form, the essence – not a human construction, but a reality embedded in the nature of things. (Example: Mathematics)

LET NO ONE UNACQUAINTED WITH GEOMETRY ENTER HERE
– Inscription above the door of Plato's Academy

Along comes Aristotle:

Shifts reality from essence (idea, ideal, form, universal) to substance (existence, particular). Ideas/forms become categories created by the intellect based on common qualities – thus universal ideals are humanly constructed (constructs).

Biology and botany – not geometry – become the model: all things grow and become, moving toward full development. Matter grows or evolves towards form.

Forms are intrinsic patterns, intelligible structures, governing dynamics, and the end or purpose (telos) toward which things move.

The Essential Tension:

The relation between ...

1. Universal unchanging objective invisible principles, ideas, ideals, forms. (Perceived through either rational mathematics or mystical contemplation)
2. Particular changing visible phenomena.
3. The faculties of the subject – the observer and thinker – who observes the visible phenomena and seeks or ponders the invisible universals.

INTELLECTUAL HISTORY:

Descartes

AND

SOCIAL HISTORY:

Thirty years war

THE 17TH CENTURY AND absolute
objective truth

Descartes' dreams

- Use the weapons of the enemy to defeat the enemy.

Descartes' experiment

- Use doubt to defeat doubt.

Descartes' finding:

- I can doubt my way to an undoubtable statement: *I doubt therefore I am.*

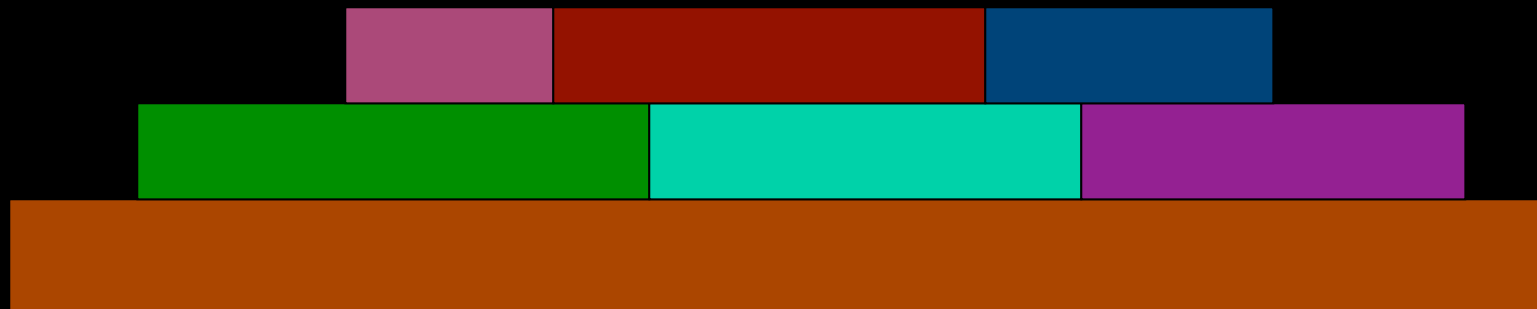
Newtonian (Modern) World:

Knowledge is like a building or wall.

**“Fundamental” Beliefs are
established by research (doubt).**

**They must be “incorrigible” and universal - which
means non-subjective, and absolute.**

Certainty is built from the bottom up.



INTELLECTUAL HISTORY:

descartes to derrida

AND

SOCIAL HISTORY:

holocaust & hiroshima

THE 20TH CENTURY AND
METANARRATIVE

The profound disquiet of postwar
European intellectuals:

How could we do this?

Has reason failed?

Where did we go wrong?

The profound disquiet of postwar
European intellectuals:

How could we do this?

Has reason failed?

Where did we go wrong?

Excessive confidence ...

Universal systems ...

Totalizing metanarratives ...

WHAT DO WE DO?

We name the disease:

Excessive confidence ...

Universal systems ...

Totalizing metanarratives ...

Absolutism

We prescribe the treatment:

We treat ABSOLUTISM with

PLURALISM

RELATIVISM

ABSOLUTISM: Upholding the conviction
a) that one single explanatory system or
view of reality can account for all the
phenomena of life and b) that conceptions
of truth and moral values are universal
and timeless, not relative to the persons
or groups holding them.

PLURALISM

1. The condition of being multiple or plural.

2. Sociology.

A. A condition in which numerous distinct ethnic, religious, or cultural groups are present and tolerated within a society.

B. The belief that such a condition is desirable or socially beneficial.

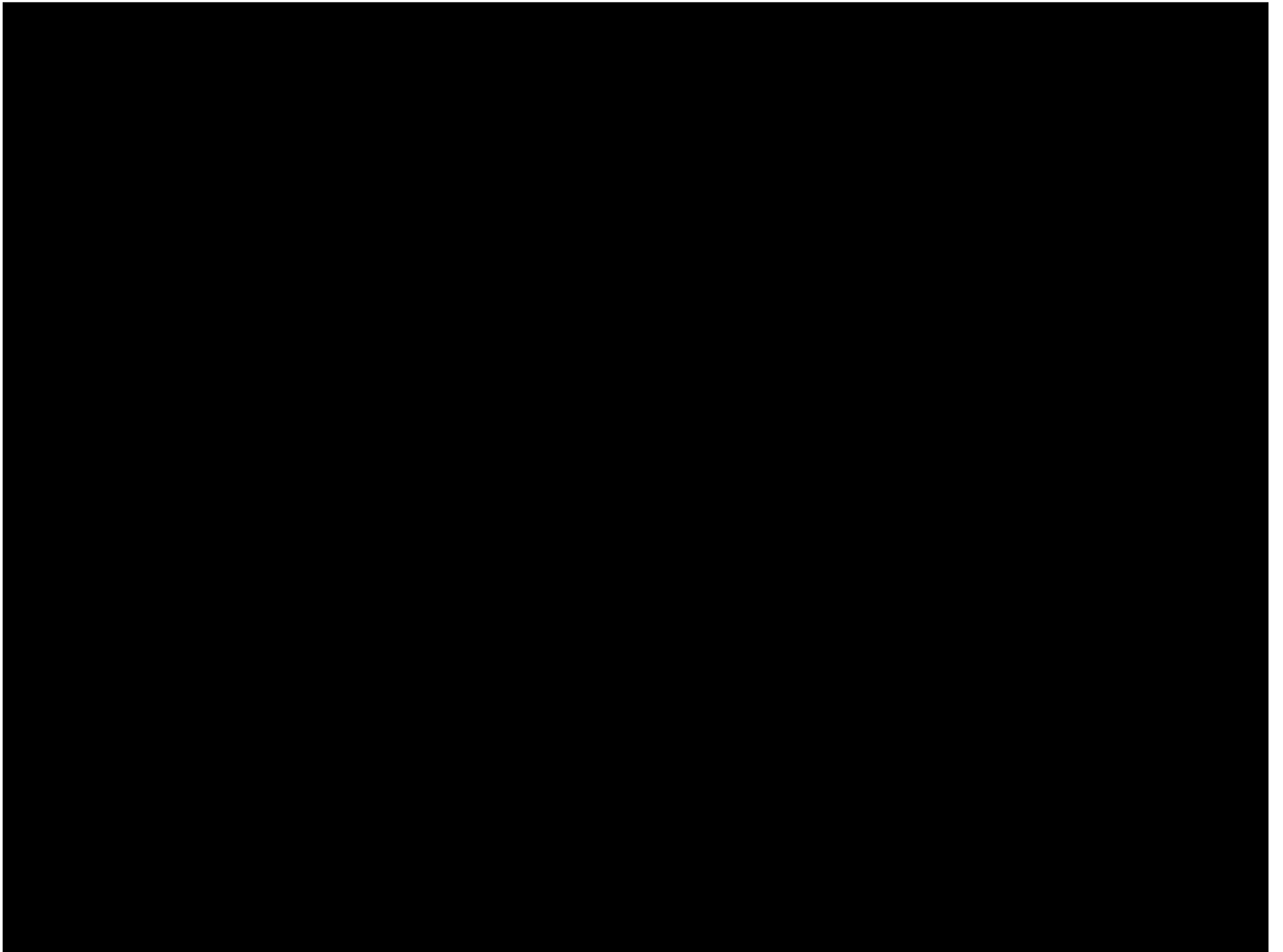
3. Philosophy.

A. The doctrine that reality is composed of many ultimate substances.

B. The belief that no single explanatory system or view of reality can account for all the phenomena of life.

RELATIVISM

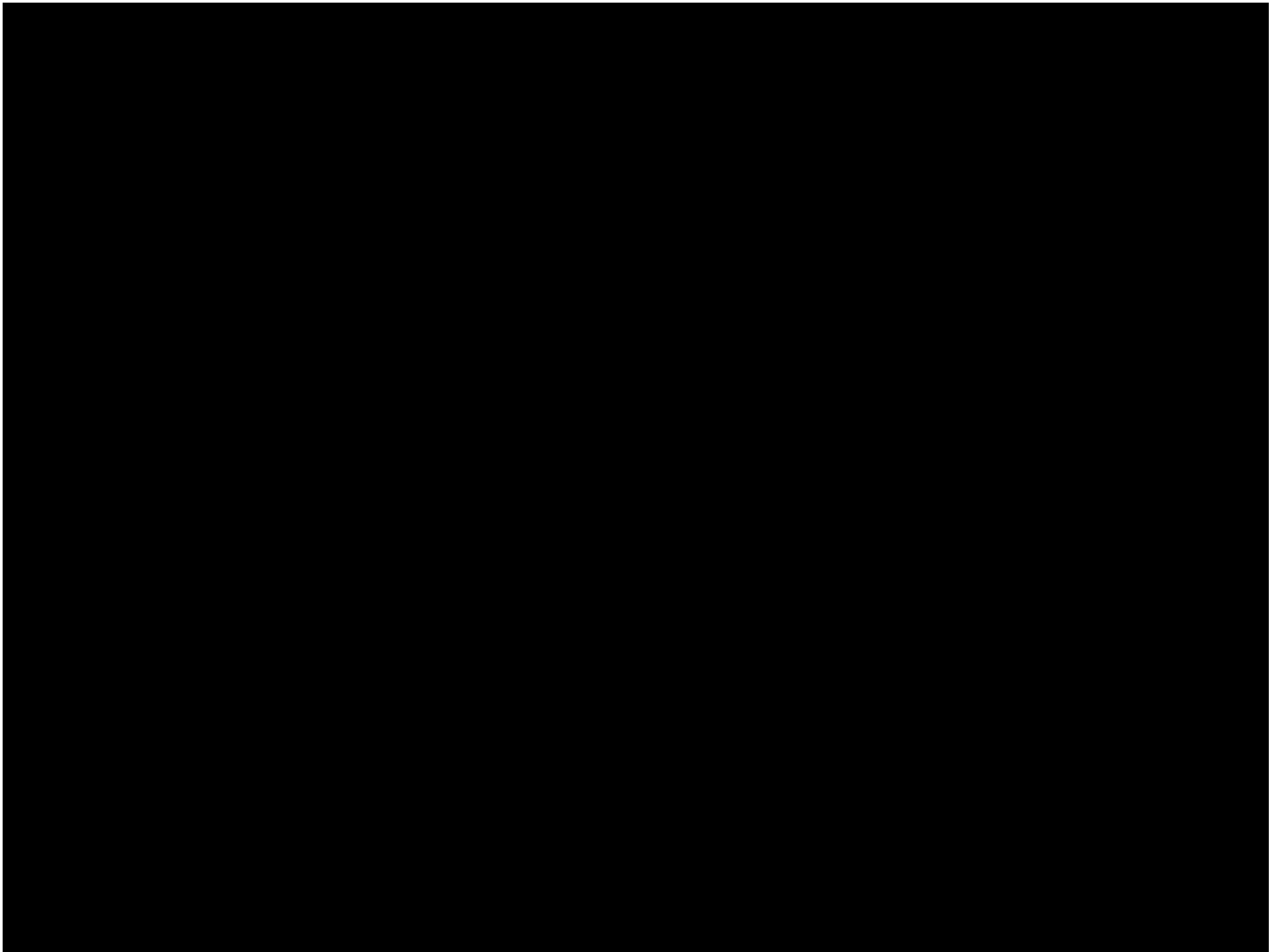
A theory, especially in ethics or aesthetics, that conceptions of truth and moral values are not absolute but are relative to the persons or groups holding them.

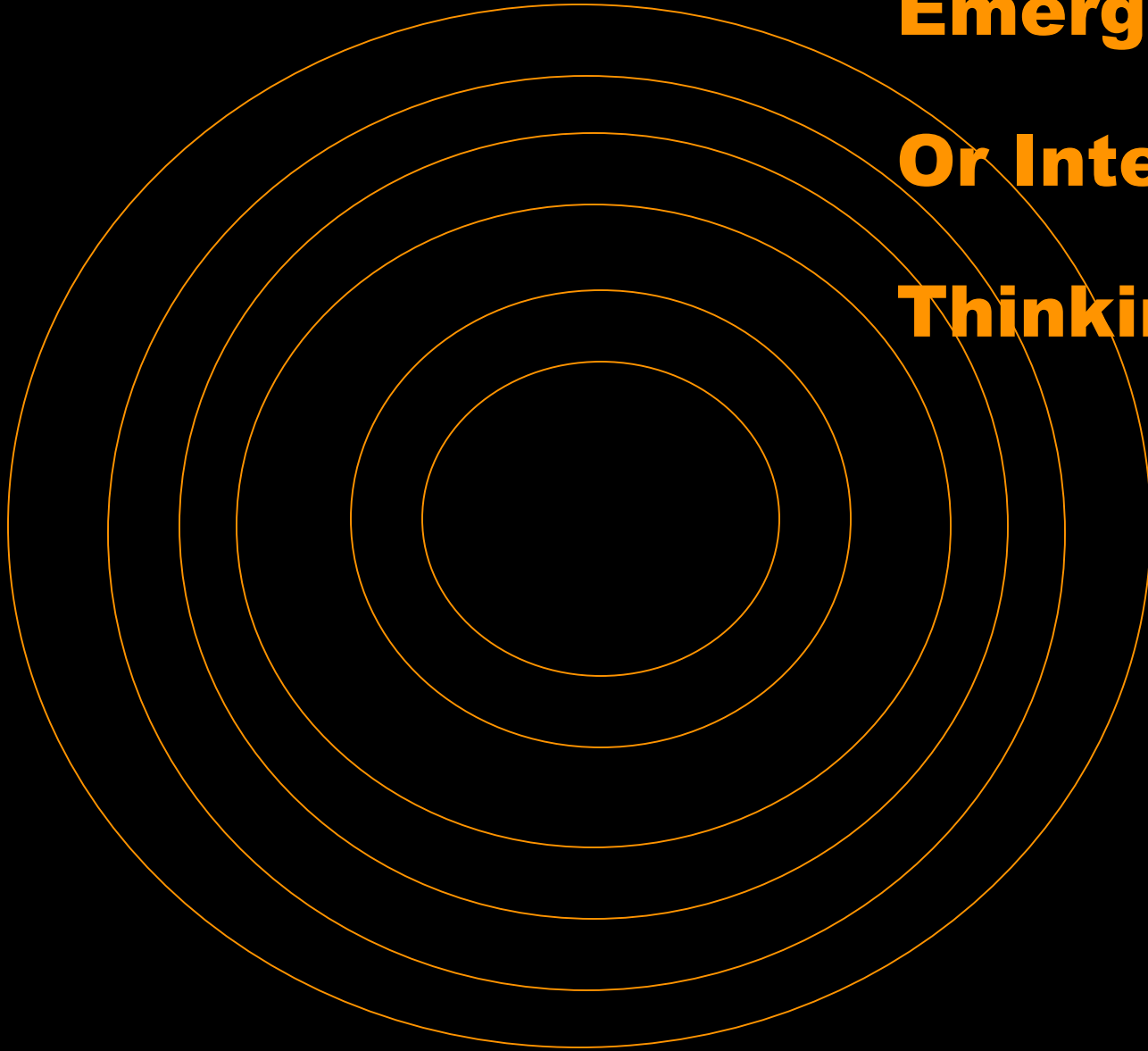


Thought experiment:

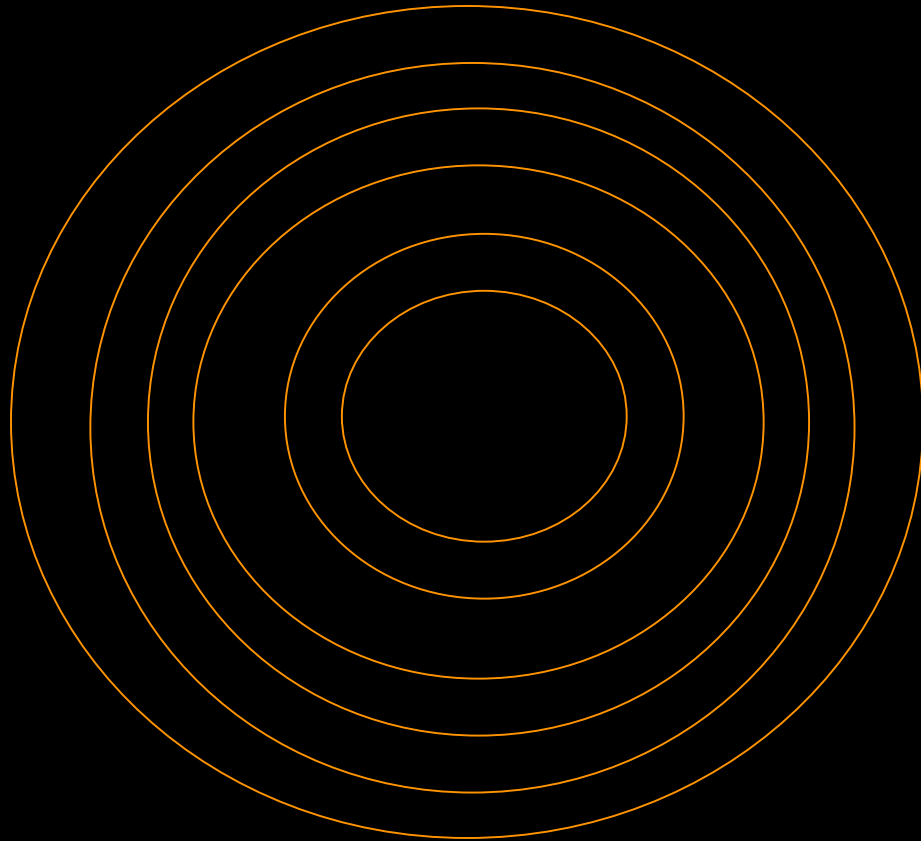
Remember the Taliban's destruction of the Pre-Islamic Buddhist statues in Eastern Afghanistan?

If Christians were in control of Afghanistan, should they have done the same thing?



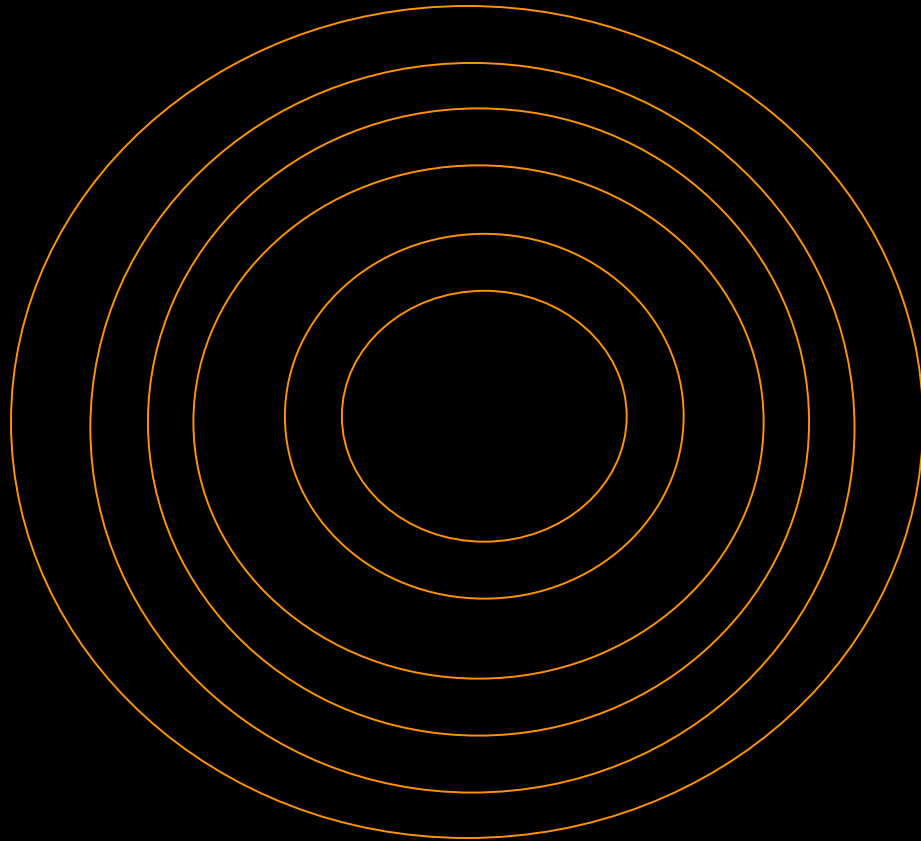


**Emergent
Or Integral
Thinking**



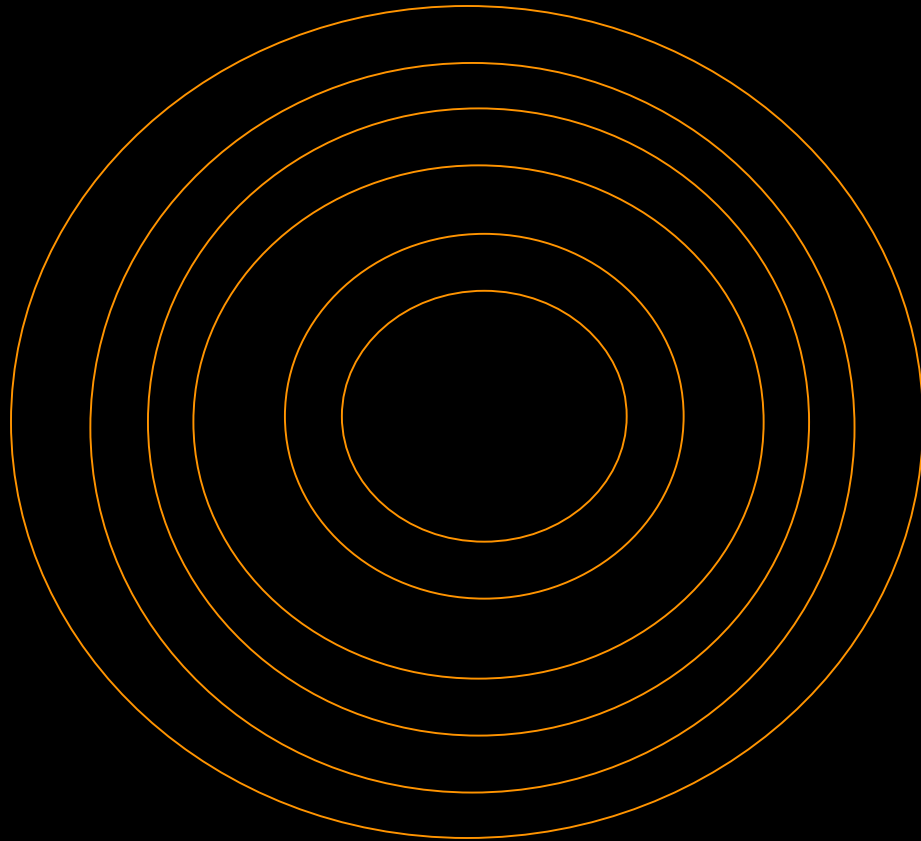
**Integral - Narrative -
Emergent Thinking:**

- 1. Letters**
- 2. Syllables**
- 3. Words**
- 4. Simple sentences**
- 5. Complex sentences**
- 6. Paragraphs**
- 7. Stories**
- 8. poetry**



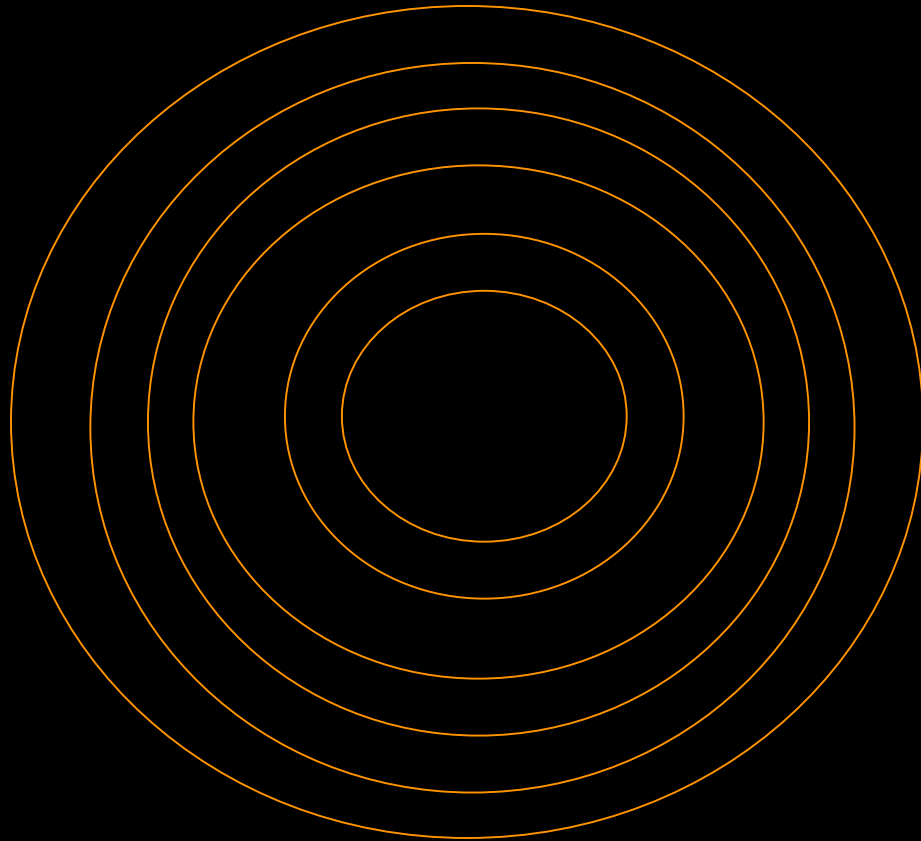
**Integral - Narrative -
Emergent Thinking:**

- 1. Infant**
- 2. Child**
- 3. Youth**
- 4. Young adult**
- 5. Adult**
- 6. Middle-aged**
- 7. Senior**
- 8. Elderly**
- 9. Dying/beyond**



**Integral - Narrative -
Emergent Thinking:**

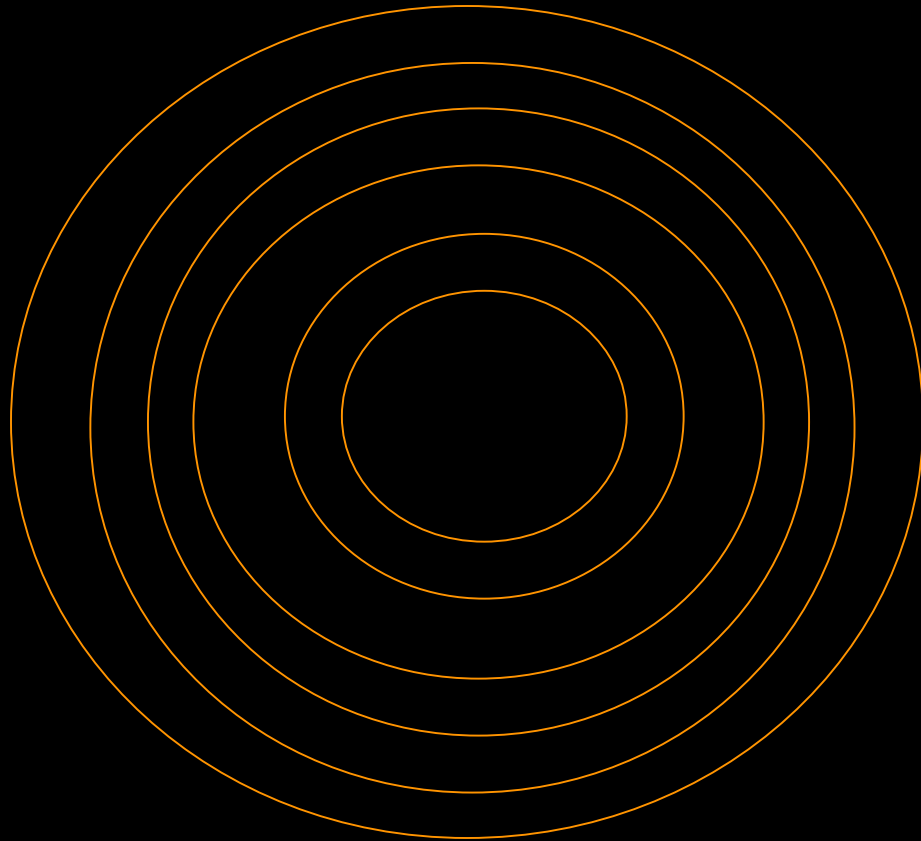
- 1. Band**
- 2. Tribe**
- 3. Chiefdom**
- 4. Kingdom**
- 5. Empire**
- 6. Nation**
- 7. Superpower**
- 8. Network???**



Integral - Narrative -

Emergent Thinking:

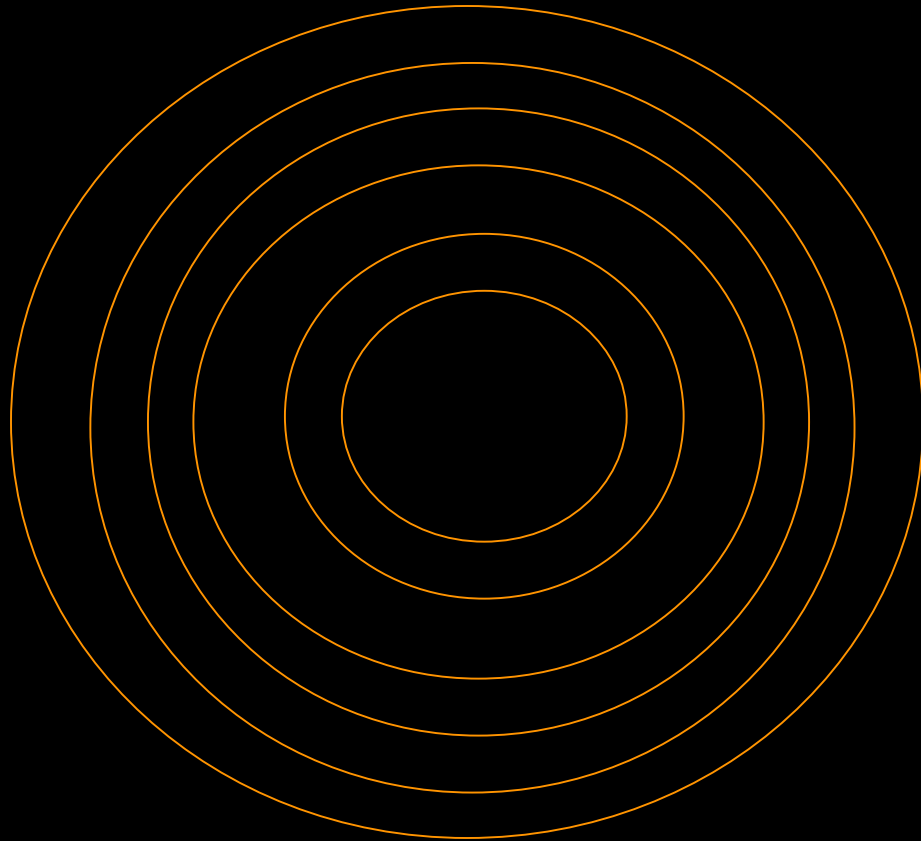
- 1. Animist**
- 2. Polytheist**
- 3. Ethnic/tribal monotheist**
- 4. Global monotheist**
- 5. Ethnic/tribal trinitarian**
- 6. Global trinitarian**



Integral - Narrative -

Emergent Thinking:

- 1. Body**
- 2. Reptilian brain**
- 3. Mammalian brain**
- 4. Human brain**
- 5. Mind/will/emotions**
- 6. Cultural forming**
- 7. Experiences,
memories, story**
- 8. Soul**



**Integral - Narrative -
Emergent Thinking:**

- 1. Magical/Tribal**
- 2. Imperial/National**
- 3. Historical/
Progressive**
- 4. Objective/Scientific**
- 5. Colonial/Absolutist**
- 6. Pluralist**
- 7. Relativist**
- 8. Beyond relativist**

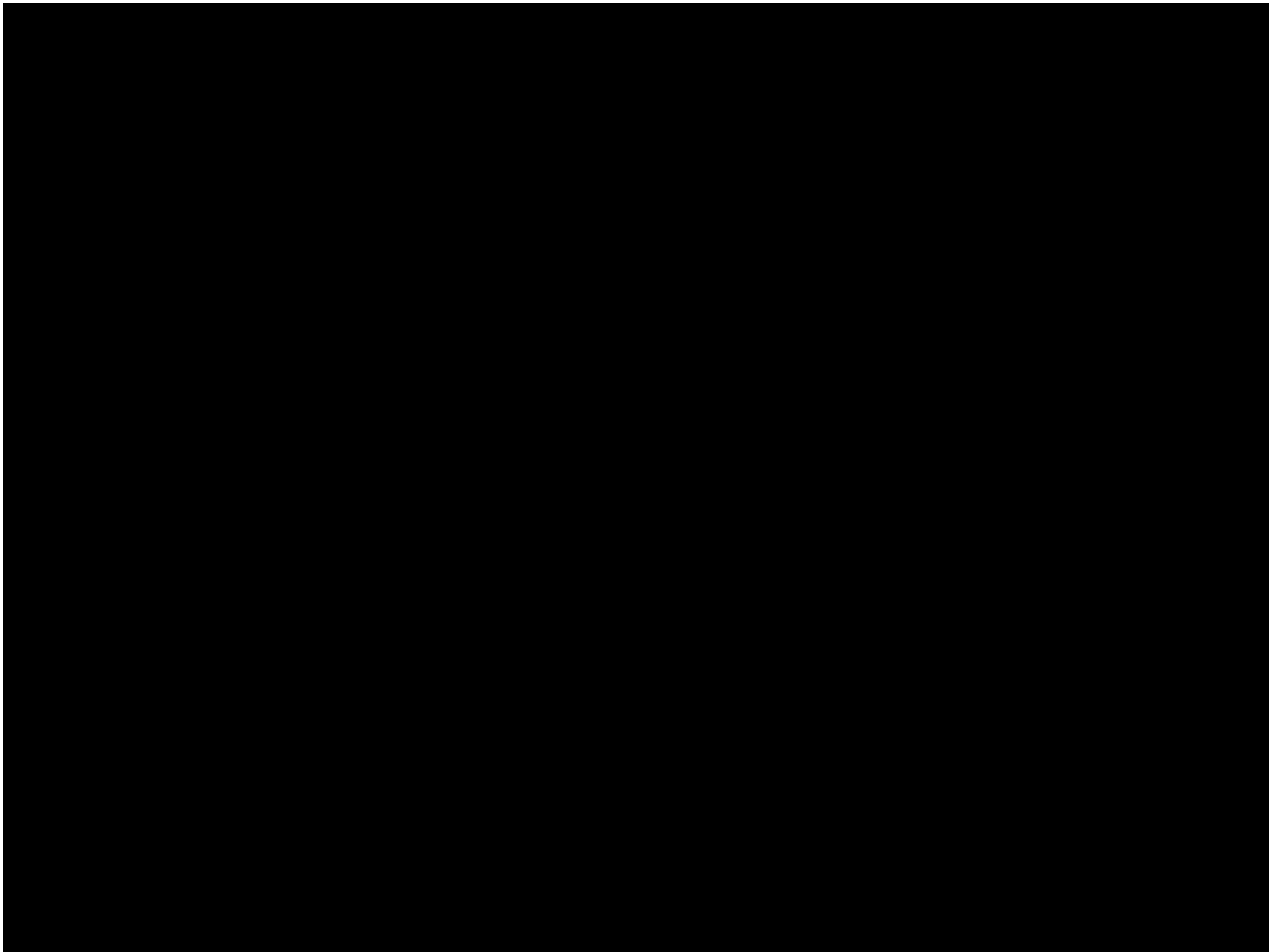
ABSOLUTISM AS CANCER

RELATIVISM AS CHEMOTHERAPY

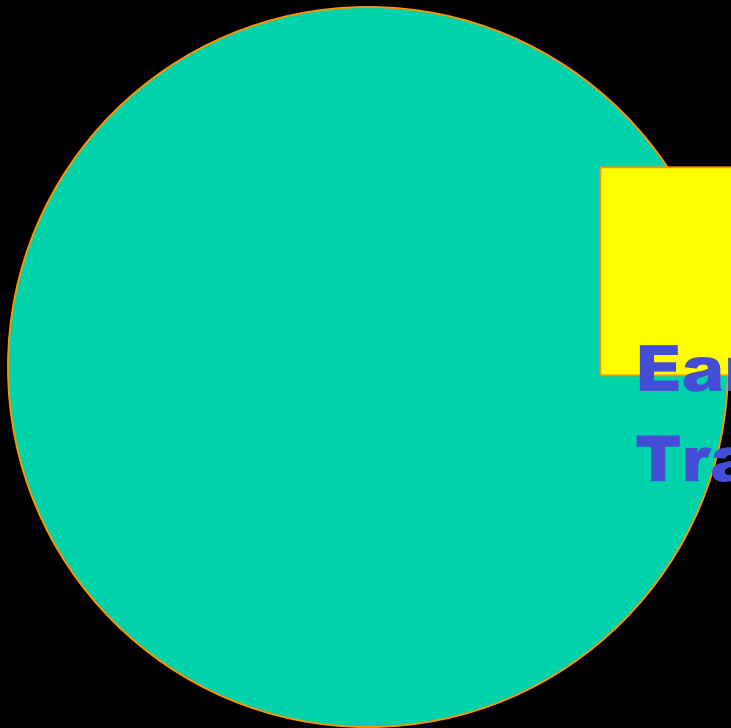
**IS THE GOSPEL AN ABSOLUTIST
(TOTALITARIAN) METANARRATIVE**

**OR A PRIVATE PERSONAL TRUE-FOR-ME
RELATIVIST NARRATIVE**

**Or ... An embracing mega-narrative this is
*beyond both absolutism and relativism?***



Old Paradigm



**Early
Transition**

**Late
Transition**



**New
Paradigm**

BEYOND MODERN
ABSOLUTISM AND EARLY
POSTMODERN RELATIVISM:

Thoughts from N. T. Wright

THE CHALLENGE OF JESUS

IVP, 1999

We dare not, as Christians, remain content with an epistemology wished upon us from one philosophical and cultural movement, part of which was conceived in explicit opposition to Christianity. ...we should allow our knowledge of [Jesus], and still more his knowledge of us, to inform us about what true knowing really is.

I believe that a biblical account of 'knowing' should take love as the basic mode of knowing, with the love of God as the highest and fullest sort of knowing that there is, and should work, so to speak, down from there.

What is love all about? When I love, I affirm the differentness of the beloved; not to do so is of course not love at all but lust. But at the same time when I love, I am not a detached observer, the fly on the wall of objectivist epistemology. I am passionately and compassionately involved with the life and being of that ... which I am loving.

[note: beyond subject and objective)

I believe that we can and must as Christians within a postmodern world give an account of human knowing that will apply to music and mathematics, to biology and to history, to theology and to chemistry. We need to articulate, for the post-postmodern world, what we might call

an epistemology of love.

This is at the heart of our great opportunity here and now, for serious and joyful Christian mission to the post-postmodern world. We live in a time of cultural crisis. At the moment I don't hear anyone out there pointing **a way forward** out of the postmodern morass; some people are still trying to put up the shutters and live in a pre-modern world, many are clinging to modernism for all they're worth ...

But we can do better than that.... The gospel of Jesus points us and indeed urges us to be at the leading edge of the whole culture, articulating in story and music and art and philosophy and education and poetry and politics and theology and even, heaven help us, biblical studies, a worldview that will mount the historically rooted Christian challenge

to both modernity and postmodernity,
leading the way into the post-
postmodern world with joy and humor
and gentleness and good judgment
and true wisdom.

I believe we face the question: if not now, then when? ... If not us, then who? And if the gospel of Jesus is not the key to this task, then what is?

(197-198)

From E. Stanley Jones (1884-1973), *The Christ of the Indian Road*:

When Mohammedanism confronted Hinduism the demand was of absolute surrender - a complete wiping of the slate of the past and the dictates of the prophet written in its stead....

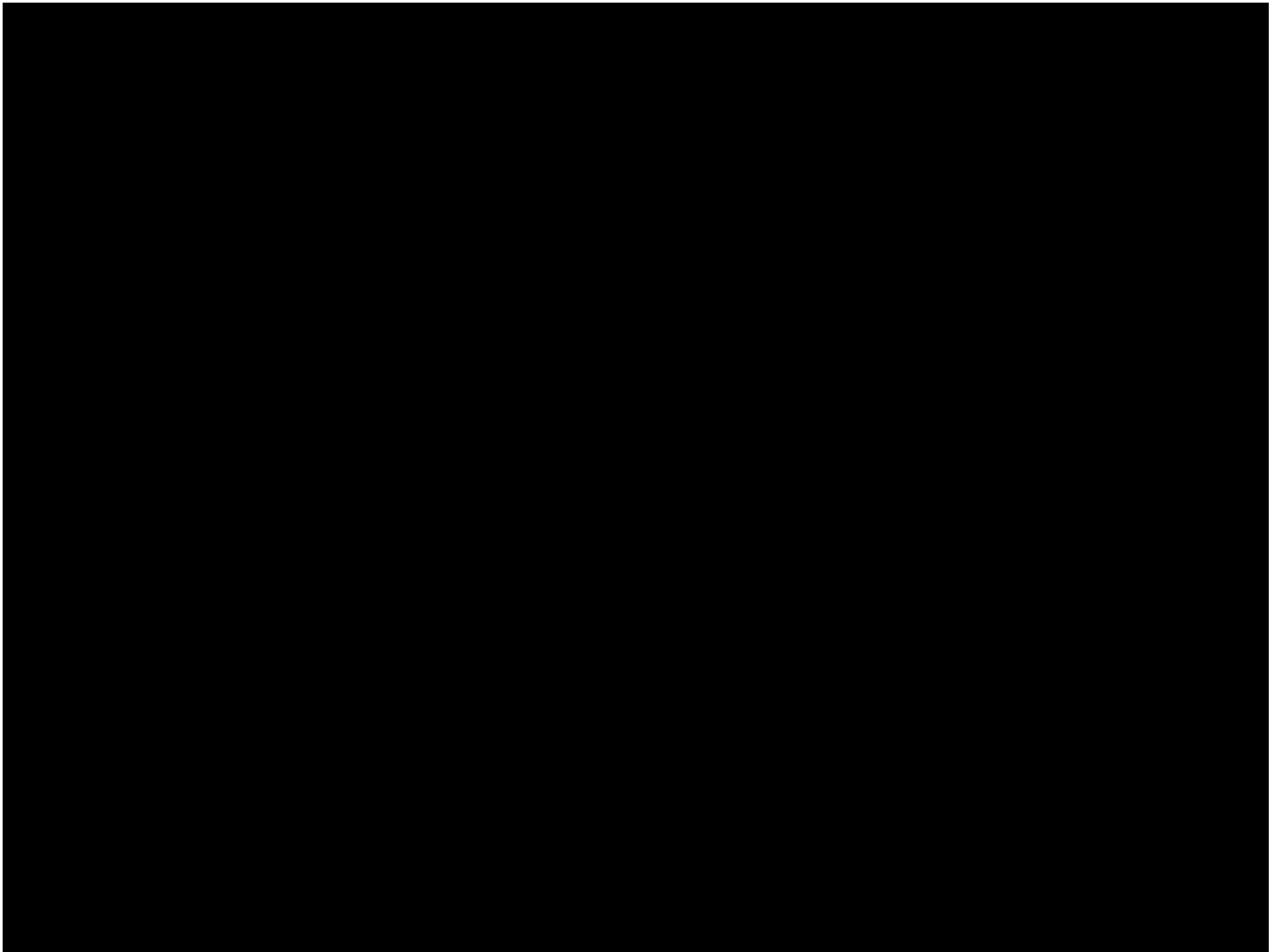
Does Jesus take the same attitude? Are his demands upon India the same as Mohammed?

Is the slate to be wiped clean and the past absolutely blotted out?

It must be confessed that this has often been the attitude and demand of the Christian missionary. If Christianity is more or less identified with Western civilization and presented as such, or if it is a system of church government and a more or less fixed theological system, blocked off and rigid and presented as such, then I do not see how we can escape the attitude of the Mohammedan. The past must be wiped out and a clean slate presented for our theological systems, our ecclesiastical organizations, and our civilization to be written in its stead.

But if our message be Christ, and Christ alone, then this does not necessarily follow. He may turn to India as he turned to Judaism and say, “I came not to destroy but to fulfill.” Just as he gathered up in his own life and person everything that was fine and beautiful in Jewish teaching and past and gave it a new radiant expression, so he may do the same with India. The fact is that the words that he used would imply that, for it is a generic term: “I came not to destroy but to fulfill,” it is locally applied to the Law and the Prophets, but capable of wider application to truth found anywhere.

(Abingdon, 2001, 169-160)



A Poem by Edna St. Vincent Millay

Upon this age that never speaks its
mind

This furtive age, this age endowed
with power to wake the moon with
footsteps,

To fit an oar into the rowlocks of the
wind and find what swims before his
prow

And what swirls behind,

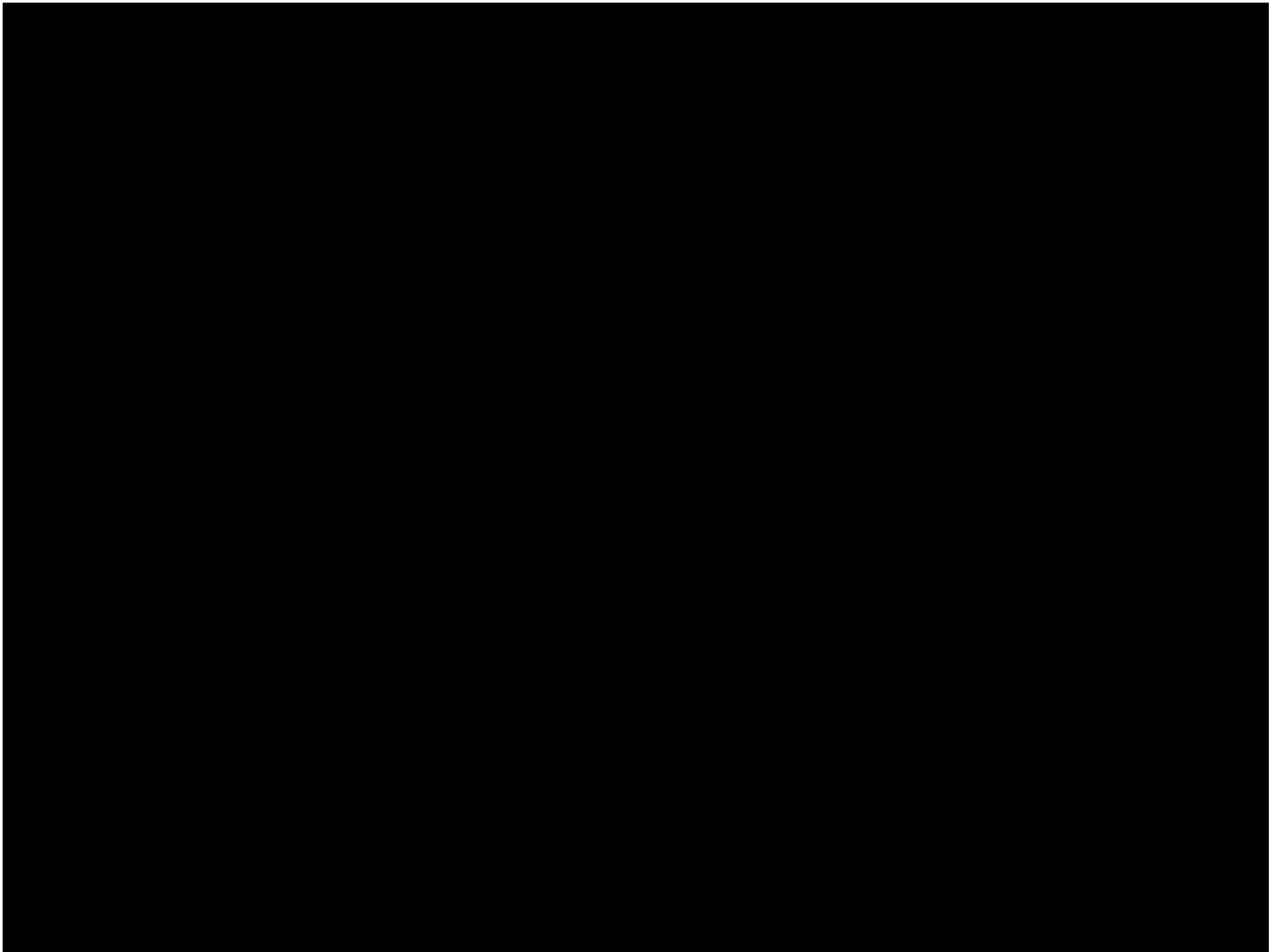
A Poem by Edna St. Vincent Millay

Upon this gifted age in this dark hour
Rains from the sky a meteoric shower
of facts.

They lie unquestioned, uncombined.
Wisdom enough to leach us of our ill
is daily spun

But there exists no loom to weave it
into fabric.

Edna St. Vincent Millay (from "Hunstman, What Quarry?")



David Bosch

Born 1930

Died 1992 (killed in car crash)

Missionary in Transkei, 1957-1971

Professor of Missiology, University of South Africa, after 1971

Dean, Faculty of Theology, 1974-1977, 81-87

Chair, National Initiative for Reconciliation, 1989-1992

Fluent in Xhosa, Afrikaans, Dutch, German, English

“I don’t think I can leave my colleagues and the struggle for South Africa. It is a critical moment and that is where God has placed me”

(late 1980’s, regarding invitation
to teach in U.S.)

“We are dealing with a mystery.”

(TM 483)

Eight Perspectives

1. Accept the coexistence of different faiths ... willingly, not begrudgingly.

Christian mission must be dialogical.

**The seven formative factors in
theology ...**

**experience, revelation, Scripture,
tradition, culture, reason ...**

(Macquarrie, 1977)

**and dialogue
with other religions.**

(TM 483)

“One-way, monological travel is out, as is militancy in any form.”

Eight Perspectives

**2. Dialogue presupposes
commitment, not the sacrifice of
one's position.**

“Without my commitment to the gospel, dialogue becomes a mere chatter; without the authentic practice of the neighbor it becomes arrogant and worthless.”

(TM 484)

Eight Perspectives

3. We assume that dialogue takes place in the presence of God, that God is an unseen partner in our dialogues, with something to teach all participants.

“We are not the “haves,” the *beati possidentes*, standing over against spiritual “have-nots,” the *massa damnata*. We are all recipients of the same mercy, sharing in the same mystery.”

(TM 484)

Eight Perspectives

4. Missional dialogue requires humility.

Apologetics often requires apology: the line of error and injustice runs through, not between, all religions, including Christianity.

...it is when we are weak that we are strong. So, the word that perhaps best characterizes the Christian church in its encounter with other faiths is *vulnerability*.... The people who are to be won and saved should, as it were, always have the possibility of crucifying the witness of the gospel. (TM 485)

Humility also means showing respect for our forebears in the faith, for what they have handed down to us, even if we have reason to be acutely embarrassed by their racist, sexist, and imperialist bias. The point is that we have no guarantees that we will do any better than they did.

We delude ourselves if we believe that we can be respectful to other faiths only if we disparage our own. (TM 485)

Eight Perspectives

5. We realize that each religion is its own world, requiring very different responses from Christians.

Eight Perspectives

6. “We affirm that witness does not preclude dialogue but invites it, and that dialogue does not preclude witness but extends and deepens it.” (San Antonio CWME)

Eight Perspectives

7. The “old, old story” may not have been the “true, true story,” and so we must continually re-discover the gospel.

Eight Perspectives

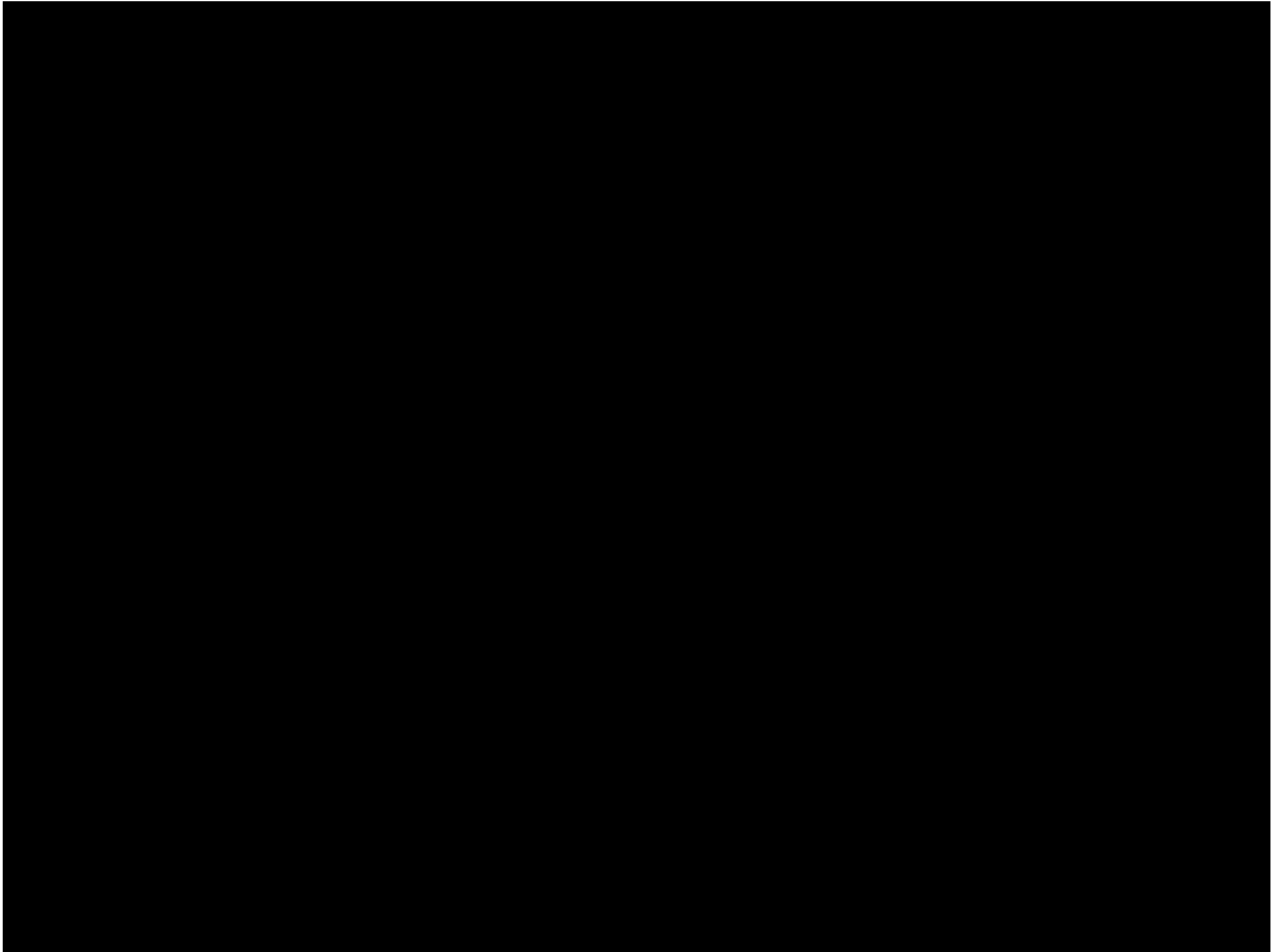
8. We must live with a paradox:

“We cannot point to any other way of salvation than Jesus Christ; at the same time, we cannot set limits to the saving power of God.... We appreciate this tension, and do not attempt to resolve it.

(San Antonio)

The goal: beyond absolutist, beyond relativist ...

To see the gospel as an integrative story which weaves fragments into a coherent, healing, growing fabric of meaning and mission.



The Modern Missionary Movement:

Perhaps we're entering the fifth?

1. Apostolic (Mediterranean Eurasia)

2. Patristic (North Africa)

3. Celtic (Northern Europe)

4a. Modern Catholic

4b. Modern Protestant

The Modern Missionary Movement:

1. Aligned with European colonial empire/expansion (Northern and Southern)

2. Attracted the most innovative, progressive members of society

3. Aligned with modern technology and medicine

4. Competitive

The Modern Missionary Movement:

- 5. Generally spread European culture with the gospel**
- 6. Generally led to “redemption and lift” in early stages, but failed to extend the lift.**
- 7. Promoted literacy and primary/secondary education**
- 8. Dominated by Rome, England, and U.S.**
- 9. Largely denominational.**

The Modern Missionary Movement:

10. “Absolutist” - colonial about theological understanding as well as culture.

A BRIEF BUT IMPORTANT DIGRESSION:

PLURALISM, RELATIVISM ...

AND

fR_A G M E N _T A T I O n

From Jonathan R. Wilson's "Living Faithfully in a Fragmented World: Lessons for the Church from MacIntyre's *After Virtue*."
(Thanks to James Mills)

One of the most popular ways of characterizing the challenge of the modern world to Christian mission is to say that we live in a pluralistic world. This pluralism is supposed to be a particular challenge for a church that has lived in a monolithic world for so long and has not had to compete with other claims to truth.

The second lesson that we learn from MacIntyre's *After Virtue* is that we live, not in a pluralistic world, but among fragmented worlds. As we will see, this characterization makes the challenge of our situation much deeper than pluralism....

Pluralism, as I am using it here, describes a world of competing outlooks, traditions, or claims to truth. It pictures a culture made up of coherent, integral communities, traditions, or positions that can be clearly differentiated from one another. Although they disagree and may often be in conflict, where these disagreements are located and why they arise are generally clear to everyone. One's Identity—as an individual or a community—is clear, the convictions that constitute that identity are coherent, and the life that follows from these convictions is determined. When one of these communities breaks down, we can say how it has failed. So even though there are many competing communities, identities, or positions, pluralism describes a situation in which these competing outlooks are coherent and clearly defined.

MacIntyre argues that characterizing our culture in terms of pluralism is misleading and obscures the real challenge that we face. In his analysis, Western Culture is fragmented, not pluralistic. It is incoherent; our lives are lived piecemeal, not whole. The disagreements that we have are difficult to resolve because we cannot locate them within some coherent position or community. We do not live in a world filled with competing outlooks; we live in a world that has fallen apart.

Although pluralism is often used to describe the new situation and challenges facing the church, it more nearly describes the world in which I grew up in the American Midwest and South in the 1950s and 1960s. We are used to thinking of American Culture in the 1950's and early 1960s as monolithic. However, in those years, we were all acutely aware that we lived in a world of competing communities and traditions. The melting pot was full of unmeltable goods.

In order to live faithfully today, we must recognize that we have not moved from a monolithic world into a pluralistic world; rather, we have moved from a time when our communities were relatively coherent and clear to a time when our communities and traditions have become fragmented. Certainly, some coherent communities still exist, but these are communities that for various reasons have not been a part of our cultural change. For example, the Amish, as well as Hasidic Jews, remain relatively coherent as communities because they have not participated in the larger culture. Recent Muslim immigrants have coherent communities because their participation in Western Culture is relatively recent.

The church in the West is fragmented because its life has for so long been intertwined with the larger culture. As that culture has fragmented, so also has the church. MacIntyre's narrative of this fragmentation centers on morality. He shows that moral schemes that were previously coherent depend for their coherence upon a conceptual scheme that gave a description of (1) "where" humans are on the moral landscape, (2) where they should be, and (3) how to get from where they are to where they should be. In a lengthy and powerful analysis, MacIntyre shows how and why modern culture abandoned the second element of this scheme—any convictions about where humans should be—our telos (goal, purpose, end). Once any notion of telos is abandoned, we are left with where humans are and what we should do, but what we should do—morality—makes no sense apart from telos. Therefore our moral language, practice, and concepts linger as fragments of a previously coherent account. As time goes on, these moral fragments appear arbitrary—mere exercises of power or expressions of emotion.

This same fragmentation has deeply affected the moral life of the church, but its effects are not limited to morality. The entire life of the church has been deeply affected by this fragmentation. If we cling to pluralism and neglect fragmentation as a description of our situation, we will become more vulnerable over time and will cease to live and witness faithfully. We will have the appearance of life and health, but it will be only simulacra of the church's calling.

Selected, from *Living Faithfully in a Fragmented World*