

# What Do We Do Now?

Shifting Paradigms in Times of  
Chaos, Upheaval, and Injustice



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Saint Mark's Cathedral  
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# Holding things lightly...

*...There will be times this next year  
when I desperately need wonder,  
and though I will likely forget  
the particulars of this night,  
let me not forget how to be stirred  
by beauty, remade by it, even.  
So I practice now, this art  
of falling in love with the world.  
Come tomorrow, I will practice again.*



-From "At the New Year's Eve Bonfire" by  
Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer

# Presuppositions for the two-week series

- Our world is on fire...
- The human impulse is to conservative inertia or even regression.
- “Crucible Moment”
- Paradigm shifts (revolutionary insights) are needed
- We are on the cusp of something significant.
- Hint: Jesus was on to something big!

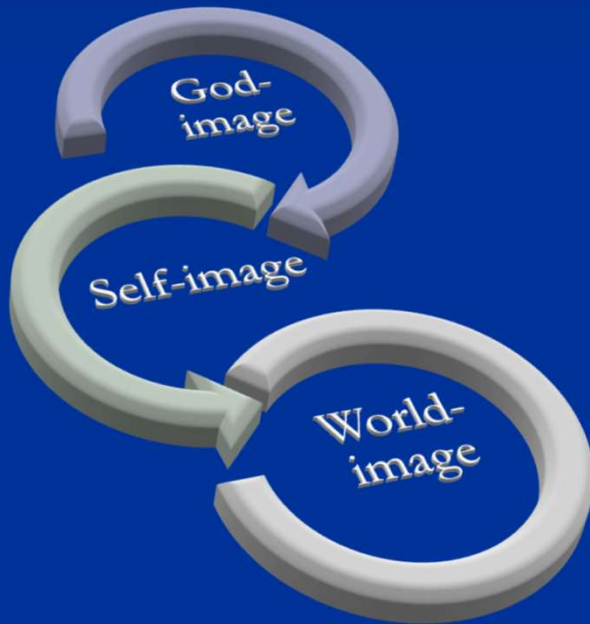


# Teleological framework for this series

- We were created to live in union with God (Rohr: Divine Love Affair)
- Love is the Source and Goal (Ground of all Being)
  - Faith is the slow process of getting there
    - Hope is the willingness to move forward without resolution or closure
- We need all three (Love, Faith, Hope) to make the arduous journey
- Even when we feel the absence of God, we still are in the “womb of the incarnation”—preparing to be born into what’s next.
- In the fullness of time, we open/yield into union with God (mystery)—nothing and no one is irretrievably lost!

*Be gentle with yourself*

# Worldview as Matrix

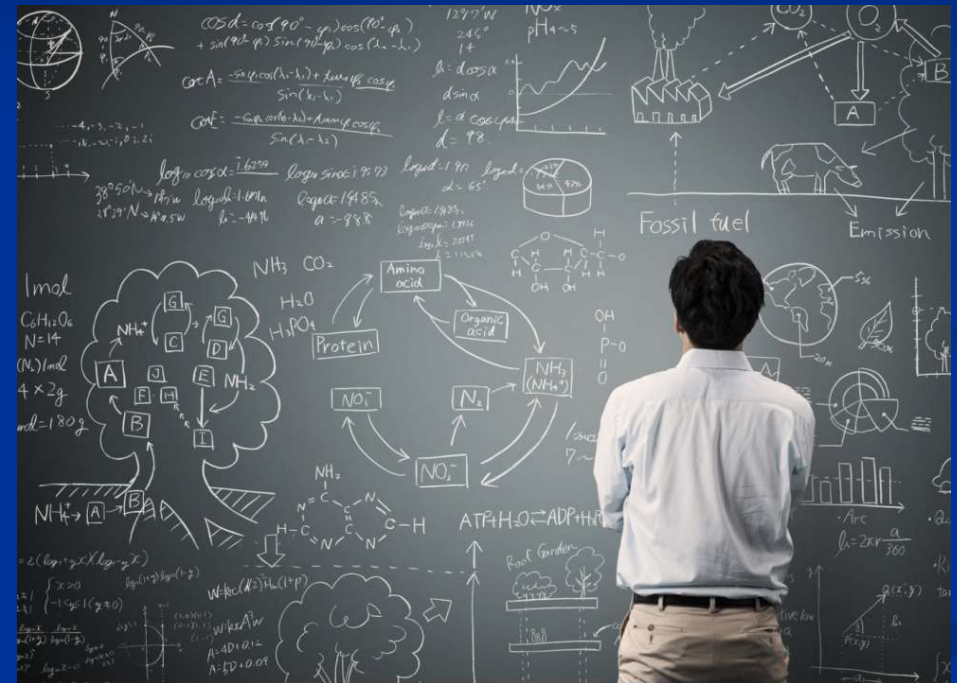


If one changes,  
the others must also change

# Paradigm

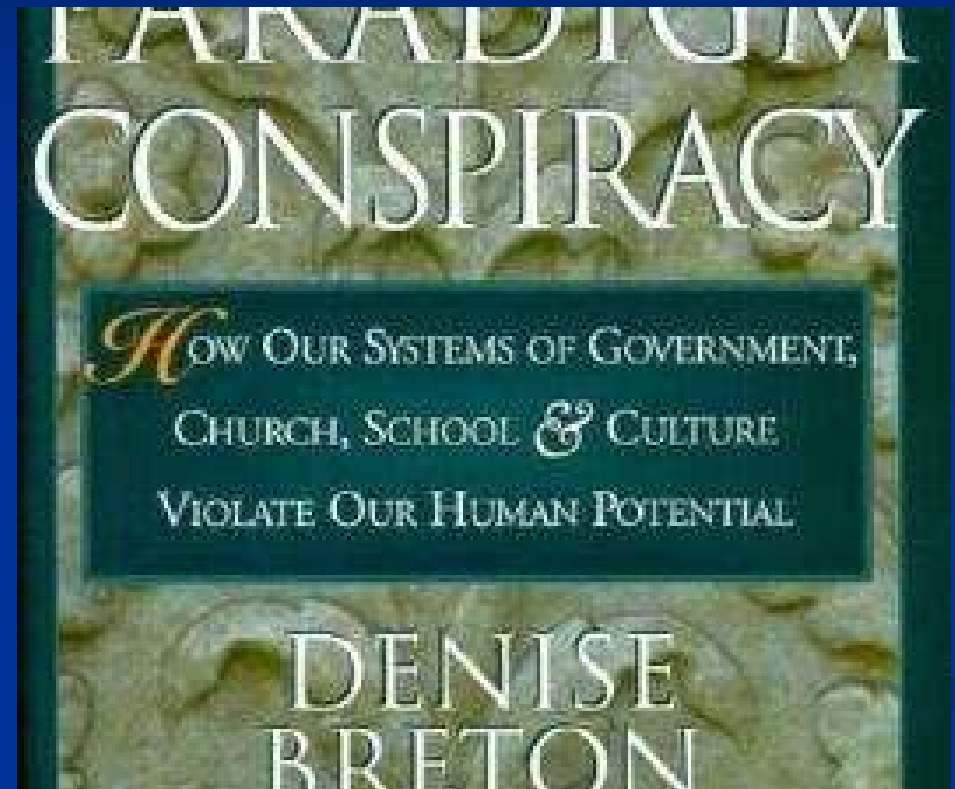
- Thomas Kuhn was the first to use the term
- Premise: Over time the paradigm is so integrated that it becomes invisible, until it is challenged by some revolutionary development external to the paradigm.
- The problem is that we keep trying to make the old paradigm work, and when it doesn't, we conclude our world is falling apart. (soul-abusive)
- Paradigms are prevalent—schools educate, families nurture, governments promote public good, businesses manage shared resources, religious institutions inspire us and help in fulfilling life's purpose...except they sometimes don't

***Conclusion: Prevailing models stymie change (institutional inertia)***



# Paradigm Conspiracy

- As long as the paradigm remains invisible, we're stuck—resist change
- If we try to move in new direction, the old paradigm intimidates us into the old “soul-diminishing” behavior
  - Conspiracy #1—perpetual loop back into what's known, even if it doesn't work
  - Conspiracy #2—revolution into new paradigm is inherently anxiety-provoking because of its unknowns, risk of failure (it may not be the right new paradigm)
- More about this next week—addictions, recovery, resilience...



# Tandem Conversations

- Paradigms are prevalent—schools educate, families nurture, governments promote public good, businesses manage shared resources, religious institutions inspire us and help in fulfilling life's purpose...
- Except they sometimes don't...

- Think of a social paradigm that runs in the background of your life.
  - How does it work well?
  - How has it not worked well?
- Can you think of a paradigm at work that is afflicting humanity today?

# Plenary conversation #1

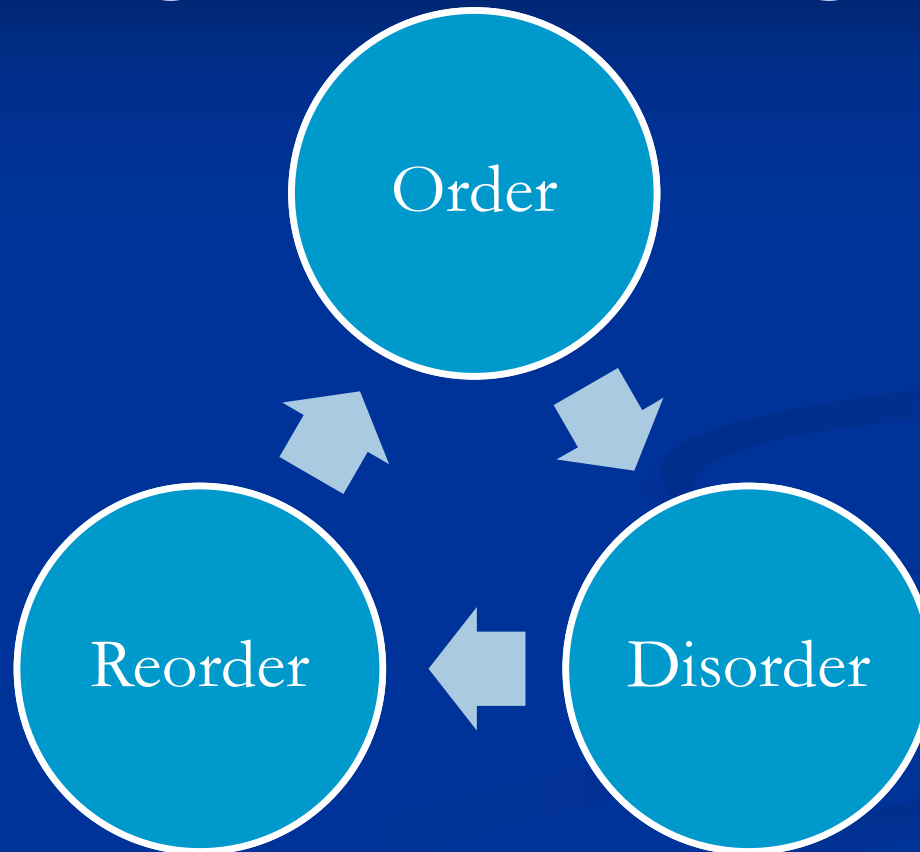
- Paradigms aren't bad; they just need to be seen for their limitations
- We use them to better understand, not put blinders on.
- And to what end? What purpose do they serve?



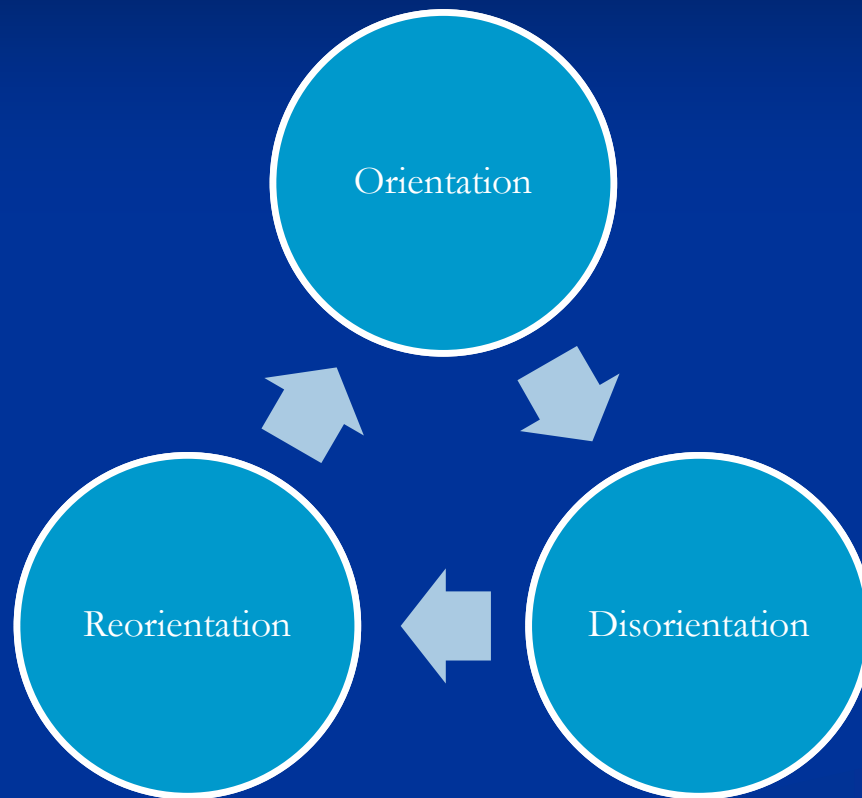
# “Modern” Western Paradigm

- Last 300 years, Western culture has been guided by a story of dominion, control, and materialism.
- Mastery over physical world, understood as a machine to be managed by technical solutions
  - Working to produce better-functioning machines
  - Downsides baked into the system:
    - Fear (what can't be controlled is to be feared)
    - Pernicious effect on relationships (how we consider one another)—cogs in machines, machines ourselves needing to be organized/controlled
- Institutional inertia strives to hold on, even regress

# Seeking New Models (heuristic guides, not straightjackets)



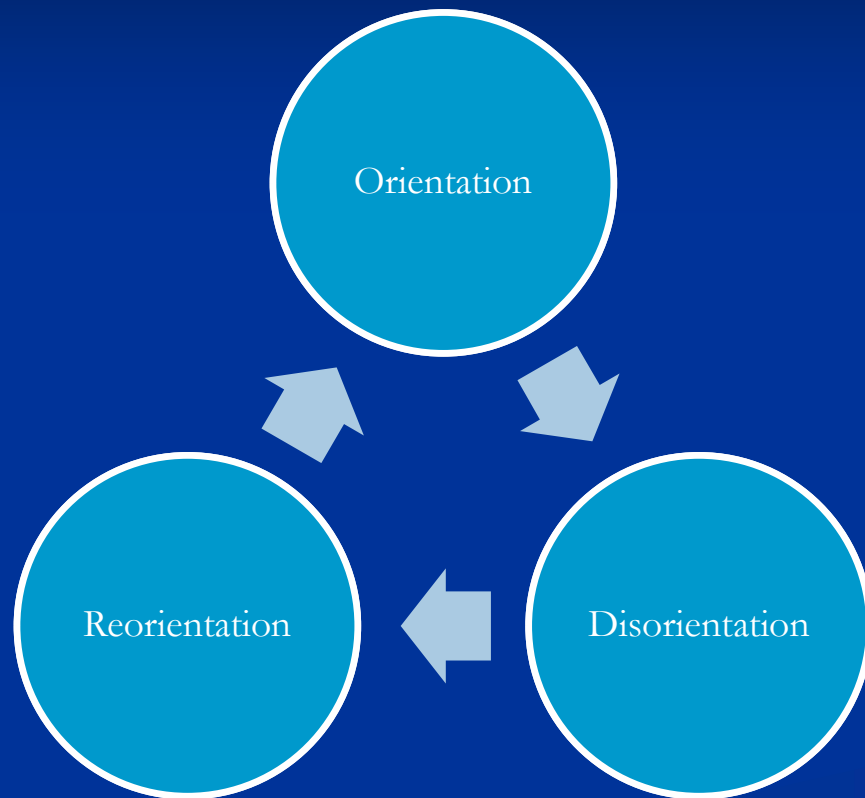
# Brueggemann's Spirituality of the Scriptures



## Old Testament Rhythm

- Torah: identity through law, certitude, ritual, chosenness
- Prophets: failures of identity and resulting struggles
- Wisdom: capacity to hold mystery and paradox as life-giving

# Brueggemann's Spirituality of the Scriptures

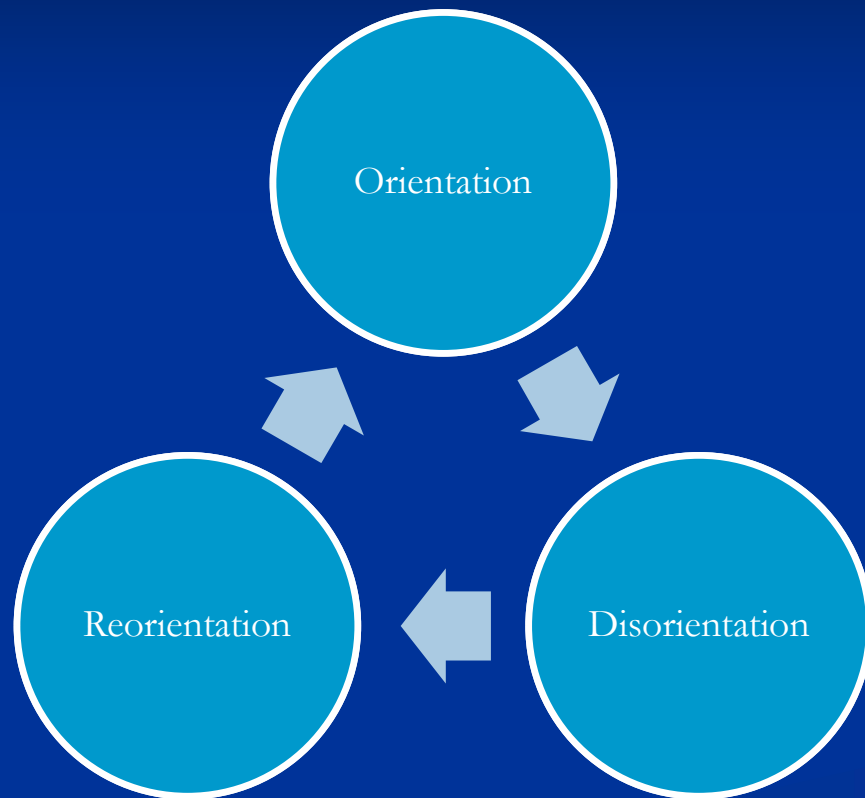


## New Testament Rhythm

### Passion Narrative

- Palm Sunday entry as king
- Gethsemane to Golgotha
- Empty Tomb and post-resurrection appearances

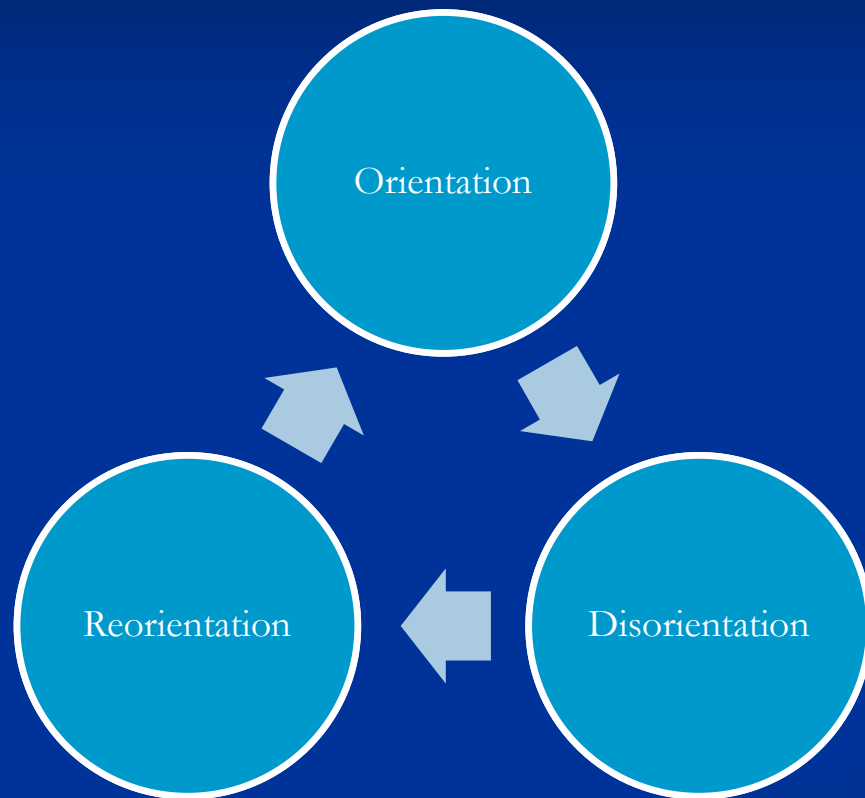
# Exemplified in the Person of Jesus



Philippians 2:5-11

“Though he was in the form of God...He emptied himself (kenosis)...Therefore, God has highly exalted him (raised him up).”

# Undergirds our Sacramental Identity



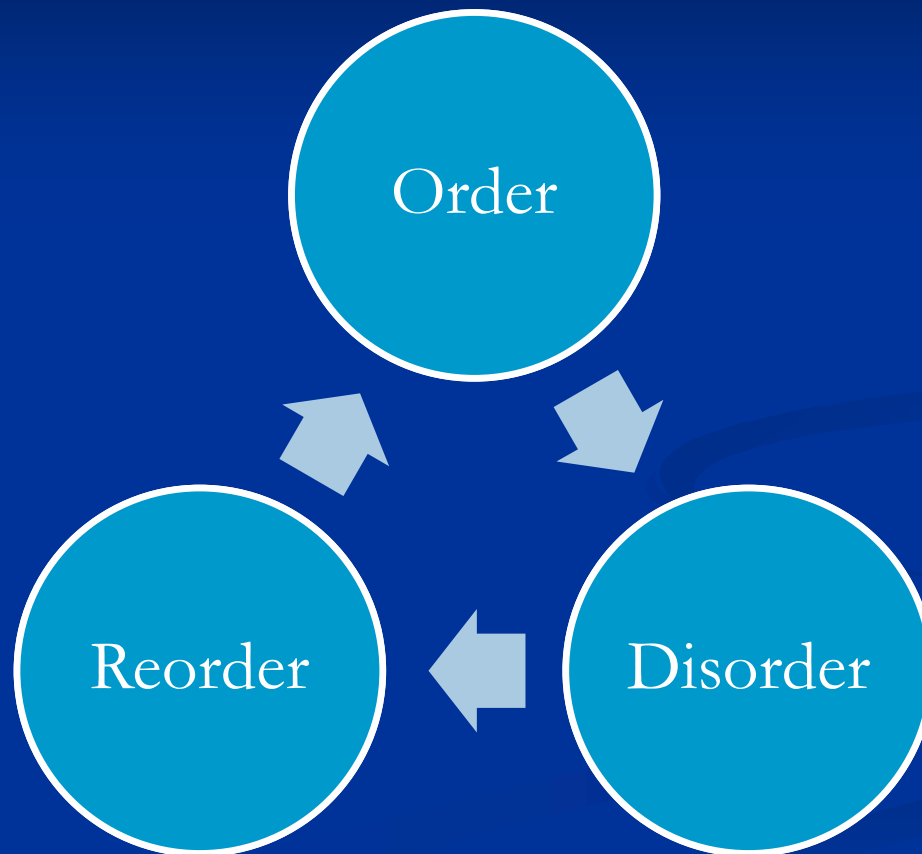
## Baptism (Romans 6:4)

“We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death...that as Christ was raised from the dead...we too might walk in newness of life.”

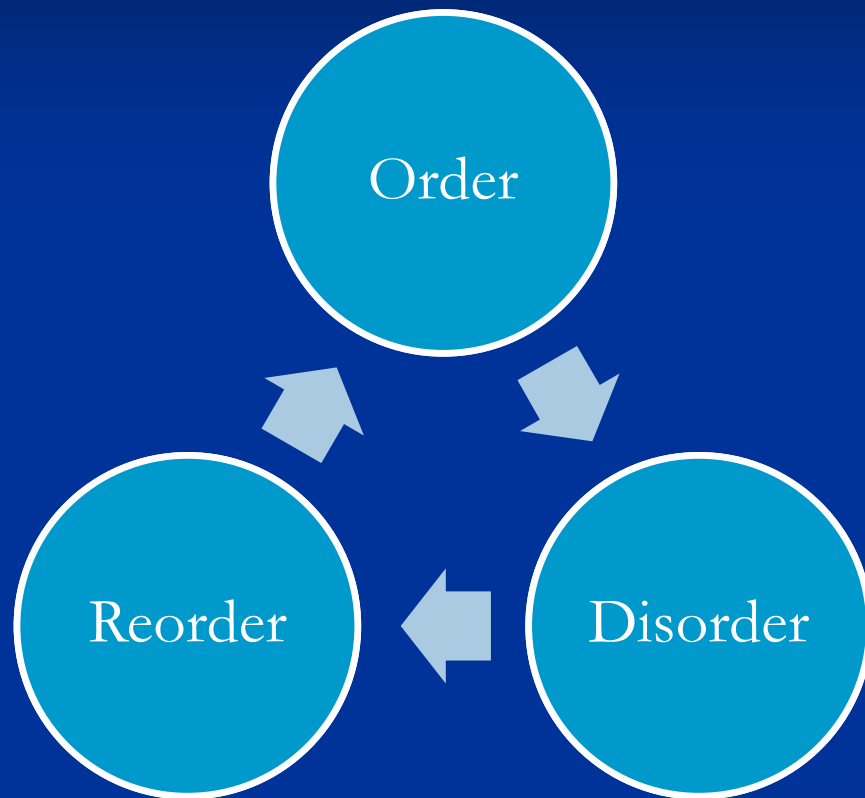
## Eucharist

- God created the world as good
- We lost our way and corrupted it
- Christ helps in redemptive love to set it right again (foretaste)

# Epic Poetry and Hero Myths (Jos. Campbell)



# Political Orientation



Conservatives often get trapped in first stage:

- Rule-oriented, rigidity, maintain status quo because it makes sense

Progressives often get trapped in second stage:

- The world is not right because of “those” people
- Work focuses on the disorientation while the

Reorientation may remain invisible (paradigm shift)

# Limitations/Dangers inherent in the Model

- Postmodern experience: the meta-narratives aren't prevalent anymore...
- There is no direct route from Order to Reorder (must go through Disorder experience)
- Some have such low sense of self that the wilderness experience can trigger pathology (different kinds of darkness)
- Religion has often been used as abusive tool of subjugation (more next week)  
Tempted to see it only as external reality (shadow always reflects)

# Change and Chaos (aka Disorder)

- Margaret Wheatley: “In order to thrive in a world of change and chaos, we will need to:
  - Acknowledge chaos as an essential process by which natural systems (including organizations) renew and revitalize themselves.
  - Share information as the primary organizing force in any organization. [feedback loops]
  - Develop the rich diversity of relationships that are all around us to energize our teams.
  - Embrace vision as an invisible field that can enable us to recreate...our world.”

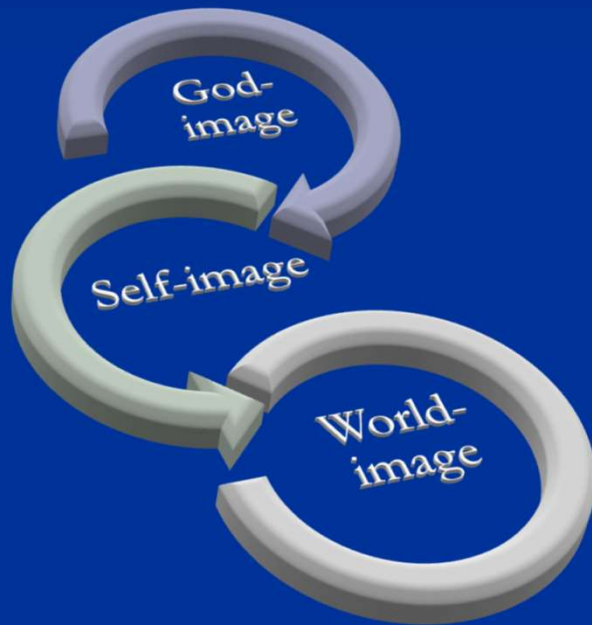
# What do we do now?

- Parker Palmer: “A leader is someone with power to project either shadow or light upon some part of the world, and upon the lives of people who dwell there. A leader shapes the ethos in which others must live...”
- Every person has the capacity to lead (imago Dei)
- Culturally, we’ve made leadership more about power and authority than relationality

# A New/Old Paradigm of Spiritual Leadership

- Parker Palmer: “New leadership is needed for new times, but it will not come from finding new and more wily ways to manipulate the external world. It will come as we who lead find the courage to take an inward journey toward both our shadow and our light, a journey that, faithfully pursued, will take us beyond ourselves to become healers of a wounded world.”

# Worldview as Matrix



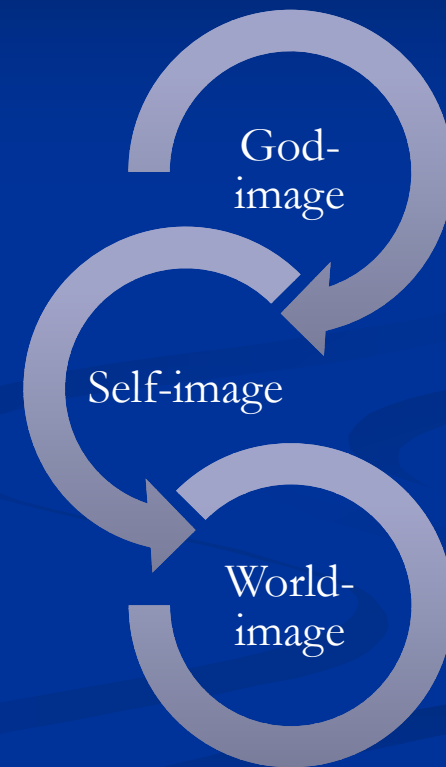
If one changes,  
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# How do you see the world?

- Deist: God has no active caring or providential guidance for the world
- Oppositional: reality is grounded in struggle for power (heroic contest)
- Fate: everything just is, neither God nor self are free to change (destiny)
- Survival of the fittest—”what’s in it for me?”
- What do I expect of life? What do I owe life?
- What does the world offer me? What do I offer the world?

# Breakout Conversation #2

- How would you describe your worldview?
- How is it informed by your image of God? Of Self?
- What is needed to shift the Modern Western Paradigm?
- What role do people of faith have in that shift?



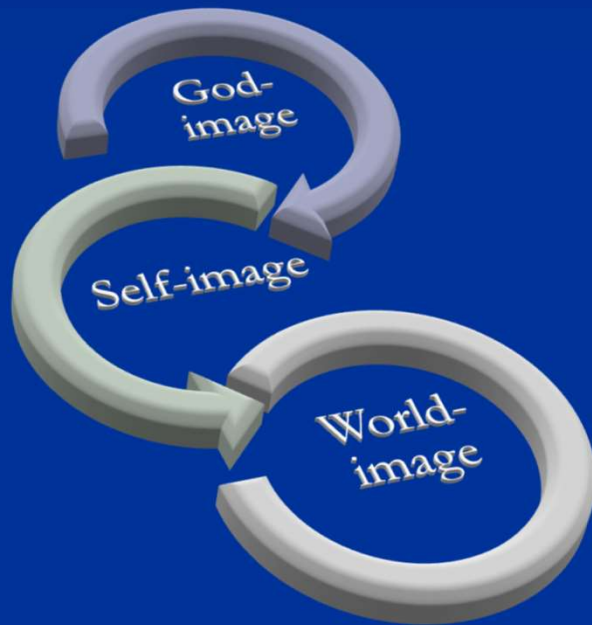


## Plenary #2

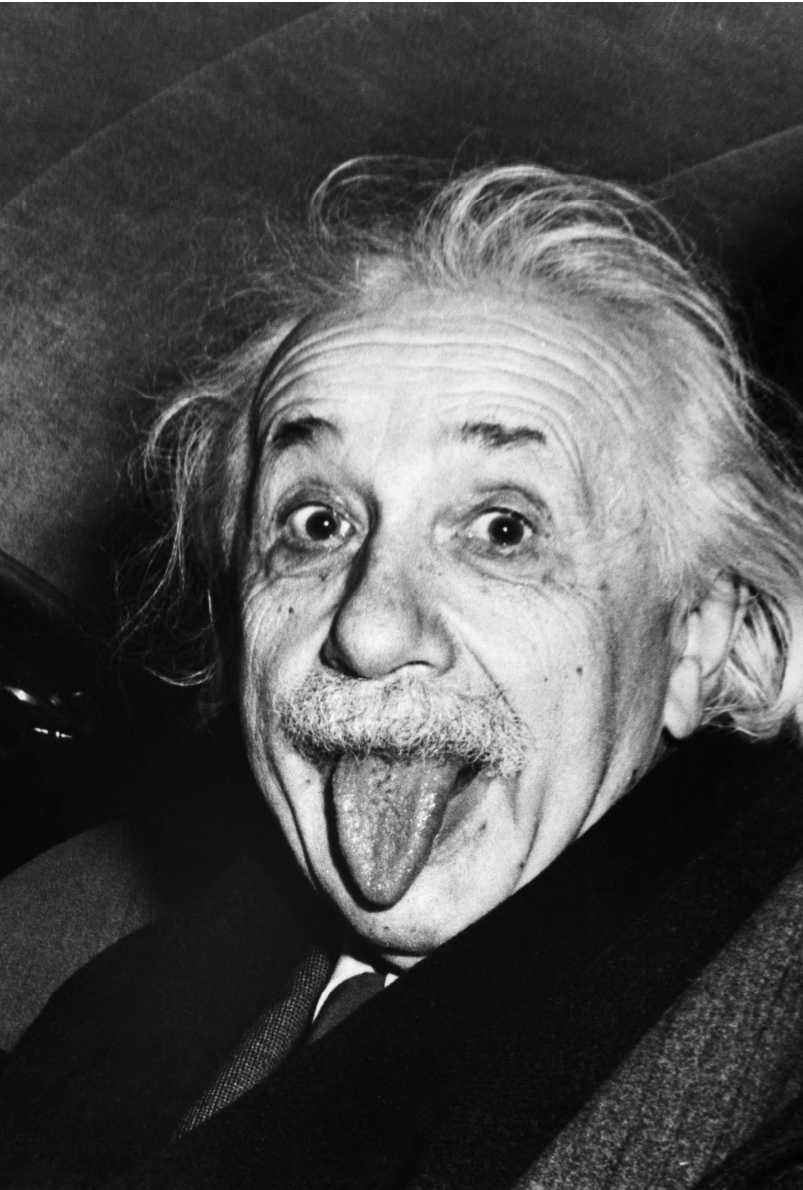
# Turning the Corner (and glimpse at next week)



# Worldview as Matrix



If one changes,  
the others must also change



# Albert Einstein

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- “A human being is part of the whole, of what we call the universe, a part limited in time and space.
- We experience ourselves, our thoughts and feelings as something separate from the rest. This is an optical illusion of consciousness.
- This illusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for those closest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening circles of compassion.”

# The Economy of Grace, writ large

## Three Consistent Principles (Practices for the True Self):

1. Unconditional giving
2. Noncompetitive relationships
3. Universal inclusion

The “gift” is being created for love...

Joy comes as a secondary and life-sustaining gift...

The gift given also becomes life-giving for others...

# Paradigm Shift ...

-Story of Movement...

-Exodus (Left to Right)

-From Bondage to Freedom (free to be truly me)

-From False Self to True Self (inward journey)

-Trust in God who trusts in our true selves



# Considerations for This week: Vice & Virtue



## Rilke's gentle reminder

"Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves...Live the questions now. Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it, live along some distant day into the answer." (Letters to a Young Poet)

# Selected Bibliography

- Gerald May, *The Dark Night of the Soul: A Psychiatrist Explores the Connection between Darkness and Spiritual Growth*
- Walter Brueggemann, *Spirituality of the Psalms*
- Richard Rohr, *Immortal Diamond*
- Kathryn Tanner, *Economy of Grace*
- Parker Palmer, *A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life in a Wounded World*
- *Writings of the Mystics: John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila, Julian*

# Selected Bibliography for Series

- Bennett Sims, *Servanthood*
- Parker Palmer, *Leading From Within* (this is an essay, can be found printed in pamphlet form), and other books
- Margaret Wheatley, *A Simpler Way; Leadership & the New Science*
- Gerald May, *Addiction and Grace*
- Denise Breton and Christopher Largent, *The Paradigm Conspiracy*
- Richard Rohr, *Hope Against Darkness* (and other books)
- Killian Noe, *Finding Our Way Home*
- Don Riso and Russ Hudson, *Wisdom of the Enneagram*