

Ungodly Facts, Real Power,  
and Holy Fear: Telling the  
Plain Truth

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Festival of Homiletics 2020

In the Bible, the heart is the organ of...

- thought
- will
- imagination
- loyalty
- faith and faithfulness.

“Insights get lost.” (Brevard S. Childs)

Reality is indivisible; the human heart and the physical world do not function in totally separate spheres.

Our core vocation is to shape our words, imaginations, and lives in accordance with a certain story....

a story that...

- comes to us from *outside ourselves*,
- the church is obligated to *hear*  
and *probe for truth*.

We have a responsibility to affirm the reality of...

- the **moral imagination** as a social force
- a **genuine politics**, which negotiates difference in community, with a concern for truth.



# Guidelines for Truthful Storytelling

*I must tell the scriptural story with...*

**transparency**, opening a window into the present moment.

**faith**, looking for God's work of creation and preservation. (Do humans honor it?)

**hope**, in a way that opens out toward the future.

**love**, looking for how love is at work.

Exodus as **master narrative**, essential for (at least)...

Isaiah

Ezekiel

Matthew

Jewish theology

Qur'an

Contemporary Christian theologies:

African, Latin American, African diaspora



# Why Exodus may help us now:

It is...

- **A creation-oriented story**
- **A story about power**
- **A story about fear (crazy fear, natural fear, holy fear)**

“The children of Israel *became fruitful*, and they *swarmed* and *multiplied* and became really really massive, and *the earth was filled with them.*” (Exod. 1:7)

\* *How does that sound in Genesis-perspective?*

\* *How does that sound to Pharaoh?*





“swarmers”  
of the Nile





From the outset, we see that...

...Pharaoh is both **afraid** and **contemptuous** of the Israelites.

...Pharaoh is on a **collision course** with God.



Image: Nina Paley



1989



THE END OF NATURE

BILL McKIBBEN

10TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION WITH A NEW INTRODUCTION

"By the end of nature Mr. McKibben means the end of nature as a force independent of man... for a man preaching apocalypse, he speaks in a measured and civilized voice that deserves a hearing."  
—NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW

2010

"What I have to say about this book is very simple: read it, please. Straight through to the end. Whatever else you were planning to do next, nothing could be more important." —BARBARA KINGSOLVER



Bill McKibben

author of *The End of Nature*

2019

Named One of the Top Ten Books of the Year by *The Washington Post*

"He has gathered the most vivid statistics, distilled history to its juiciest turns, and made the case as urgently and clearly as can be: The whole breadth of our existence—the 'human game'—is in jeopardy."

—*The Washington Post*

**Falter**

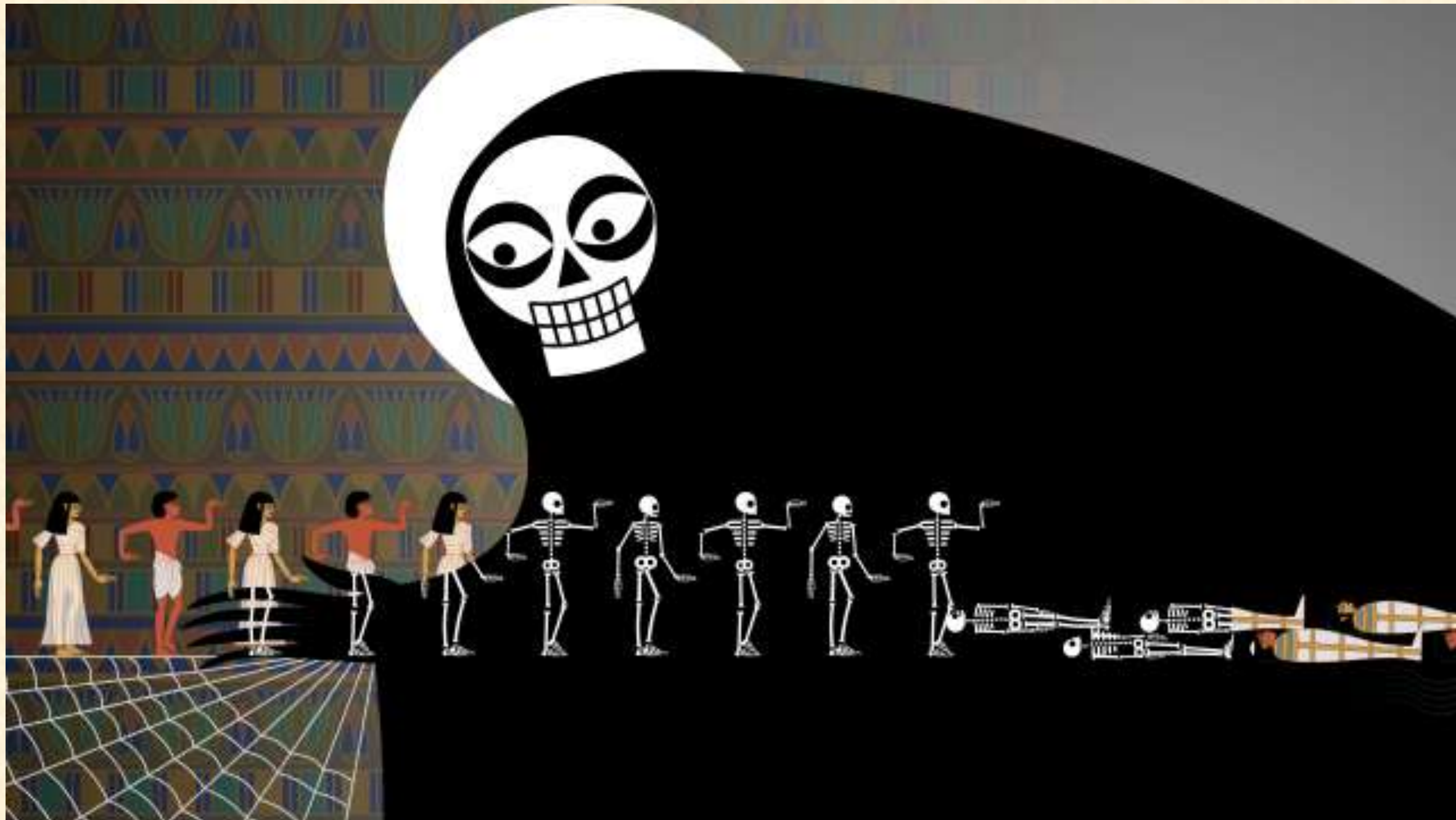
NEW YORK  
TIMES  
BESTSELLER

Has the Human Game  
Begun to Play Itself Out?

BILL  
McKIBBEN

New York Times Bestselling Author of *Eaarth* and *The End of Nature*

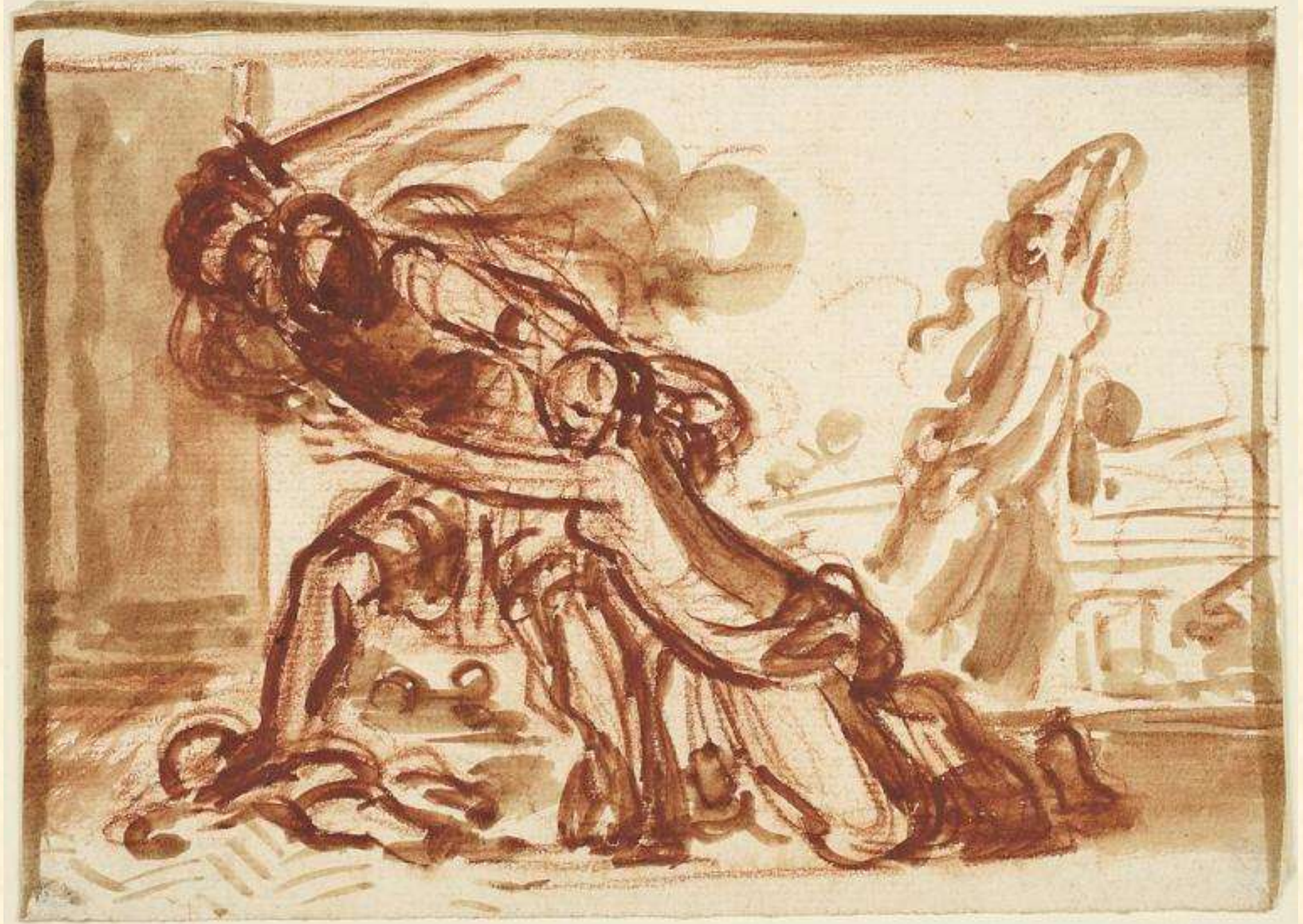








*“Slaughter of the Innocents”*  
[study, 18th  
century] after  
Nicolas Poussin





“Powerless” (?)  
women shaping  
history:

\* the midwives  
Shifrah & Puah

\* Yocheved &  
Miriam

\* Pharaoh’s daughter  
& her attendants

\*Zipporah





en-courage –

literally, “put heart into”

cf. French *coeur*, “heart”

“As Pharaoh drew near, the Israelites looked and Whoa! Egypt was coming on, right behind them, and they were *very afraid*.” (Exod. 14:10)

“...and Israel saw Egypt dead on the seashore. Israel saw the great ‘hand’ (= act of power) that YHWH had performed against Egypt, and the people *feared* YHWH, and they *trusted* in YHWH and in Moses, his servant.” (Exod. 14:30-31)



**fear of the Lord = “true faith”**

Fear of the Lord is the opposite of ...

arrogance,

recklessness,

moral blindness

Pharaonic insanity

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with Scripture:

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