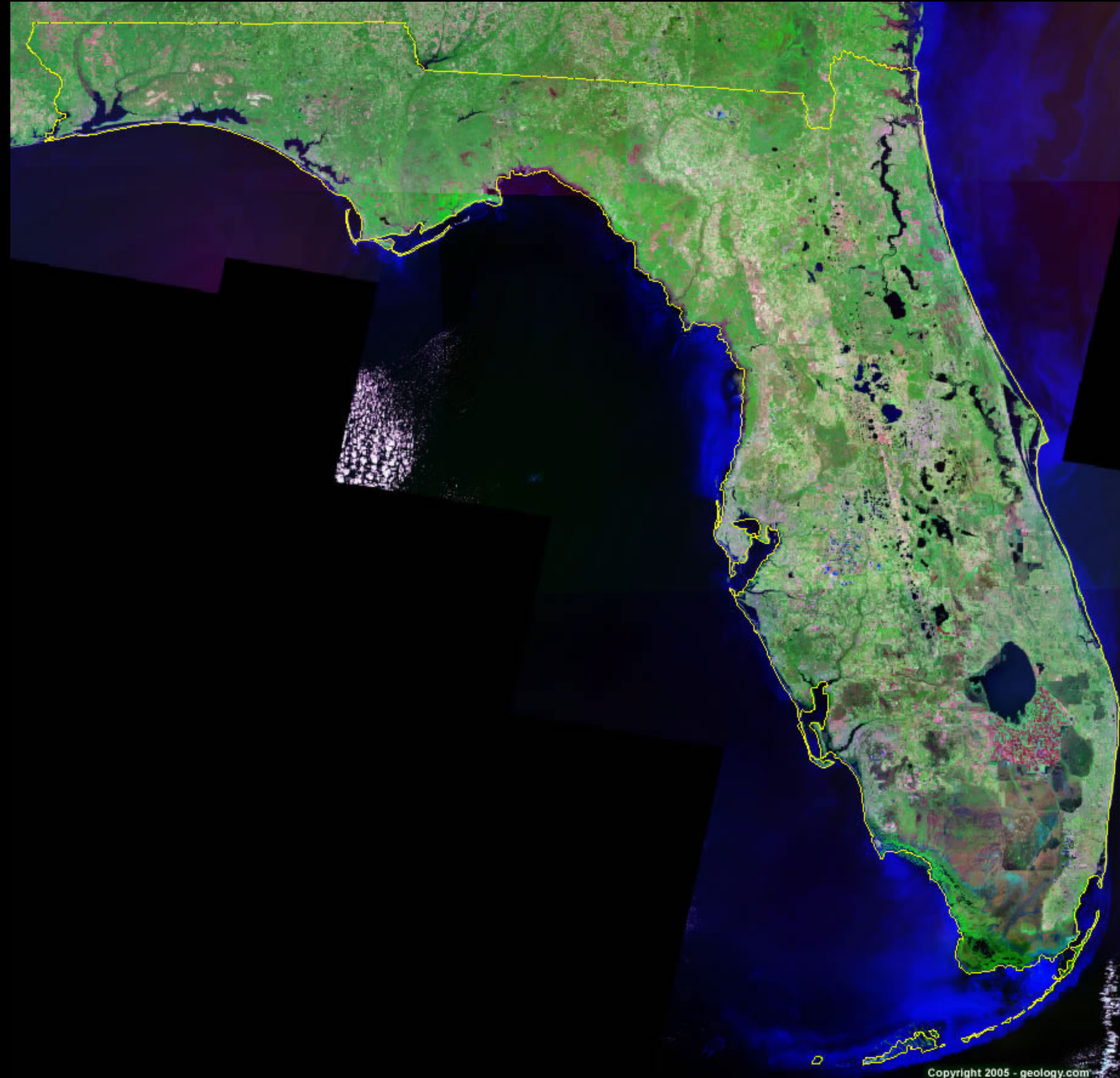


# christianity after trump

brian d. mclaren

[brianmclaren.net](http://brianmclaren.net)

I speak to you from this place on  
Turtle Island ...



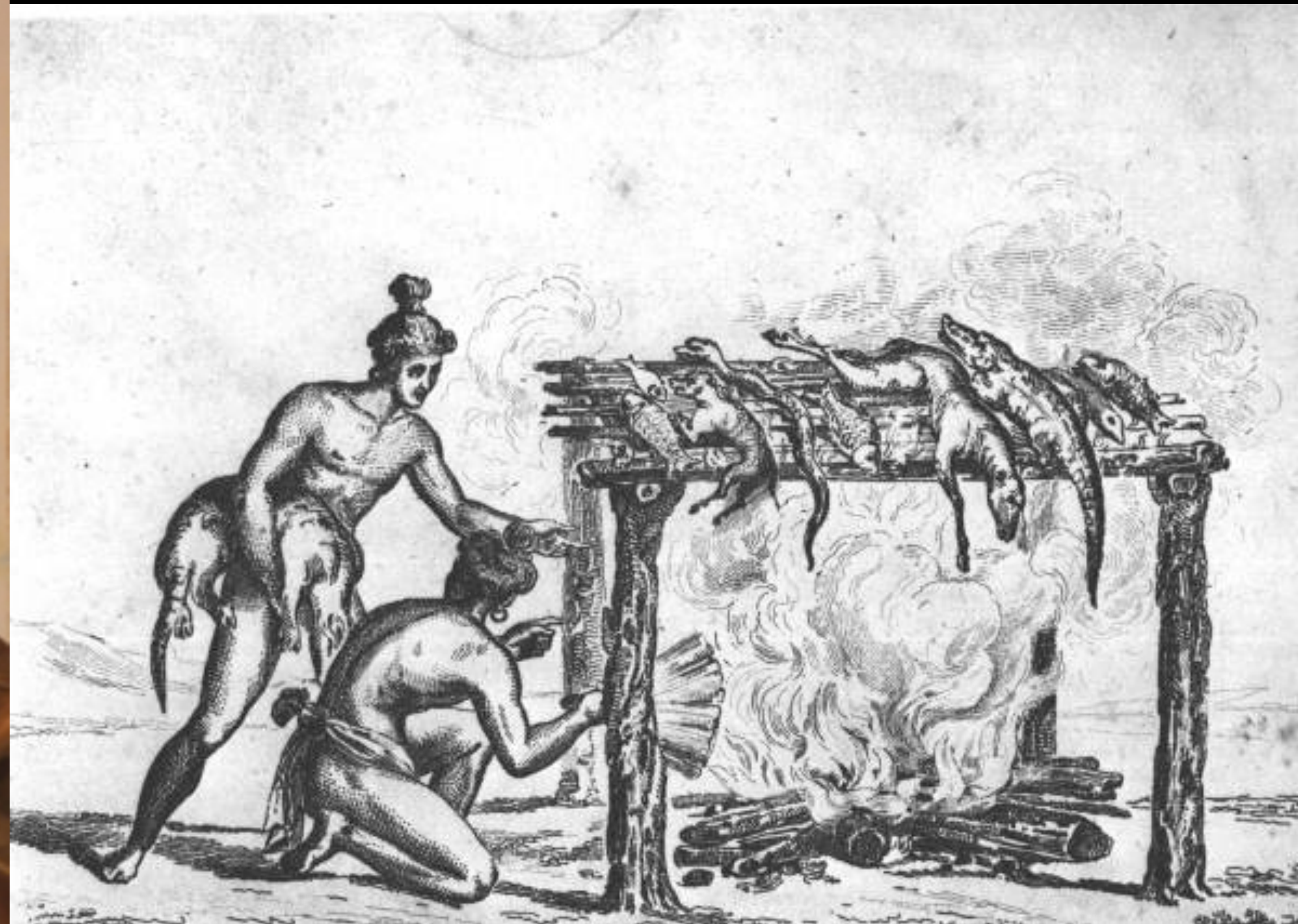


I honor the original peoples of this land, and the lives they lived here for thousands of years:





the paleo-Indians, the Muspa, the Calusa, the Tequesta, the Jeaga, the Ais, along with the Seminole and Miccosukee, and their subtribes, alliances, and relatives.





I lament the injustice done to the original inhabitants by Spanish and American colonizers, and I lament all injustice that humans have done on this land in the centuries since, to this very day, bearing in mind that Floridians committed more lynchings per capita than any other state.

## Florida Lynched More Black People Per Capita Than Any Other State, According to Report

RAY DOWNS | FEBRUARY 11, 2015 | 7:00AM

...ear-old black man, hangs from a tree on Old Davie  
...ale, blood trickling down his body and dripping off his





On the eve of the day honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, I honor the struggle of all people seeking justice and peace, and I seek the courage and wisdom to heal the wounds of the past and build a better future story with all my neighbors and fellow creatures, together.





I am grateful for the beauty of this land ...  
from the dunes, marshes, and surf of the Atlantic Coast and the  
Indian River to the crystal-clear springs and sandhills of Central  
Florida, from the Everglades and the Ten Thousand Islands to  
the Florida Keys ... for the streams, rivers, estuaries, mangrove  
forests, and shorelines that connect one region to another, for all  
the beautiful creatures that surround me.







Oh Creator, I lament how many species in my region have been pushed toward extinction - and I desire to protect all of your precious creatures, each known and loved by you ... from the manatee to the snake tail dragonfly, from scrub jay to the indigo snake, from the gopher tortoise to the Florida panther.



I thank you, Creator Spirit, for all the plants and animals with whom I share this land as neighbors. I accept my responsibility to care for my fellow creatures and the habitats we share, and to protect them from the harm that humans are causing.





And so we all, from our different home  
habitats and watersheds, pray as Jesus  
taught us ...

May God's harmony way, God's  
ecosystem, God's beloved community and  
web of life, come here and now in this land  
we share,

And may God's dreams come true here on  
earth, as in heaven, even now.

Amen.







# **christianity after trump: four moves for constructive response**

**brian d. mclaren**



- 1. Acknowledge the roots of Trumpism in Christian history and theology.**



**this is who we are ...**



# ... the historic depth and breadth of Christian complicity

DOCTRINE OF DISCOVERY  
CHRISTIAN SUPREMACY  
(CHRISTIAN EMPIRE]

WHITE  
SUPREMACY,  
CHRISTIAN COLONIAL  
PROJECT,  
GENOCIDE,  
ENSLAVEMENT,  
APARTHEID,  
MASS  
INCARCERATION

DENIAL OF HISTORY,  
DENIAL OF SCIENCE

THE FINANCIAL  
CAPTIVITY OF  
CHRISTIANITY,  
RULE BY DONORS,  
THEO-CAPITALISM

ANTI-ECOLOGY,  
DOMINION  
THEOLOGY,  
ESCAPIST  
ESCHATOLOGY,  
EVACUATION GOSPEL

AUTHORITARIAN  
AGGREGATORS

TOXIC MASCULINITY,  
PATRIARCHY

BELIEFS:  
CALVINISM,  
CHEAP GRACE,  
CRAZY CHARISMATIC  
PROPHECIES,  
OBSESSION WITH  
ABORTION, LGBTQ  
EQUALITY



**this is who we are ...**

**something is deeply,  
dangerously wrong with (white)  
Christianity in America.**

**2. Expose the current role of  
Christian churches and media as  
aggregators of authoritarian  
followers**







How Will Joe Biden Build a Common Future? [Read Our Feature Series](#)

EDITORIAL

## Editorial: Catholics need to confess their complicity in the failed coup

Jan 7, 2021

by [NCR Editorial Staff](#) | [Opinion](#) | [Justice](#)



Police officers in Washington stand guard Jan. 6, 2021, as supporters of President Donald Trump gather in front of the U.S. Capitol. (Chris Leah Mills, Reuters)

There is plenty of blame to go around after yesterday's shameful storming of the U.S. Capitol by a right-wing mob trying to stop the formal counting of the Electoral College vote for the legally elected next president of the United States.

Jan 15, 2021, 07:40am EST | 2,917 views

# Wheaton College Faculty And Staff Condemn Capitol Violence And Rebuke Donald Trump



**Michael T. Nietzel** Senior Contributor ⓘ ⊕

**Education**

*I am a former university president who writes about higher education.*

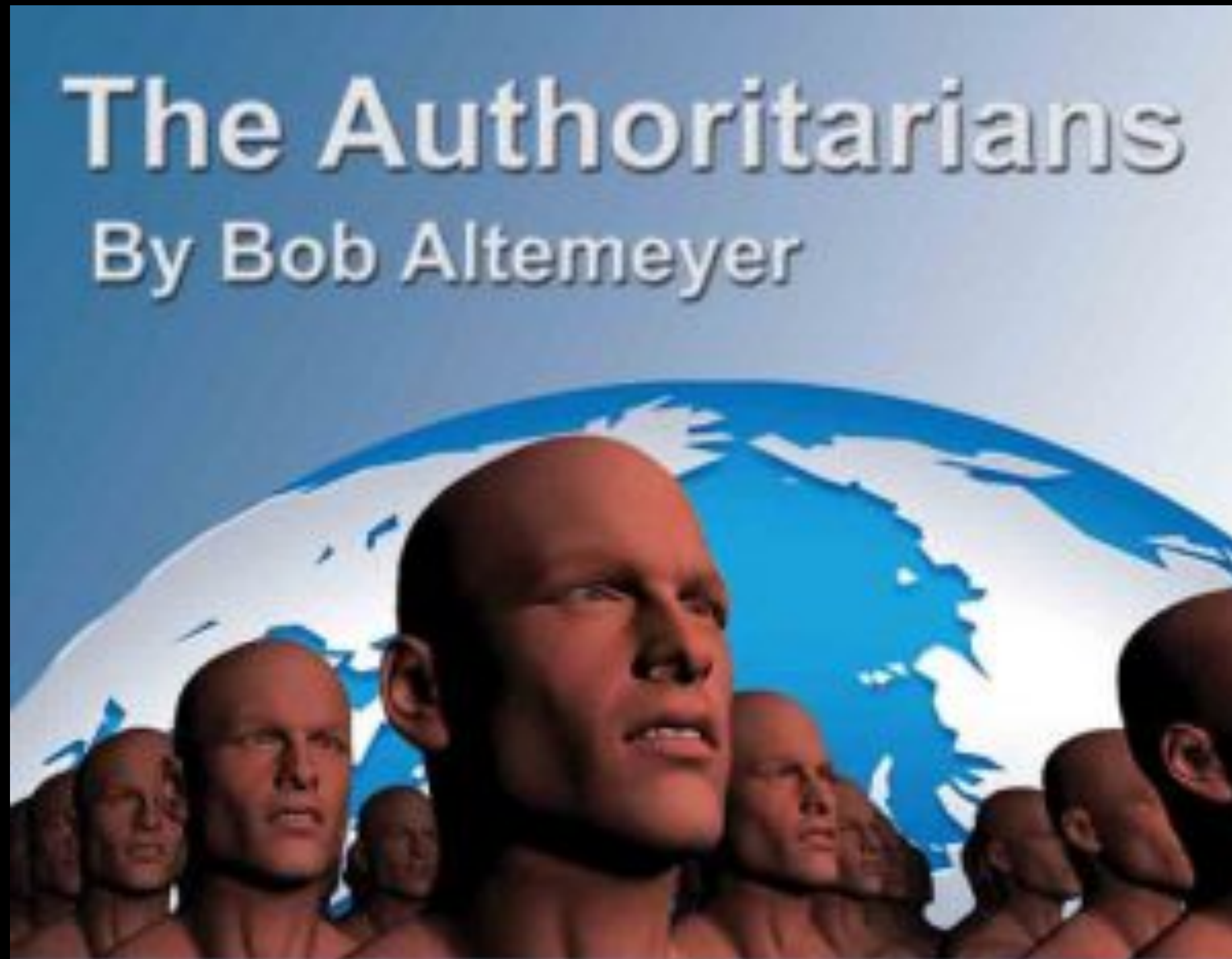




**“In the end, we will remember  
not the words of our enemies,  
but the silence of our friends”**



# Authoritarian Followers





## The Rise of American Authoritarianism (Vox, Mar 1, 2016)

[Researchers like Hetherington and Weiler, Stanley Feldman, Karen Stenner, and Elizabeth Suhay, to name just a few] study what they call authoritarianism: not the dictators themselves, but rather **the psychological profile of people who, under the right conditions, will desire certain kinds of extreme policies and will seek strongman leaders to implement them.**

The field ... has come to develop the contours of a grand theory of authoritarianism, culminating quite recently, in 2005, with Stenner's seminal *The Authoritarian Dynamic* — just in time for that theory to seemingly come true, more rapidly and in greater force than any of them had imagined, in the personage of one Donald Trump and his norm-shattering rise.

According to Stenner's theory, **there is a certain subset of people who hold latent authoritarian tendencies. These tendencies can be triggered or "activated" by the perception of physical threats or by destabilizing social change, leading those individuals to desire policies and leaders that we might more colloquially call authoritarian.**

It is as if, the NYU professor Jonathan Haidt has written, a button is pushed that says, "In case of moral threat, lock down the borders, kick out those who are different, and punish those who are morally deviant."

Authoritarians prioritize social order and hierarchies, which bring a sense of control to a chaotic world. Challenges to that order — diversity, influx of outsiders, breakdown of the old order — are experienced as personally threatening because they risk upending the status quo order they equate with basic security.

This is, after all, a time of social change in America. The country is becoming more diverse, which means that many white Americans are confronting race in a way they have never had to before. Those changes have been happening for a long time, but in recent years they have become more visible and harder to ignore. And they are coinciding with economic trends that have squeezed working-class white people.



When they face physical threats or threats to the status quo, authoritarians support policies that seem to offer protection against those fears. They favor forceful, decisive action against things they perceive as threats. And they flock to political leaders who they believe will bring this action.

For decades, the Republican Party has been winning over **authoritarians** by implicitly promising to stand firm against the tide of social change, and to be the party of force and power rather than the party of negotiation and compromise. But now it may be discovering that its strategy has worked too well ....

<https://www.vox.com/2016/3/1/11127424/trump-authoritarianism>

**Authoritarianism:** a process of centralizing power in an individual, party, or cabal by using *fear* of a real or concocted enemy, radical *division* of society based on support for the regime, gross *distortion of/diversion from* the truth, and *suppression* of dissent.



**Authoritarian Followers:** a percentage of the population (perhaps 30 - 35%?) whose brains are easily activated by anxiety, anger, or other strong emotions to willingly submit to an authoritarian leader, deriving great pleasure from that submission and the belonging it conveys.

**Authoritarian Leaders have Global Networks - sharing information, tactics, for mutual advantage.**

**Robert Mueller's Iron Triangles - 1. Mafia/ Crime Syndicates, 2. Corrupt Government Leaders and Officials, 3. Business Leaders**

<https://archives.fbi.gov/archives/news/speeches/the-evolving-organized-crime-threat>

**Actually, Iron Quadrangles: 4. RELIGIOUS COMPLICITY**



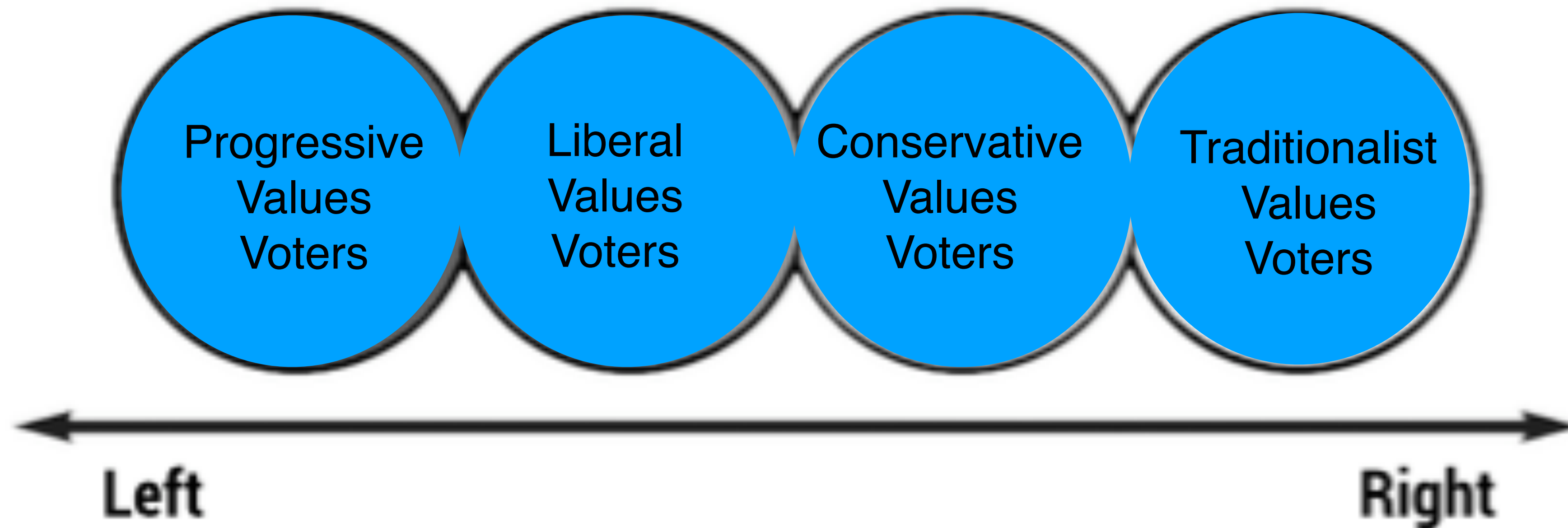
# The Five Electorates

**THE SECOND PANDEMIC:  
AUTHORITARIANISM  
AND YOUR FUTURE**



**BY BRIAN D. MCLAREN**

**All voters are values voters.**



from Steve McIntosh, *Developmental Politics* (March 2020)

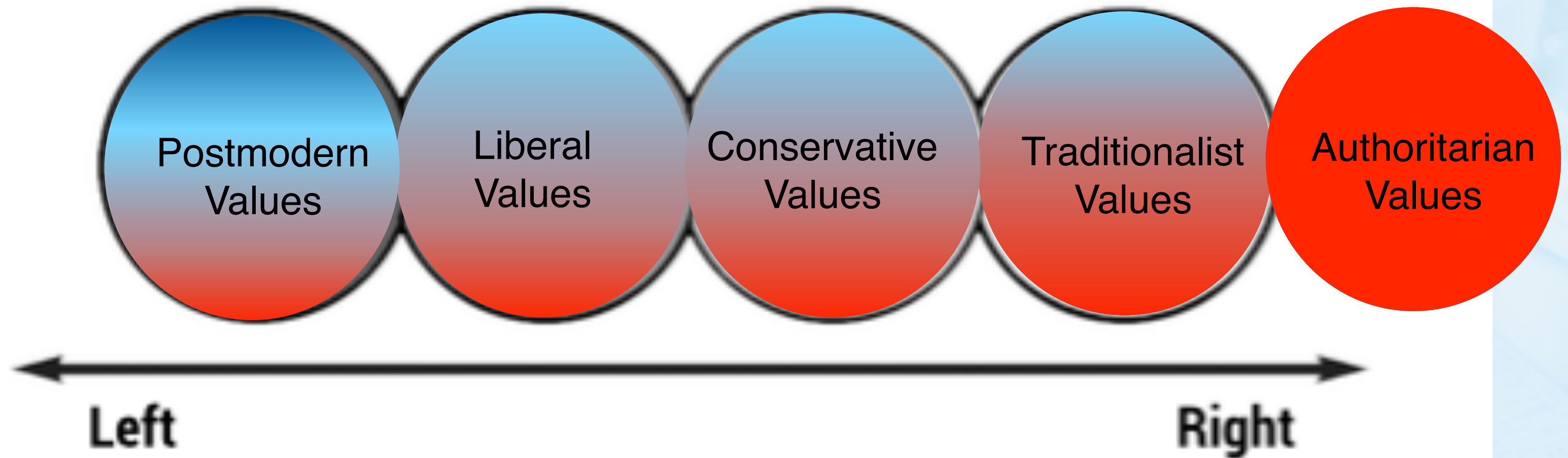


**VOTE COMMON GOOD** MESSAGING TEAM

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# THE RISE OF THE FIFTH ELECTORATE



## AUTHORITARIAN VALUES

Winning is everything/US vs. Them  
Truth doesn't matter/Lie & Mock freely  
Physical force (guns, threats, torture)  
Power/submission is the ultimate value



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## **Many Christian communities**

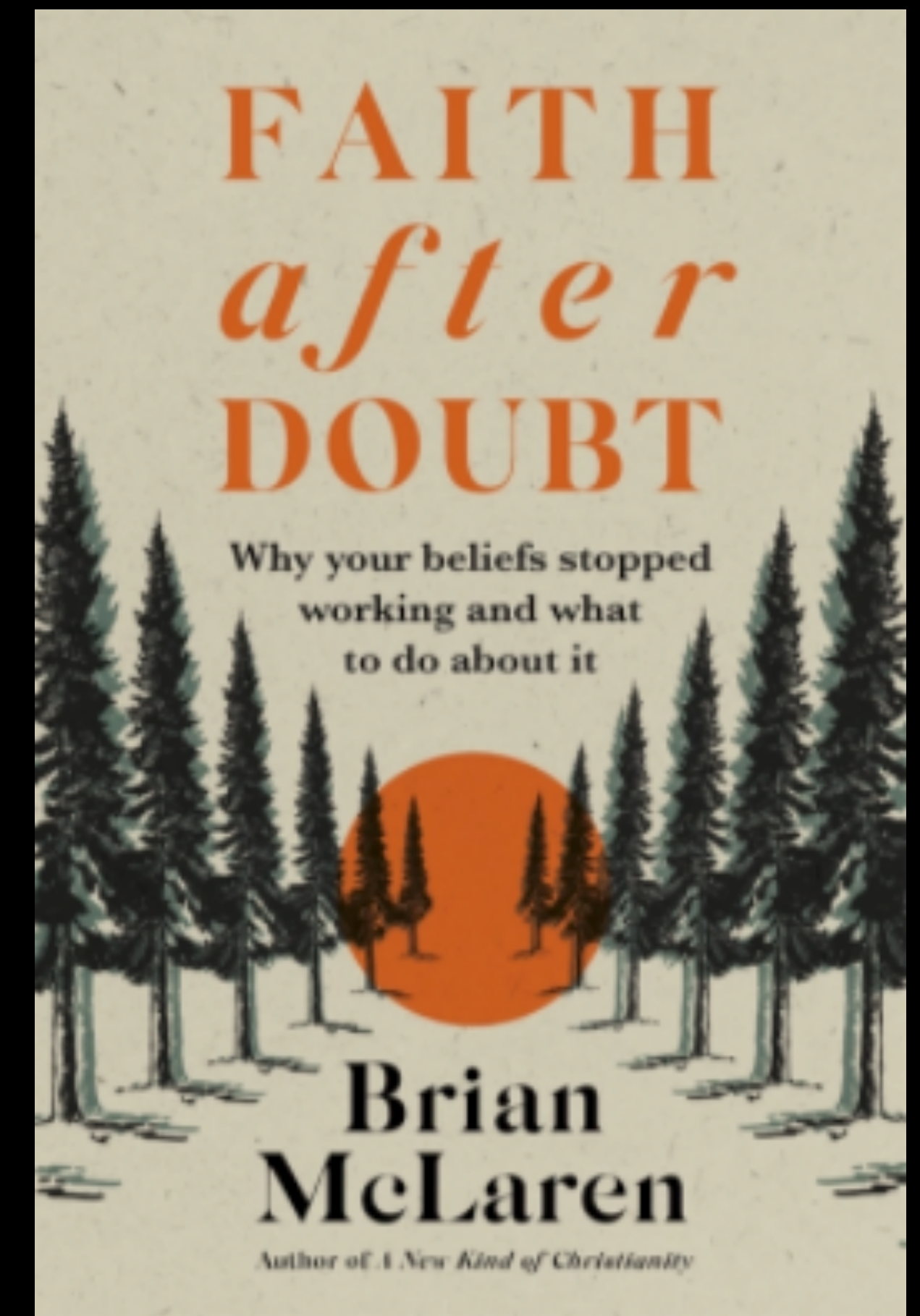
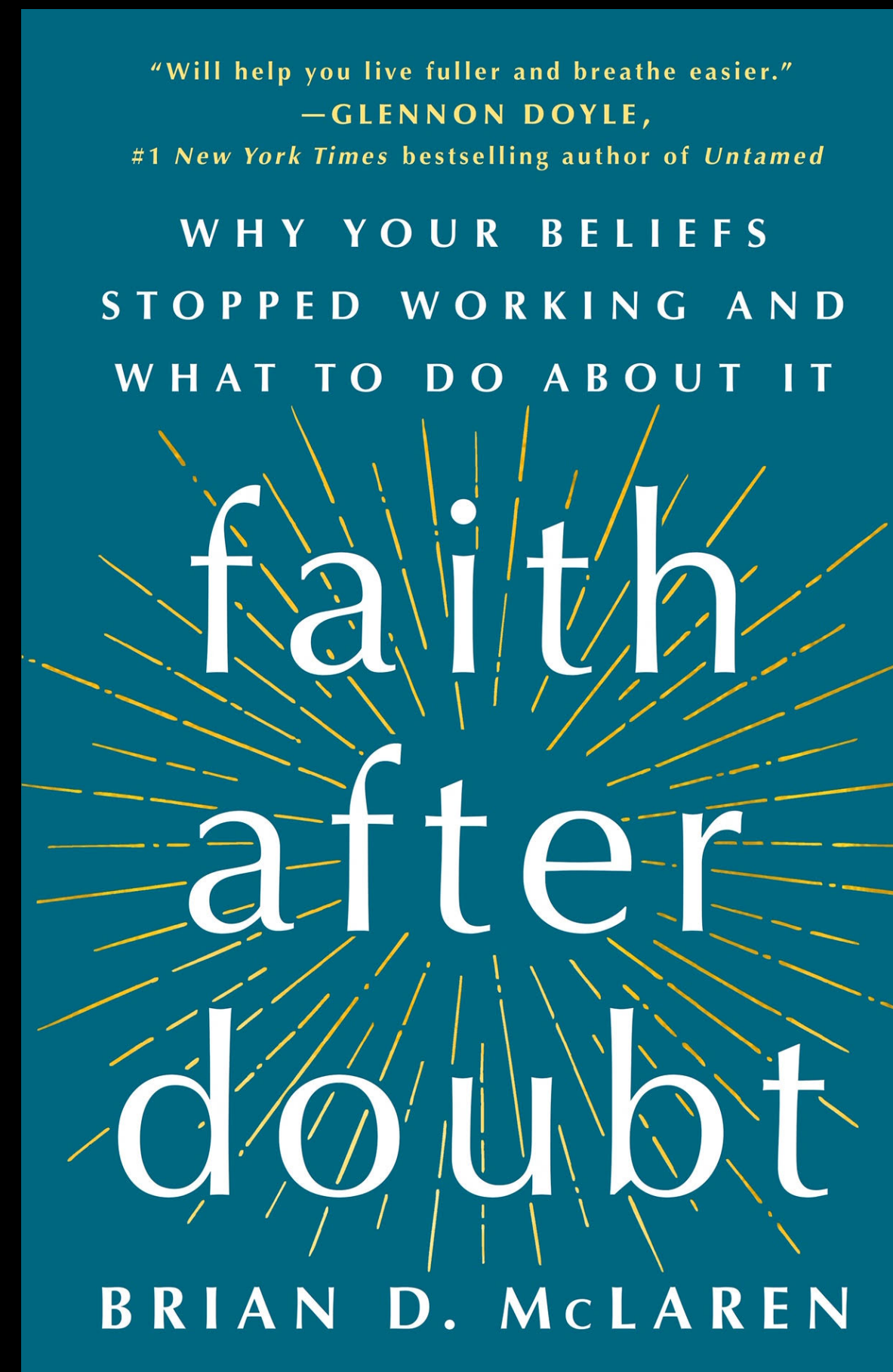
- encourage blind trust in inerrant authorities & infallible hierarchies
- drive away critical thinkers (doubters)
- platform leaders with authoritarian and narcissistic tendencies
- aggregate authoritarian followers & deliver fervent voters to authoritarian leaders/parties



1. Acknowledge the roots of Trumpism in Christian history and theology.

2. Expose the current role of Christian churches and media as aggregators of authoritarian followers

### 3. Explore the deeper dynamics of faith and doubt.

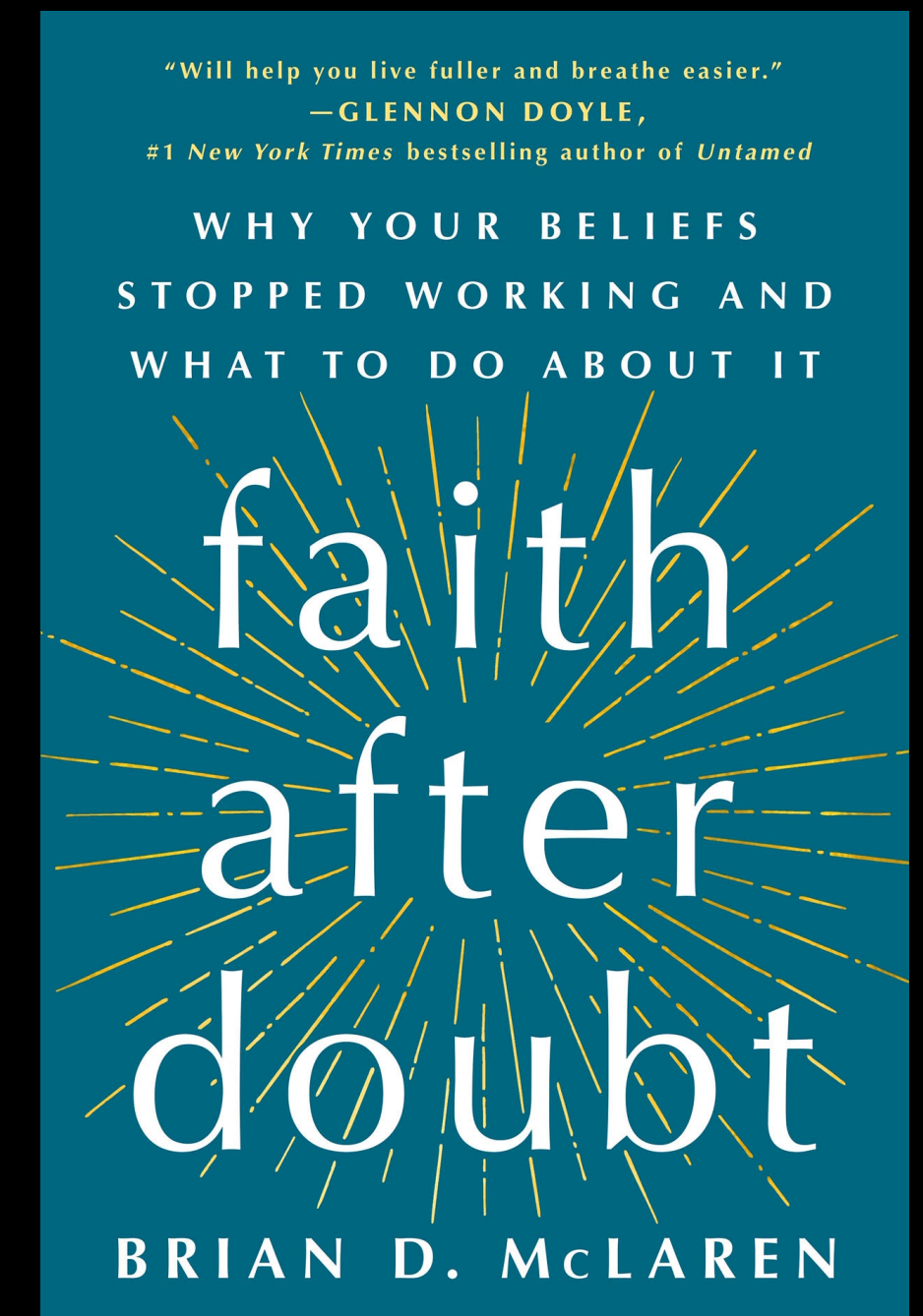




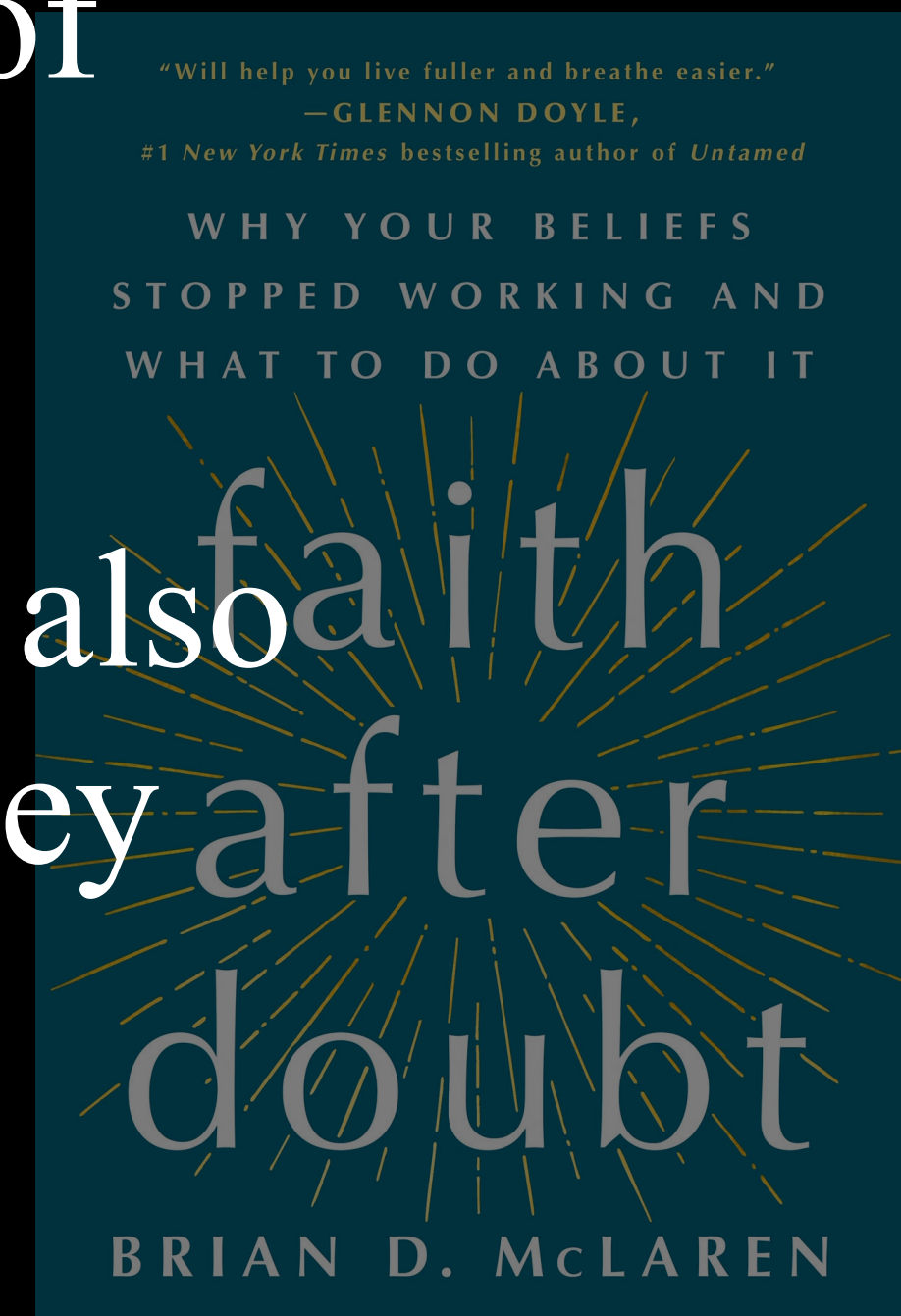
"The greatest threat to our moral and spiritual health wasn't questions or doubts but rather dishonesty or pretense *about* our questions or doubts."

Doubt is not the enemy of faith.

Doubt is the enemy of authoritarianism.

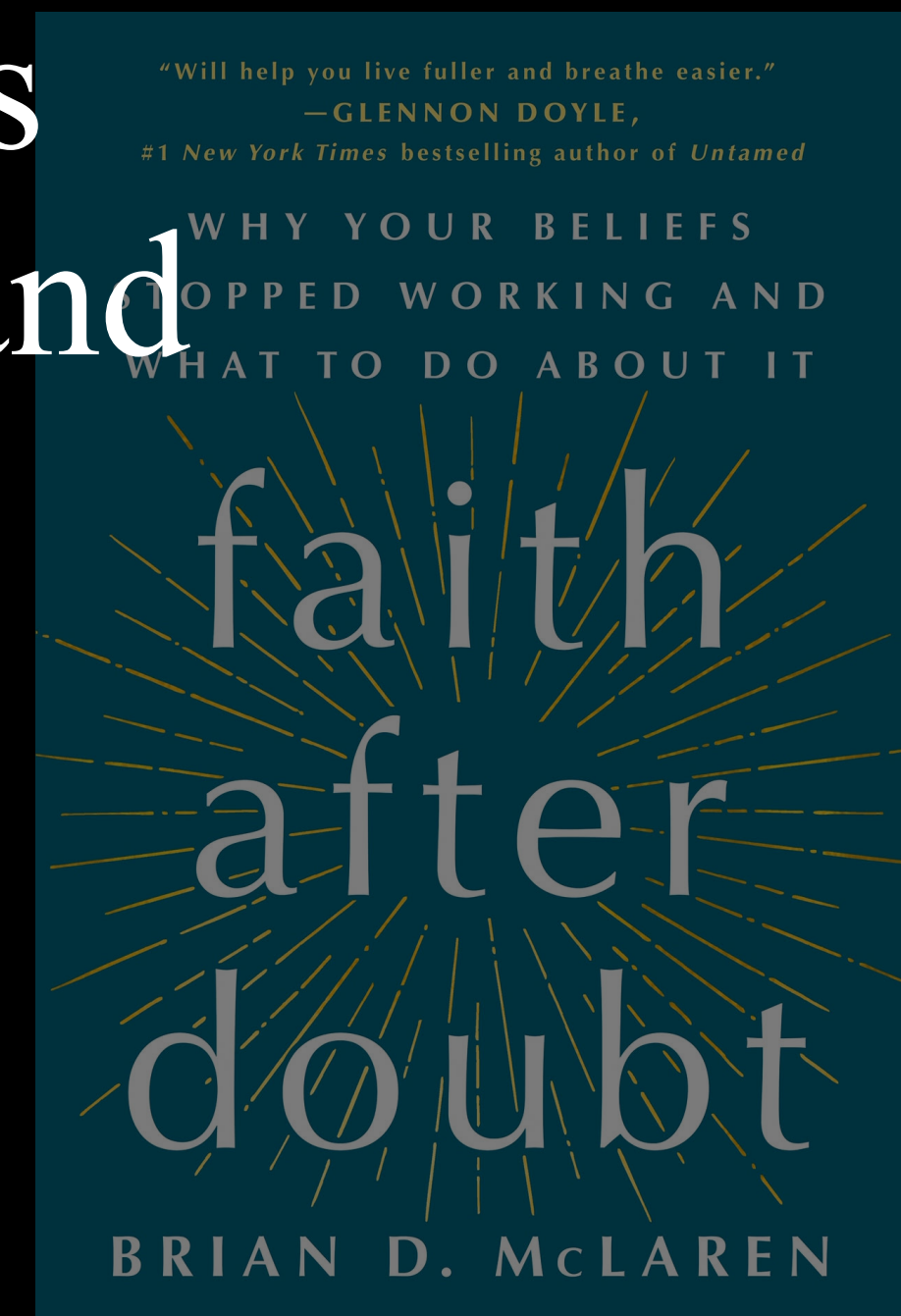


Of course, along the way, religious and political demagogues have learned to manipulate this secret weapon [of beliefs] with great skill. One can imagine a gang of unscrupulous authoritarians toasting one another behind a curtain somewhere, gleefully boasting, “If we can get these gullible idiots to believe what we tell them to, whether it makes sense to them or not, we have them in the palms of our hands! If they are afraid to question what we label unquestionable, if they are afraid to think what we label unthinkable, we control their thoughts, which means we also control their words and their actions! At that moment, they trust us more than they trust themselves!”

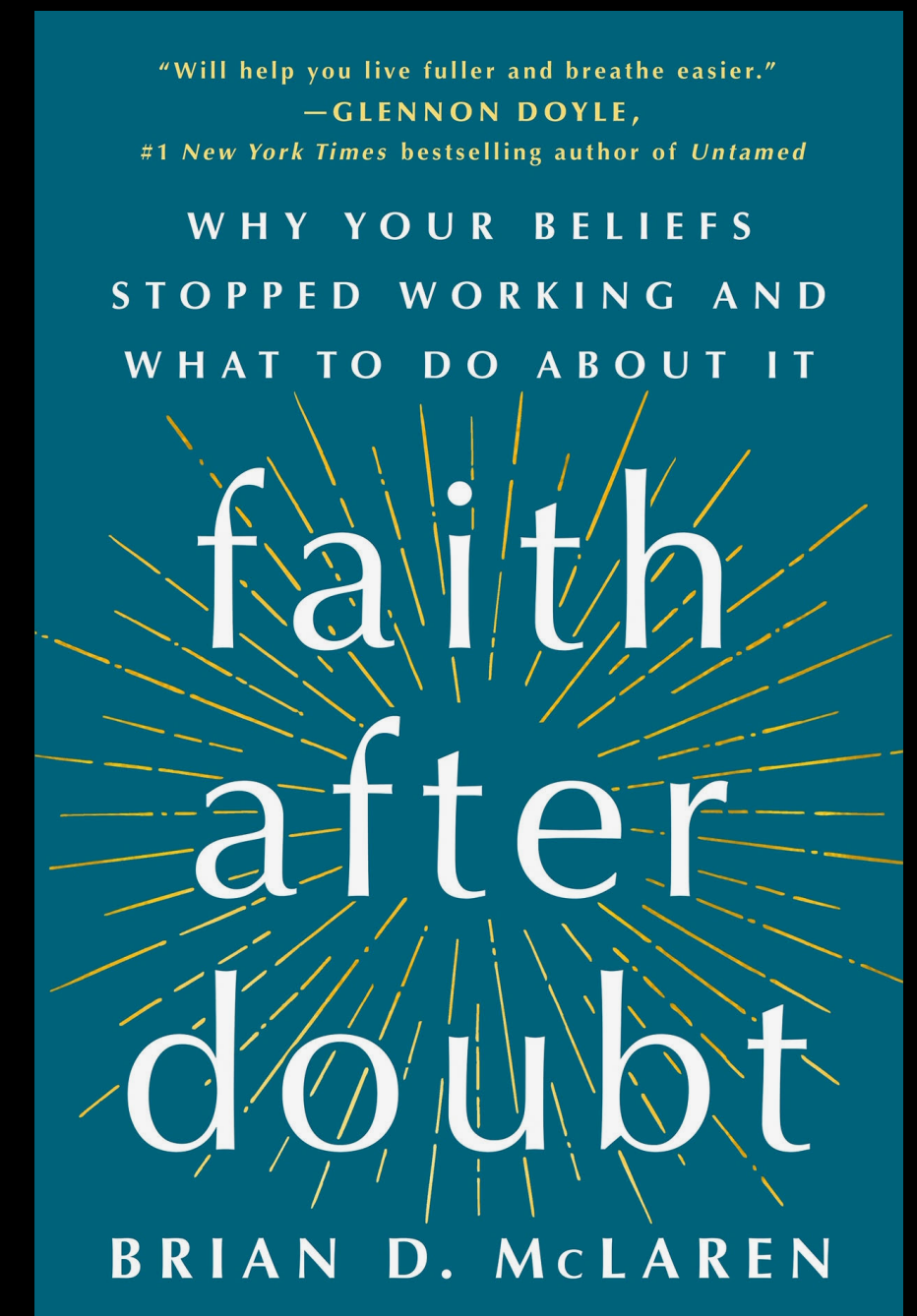




It's even better (from the perspective of demagogues) if they can compel compliant people to perjure themselves, to say they believe something they do not actually believe. Whether group members do so to curry favor or to avoid punishment, once they sell their integrity, they have pledged their absolutely loyalty and the demagogue holds exquisite power over them. Each time members willingly exchange their integrity to gain belonging and other benefits or to avoid exclusion and other punishments, a religious cult or political dictatorship grows a little stronger.



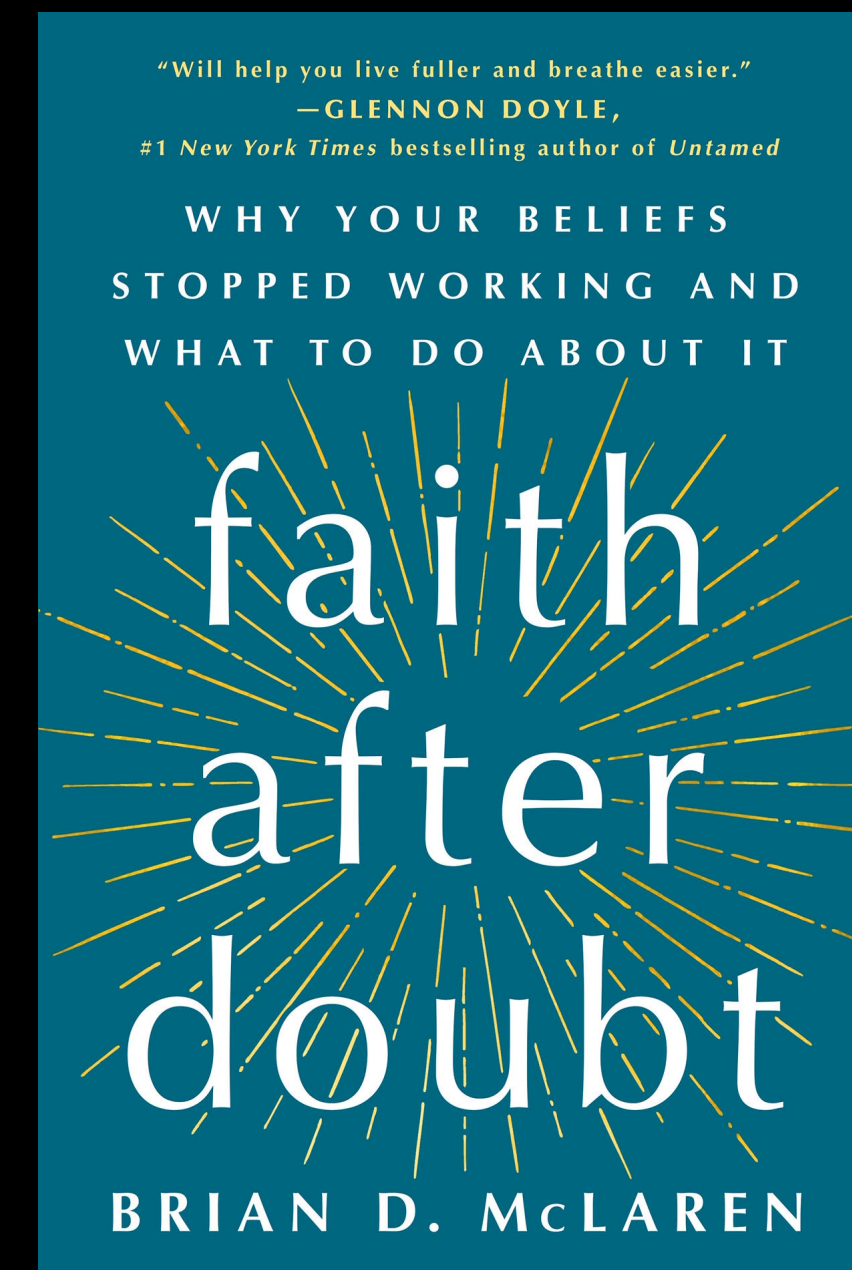
On more than one occasion, a chill ran up my spine as I remembered all the theological arguments that kept people of my conservative Christian religious tradition so intensely occupied, literally, for lifetimes. “Could it be,” I wondered, “that these arguments are weapons of mass distraction, keeping us fixated on abortion and gay marriage, evolution and inerrancy, popes versus presbyteries, and guitars versus organs so that we don’t talk about other things: racism, environmental destruction, militarism, economic inequality, and how the love of money is at the root of all kinds of evil?”





Sixty-five million adults alive in the United States today have already dropped out of active religious attendance, and that number grows by about 2.7 million more every year....

John Lennon asked us to imagine a world without religion, so “the world will be as one.” As a lifetime insider in the world of religion, I have seen its weaknesses as well as strengths, so I feel deeply the appeal of Lennon’s proposal. But in the absence of religion, we fractious humans will simply unite and divide around other things: ideologies, dictators, demagogues, racial identities, wealth, weaponry, rumors, patriotism, conspiracy theories, revenge, threats.....



1. Acknowledge the roots of Trumpism in Christian history and theology.
2. Expose the current role Christian churches and media as aggregators of authoritarian followers
3. Explore the deeper dynamics of faith and doubt.



## 4. Embody (and announce) an alternative.

Emulate and promote examples of anti-authoritarian, anti-racist, pro-science, pro-truth, pro-earth, love-centered Christianity  
to build

a genuine spiritual movement.

a genuine spiritual movement

a vital Christian wing

of a multi-faith, multi-sector movement

for the planet, the poor, and peace.

“the great turning”

beloved community

an ecological civilization



WILD  
GOOSE  
FESTIVAL

your face here



## 4. Embody (and announce) an alternative.

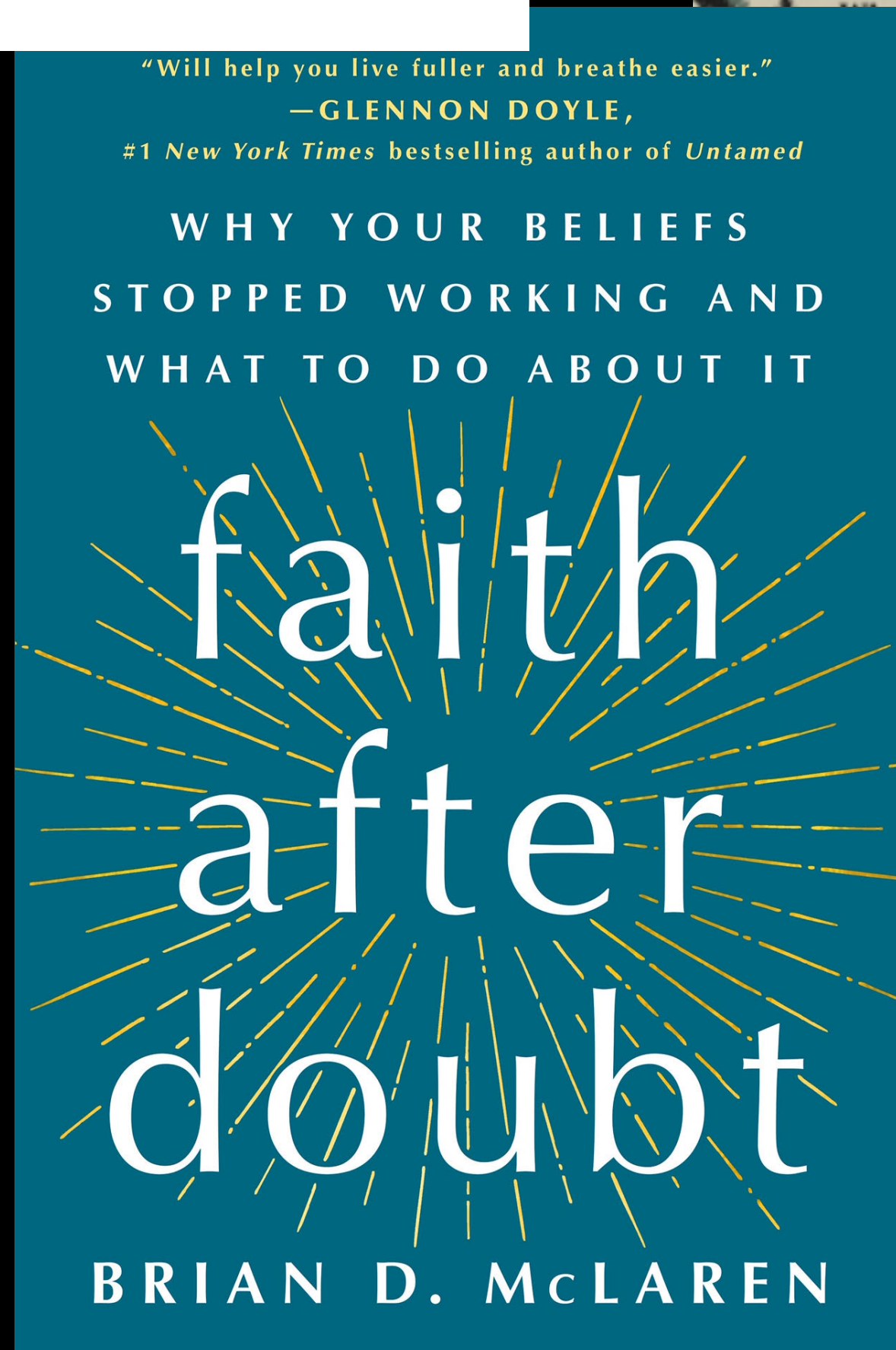
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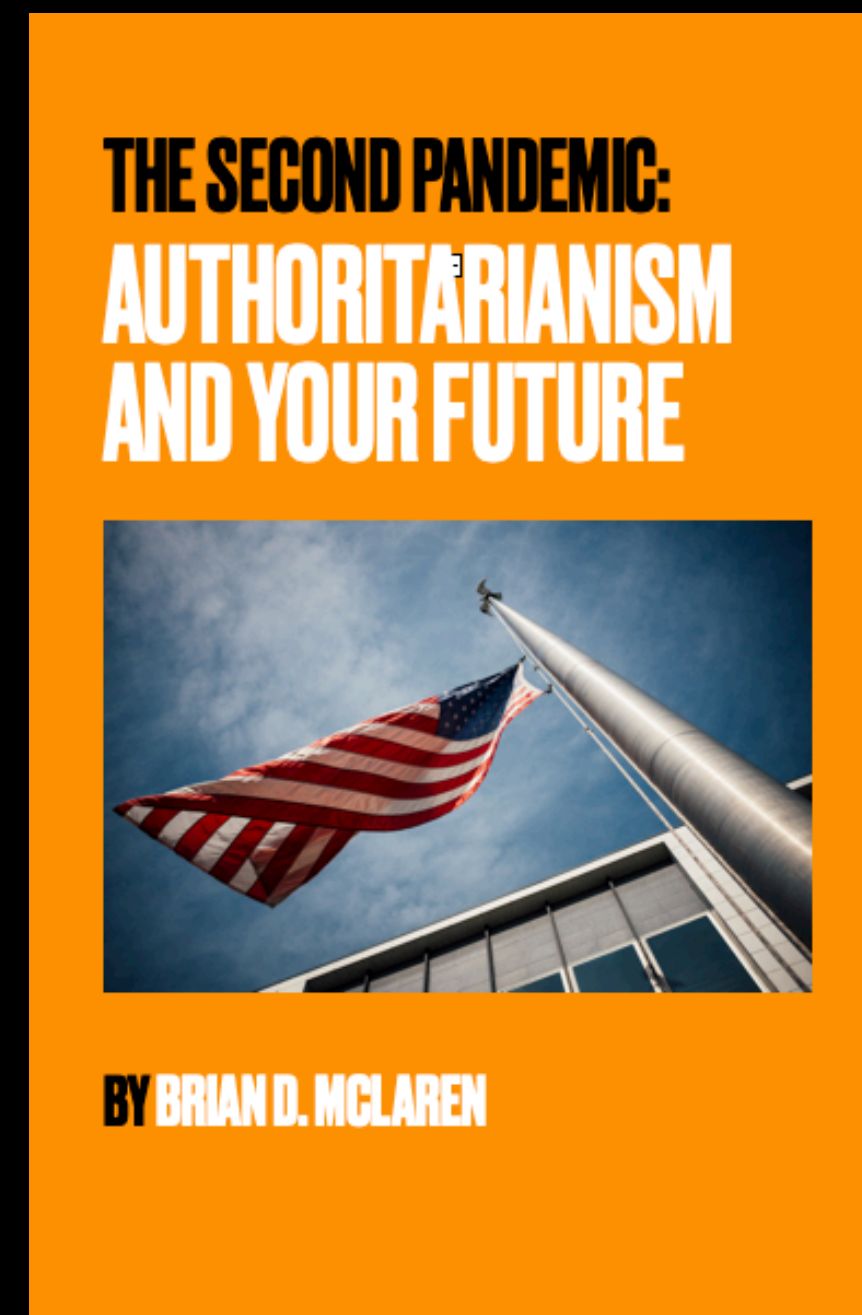
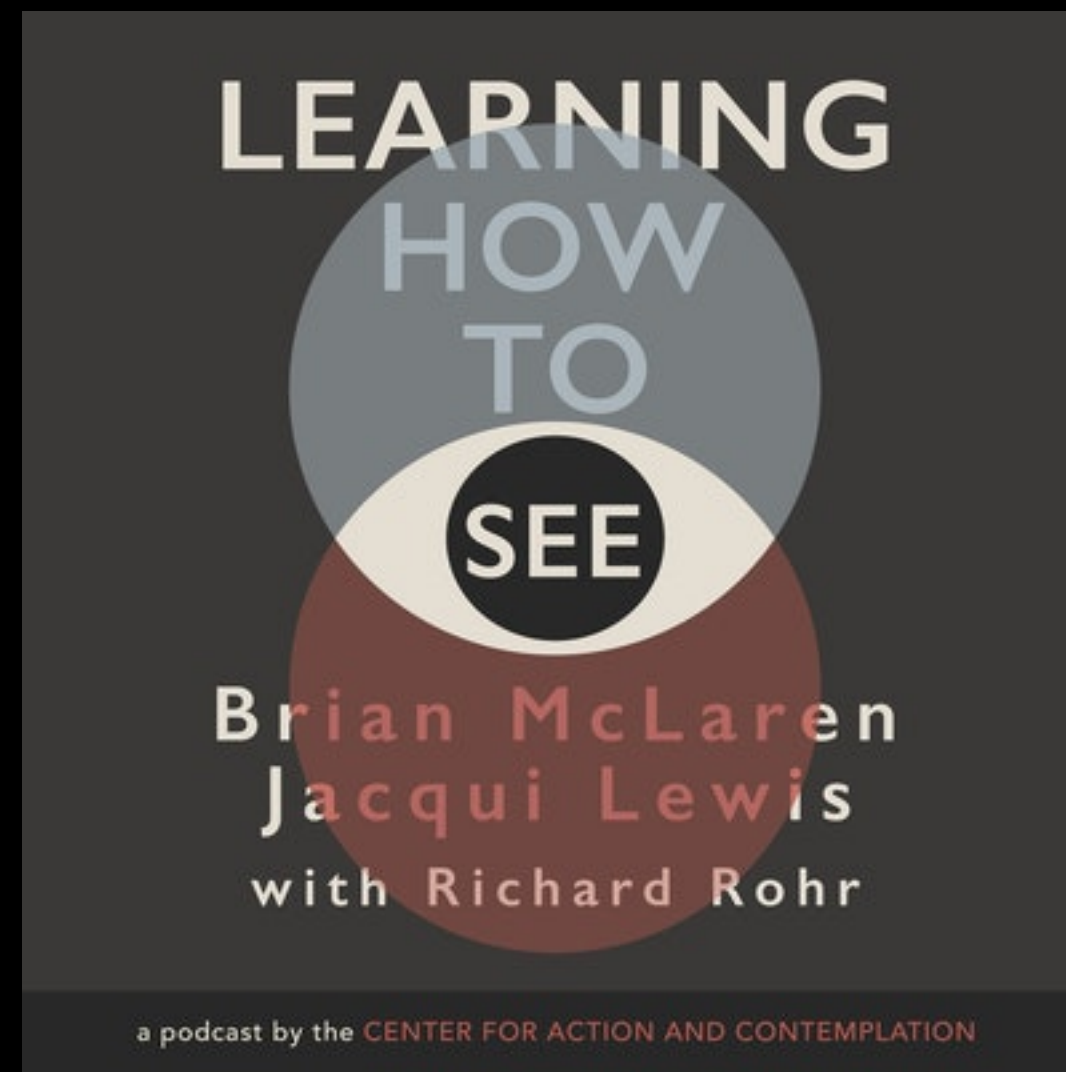
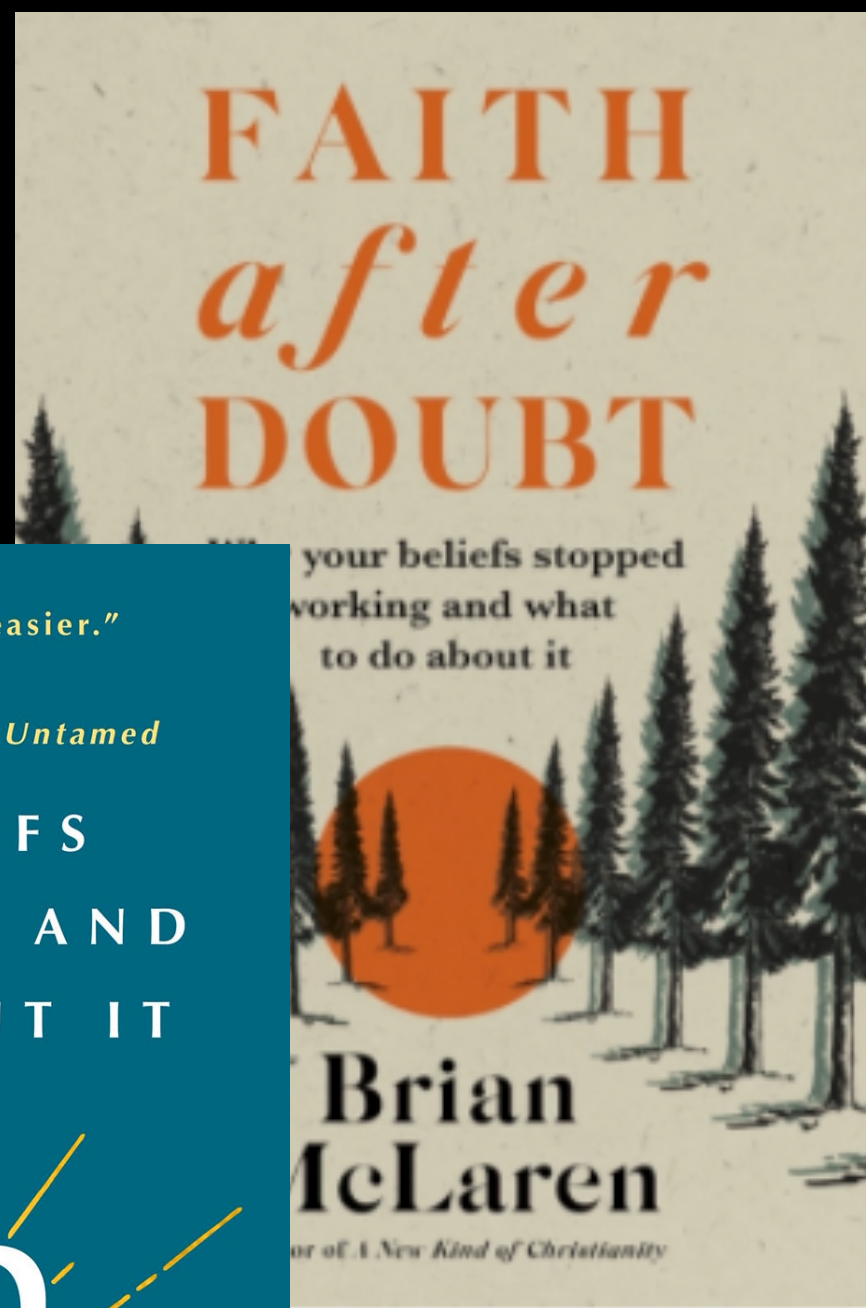
a genuine spiritual movement.

Do so with urgency, for this is an actual emergency.





[brianmclaren.net](http://brianmclaren.net)



# christianity after trump

brian d. mclaren

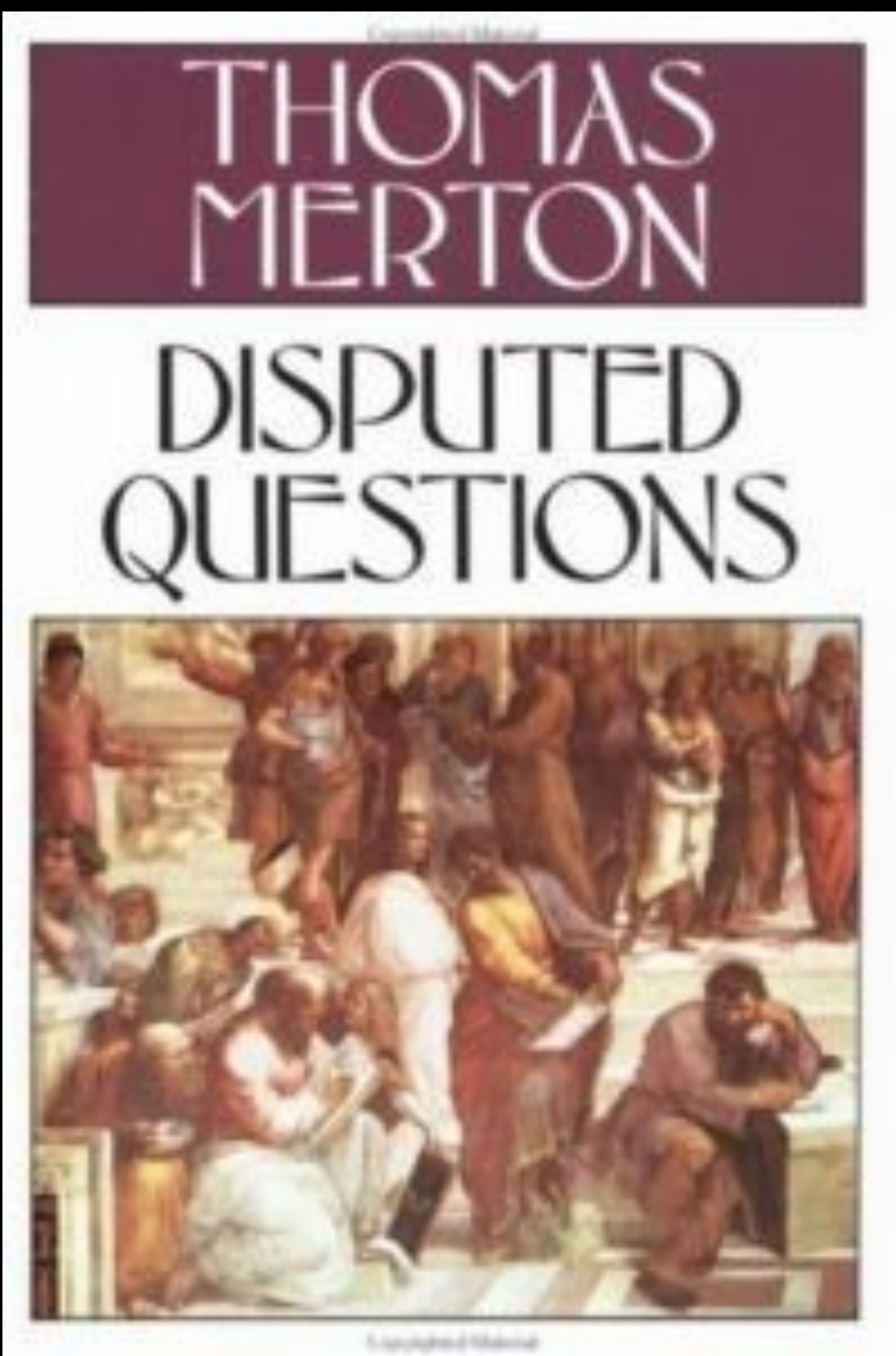
**For further reflection/discussion:**

**1. What do you feel?**

**2. What most struck you? Bothered you? Intrigued you?**

**3. What do you want to do in response?**





from Merton's  
1960 Essay,  
“Christianity and  
Totalitarianism”

A mass movement readily exploits the discontent and frustration of large segments of the population which for some reason or other cannot face the responsibility of being persons and standing on their own feet. But give these persons a movement to join, a cause to defend, and they will go to any extreme, stop at no crime, intoxicated as they are by the slogans that give them a pseudo-religious sense of transcending their own limitations.



The members of a mass movement, afraid of their own isolation, and their own weakness as individuals, cannot face the task of discovering within themselves the spiritual power and integrity which can be called forth only by love. Instead of this, they seek a movement that will protect their weakness with a wall of anonymity and justify their acts by the sanction of collective glory and power. All the better if this is done out of hatred, for hatred is always easier and less subtle than love.

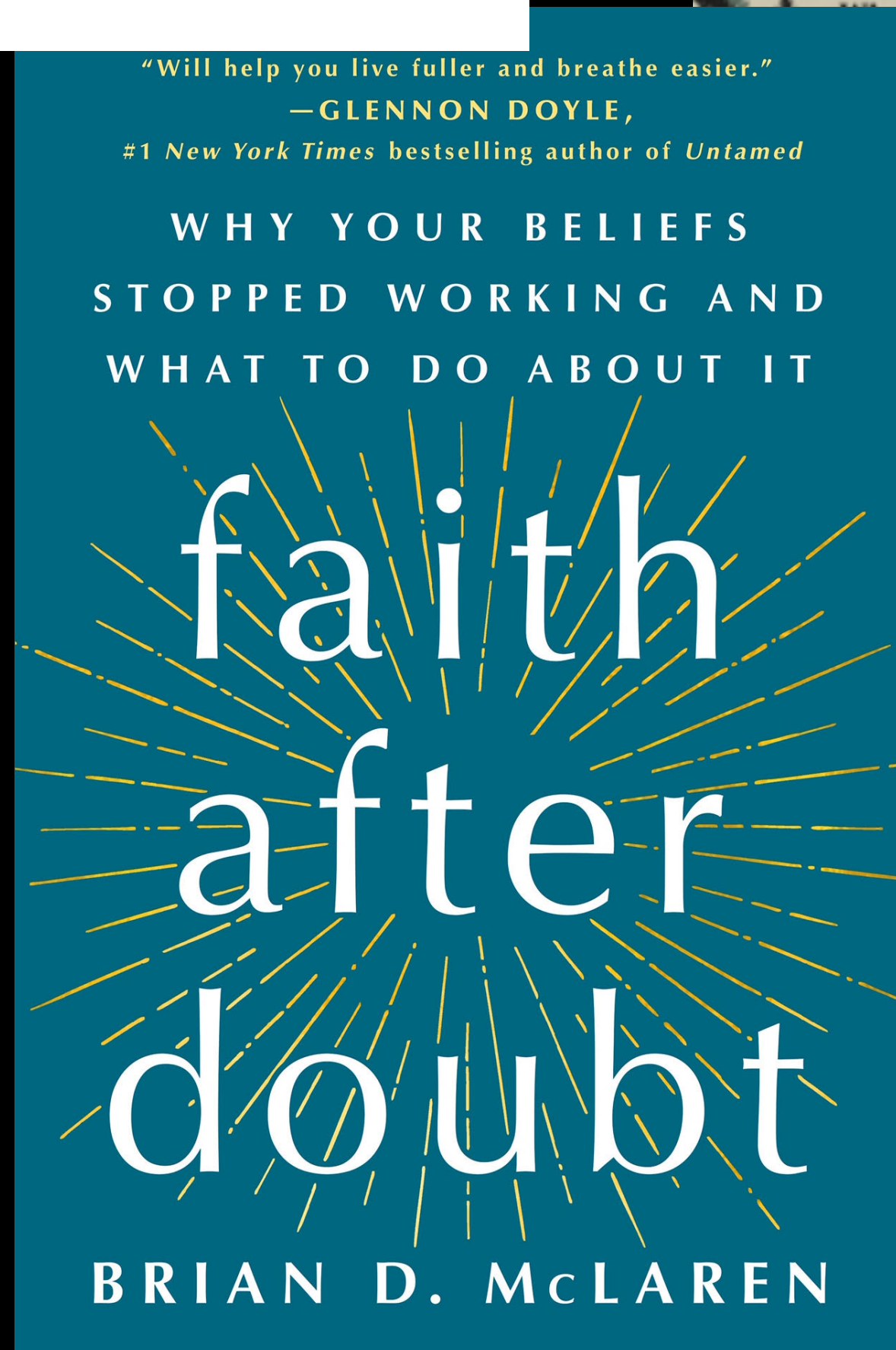
[Hatred] does not have to respect reality as love does. It does not have to take account of individual cases. Its solutions are simple and easy. It makes its decisions by a simple glance at a face, a colored skin, a uniform. It identifies an enemy by an accent, an unfamiliar turn of speech, an appeal to concepts that are difficult to understand. *He is something unfamiliar. This is not “ours.” This must be brought into line – or destroyed.*



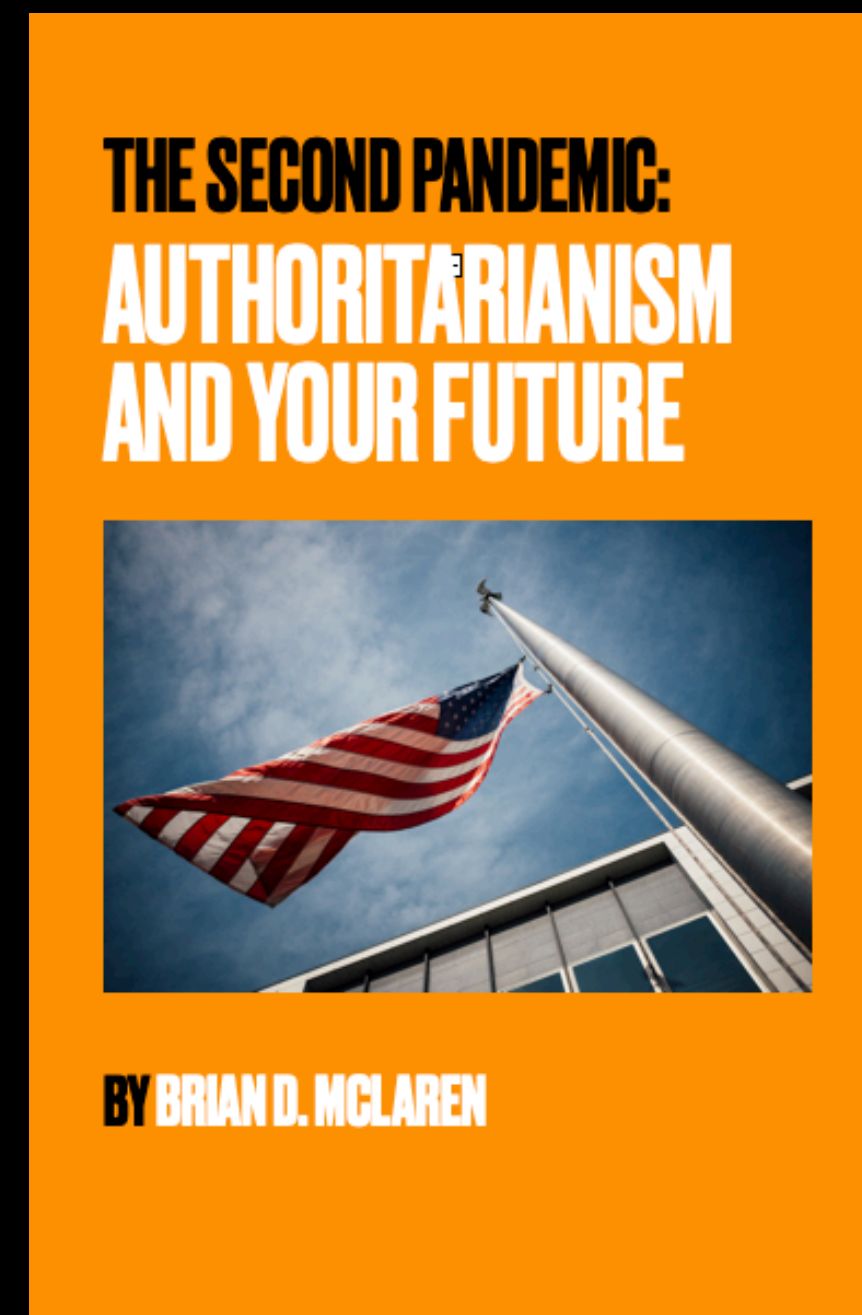
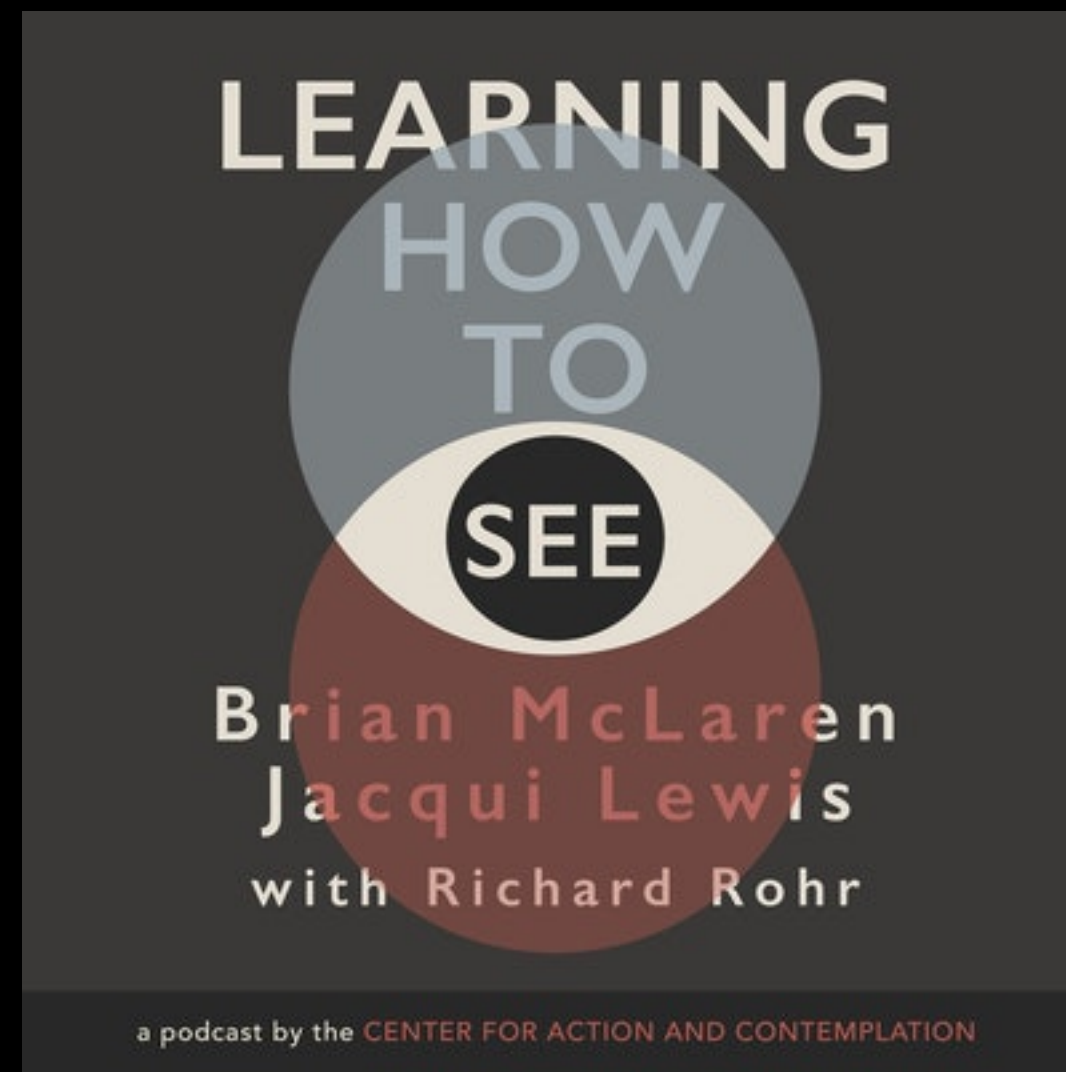
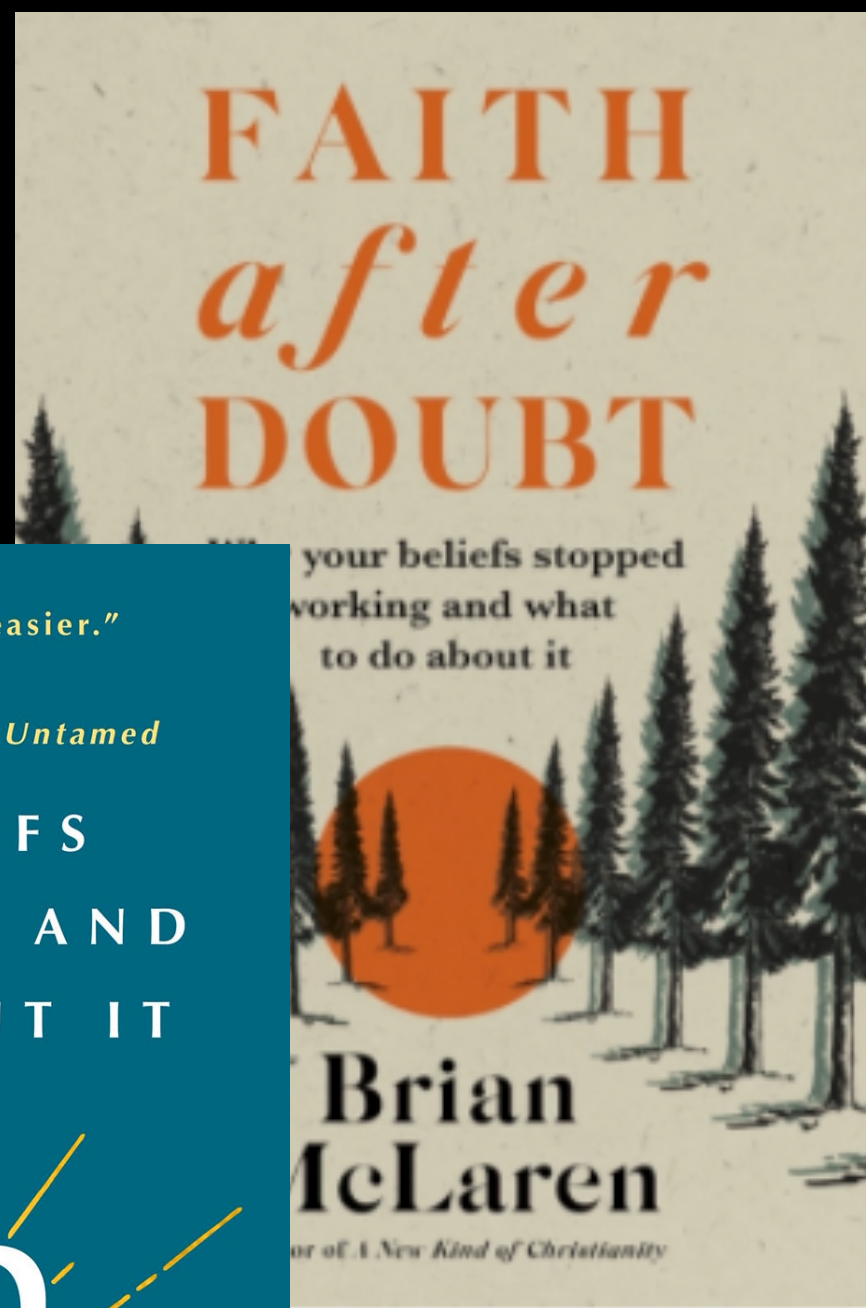
Here is the great temptation of the modern age, this universal infection of fanaticism, this plague of intolerance, prejudice and hate which flows from the crippled nature of person who is afraid of love and does not dare to be a person. It is against this temptation most of all that we Christians must labor with inexhaustible patience and love, in silence, perhaps in repeated failure, seeking tirelessly to restore, wherever we can, and first of all in ourselves, the capacity of love and which makes us the living image of God.

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For more information and resources,  
please go to [brianmclaren.net](http://brianmclaren.net).

Faith After Doubt - links here:

[https://us.macmillan.com/books/  
9781250262776](https://us.macmillan.com/books/9781250262776)



