

BRIAN D. MCLAREN'S

DO I STAY CHRISTIAN?

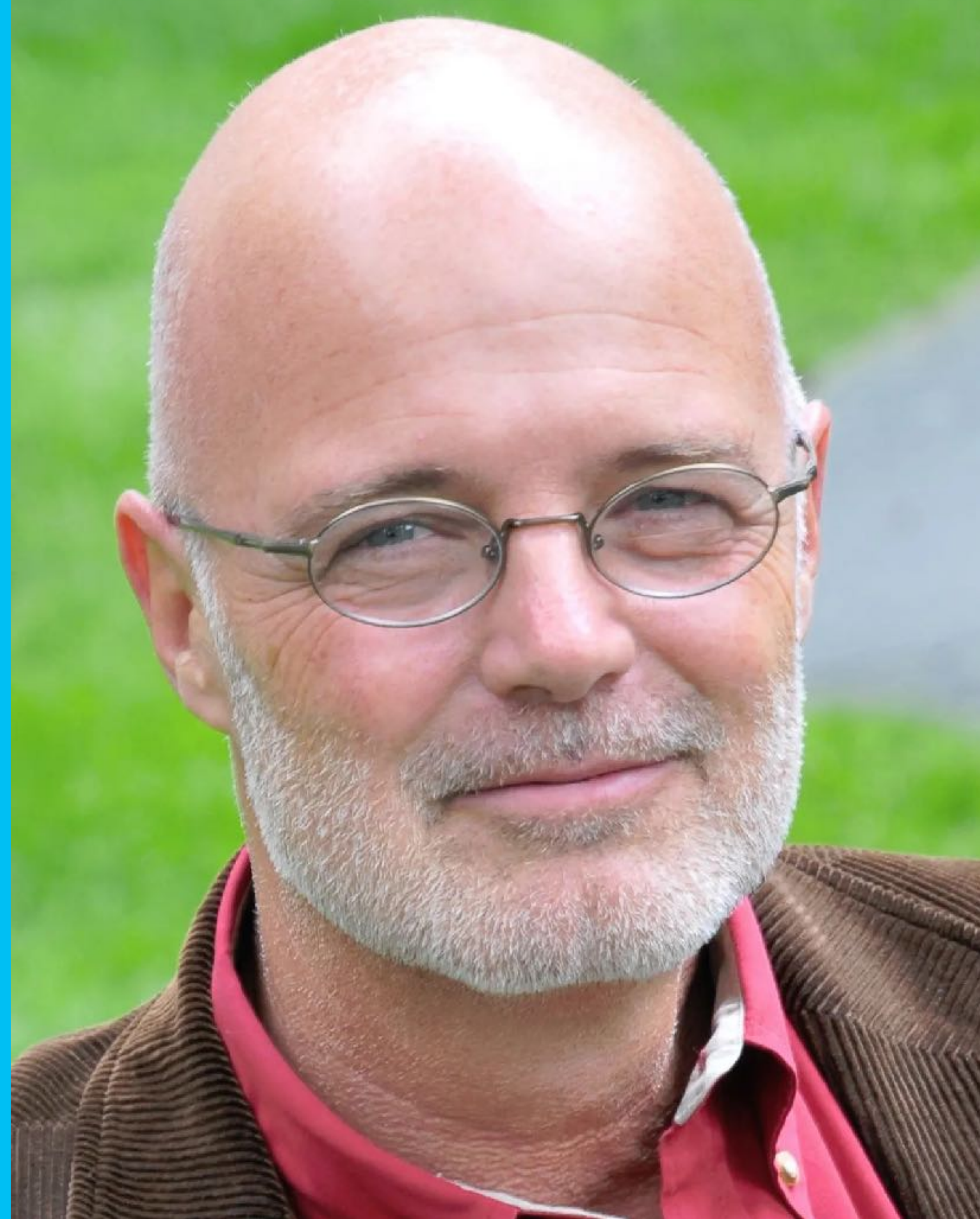
**Introduction “A Religion Is Many Things” and
Part 1 “No”, Chapter 1 “Because Christianity Has Been Vicious to Its Mother
(Antisemitism)”**

Douglas Olena • Sunday February 5, 2023 • Life Together at ET

BRIAN MCLAREN

OUTLINE

- **Introduction: “A Religion Is Many Things”**
- **Chapter 1: “Because Christianity Has Been Vicious to Its Mother (Anti-Semitism)”**



**BEFORE WE BEGIN:
ANY QUESTIONS, REFLECTIONS, STATEMENTS?**

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

ME

INTRODUCTION

- Narratives
 - Louisiana Evangelicals: Meeting Carl's team at 5:30 am
 - Converted by secular students in San Fransisco
 - Remarks about Christianity
 - Now Post-evangelical
 - Meeting mainline protestants in Chicago
 - Asking Brian about his relationship with Christianity
- Categories which make Christianity complex
- More of Brian's story



BRIAN MCLAREN, 2022

Life Together at Evangel Temple Sunday School class, February 5, 2023

INTRODUCTION

NARRATIVES

- Louisiana Evangelicals: Meeting Carl's team at 5:30 am (p. 1)
 - Converted by secular students in San Francisco
 - Remarks about Christianity
 - Now Post-evangelical
- Have any of these sentiments ever traveled across your consciousness?
- How would you/we respond to these people?

TWENTY YEARS LATER...

NARRATIVES

- Meeting mainline protestant leaders of the group that invited Brian to Chicago p. 2, 3
 - Asking Brian about his relationship with Christianity...
- Others, including Roman Catholics, Latter-Day Saints, Adventists, Unitarians have confessed similar frustrations.
- Brian is clearly pointing to Pentecostals, as well as almost every other denomination.
 - Any comments or questions at this point?

CATEGORIES

- Categories which show the complexity of Christianity, hence the complexity of the questions facing us.
 1. Christianity can be understood **historically** or **culturally**,
 2. Christianity can be defined **institutionally**,
 3. Christianity can be defined **doctrinally**,
 4. Christianity can be defined **liturgically** or **pragmatically**,
 5. Christianity can be defined **spiritually** or **experientially**,
- If any of these strike a chord in you please pipe up.

CATEGORIES CONT.

- 6. Christianity can be defined **moralistically**,
- 7. Christianity can be defined **missionally**,
- 8. Christianity can be defined **demographically**,
- 9. Christianity can be defined **politically**,
- 10. Christianity can be defined **socially**,
- 11. Christianity can be defined **linguistically**,

MORE OF BRIAN'S STORY

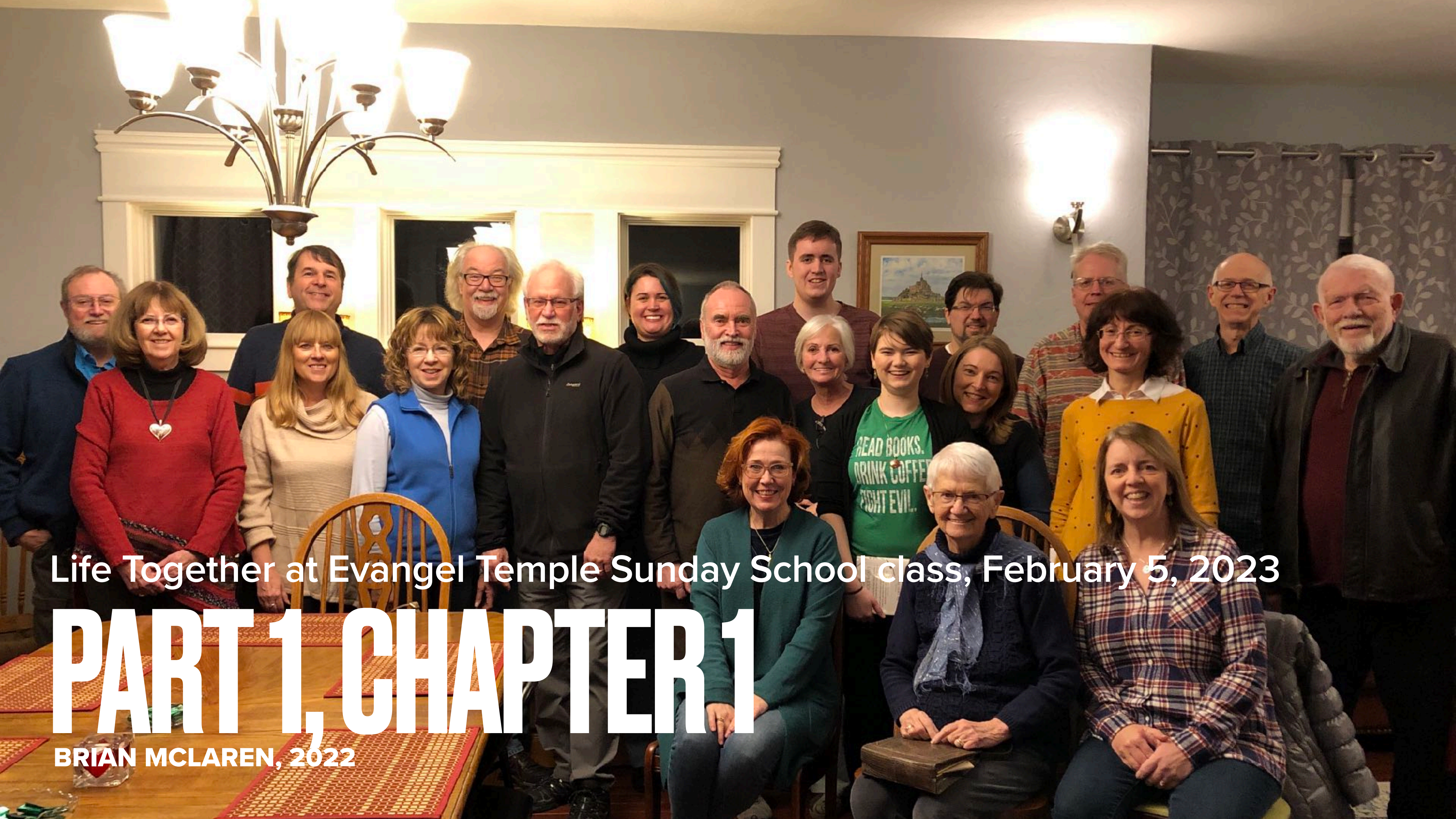
- By the end of college, Brian identified with all 11 of these markers. p. 4-6
- Mafia Story
- Politician, 2016: “Tancredo doubled down. He saw his willingness to nuke the holiest sites of Islam as proof of his fitness to be president. He saw no conflict between killing over two million innocents and having “accepted Christ as his personal savior.”
- So here was an outspoken Christian unapologetically threatening to commit a war crime as a plank in his campaign platform.

MORE OF BRIAN'S STORY

- “So,” Brian thought, “If this person becomes president and follows through on his threat, I will have to give up Christianity as an act of protest.”
- But Brian backed off, considering that there have been few times in history when bad actors have not done destructive things in the name of Christ.
- So, Tancredo may not be sufficient reason to stop identifying as Christian.
- Then came Trump and Evangelicals stood by him.
- In that Evangelical view Christianity looks more like a shill for capitalism and greedy for power than a religion.

**“SO, IN PART 1 OF THE BOOK, I PRESENT
THE BEST REASONS I AM AWARE OF
FOR ANSWERING ‘DO I STAY A
CHRISTIAN’ WITH A DECISIVE *NO.*”**

BRIAN MCLAREN P. 7



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PART 1, CHAPTER 1

BRIAN MCLAREN, 2022

**“NOBODY IS BORN A RELIGIOUS JERK. IT
TAKES A RELIGION TO HELP SOMEONE
BECOME THAT WAY.”**

BRIAN MCLAREN P. 13

CHAPTER 1 “BECAUSE CHRISTIANITY HAS BEEN VICIOUS TO ITS MOTHER (ANTI-SEMITISM)”

- Brian apologizes to his children for the way he disciplined them.
- He accuses those who guided his young Christianity as being Authoritarian under the guise of being Biblical.
- “Some aspects of my parenting were insensitive, unwise, and hurtful. I’ve told all my children, ‘I sincerely did my very best for you as a father, but you deserved so much better.’”
p. 13

CHAPTER 1 “BECAUSE CHRISTIANITY HAS BEEN VICIOUS TO ITS MOTHER (ANTI-SEMITISM)”

- “Our religion can “hell-ify” us by inspiring in us an impenetrable sense of rightness or even superiority.
- “That sense of rightness can inoculate us against humility, infusing in us an excessive confidence or addiction to certainty that keeps us from seeing our mistakes until after the harm has been done—to others (including our children) and to ourselves.
- “Our religion is right, we believe, which makes us right. As a result, the more devoted we are, the more stubborn and unteachable we become. And everyone can see it but us, because we’re blinded by our sincerity and zeal.” p. 14

CHAPTER 1 “BECAUSE CHRISTIANITY HAS BEEN VICIOUS TO ITS MOTHER (ANTI-SEMITISM)”

- Brian was taught about all the heroes of the faith in modernity, Christians who ended slavery, contributed greatly to our understanding of the world, those who gave their lives for the poor, fought injustice, wrote some of the greatest literature, made some of the greatest art and music,
- but he was not told of the despicable behavior of their Christian contemporaries who enslaved, profited from, used and misused people and the land to become wealthy and powerful, all against the teachings of Christ. p. 14
- “Christians used the doctrines of *dominion*, the *Second Coming*, and *election* as excuses to exploit the earth.”

CHAPTER 1 “BECAUSE CHRISTIANITY HAS BEEN VICIOUS TO ITS MOTHER (ANTI-SEMITISM)”

- “I was taught about the heroic Christian martyrs who faced torture and death with courage and equanimity. (But I wasn’t ever taught about how often Christians had made martyrs of others, torturing and killing both people of other faiths and their fellow Christians in the name of God, Jesus, the Church, the Bible, and Christianity.)” p. 15

CHAPTER 1 “BECAUSE CHRISTIANITY HAS BEEN VICIOUS TO ITS MOTHER (ANTI-SEMITISM)”

- “In short, I was taught my religion’s historical upsides and few of its downsides, and I was taught about other religions’ historical downsides and few of their upsides.
- “That’s a perfect recipe for creating ignorant and arrogant religious jerks.” p. 15





CHRISTIANS
ONLY

JEW
NOT

FOCUS ON ANTI-SEMITISM

- The earliest atrocity of my religion began just decades after Jesus lived and died. He taught and modeled love and radical forgiveness, but the religion that sprang up around his name very quickly showed a hateful face, and the first victim of its hostility was its own mother: Judaism. pp. 15-16
- It certainly is not as simple as that, Lois can inform us, but it is a fact that the Church made an enemy of the Jews.
- All of history since bears testimony of the violence done to Jews in the name of God and expedience.

FOCUS ON ANTI-SEMITISM

- Covid 19 brought up the ghost of past plagues, and how Christians, looking for someone to blame, pointed their fingers at the Jews, and aimed their destructive forces against them.
- Murder, thievery, burnings, and violence of a wide variety followed. Every effort was made to cancel and wipe out every trace of Jewery.

FOCUS ON ANTI-SEMITISM

- The Church, with modern Christian Zionism “reduces Jews to the status of pawns in the fulfillment of end-times prophecies that many Christian preachers love to speak and write about.” p. 17
- “Rabbi Danya Ruttenberg diagnosed our problem succinctly in a tweet: ‘Philosemitism is antisemitism, too. Fetishization of Jews and Judaism is also an objectification of us and a denial of our humanity, and also often comes with a side order of appropriation.’” pp. 17-18
- In this view Jews become God’s pawns in Christianity’s plans.

FOCUS ON ANTI-SEMITISM

- McLaren, a witness of the Charlottesville Nazi parades, muses that Nazism has not left the American soul but continues to ferment.

FOCUS ON ANTI-SEMITISM

- “Until the Christian faith unites more passionately and decisively in acknowledging its ugly anti-Semitic history (which is ongoing and, in some places, experiencing a resurgence), I must be sympathetic to those who say they can’t stay Christian for this reason alone.” pp. 19-20
- McLaren recounts the story of some who converted to Judaism in response to knowledge of Christian Anti-Semitism.

FOCUS ON ANTI-SEMITISM

- **Anti-Semitism is more like a conspiracy theory that an unscrupulous cable news station spreads among susceptible groups, recruiting the naive as accomplices in ignorance, lies, and bigotry.**
- **For most of its history, the Christian religion has been this tawdry cable news station, hosting a wide array of dangerous anti-Semitic conspiracy theorists, and in many places, it continues to do so. p. 20**

FOCUS ON ANTI-SEMITISM

- “Don’t I owe it to my neighbors, especially my Jewish neighbors, to seriously reconsider my involvement in a religion that has been so cruel to them for so long?” p. 20