





Each blade of grass, ev'-ry wing that soars,
the waves that sweep a-cross a dis-tant shore,
make full the cir-cle of God.



Each laugh-ing child, ev'-ry gen-tle eye,
a for-est lit be-neath a moon-bright sky,
make full the cir-cle of God.



Each si-lent paw, ev'-ry round-ed stone,
the buzz that ech-oes from a hon-ey'd comb,
make full the cir-cle of God.



Each fire-brimmed star, ev'ry outstretched hand, the
wind that leaps and sails ac-ross the land, make full
the cir-cle of God.



Each i-cy peak, ev'ry pat-terned shell,
the joy-ous chor-us that the dawn fore-tells, make full
the cir-cle of God.



Each cos-mic hue, ev'-ry crea-ture's way,
all form the beau-ty of this vast ar-ray,
mak-ing full the cir-cle of God.

do i stay christian?
no. yes. how? so?

slides will be available at
brianmclaren.net

do i stay christian?

no.

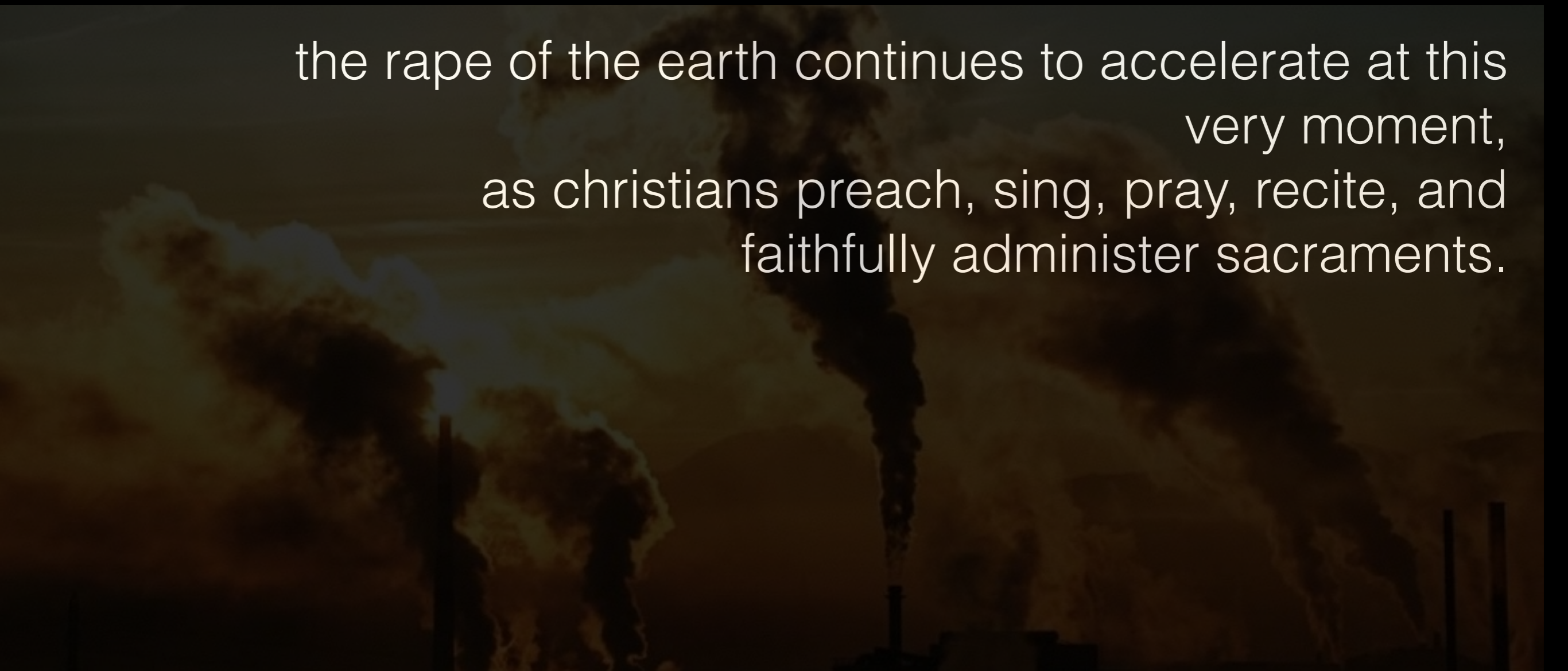
reasons to leave.

for the last 500 years

while we've been happily supporting Christianity ...

this beautiful planet has been plundered and raped, treated like a stolen bank account or a trash dump or a sewer, while churches motor on, obliviously.

the rape of the earth continues to accelerate at this very moment, as christians preach, sing, pray, recite, and faithfully administer sacraments.



while we've been happily keeping Christianity going ...

euro-American empires have colonized the world,
exploiting its labor and extracting its wealth;
the cries of the poor have gone unheard, the power of
the super-rich has multiplied rapidly;
the gap between the rich and powerful minority and a
poor and vulnerable majority has become a widening
chasm.



while we've been happily praying, singing, and writing our checks ...

racism resurges,
antisemitism and islamophobia intensify,
ethno-nationalism spreads,
more and more people live by the gun and die by the gun,
and church members pray for peace in theory but know
nothing of what makes for peace in practice. So they buy
more bombs, drones, and guns, and use them in jesus'
name.



while we've been conducting "worship wars" and arguing organs vs. guitars, charismatic vs. Calvinist, traditional vs. contemporary ... and while we've been spending billions on worship buildings, worship conferences and concerts, worship music, and a worship industry ...

our world speeds toward a cluster of catastrophes ...

a planet being exploited, poisoned, and destabilized,
a crisis of poverty and obscene economic inequality,
unprecedented existential threats of violence, war, and
civilizational collapse,

and twin failures of our political and religious leadership to adapt.



our system is perfectly designed
to yield the results we are now getting.
— Dallas Willard



The historical challenge

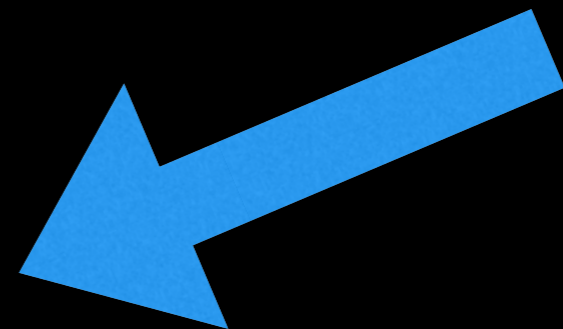
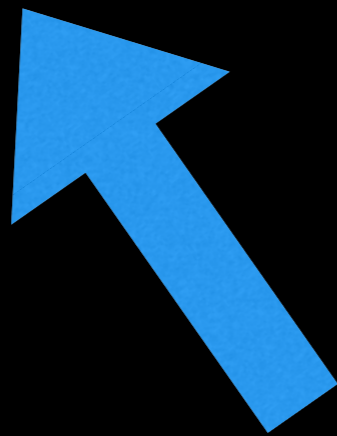
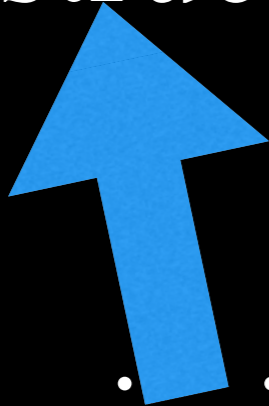
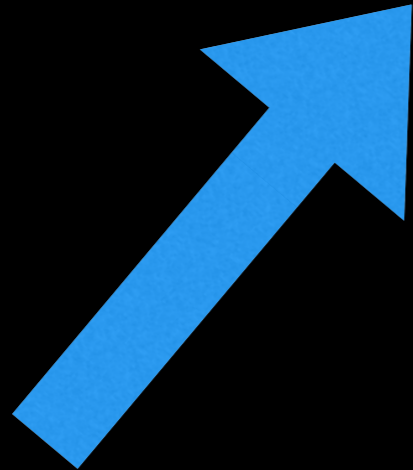
The doctrinal challenge

The structural challenge

The missional challenge

The liturgical challenge

The spiritual challenge



reason 1. history

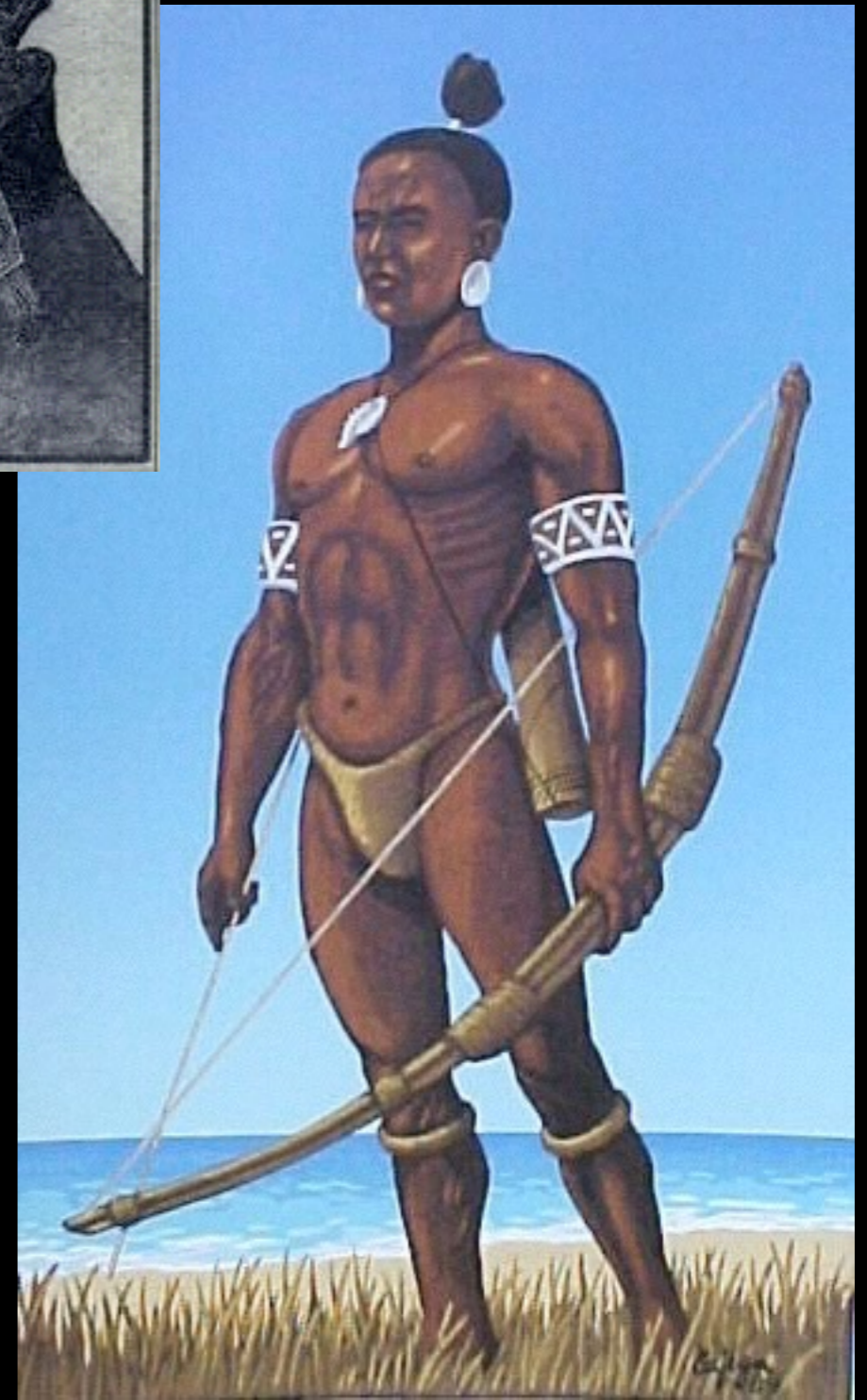
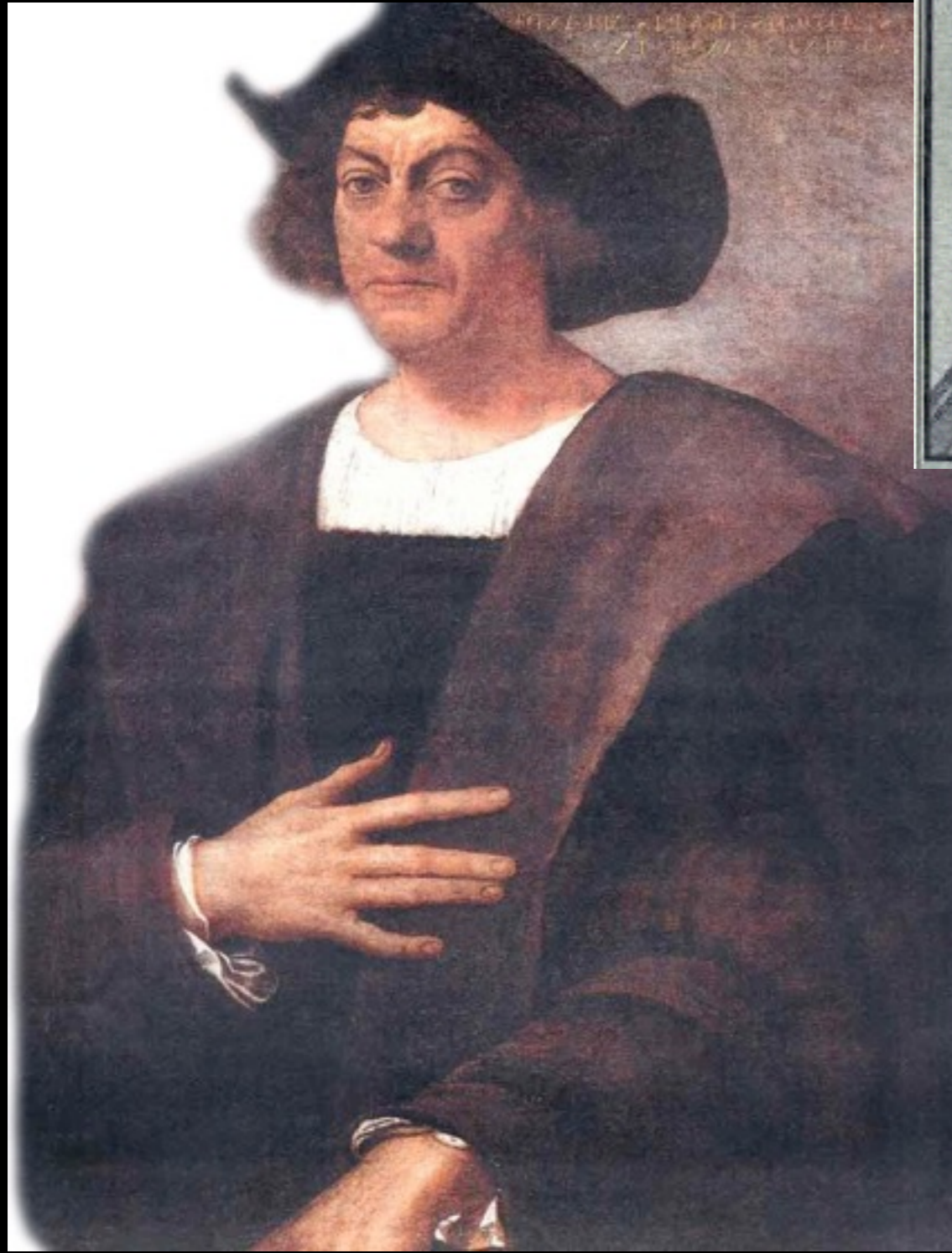
In Fourteen Hundred and Ninety-Two, Columbus sailed the ocean blue.



In Fourteen Hundred and Fifty-Two, Pope Nicholas told European Christians what to do.

“...invade, search out, capture, vanquish, and subdue all Saracens and pagans whatsoever, and other enemies of Christ wheresoever placed, and the kingdoms, dukedoms, principalities, dominions, possessions, and all movable and immovable goods whatsoever held and possessed by them and to reduce their persons to perpetual slavery, and to apply and appropriate to himself and his successors the kingdoms, dukedoms, counties, principalities, dominions, possessions, and goods, and to convert them to his and their use and profit.” - Pope Nicolas V, Romanus Pontifex, 1452-4, Doctrine of Discovery

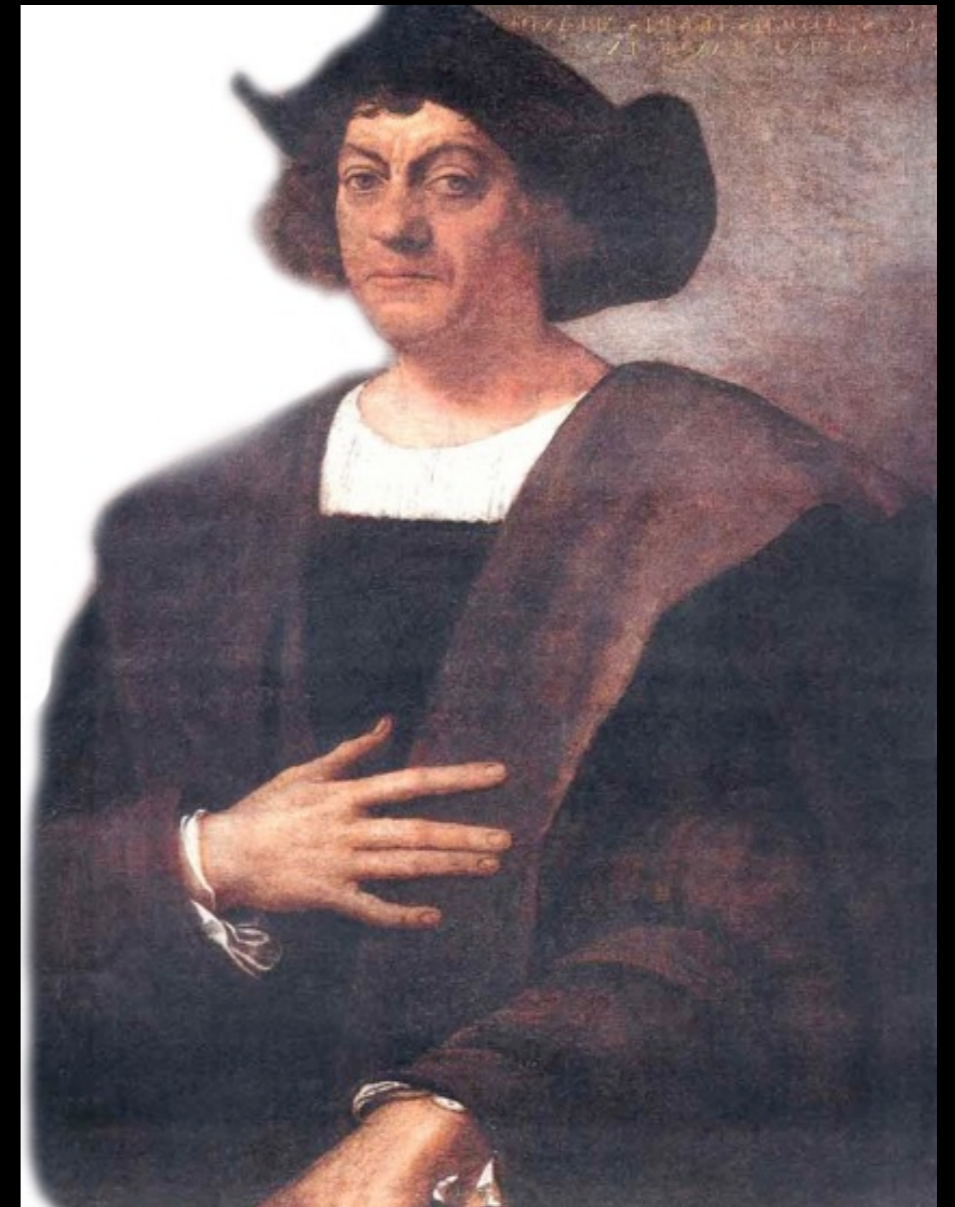




1495

2nd Voyage Return Cargo: 1600
male and female Taino slaves for
Spain

“It is possible, with the name of the Holy Trinity, to sell all the slaves which it is possible to sell ... Here there are so many of these slaves ... although they are living things they are as good as gold.”



The people of Hispaniola had their lives unjustly and savagely taken by, as de Las Casas repeatedly notes, professed Jesus followers, and they were not, as we all know, the only ones to meet such a fate. Millions of their indigenous sisters and brothers on Turtle Island were killed at the hands of other Europeans, as nation after imperial nation, bearing Christ on their lips and crosses on their military standards, followed suit. - Waziyatawin



From this vantage point, Christianity has nothing – absolutely nothing – to teach Indigenous people about how to live in a good way on this land. In fact, Christians have only demonstrated that there is something profoundly wrong with the cosmology and worldview behind more than five centuries of carnage—carnage that has yet to even slow down. Christians have so much negative history and dogma to overcome within their own tradition, I do not believe the religion is even salvageable. The world is deep in the throes of an ecological crisis based in Western economies of hyper-exploitation. The planet will not survive another 500 years of Christian domination.

- Waziyatawin, PhD, 2012



The history we don't tell ourselves

1st - 2nd Century: Anti-semitism begins

2nd - 3rd Century: Suppression of women

4th Century: Conversion of/by Constantine - torture, banishment, execution

Multiple Centuries: Burning of witches

Multiple Centuries: Crusades

15th Century: Doctrine of Discovery

16th - 19th Centuries: Global Conquest/ African Slave Trade/White European Empires/Supremacy

20th Century - the relationship between Christianity & Hitler, Christianity & Capitalism/Militarism

21st Century - resurgence of "Christian" ethno-nationalism in US, UK, Russia, Brazil, etc.

many feel religion has become a
destructive force in the world ...
a weapon of mass distraction, and
a destructive influence.

is that fair?
let's get specific ...

1. christianity that celebrates an evacuation plan for “us” and leaves the earth and “them” to destruction ... destroys the world.

1. christianity that celebrates an evacuation plan for “us” and leaves the earth and “them” to destruction ... destroys the world.

because it teaches us to seek first our own “eternal security” and personal well-being (aka salvation) - breaking solidarity with our neighbors and selling out the earth to the highest bidder.

2. christianity that puts God on our side as “the chosen people,” and therefore creates a sense of spiritual elitism, religious supremacy, and excessive, unreflective confidence ... destroys the world.

2. christianity that puts God on our side as “the chosen people,” and therefore creates a sense of spiritual elitism, religious supremacy, and excessive, unreflective confidence ... destroys the world.

because it gives us permission to dominate, exclude, and seek our own interests, even to the harm of other humans and other living creatures.

3. christianity that frames the story of the universe as a cosmic war that ends in eternal conscious bliss for us winners and eternal conscious torment for the losers ... destroys the world.

3. christianity that frames the story of the universe as a cosmic war that ends in eternal conscious bliss for us winners and eternal conscious torment for the losers ... destroys the world.

because it leads to colonialism, torture, cruelty, and offense/defense rather than dialogue.

4. christianity that renders “us” clean and
“them” unclean ... destroys the world.

4. christianity that renders “us” clean and
“them” unclean ... destroys the world.

because it leads to “ethnic cleansing”
and genocide, not to mention
scapegoating and racism/nativism/
nationalism.

5. christianity that empowers toxic masculinity, bureaucratic or charismatic patriarchy, and the suppression/stigmatization of women and LGBTQ people ... destroys the world.

5. christianity that empowers toxic masculinity, bureaucratic or charismatic patriarchy, and the suppression/stigmatization of women and LGBTQ people ... destroys the world.

because it denies what the gospel makes clear: God's way subverts patriarchy, so that in Christ, there is neither male nor female, Jew nor Greek, slave nor free.

6. christianity that reduces jesus to a variable in a cosmic damnation/salvation equation, or demotes Jesus to the level of “personal savior” ... destroys the world.

6. christianity that reduces jesus to a variable in a spiritual damnation/salvation equation, or demotes Jesus to the level of “personal savior” ... destroys the world.

because it shrinks the gospel to a consumer product and detaches the life and ministry of Jesus from a God who created the cosmos, loves the cosmos, and inhabits the cosmos in embodied solidarity.

7. christianity that celebrates magical skyhooks and a predetermined future, while guaranteeing that the “everything is under control” right now ... destroys the world.

7. christianity that celebrates magical skyhooks and a predetermined future, while guaranteeing that the “everything is under control” ... destroys the world.

because it allows us to be piously, naively, and irresponsibly complacent about injustice, and therefore complicit in it.

we are not only saved by grace. we are also
paralyzed by it.

— Dallas Willard



8. christianity that requires us to say & sing “lord, lord” but doesn’t equip us to do what Christ taught and modeled, or to believe things about him and even worship him but not follow him and be formed in his mind/spirit... destroys the world.

8. christianity that requires us to say & sing “lord, lord” but doesn’t equip us to do what Christ taught and modeled, or to believe things about him and even worship him but not follow him and be formed in his mind/spirit... destroys the world.

because it is satisfied with church attendance without discipleship ...

9. christianity that tries to make us feel good rather than be good so we can do good ... destroys the world.

9. christianity that tries to make us feel good rather than be good so we can do good ... destroys the world.

because it bestows a sense of moral superiority upon spiritually narcissistic people.

10. christianity that teaches us to seek forgiveness without seeking repentance, and to seek forgiveness without spreading forgiveness, and to evade justice without seeking first God's commonwealth and justice ... destroys the world.

10. christianity that teaches us to seek forgiveness without seeking repentance, and to seek forgiveness without spreading forgiveness, and to evade justice without seeking first God's commonwealth and justice ... destroys the world.

because it allows us to do the unthinkable and gain instant, free, convenient, easy absolution, and it is focused on evading justice (defined as punishment) without seeking first God's commonwealth and justice (defined as making wrongs right).

11. christianity that relies on authoritarian
(even quasi-inerrant) leaders and
compliant (even quasi-cultic) members ...
destroys the world.

11. christianity that relies on authoritarian
(even quasi-inerrant) leaders and
compliant (even quasi-cultic) members ...
destroys the world.

because it renders us susceptible to
demagogues and con artists who demand
trust and obedience under threat of
banishment, punishment, and death.

12. christianity that motivates primarily through fear, guilt, and shame ... destroys the world.

12. christianity that motivates primarily through fear, guilt, and shame ... destroys the world.

because it renders us easy to manipulate with fear, guilt, and shame, rather than alive and free in the Spirit of empowerment, love, and a sound mind.

13. christianity that serves as a chaplaincy to an extractive and exploitive economy and a covert white & human supremacist ideology, all the while boasting in its correctness of doctrine, hierarchy, liturgy, and polity ... destroys the world.

13. christianity that serves as a chaplaincy to an extractive and exploitive economy and a covert white & human supremacist ideology, yet refuses to interrogate its history and learn from its complicity, all the while boasting in its correctness of doctrine, hierarchy, liturgy, and polity ... destroys the world.

because it teaches us to strain at gnats
and swallow camels.

14. christianity that spiritualizes poverty, slavery, sickness, and hunger ... but never addresses actual poverty, slavery, sickness, and hunger ... destroys the world.

14. christianity that spiritualizes poverty, slavery, sickness, and hunger ... but never addresses actual poverty, slavery, sickness, and hunger ... destroys the world

because it raptures us into an alt-reality fantasy rather than deploying us for mission in this actual reality.

15. christianity that lives by the donor and therefore dies by the donor because it is afraid to challenge or confront the donor ... destroys the world.

15. christianity that lives by the donor and therefore dies by the donor because it is afraid to challenge or confront the donor ... destroys the world.

because it is held hostage by its donors and the values of the destructive economic and political systems that have made them wealthy.

16. christianity that claims to be divinely
sanctioned in form and content ...
destroys the world

16. christianity that claims to be divinely
sanctioned in form and content ...
destroys the world

because it is blind to its ethnic origins, incapable
of being changed, and bound to the cultures and
conditions of its sacred texts, rendering it
incapable of adapting to address the emergencies
of our current (and constantly changing) world.

if your image of God is unhealthy, the more
devoted you are, the less healthy you will be.
— Dallas Willard



And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit. - 2 Corinthians 3:18



what is the image reflected in a mirror that we are worshipping?

in light of our history, we have to ask whether it is an act of betrayal to remain faithful to the christian religion in most of its current forms.

The historical challenge

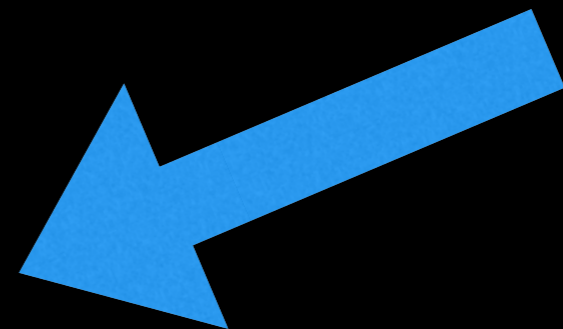
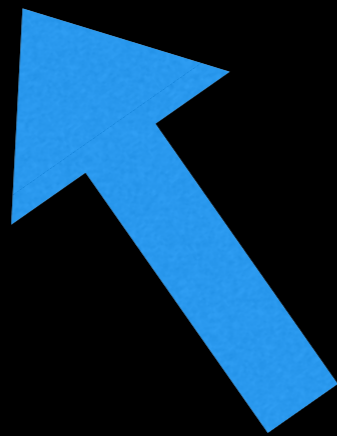
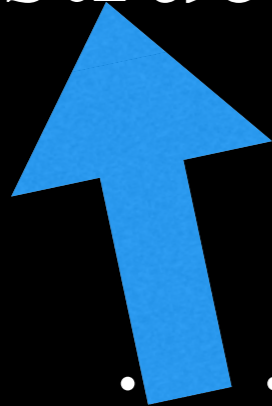
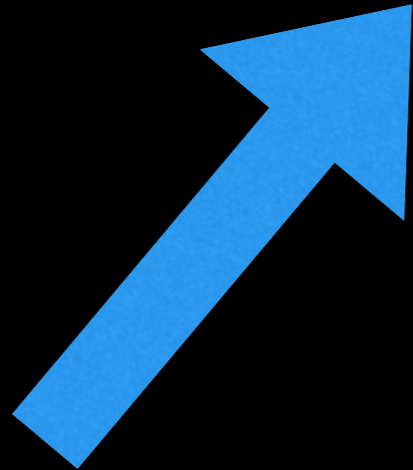
The doctrinal challenge

The structural challenge

The missional challenge

The liturgical challenge

The spiritual challenge



but what happens if we give up christianity
entirely?

will that be better?

