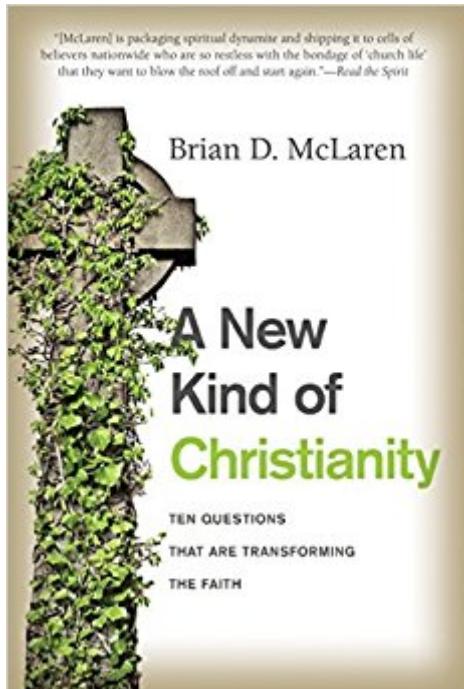


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A New Kind Of Christianity: Ten Questions That Are Transforming The Faith



Synopsis

We are in the midst of a paradigm shift in the church. Not since the Reformation five centuries ago have so many Christians come together to ask whether the church is in sync with their deepest beliefs and commitments. These believers range from evangelicals to mainline Protestants to Catholics, and the person who best represents them is author and pastor Brian McLaren. In this much anticipated book, McLaren examines ten questions facing today's church: "questions about how to articulate the faith itself, the nature of its authority, who God is, whether we have to understand Jesus through only an ancient Greco-Roman lens, what exactly the good news is that the gospel proclaims, how we understand the church and all its varieties, why we are so preoccupied with sex, how we should think of the future and people from other faiths, and the most intimidating question of all: what do we do next? Here you will find a provocative and enticing introduction to the Christian faith of tomorrow.

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Customer Reviews

Brian McLaren has emerged as a voice that asks aloud the questions that many of us have wrestled with in silence. As a result, he has been lionized (and sometimes idolized) by those who find resonance with his theological ponderings. He has simultaneously been demonized and even slandered by those who are disturbed by his explorations into what it means to follow Jesus in the 21st century. He has become both an antenna and a lightning rod for the light and heat generated by the friction of Christianity's transition into post-modernism. I have just finished reading McLaren's latest book, *A New Kind of Christianity*. Having read several of McLaren's other books, I would

consider this one to be essential. I mean "essential" in two different ways:1. "Essential" in the sense that A New Kind of Christianity is a streamlined and tightly focused distillation of ideas that McLaren has explored elsewhere. This book seems to contain the concentrated essence of what McLaren's theological labor has produced thus far. I often found points which he had sketched out in previous books now re-drawn in sharp, clear and muscular form. As a result--at under 300 pages--this book packs a great deal of theological, intellectual and inspirational punch.2. "Essential" in the sense that A New Kind of Christianity is *the* Brian McLaren book to read, whether you haven't read anything else by him or whether you have read everything else by him. A New Kind of Christianity is built around the exploration of ten important questions that Christians throughout the world seem to be asking more and more and with greater urgency. These questions are:1. What is the overarching story line of the Bible?2. How should the Bible be understood?3.

I am not a Calvinist. Like McLaren I am charismatic and non-Reformed. I gave it 2 stars (instead of 1) because I felt the book, like Tim Keller's "Reason for God", addressed good and valid questions that people are asking today. I gave it 2 stars because I believe the premise of the book is faulty. Please let me explain: McLaren bases the entire book on one historical premise: that the Church, at the time of Constantine, imported neo-Platonism into Christianity and Christian faith has been defunct ever since. He says that Platonist ideas such as atonement, hell, just-war theory, a literalistic view of the Bible and the exclusivity of Christ are all ideas foreign to Christianity but were Greek and Roman ideas brought in by Constantine and others. Throughout the book he refers to traditional Christian belief as the "Greco-Roman story line" which he contrasts with his version of Christianity which he presents as true Christianity. If McLaren's understanding of history is correct, then this really is a revolutionary book. Everything I have ever read and learned about this epoch of Church history however, leads me to believe that McLaren's premise, and therefore all of his conclusions which he extrapolates throughout the book, are incorrect. Now, that could mean that all the books I have read on the subject are wrong. But if that is so, then McLaren needs to write a much larger book just to establish his premise as valid. The book does not attempt to explain why other branches of Christianity which grew up outside of the Roman empire or outside of the range of Greek thought (Ethiopian, Syrian, Indian, etc) also held to these beliefs.

I'm cross-posting this review from The Christian Humanist Blog, so do forgive any html oddities. When I praise Plato and defend my teaching Republic to college freshmen, I often say that Plato's excellence lies not in the fact that he's always right but that when he's wrong, he's wrong in

compelling ways, ways that inspire me to imagine a better alternative. While Brian McLaren is no Plato, parts of his most recent book *A New Kind of Christianity* have that Platonic character to them, getting things very wrong in ways that set me thinking about how I'd improve on his points. Other parts of the book resonate quite nicely with things that I try to do as a Christian teacher or realize now that I should try to do. But other parts still, alas, smack of the sleight-of-hand, the well-poisoning, and the other dirty trickery that make me mistrust apologetics literature of various sorts. In other words, *A New Kind of Christianity* is a complex book, not consistently excellent but nonetheless very helpful in places. Brian McLaren Gets it Right As Phil Rutledge pointed out in response to our podcast on the Haiti Earthquake, when I talk about the Bible, I tend to talk not about one unified document but a library, various not only in cosmetic details but in a more robust sense of genre, asking certain questions in this book that lie out of bounds in other books, offering teachings here that seem to stand at least in tension with teachings there. (I should note the obvious, namely that I do not speak for the other Christian Humanists on this point or necessarily on any given point.)

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