

An Assortment of Study Slides for Discussing

Brian D. McLaren's

***A New Kind of Christianity***

**Chapter 22: Conclusion**

June 21, 2026

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## On Chapter 22: “A New Kind of Christianity”

### Catching an infection threatening to reach pandemic status; some observable characteristics:

1. **Mysterious origin but traceable transmission** (“I can’t point to a single moment when it began for me[, but] I do clearly remember the people from whom I caught it” [252].)
2. **Mutation into “more complex and incurable strains”** (“From each of them I got a little more infected, and then we all started reinfecting each other [. . .]” [252].)
3. **Severity an index of relative good health and liveliness** (“[T]he worse case of it you had, the better, healthier, and more alive you became” [252].)
4. **Similarity of symptoms telltale of shared etiology** (“Tom, Dave, Rod, Judy, and all the others were so different in so many ways, but so alike in their aliveness, their passion, their simple love for God and neighbor, and their shared ambition to live live in a way that would make God proud and happy [. . .]” [252-53].)

## On Chapter 22: “A New Kind of Christianity”

### McLaren’s surprising desiderata relative to this “infection”:

He says, “I do not expect, if this infection spreads, that it will lead to a sudden outbreak of mass agreement on the answers to these questions” that he has raised throughout the book (253). “I hope,” he says,

1. “that we can agree that these questions need to be asked” and
2. “that they invite us into reverent and respectful conversation and even friendship [. . .].”

“And even better,” he says,

3. “I hope that this conversation and friendship can unite us in a quest to receive and participate in what Jesus called God’s kingdom, life to the full” (253).

## On Chapter 22: “A New Kind of Christianity”

### McLaren’s expected results of such developments:

1. “As we’re moving forward in that quest together, I believe God’s Spirit will continue guiding us into truth, as Jesus promised.”
2. “And as a result, while we continue grappling with these ten questions, other urgent questions will no doubt beckon us, and new light will be given to us as we need it” (253).

McLaren shows a wisely traditional respect for the scripture in John 16:13:

When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. (NRSVU)

There is, of course, much controversy over the who, when, how, and what of such guidance, its reception, and its distribution. (*Sigh.*) Therefore, McLaren’s comforting citation of that passage—without further discussion--may seem a bit naïvely optimistic in our cultural moment. What do you think?

## On Chapter 22: “A New Kind of Christianity”

### McLaren’s uncomfortable discovery of the need for the book we are studying:

His 2008-09 speaking tour for *Everything Must Change* (2007) showed him painfully that most of his interlocutors were prevented by their conventional paradigms from seriously considering or directly addressing the four “global emergencies” he identifies in that book:

1. the **Prosperity Crisis** (ecologically unsustainable pursuit of prosperity)
2. the **Equity Crisis** (rising poverty; growing “gap between rich and poor”)
3. the **Security Crisis** (retreat of peace; “vicious cycle of violence”)
4. the **Spirituality Crisis** (religion’s role in perpetuating the other three crises)

“It was as if they said, ‘Oh, yeah, yeah, a billion people live on less than a dollar a day. But you’re decentralizing our preferred theory of atonement!’ Or ‘Yeah, yeah, yeah, we’re in danger of environmental collapse and religiously inspired catastrophic wars, but you seem to be questioning our conventional ways of reading the Bible about homosexuality!’”

## On Chapter 22: “A New Kind of Christianity”

**McLaren’s uncomfortable discovery of the need for the book we are studying:**

**“This frustrated me,” says McLaren. “And frankly it angered and depressed me. But gradually I realized that my conversation partners simply couldn’t address life-and-death issues like poverty, the planet, and peace from within the conventional paradigms they inherited. Those paradigms “rendered those [. . .] issues invisible, insubstantial, and unaddressable.”**

**“So there was no getting around it. Those inherited paradigms couldn’t be simply outflanked; they needed to be confronted, questioned, and opened up, which then shaped the direction this book has taken” (254).**

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**I suspect that most of us have encountered this sort of blank incomprehension or jerk-the-wheel avoidance of such issues in our own conversations from time to time. Got any testimonies?**

## On Chapter 22: “A New Kind of Christianity”

**McLaren’s uncomfortable discovery of the need for the book we are studying:**

Well, “[w]ith that background in mind,” says McLaren, “it should be no surprise what directions I believe we should take in our next round of questions. We need to ask the same question Francis and Frank Schaeffer raised back in 1976: ‘How should we then live?’” (254).

Here McLaren launches into three paragraphs of specific questions related to that general one (and later brings up many others):

## On Chapter 22: “A New Kind of Christianity”

**McLaren’s first installment of questions for imminently necessary discussion (directly quoted below from pp. 254-55):**

- 1. How shall we live in relation to the planet?**
- 2. How can we go from a consumptive to a sustainable way of life and from a sustainable to regenerative way of life?**
- 3. What is our duty to the living and nonliving creations among which we live and on which we depend?**
- 4. How has our faith been misused in the past in relation to these questions, and how can our faith provide healing, inspiration, formation, and motivation for the way forward?**

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**I’m curious about which ONE of those questions you feel most drawn to address. ;)**

## On Chapter 22: “A New Kind of Christianity”

### McLaren’s first installment of questions for imminently necessary discussion:

5. How shall we live in relation to poverty? Given that capitalism outcompeted communism, what threats does capitalism in its current form pose for our world?
6. How can capitalism be redeemed, retrained, and redirected so that a prosperous minority of people don’t continue to suffer the dehumanizing meaninglessness of self-centered luxury while a struggling majority suffer the dehumanizing degradation of crushing poverty?
7. How has our faith been misused in the past in this regard, and how can our faith provide motivation and wisdom for the way forward?

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I’m curious about which ONE of those questions you feel most drawn to address. ;)

## On Chapter 22: “A New Kind of Christianity”

**McLaren’s first installment of questions for imminently necessary discussion:**

8. How shall we live in relation to people who are different from us—in religion, region, race, class, caste, political party, sexual orientation, history, and so on?
9. How has our faith been misused to increase alienation, fear, and violence in the past, and how can it provoke understanding and reconciliation for the way ahead?

McLaren says, “[Q]uestions like these—worthwhile, significant, moral ones—will help us be more infected with profound aliveness, more alive as human beings and more alive as practitioners of a new kind of Christianity” (255).

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I’m curious about which ONE of those questions you feel most drawn to address. ;)

## On Chapter 22: “A New Kind of Christianity”

### McLaren’s critiques of his own usages of the terms “new,” “kind,” and “Christianity”:

1. “[T]his thing comes in many new kinds, not just one.”
2. “[T]his thing is not only new; it’s also very ancient.”
3. “I’m also ambivalent about the word “Christianity” since, as I’ve said, I don’t believe Jesus came to start a new religion [. . .].”
4. “[N]or do I believe Christianity (or any religion) is the answer in itself. Of course, I believe it can be part of the answer, but only if it doesn’t see itself as the answer.”
5. “[R]egarding the term “Christianity,” if I didn’t believe that with God all things are redeemable, I’d be worried whether the term is redeemable. As we’ve seen, the term [. . .] has too often camouflaged something quite foreign to Christ and his message, something that is more the problem than the solution [. . .].”
6. “Are we just falling into the same patterns of the past, creating Protestant Christianity 2.0, or Reformed Christianity 2.0, or Catholic Non-Roman Christianity 3.0? [. . .] Or is it more creative and subversive than that?”

## On Chapter 22: “A New Kind of Christianity”

**McLaren uses Luther’s eruption as an analogy for the quest he recommends.**

**“It’s true that what is trying to be born today echoes the Great Reformation in many ways. ‘Out of love for the truth and desire to bring it to light’ [thus Luther], intrepid people of faith today continue to dialogue about our contemporary issues and struggles” (256).**

**“We must stop being ashamed of our questions, and we must stop pretending to be content with unsatisfying answers. Instead, we must let our questions and our fresh readings of Scripture become passageways out of the thought boxes and mental stages and cages that can confine us. We must let our questions be the picks and shovels of a Spirit-inspired jailbreak. Once free, we can launch an exodus and continue our adventure, our quest for truth in the wild, unmapped places, as the biblical story beckons us to do” (257).**

## On Chapter 22: “A New Kind of Christianity”

McLaren tries hard to balance the claims of tradition and reform:

“As part of our inheritance from the past, we have been entrusted with an ongoing mission, and that mission requires us to be loyal—yes, to beloved tradition—but no less to the beloved present world in which we serve.”

“And perhaps our greatest loyalty should be directed forward, to a beloved future we are cocreating with the Spirit of the living God.”

“To be loyal to *the God who was* without being loyal to *the God who is* and to *the God who is yet to come* would be, it seems to me, only a 33% infection with a new kind of Christianity. When I started this quest, I think I started catching the other two-thirds as well” (258).

## On Chapter 22: “A New Kind of Christianity”

### McLaren’s single endnote within Ch. 22:

An old friend of mine used to say, “You can’t steer a bicycle unless it’s moving.” Perhaps, similarly, the Spirit can’t guide us unless we’re on a quest; or better said, perhaps we’re unguidable unless we’re searching for something more, something beyond, something better.