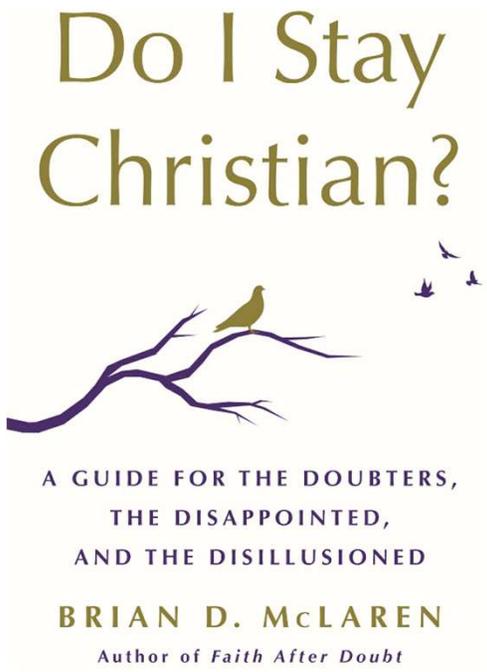


The “No” answer  
Chapter 4  
“Because of Christianity’s  
Loyal Company Men”  
(Institutionalism)

Chapter 5  
“Because of Christianity’s  
Real Master (Money)”

Much of the material in this presentation was taken verbatim or almost verbatim from the book “Do I Stay Christian?” by Brian McLaren



**Do I Stay  
Christian?**

A GUIDE FOR THE DOUBTERS,  
THE DISAPPOINTED,  
AND THE DISILLUSIONED

**BRIAN D. McLAREN**  
*Author of Faith After Doubt*

1

**Chapter 4: Institutionalism**

Over McLaren’s lifetime as a Christian, whenever the underbelly of Christian history has been exposed (which isn’t often), a little voice pops up inside his head with counter-arguments. He calls this voice his Inner Fundamentalist.

1. Inner Fundamentalist: You were being so negative in the previous chapters! You’re minimizing all the good we Christians have done.
2. Inner Fundamentalist: OK. There may have been some failures, but the good far outweighs the bad.
3. Inner Fundamentalist: OK. No need to preach. But you make it sound like Christians are worse than anyone else.

2

4. Inner Fundamentalist: But we constantly talk about our sins. We confess our sins every Sunday.

5. Inner Fundamentalist: But those are liberal matters. Christians are supposed to be conservative.

Many of us have the same kind of inner dialog. What does this come from?

McLaren has observed a large number of Christian are “company” men.

Very sincere, convinced that loyalty to their religion equals service to God. That loyalty is their primary qualification.

Their fellow company men promote them, often to the very highest places of power, even if they must overlook deficits in spirituality, insight, or virtue. Loyalty trumps all else.

3

Isn't loyalty a virtue?

Loyalty is easily abused. There is a conflict of interest.

For example, a Catholic bishop who makes decisions out of loyalty to his fellow clergy at the expense of children who are being sexually abused.

Or imagine a pastor who does not speak out on behalf of people of color for fear of alienating major donors.

Jesus had a lot to say to the loyal religious company men of his day.

4

McLaren began writing this book during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Many churches around the world defied commonsense rules of social distancing and quarantine because the common good of public health conflicted with their personal and institutional ability to conduct business as usual, including the collection of in-person offerings.

Misplaced, constrained, or absolutized loyalty, we now see, can be lethal. That fact is obvious in death cults like Jonestown, when the poisoned Kool-Aid is literal.

It is no less lethal when followers drink metaphorical Kool-Aid by defying public health guidelines or refusing to get vaccinations.

Christian con men. The con is all about confidence.

5

## Chapter 5: Money

McLaren was a pastor for over 20 years. He collected thousands of offerings.

He felt uncomfortable at first, but eventually discovered that raising money for worthy causes is meaningful, wonderful work.

He believes in giving and finds great joy in it.

But he also believes that every religious system, like every individual, faces the perpetual danger of being corrupted by money.

Historically, white European Christianity had a bad start.

6

Doctrine of Discovery (Pope Nicholas V): Justly desiring that whatsoever concerns the integrity and spread of the faith, for which Christ our God shed his blood, shall flourish in the virtuous souls of the faithful ... we grant to you by these present documents, with our Apostolic Authority, full and free permission to invade, search out, capture and subjugate the Saracens [Muslims] and pagans and any other unbelievers and enemies of Christ wherever they may be, as well as their kingdoms, duchies, counties, principalities, and other property ... and to reduce their persons into perpetual slavery, and to apply and appropriate and convert to the use and profit of yourself and your successors, the Kings of Portugal, in perpetuity, the above-mentioned kingdoms, duchies, counties, principalities, and other property and possessions and suchlike goods.

7

Western Christianity has a long history of being driven by money. McLaren believes a new danger has developed since the U.S. Supreme Court issued a landmark decision known as *Citizens United* in 2010.

The super-rich, who already had a disproportionate amount of power and influence in our country, were given carte blanche to use their wealth to further bias the political system in their favor.

What's happened in U.S. politics since 2010 has confirmed that his concerns were justified.

Donation-dependent religious organizations and leaders are as beholden to their major donors as political parties and politicians.

8

Why didn't more white American preachers preach more courageously against land theft and slavery in the first four centuries of this country's history?

Why haven't more white American preachers spoken out against lynching, segregation, and white supremacy in the last two centuries?

Why don't more Christian leaders today speak out against climate change and the long-term environmental cost.

Why don't they speak out against nationalism, militarism, and the NRA's campaign of gun proliferation?

Why do so many preach so frequently against abortion and gay marriage but so rarely against economic inequality and systemic injustice?

Clergy are caught in a conflict of interest involving money.

9

The personal ego of the pastor and the institutional ego of the congregation fuse; they merge their interests and render themselves a co-dependent mutual appreciation society, based on an unwritten contract of mutual payoffs.

What do you call it when a preacher needs the people for his own ego and advantage, and the people need the preacher for their own ego and advantage? The best word I've found to describe such a relationship is *narcissistic*.

Inner Fundamentalist: Unfair! There are many wonderful, happy churches that aren't like this.

Clergy are caught in a conflict of interest involving money.

10

You can't serve two masters. Either you hate one and love the other, or you cling to one and despise the other."

If you love money, you'll hate God, and if you love God, you'll hate money.

Christ overturned the money changers tables.

"As the coins scatter across the stones, he leaves the Temple, never to return. I wonder if I should follow him out the door."