

and

...living conjunctively, loving thru

Monday | May 09, 2005

**Brian McLaren's post**

I'm delighted to have Brian McLaren as a guest on this journal today. Brian wrote the following post, and he will be engaging here over the next couple of days. Ask him any questions you want, raise issues, enjoy and practice a generous orthodoxy (other sites on the blog tour: [Tallskinnykiwi](#), [Jordan Cooper](#), [Jen Lemen](#), [Paradoxology](#), and [Pomomusings](#)).  
peace, dwight

\* \* \* \* \*



Hi, everyone - it's an honor to be your guest and have a bit of conversation about my newest book, "[The Last Word and the Word After That](#)."

I thought I'd offer a bit of personal information about the book. I felt a good bit of excitement and intellectual/spiritual energy about writing and publishing "[The Last Word and the Word After That](#)." I also felt a good bit of fear and trembling.

I knew that it would be controversial, and I knew that many Christian sisters and brothers would consider me an enemy for writing it. The timing of the book's release was also somewhat disadvantageous in my mind, because "[A Generous Orthodoxy](#)," which I didn't expect to be seen as controversial, ended up eliciting some pretty harsh response. That meant I was coming out with two highly controversial books in less than a year. I'm not by nature a controversialist, so I didn't look forward to a hornet's nest being stirred up.

But at the same time, I have felt for a long time that Western Christian theology (in its Catholic and Protestant forms) had somewhere become preoccupied with getting individual souls out of hell after death, and had too often lost a sense of God's continuing love for all creation in this life - in other words, we had substituted something else for the gospel of the kingdom of God, which was at the heart of Jesus' message. It was as if the doctrine of the fall had eaten up the doctrine of creation. The issue of hell-avoidance became the centerpiece of salvation, and I felt this perspective was neither true to Scripture nor healthy. So that was the origin of the book.

I'd be interested in knowing if any of you have read the book, and how it seemed to you. Did it seem shocking, or tame? Did it present new information, or were you already familiar with the content of the book? I'll do my best to respond to some of your questions/comments in the next couple days.

Thanks!

[Brian McLaren](#)

Posted by dwight friesen at 03:11 in [last things](#) | [Link](#) | [Comments \(3\)](#)  
Comments

Brian,

To my utter surprise, I find myself believing these days like Casey's Dad who said, "That dog'll hunt!"

For me, one doctrine that has hunted (and caught me) is hellology. It started at age 9 when the traveling evangelist stopped by to light up the fire and toast me until I screamed, "PLEASE, NO, PLEASE NO. I'LL DO ANYTHING. JUST DON'T SEND ME TO HELL. PLEASE!!!" Then I filled my cub scout canteen full just in case. Now THAT dog hunts.

I read your book the first week it was out and agree that the way we believe in hell and use it on each other is way more dangerous than going there. But it works. It got me to say "I Do" to Jesus.

The worst thing I can think of that it's done to me is like Amittai (Johan's father), it has produced a Jonah. But at least I've been to Ninevah with the not-so-good news, seen some old fashioned repentance, and now have a chance to think under the grace gourd. I even had a chance to read about the first Jonah and repent from some of my evil ways, seeing the hell of it all. So the news I preach now is "better news" if not 100% good news.

But I'm stuck with a dog that hunts and doesn't know how not to hunt. When I told my story about the last word and word after that (as a form of confession and correction to the traveling evangelist) to kids interested in getting baptized yesterday, my dog hunted them down until they were all shuddering and begging for a one way ticket to heaven without stopping in hell.

What do I do with this damn dog? He's been faithful. I can't just shoot him.

Written by: ron king at 2005/05/09 - 15:18

George MacDonald once wrote:

"No, this is no escape. There is no heaven with a little of hell in it – No plan to retain this or that of the devil in our hearts or our pockets. Out Satan must go, every hair and feather."

Thanks Brian.

Liz

Written by: Liz at 2005/05/09 - 17:13

Brian,

Ever since your name (and beautifully balding head) appeared in Time Magazine with 24 other influential evangelicals, and since your appearance on Larry King Live I have been sensing an invitation to pray even more consistently for both you and Grace. So much is being called of you and the more you are called to "step into" the more controversy seems inevitable; even though you are the very picture of a gracious and spacious person. Of course conflict avoidance isn't the goal, but how one chooses to engage the other . . . well that is applied theology.

I can't image anyone who has had the privilege of conversing with you fact-to-face coming away from such an exchange with a sense that you had sought to stir up controversy. Yet between A Generous Orthodoxy and

this your latest offering, a hornet's nest has been stirred. On the one hand, I guess we should expect nothing less. As your text seems almost to extend the conversation of William Blake (in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*), and C. S. Lewis (in *The Great Divorce*) by inviting your readers to see "last things" in a fresh light . . . but who really wants to see their own theological systems in fresh lights?

As you have thoughtfully pointed out, all too often the theology of the West has used the fall and sin as the starting point to understand humanity's relationship with God. God's creation of humanity *imago Dei* has often been functionally lost to "original sin."

Your willingness to engage with people holding differing hermeneutics, opinions, convictions and dogmas hints toward a more open-source theological future. Even a blog tour like this helps to level perceived separation between author and reader. Thanks for your courage and your wisdom, and your embodiment of Divine Love.

I'll say more later.

Peace, dwight

Written by: [dwight friesen](#) at 2005/05/09 - 17:58

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- [Brian McLaren will be interacting with post on this site regarding his newest book throughout the day - MAY 9.](#)

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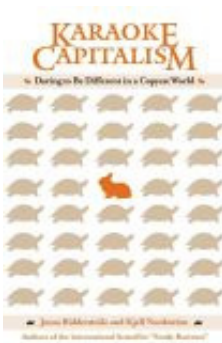
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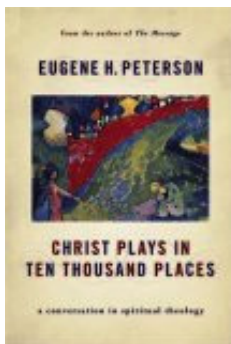
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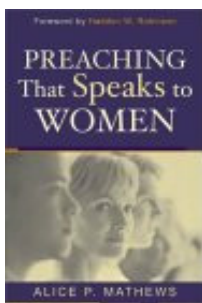
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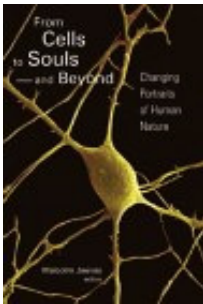
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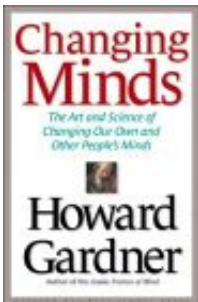
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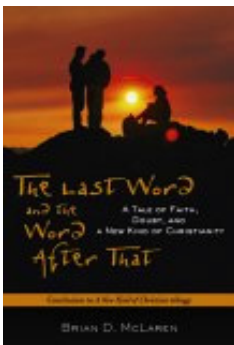
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- [The Last Word and the Word after That : A Tale of Faith, Doubt, and a New Kind of Christianity](#) by Brian McLaren



"Brian will be visiting this site on May 9th as part of a Blog-Tour. He will be in and out all day long commenting and interacting with comments. See you then."

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