



### Tribute to Bishop John Shelby Spong by Brian D. McLaren

I grew up in a sector of Christianity where Bishop Spong was portrayed as the epitome of theological evil, often by people who had never actually read his books or listened to him speak. Later in my life, when I found myself similarly characterized by some in my tradition, I had the chance to meet many people whose Christian faith had survived because of his work.

Once we were interviewed together on a radio show, and I remember thinking, "How could anyone speaking extemporaneously utter such complex, graceful, insightful, and yet clear and intelligible sentences?" Driven by a clear-eyed desire for truth and a compassionate commitment to justice for all, he was willing to be mistreated for those commitments, evoking the words from Matthew's Gospel about the persecuted being blessed.

He challenged the Christian inheritance, not to harm it, but to expose its misunderstandings and mine it for its most enduring treasures.

~ Brian McLaren



**Brian D. McLaren** is an author, speaker, activist, and public theologian. A former college English teacher and pastor, he is an Auburn Senior Fellow and a leader in the Convergence Network, through which he is developing an innovative training/mentoring program for pastors, church planters, and lay leaders called [Convergence Leadership Project](#). He works closely with the Center for Progressive Renewal/Convergence, the Wild Goose Festival and the Fair Food Program's Faith Working Group. His most recent book is [Faith After Doubt](#). He is the author of the illustrated children's book (for all ages) called *Cory and the Seventh Story*,

*The Great Spiritual Migration*, *We Make the Road by Walking*, and *Why Did Jesus, Moses, the Buddha, and Mohammed Cross the Road?* Brian is a popular conference speaker and a frequent guest lecturer for denominational and ecumenical leadership gatherings. He has written for or contributed interviews to many periodicals, including Leadership, Sojourners, Tikkun, Worship Leader, and Conversations and is a frequent guest on television, radio, and news media programs.