

McLaren talk canceled by Kentucky Baptists: Objections to McLaren's *Generous Orthodoxy*

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Author-pastor Brian McLaren, recently listed by *Time* magazine as one of the country's most influential evangelicals, was removed as a scheduled speaker by a Kentucky (Southern) Baptist evangelism conference after a review of his book *A Generous Orthodoxy* and his statements on salvation.

McLaren, pastor of Cedar Ridge Community Church in Spencerville, Maryland, is author of several books on evangelism, including *A New Kind of Christian*, which caused a stir in evangelical circles in 2001. He is regarded as the elder statesman for "emergent" churches, a movement of congregations seeking to connect with people in the postmodern culture.

"I respect Dr. McLaren greatly and have appreciated his insights on reaching people in today's culture," said Bill Mackey, the convention's executive director. Mackey made the decision to disinvite McLaren with Dan Garland, church development and evangelism team leader, who invited McLaren to speak at the February 28-March 1 event in Louisville more than a year ago.

"We try to bring dynamic speakers to the evangelism conference who will challenge and inspire their listeners," Mackey said. "I felt that in this instance, however, Dr. McLaren's position diverges too greatly to be appropriate for this conference." In *A Generous Orthodoxy*, McLaren writes that while there is no assurance that salvation can be found outside of Jesus, Christians should not jump to the conclusion that Jesus is the only way to salvation.

"I must add, though, that I don't believe making disciples must equal making adherents to the Christian religion. It may be advisable in many (not all!) circumstances to help people become followers of Jesus and remain within their Buddhist, Hindu or Jewish contexts," McLaren states in the book.

Albert Mohler, president of the conservative Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, wrote a review critical of McLaren's book. "The problem with *A Generous Orthodoxy*, as the author must surely recognize, is that this orthodoxy bears virtually no resemblance to orthodoxy as it has been known and affirmed by the church throughout the centuries," Mohler argued.

McLaren said he respects the convention's decision. "We need to keep our focus on what's most important," McLaren said in an e-mail response to Garland. "It would have been a shame if my presence distracted people from Christ and the Great Commission." -*Associated Baptist Press*