

THE GREAT SPIRITUAL MIGRATION



BRIAN D. MCLAREN



CONVERGENT



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HOW THE WORLD'S LARGEST  
RELIGION IS SEEKING A **BETTER**  
WAY TO BE **CHRISTIAN**

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# Let's stay in touch!

1. [brianmclaren.net](http://brianmclaren.net)

slides, blog, books, social media, email newsletter

2. Convergence Leadership Project:

Send a Text to 38470

In the message line,  
type SPIRIT





# A spiritual migration

from system of belief to way of life/  
way of love



A theological migration

from violent Supreme Being  
to nonviolent Holy Spirit/Spirit of  
Christ



I used to be friendly on airplanes.

A missional migration

from organized religion (for self-protection)

to religion organizing for the common good

(institutions and movements in romance,  
forming & deploying spiritual activists)





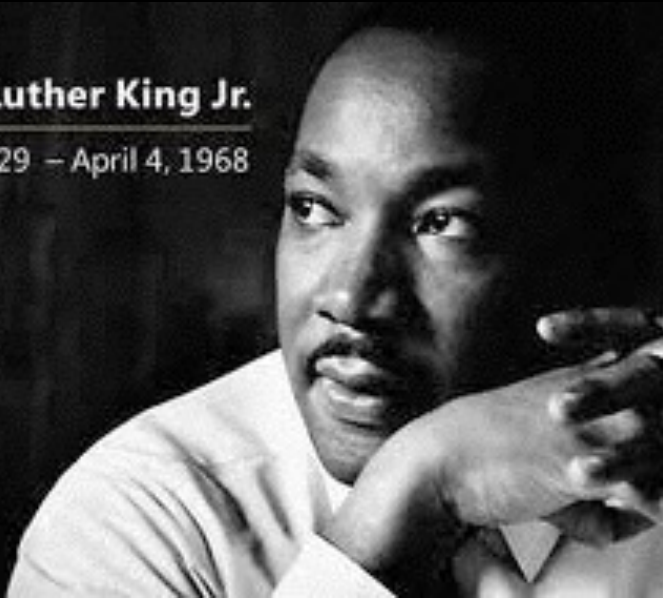




WE NEED A THEOLOGY OF

Martin Luther King Jr.

Jan. 15, 1929 – April 4, 1968



INSTITUTIONS, MOVEMENTS,  
AND COMMUNITIES

# Communities

Families, individuals, and organizations linked to a common environment, collaborating for the common good.

# Institutions:

Organizations which  
**conserve** the gains made  
by past social movements.

# Social Movements

Organizations which make proposals or demands to current institutions to make progress towards new gains.

Both movements and  
institutions...

Organize for their purpose

Need one another

Are frustrated with one  
another

Benefit or harm communities



Without movements ...

Institutions stagnate ...

Without institutions ...

Movements evaporate ...

Some movements  
successfully inject their  
values into the institutions  
they challenge

Other movements  
create their own institutions,  
or pass away

Vital movements  
call people to passionate,  
sacrificial personal  
commitment

Sustainable institutions  
create loyalty across  
generations through  
evocative rituals & traditions

movements  
can be  
progressive or regressive





# *Parker Palmer's 4 stages of social change*

1. Divided no more
2. Communities of congruence (conversation)
3. Going public (movement)
4. Alternative Rewards

From Greg Leffel  
*Faith Seeking Action: Mission  
and Social Movements*

A movement is born when 3 things happen:

- 2 or more people agree what's wrong
  - They agree what should be done
    - They agree to do it.

# Leffel's 6 Characteristics of Vibrant Social Movements

1. Opportunity Structure
2. Rhetorical framing
3. Protest (messaging) strategy
4. Mobilization strategy
5. Movement culture
6. Participant Biography



Jesus says the kingdom of God is like gardening (an organic movement) not warfare (institutional action): It spreads through seeds ... sown into systems to grow.

The seeds of the message.

The seeds of people who personally embody the message.

The seeds of communities who socially embody the message.

Jesus seizes the *opportunity*  
*structure* provided by  
conflicted elites (Pharisees/  
Sadducees; Herodians/  
Zealots) and struggling  
masses (Galilee/Judea)

He provides rhetorical framing on hillsides, in houses, on retreats, in public teach-ins, in debates, through parables, through rituals and practices. He repeats key themes - commonwealth of God, life to the full, life of the ages, liberation - rooted in dynamic tension with tradition.

His protest (messaging) strategy includes public demonstrations (healings & miracles), teach-ins (sermon on mount), civil disobedience (turning tables), guerilla theatre (exorcisms), festivals (feasts & feedings), naming evil (woes), naming heroes (blessings).

He develops a *mobilization strategy* based on 3, 12, 70, and multitudes. He entrusts freely with responsibility and expresses high confidence in his agents (greater things shall you do ...)

He associates his  
*movement culture* with  
love, joy, justice, risk,  
hope, creativity, courage,  
service, willingness to  
suffer, nonviolence.

He provides his disciples  
challenge, rest, retreat,  
encouragement, recovery after  
failures. They testify that  
their *participant biographies*  
have been forever changed for  
the better.

What spiritual movement is trying to be born among us today?

What are its demands/proposals?

What role might we play in its emergence?



The Holy Spirit movement to ...  
protect the planet  
liberate the poor/oppressed  
build pre-emptive peace  
help people everywhere thrive  
teach and embody a way of  
life, a way of love

*A joyful new evangelism ...*

**Do not merely try to bring others  
to where you are, as wonderful as  
that place might be.**

**But do not leave them where they  
are either.**

**Instead, go with them to a place  
neither you nor they have ever  
been before.**

Fr. Vincent Donovan (adapted)

You have one job or calling. You may also have a second.

One: to be an institutional & community leader, providing for the spiritual needs of your community.

Two: to be a movement leader in and from (or apart from) your congregation to the community and world.

I am encouraging you to complicate your life by accepting this dual calling.



your  
face  
here



May we feel in our innermost being a beautiful and holy dissatisfaction.

May that holy dissatisfaction ignite in us a holy refusal

To remain stuck where we have been.

May that holy refusal break open our hearts to a holy hope,

So that the wind, wine, and fire of the Holy Spirit will fill us all.

May we learn to live in the way of revolutionary love,  
And may we experience and embody God as Jesus  
did,  
As the radiant light of perfect compassion for all  
creation.

And may we find or form our flocks,  
And may ten thousand flocks and more arise together  
In a great spiritual migration of justice, joy, and  
peace.

But first,  
May we feel in our innermost being a beautiful and  
holy dissatisfaction.

