

Emergent Church



Emergent Church...aka Emerging and sometimes Emergence

Religious leadership must end its intellectual and imaginative failure to think through what it is doing in the light of the new emerging cosmology, which is hospitable to spirit-matter theories and mindbody experiences. ~ Leonard Sweet

The Emergent/Emerging Church movement is heading towards a crash collision with the New Age movement. In fact, it may already be happening before our very eyes. The Discernment Research Group has reached the inescapable conclusion that this is intentional and it has been planned for over a generation. ~ Sarah Leslie

Definition:

“A label that has been used to refer to a particular subset of Christians who are rethinking Christianity against the backdrop of Postmodernism.” ... “Members of the movement often place a high value on good works or social activism.” (Encyclopedia & Wikipedia)

Emergents “hold to traditional Protestant theological distinctives while rejecting the structures and styles of institutionalized Christianity.”



Emergent church leaders usually adopt the principles of [social justice](#), [liberation theology](#) and collective salvation. Some leaders also incorporate elements of [Universalism](#), the Seeker-Friendly Movement, and even [New Age Spirituality](#).

Fast Facts:

Emerging Church groups contain some or all of the following elements:

- Highly creative approaches to worship and spiritual reflection. This can involve everything from the use of contemporary music and films through to liturgy or other more ancient customs. ...
- Does not like to spend money on church buildings. Prefer meeting as “house churches” or in temporary structures such as stores and warehouses.
- A flexible approach to theology whereby individual differences in belief and morality are accepted within reason.
- A more holistic approach to the role of the church in society. This can mean anything from greater emphasis on fellowship in the structure of the group to a higher degree of emphasis on social action, community building or Christian outreach.
- A desire to reanalyze the Bible against the context into which it was written...”
- A reading list that “consists primarily of Stanley Hauerwas, Henri Nouwen, T. Wright, Stan Grenz, Dallas Willard, Brennan Manning, Jim Wallis, Frederick Buechner, David Bosch, John Howard Yoder, Wendell Berry, Nancy Murphy, John Franke, Walter Winks and Lesslie Newbigin (not to mention McLaren, Pagitt, Bell, etc.) and your sparring partners include D. A. Carson, John Calvin, Martyn Lloyd-Jones, and Wayne Grudem...”

- Political concerns are “poverty,AIDS, imperialism, war-mongering, CEO salaries, consumerism, global warming, racism, and oppression and not so much abortion and gay marriage.”
- Support women in all levels of ministry including women pastors.
- Prefer theology *narrative* instead of *systematic*.
- Following Jesus is living the right way, not believing in the right things.
- Eschatology: Building the kingdom of God on earth.

(Sources for some of the above facts are from [You might be Emergent if...](#))

Phrases, Terms, Practices:

Postmodernism, Progressive Evangelicalism, Progressive Christianity, Social Justice Christianity... impartation, implantation, incarnation, visualization, holistic, story, linear, propositional, rational, machine, hierarchy, ancient-future, jazz, mosaic, matrix, missional, vintage, dance...

(Source for some of the above phrases and terms are from [You might be Emergent if...](#))

Practice:

[Lectio divina](#) a.k.a. spiritual formation...the silence...centering, breath...but is best known as contemplative prayer. This is a growing trend in evangelical churches. The prayer ritual stems from teaching associated with Catholic mystics such as Meister Eckhart, Ignatius of Loyola, St. John of the Cross, and St. Teresa of Avila. CP was reintroduced by Thomas Merton, Thomas Keating, Henri Nouwen, William Meninger, Basil Pennington and other mystics. The aim is to achieve an [altered-state-of-consciousness](#))

Leaders:

There are the well-known emergent leaders (some are now deceased): Brian McLaren, Phyllis Tickle, Marcus Borg, Dallas Willard, Richard Foster, Leonard Sweet, Bob Buford, Brennon Manning, Eugene Peterson, Donald Miller, Rob Bell, Erwin McManus, Tony Jones, Doug Pagitt, Jim Wallis, Tony Campolo, Richard Rhor, Andy Stanley, John Ortberg, Frank Viola, Laurie Beth Jones, Ruth Haley Barton, Rachel Held Evans, Shane Claiborn, Dan Kimball, Shane Hipps, Spencer Burke, Peter Rollins, Steve Chalke, Nadia Bolz-Weber, Jay Bakker, Jen & Brandon Hatmaker and many others.

Then there is the next generation; the up-and-coming rookies who now are the prolific young voices at leadership conferences (like Catalyst and many others), that you can't easily research because they don't have anything questionable yet attached to their bios. But make no mistake: The leaders of old have not gone away, nor has the movement died. Instead it is shifting into a new or neo mode, making the Neo-Emergent movement even more appealing to a whole new audience of young Christians. It's the same old "Hath God said" lie repackaged into a slick media marketing formula with programs helping many pastors "plug and play" with sermon topics and programs in their own churches to perpetuate the movement. Most don't even know they're doing it.

The [Leadership Network](#) has played a pivotal role in the Emerging Church movement. So have [Roman Catholic](#) mystics. Beware of Meister Eckhart, Ignatius of Loyola, St. John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila, Thomas Merton, Thomas Keating, Henri Nouwen, William Meninger and Basil Pennington and New Ager Ken Wilbur.

Helpful Articles:

- [A New Kind of Christianity](#) By Tim Challies
- [A Subtle and Dangerous Shift in Christianity](#) By Marsha West
- [Brian McLaren's "new music for a new Christianity"](#) By Amy Spreeman
- [Carl Rogers – Father of the Emergent Culture](#) By Sarah H. Leslie
- [Catalyst: It's Never Been About Jesus](#) By Amy Spreeman **NEW**
- [Cross Over to the Otherside](#) By Orrel Steinkamp
- [The Emergence of the "Mystical Church"](#) By Mike Oppenheimer
- [The Emerging Church and the New Progress Theology on Christ](#) By Ken Silva
- [The "Emerging" Church—Always Be Ready](#)
- [Emergent Church Part 1](#) [Part 2](#) [Part 3](#) By Gary Gilley
- [Emergent Church Spreading Spiritual Cancer](#) By Marsha West
- [Emergent Church: What is it? Emerging Toward Convergence](#) By Sarah Leslie
- [Emerging Writers—The Shack](#)
- [Experiencing God by Henry Blackaby, Part 1](#) [Part 2](#) [Part 3](#) By Gary Gilley
- [Hank Hanegraaff speaks out about the Emergent Church](#)
- [Is Emergent the New Christian Left?](#) By Tim Challies
- [Jesus: The Illumined Illuminator](#) By Marsha West
- [Let's stop snuggling the wolves](#) By Amy Spreeman
- [Liberalisms Warm Fuzzy God](#) By Marsha West
- [MacArthur interview: The Emergent Church is a Form of Paganism](#) By Paul Edwards
- [Rob Bell: A Brother to Embrace, or a Wolf To Avoid?](#) By John MacArthur
- [Subverting the Word of God](#) By Marsha West
- [You Really Want An Abundant Life?](#) By Ken Silva **NEW**

Video

- [John Loffler interviews Gary Gilley](#)

Books:

- [A Magna Carta for Restoring the Supremacy of Jesus Christ a.k.a. A Jesus Manifesto for the 21st Century Church](#) by Leonard Sweet and Frank Viola (Read with extreme caution)
- [Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church: Understanding a Movement and Its Implications](#) by D.A. Carson
- [Why We Are Not Emergent](#) authors [Kevin DeYoung](#) and Ted Kluck
- [Emerging Churches – Eddie Gibbs](#) and Ryan Bolger (the most comprehensive resource on the EC, very readable and done in a creative format)
- [Shaping of Things to Come – Michael Frost](#) and [Alan Hirsch](#) (Offer both theoretical and concrete ideas about models of church that are emerging in the postmodern world)
- [Out of Bounds Church](#) – Steve Taylor (A short easily accessible book about the emerging church)
- [A New Kind of Christian](#) – Brian McLaren (A short story that helps to get at some of these ideas in narrative form)

Other research sites:

- [Apprising Ministries](#)
- [Deception in the Church](#)
- [Herescope](#)
- [Lighthouse Trails Research](#)

- [On Solid Rock Resources](#)



Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the **sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.**

[2 Timothy 3:12-17](#) (emphasis added)

The [Emergent Church movement](#) is a [progressive Christian](#) movement that attempts to elevate experience and feelings on a par with Christian doctrine. Many do not believe man can know absolute truth, and believe God must be experienced outside of traditional biblical doctrines.

Lighthouse Trails Research

Hundreds of Protestant Scholars and Pastors Sign "Reforming Catholic Confession," But Can the Church Trust This Document?

 September 20th, 2017 |  Author: *Lighthouse Trails Editors*

Hundreds of Protestant and evangelical scholars, pastors, and theologians have signed a document called "**Reforming Catholic Confession**" to mark the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, which will be commemorated on October 31, 2017. According to Dr. Timothy George, dean of Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham, Alabama, who co-chaired the Confession's steering committee, "a significant motivating factor of the Confession's participants is to call the Church to spiritual renewal."¹ In reviewing the "Reforming Catholic Confession" and the signatories, Lighthouse Trails has observed a few things, which lead us to ask, "Can the church trust the "Reforming Catholic Confession"?

To begin with, the majority of the hundreds of initial signatories either promote the contemplative prayer movement (a movement that has its roots in Catholic mysticism and panentheism and is drawing Protestants in that direction) directly themselves or represent institutions or denominations that do.

This promotion of contemplative spirituality includes the Confession's co-chair, Dr. Timothy George. For example, in a 2014 article titled "**Not Just For Catholics**" on Beeson Divinity School's website, written by George, he expresses his admiration for Catholic practices such as the contemplative **Lectio Divina**. George is also the general editor for a series called

the **Reformation Commentary on Scripture** (published by InterVarsity Press) that boasts of including Catholic writers in its collection of commentaries. While the “Reforming Catholic Confession” claims to be trying to strengthen the Protestant church and its unique mission separated from the Catholic Church, how can we trust a document whose co-chairman does not even understand the serious reasons Christians must be separated from the Roman Catholic Church? We know Timothy George cannot understand this for if he did, he would certainly not, as the general editor, allow the writings of Catholic writers in a commentary series on Scripture.

On **the Beeson Divinity School website**, George is described as “active in Evangelical–Roman Catholic Church dialogue.”

Leith Anderson, president of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), is another signatory of the “Reforming Catholic Confession.” Anderson was a pioneer of the emerging church movement as described in Roger Oakland’s book *Faith Undone*, which quotes Anderson saying he is hoping for a paradigm shift within the church:

The only way to cope and be effective during this period of structural change in society is to *change some of the ways we view our world and the church*. It is what some call a paradigm shift—a *new way of looking at something*. Such a shift will allow us to view our changing world with new perspective. It is like a map. Old maps from 1950 may have sufficed before the construction of interstate highways and the expansion of major cities, but *new maps are needed now*. Likewise, we need a paradigm shift for the future.² (emphasis added)

It was Leith Anderson, Rick Warren, and Bill Hybels who were instrumental in helping Bob Buford (under the inspiration of Peter Drucker) launch the emergent church (then called Terra Nova) around 1998 with a group of young pastors: Doug Pagitt, Dan Kimball, Mark Driscoll, and Brian McLaren. Things have never been the same since, which leads us to ask the question: Is the “Reforming Catholic Confession” (which uses the word “catholic” over 30 times) another step in this emergent paradigm shift that Leith Anderson longed for twenty years ago where “a new way of looking at something [the church]” comes into play? Those who have studied the emergent/emerging church in the scope of Scripture know it is a definite road to Rome with its ecumenical, interspiritual, and mystical elements leading the way.

Other institutions that are represented in the signatures of the “Reforming Catholic Confession” are some of the most blatant contemplative-promoting Christian colleges and universities out there. And when we say contemplative, remember, we mean on a path to Rome: Wheaton College, Fuller Theological Seminary, Biola University, Bethel College, Regent University, Asbury University, Andrews University, Denver University, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, and Calvin

Institute of Christian Worship. Other schools represented in the document are also contemplative promoting: Dallas Theological Seminary, Liberty University, Moody Bible Institute, Baylor University, Cornerstone University, and Westmont College. We've only named a few of the institutions that are represented on the signature list that promote contemplative spirituality (i.e., the emergent church). As we stated, it is the majority of them that do.

Several denominations are also represented in the "Reforming Catholic Confession" such as the Evangelical Free Church of America (and as of more recent years is now an advocate for contemplative spirituality). And don't think that these signatures representing these groups are insignificant non-influential back-room members. For instance, the man from the Evangelical Free Church of America who signed the document is Rev. Greg Strand whose title is the Executive Director of Theology & Credentialing for the denomination. Not to mention that the president of that denomination, Rev. Kevin Kompelien, also signed the Confession.

Dr. Timothy George, co-drafter of the ecumenical Manhattan Declaration

Worth pointing out, John Stonestreet of the Colson Center for Christian Worldview is also a signatory of the Confession. Some may remember when Chuck Colson co-authored the Manhattan Declaration in 2009. Lighthouse



Trails wrote about this in our article titled **"Manhattan Declaration: 'Perhaps Millions' Being Led Toward the New Age/New Spirituality."** Here is a statement from the Manhattan Declaration:

We are seeking to build a movement—hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, of Catholic, Evangelical and Eastern Orthodox Christians who will stand together.

The connection between the Manhattan Declaration (by the way, Brian McLaren was one of the original signers too) and the "Reforming Catholic Confession" is not just that John Stonestreet is a signer. Timothy George was very involved with the Manhattan Declaration as well. He was one of the four drafters of it!

It stands to reason, based on evidence, that the "Reforming Catholic Confession" is just an extension of the Manhattan Declaration's goal to "build a movement" of Catholics, Evangelical and Orthodox Christians "who will stand together." It seems naïve at best, deceiving at worst, to come out with this new document and claim that it is an effort to renew the Christian church, when in

fact it has all the earmarks of helping to bring the “lost brethren” back into the fold of the “Mother Church,” whether the drafters or signatories realize it or not.

The “Reforming Catholic Confession” lists several doctrinal characteristics that define Protestantism such as the Trinity, baptism, the virgin birth, the deity of Christ (all of which, incidentally, the Catholic Church would say they believe in too). When it came to the category “the Lord’s Supper,” there was quite a bit of wordage, but the words “do this in remembrance” were not used while the words “the faithful” (the Catholic Church’s name for practicing Catholics) was used twice in that section. This may seem like a moot point to those who may not understand the significant difference between the Catholic Mass with the sacrament of the Eucharist and the Protestant “Lord’s supper” (i.e., communion service), which in Scripture Christians are instructed to “do this in remembrance” of Jesus Christ. We find it troubling that the “Reforming Catholic Confession” presented a vague and obscure description of this practice that has so separated Roman Catholicism from biblical Christianity for so many centuries that those who opposed the idea that Jesus was actually in a wafer were burned at the stake by the Catholic Church (see *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs* for documentation on papal persecutions).³ In one section of the Confession, it states: “it is particularly to be regretted that the early Protestant Reformers were unable to achieve an altogether common mind, in particular as concerns the doctrine of the Lord’s Supper.” But the Confession, again, is vague and never truly defines the biblical practice of the Lord’s Supper. We find it a little unnerving when the Confession states that we should go from reformation to “reforming catholic.” Perhaps the authors of the Confession are not implying that Protestants should now call themselves by that name, but vagueness and the oft used word catholic leaves speculation to the imagination. And when the Confession states, “We believe that what unites us is far greater than what divides us,” it is reminiscent of words Pope Francis said less than 12 months ago. In an article titled **“Pope Stresses to Lutherans: What Unites Us Far Greater Than**

What Divides Us,” the Catholic pope told the ecumenical gathering of 1000 Lutherans:

The apostle Paul tells us that, by virtue of our baptism, we all form the single Body of Christ. The various members, in fact, form one body. Therefore, we belong to each other and when one suffers, all suffer; when one rejoices, we all rejoice. We can continue trustfully on our ecumenical path, because we know that despite the many issues that still separate us, we are already united. *What unites us is far greater than what divides us.* (emphasis added)

According to the article, Pope Francis said, “Lutherans and Catholics are on a journey from conflict to communion.” By the indications of the “Reforming Catholic Confession,” Lutherans may not be the only ones heading into communion with the Catholic Church.

Conclusion

If your denomination or the college that your children or grandchildren attend is represented in the list of signatories of the "Reforming Catholic Confession," perhaps it's time to reconsider the direction your family may be getting pulled into. Today, we are witnessing apostasy and delusion on a grand scale. To turn a blind eye to doctrines that were formerly of paramount importance and now waning to insignificance may have disastrous results.

Endnotes:

1. <https://www.christianpost.com/news/over-250-protestant-leaders-sign-reforming-catholic-confession-on-essentials-of-christian-faith-198747/page2.html>.
2. Leith Anderson, *A Church for the 21st Century* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1992), p. 17.
3. We recommend the edition by Lighthouse Trails as many of the other editions by other publishers have removed Foxe's writings on papal persecutions.

Other noteworthy organizations represented in the "Reforming Catholic Confession":

Calvary Chapel Lexington Kentucky

Calvary Chapel Moreno Valley

Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

Wycliffe College

Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary

Westminster Seminary

National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference

Hope College

Grace College and Seminary

The Village Church

Harvest Bible Chapel

Institute on Religion and Democracy

Reformed Theological Seminary

Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission

Houghton College

Corban University

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

On Leonard Sweet: Connectness Or Correctness – Which Will It Be?



September 6th, 2017 |



Author: *A Ministry in His Service*

By Tamara Hartzell

(author of *Reimagining God*)

“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.” (2 Timothy 4:2-4)

Sadly, it has become quite obvious that the time has already come. Openly preferring the fables of man’s imagination to the doctrinal truth of God’s Word, today’s shifting Christianity is heaping to itself teachers to scratch its itching ears. People are choosing to be led in “a way that seemeth right unto a man” rather than in the way that is right unto God as set forth by God in the Word of God.

In Leonard Sweet’s 2009 book, *So Beautiful: Divine Design for Life and the Church*, which, sadly, is just as anti-truth, anti-God, anti-Christ as everything else that caters to today’s epidemic of itching ears, this “[r]enowned professor and theologian” —who has worked for “years as a mentor to pastors” and “is a frequent speaker at national and international conferences, state conventions, pastors’ schools, retreats” as well as “a consultant to many denominational leaders and agencies” —asks a question that effectively sums up the new way of thinking:

“What if we were to think connectness rather than correctness?”

In today’s emerging paradigm/faith, “relationship, not believing is central,” so connectness is naturally replacing correctness. The two go hand in hand. Since the correctness of the truth of God’s Word is a “stumbling block in the way” of today’s desired connectness, these connections are thus held together not by correct truth but by man’s “reimagined” “truth.” But, naturally, the latter is not seen as incorrect in today’s preferred “light” of darkness.

Even so, when connectness is instead of correctness, the connectness thus becomes incorrectness. Incorrectness is not truth but error. But of course the circle of Oneness that connects opposites also brings incorrectness and correctness together as one into a relationship that then becomes a new and “reimagined” “correctness.” This way those who prefer to “think connectness rather than correctness” can see the incorrectness of this connectness as “correctness” and not error, especially since this incorrectness is their new and “reimagined” “truth.” And lest anyone see this new “truth” as incorrect or as error, it is conveniently claimed that truth is to be conceived rather

than believed. Nevertheless, error is only "truth" in man's imagination where this new incorrect "truth" is conceived in the first place.

"But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." (2 Timothy 3:14-16)

"Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness." (2 Peter 3:17)

Leonard Sweet

Leonard Sweet states:

"The meaning of Christianity does not come from allegiance to complex theological doctrines but a passionate love for a way of living in the world that revolves around following Jesus, who taught that love is what makes life a success ... Only love. The main theme in the preaching of Jesus was that life with the Father was all about love ... that we do not worship a God who punishes us for evil and rewards us for good....



"Propositionalists want you to fall in line. Relationalists want you to fall in love. Christians aren't people who follow Christianity. Christians are people who follow and fall in love with Christ....

"We were put here to 'glorify God and enjoy him forever.' In other words, we were not put here to 'do the right thing' but to be in a 'right relationship' with God. We were not put here to 'keep commandments' but to conceive beauty, truth, and goodness. We were not put here to 'take a stand' but to walk in the light for the greater glory of God. Biblical truth doesn't feast on fact. It feasts on relationship and revelation, which is why eternal truth is better communicated by the fictions of parables and narratives than the facts of science and philosophy." (Leonard Sweet; 2nd ellipsis dots in the original)

The Bible states:

"Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made

like to corruptible man, ... Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen." (Romans 1:21-23, 25)

"My son, fear thou the LORD and the king: and meddle not with them that are given to change: For their calamity shall rise suddenly; and who knoweth the ruin of them both?" (Proverbs 24:21-22)

Sadly, many are resisting God being God and resisting the Word of God being God's Word of truth. People today simply do not want an "overlay of power," "chain of command," or "final authority." Rather, they want the unencumbered freedom "to simply 'be' in relationship," however they choose, of course.

Although unscriptural enough in itself, Sweet's previous quote is only the tip of the iceberg of his false teachings. And even though it all once would have been obvious, everything is changing as more and more people purposely shift to darkness and incorrectness—i.e., as they purposely cover their eyes and ears to the light of God's Word of absolute truth and correctness.

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee ... And there shall be, like people, like priest: and I will punish them for their ways, and reward them their doings." (Hosea 4:6, 9)

"And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogance of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible." (Isaiah 13:11)