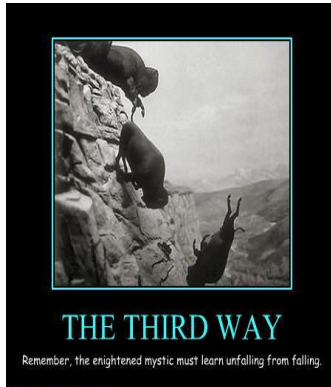


LEONARD SWEET, FRANK VIOLA, AND THE THIRD WAY

By [Ken Silva pastor-teacher](#) on Jun 8, 2010 in [AM Missives](#), [Contemplative Spirituality/Mysticism](#), [Current Issues](#), [Emergence Christianity](#), [Emergent Church](#), [Features](#), [Leonard Sweet](#), [New Apostolic Reformation](#)

...they mixed with the nations and learned to do as they did. They served their idols, which became a snare to them. (Psalm 106:35-36, ESV)



The Convergence

[Apprising Ministries](#) introduced you to Mike Morrell, a largely behind the scenes networker in the neo-liberal cult of the [Emergent Church](#) in [Mike Morrell On Matthew Fox, John Wimber, And The Emerging Church](#).

The other day the respected online apologetics and discernment ministry [Herescope](#) ran [The Great Confluence: The Emergent New Apostolic Reformation Flowing into the New Age](#), which opens with the following from Mike Morell:

“If you’re a house church or emerging church (or baffled onlooker), what do you think of this confluence of HC [House Church] and EC [Emergent Church]?” ([Online source](#))

That quote comes from Morrell’s 2008 article [House Church: Ready for Prime Time? Frank Viola says ‘Yes!’](#) where he explains that a “decade ago” he would take his “first plunge into” the “world of house churching – or, as it’s increasingly called today, ‘organic church.’” Morrell next tells us how he originally became involved with the sinfully ecumenical [Emergent Church](#):

2-3 years into my house church journey, I discovered the ‘[emerging church conversation](#)’ before it was ever called that. (Back then it was *postmodern Christianity*, baby! [Stranger Things Magazine](#), [Next Wave](#), and [The Ooze](#) were the places to be. But then, I suppose the latter two still are, with some notable newcomers.) *Finally*, I thought. *Some other Christians I could talk about this stuff with.* And I was right. Be they Catholic, Orthodox, Anabaptist or anarchist, in the pomo xian conversation I found *friends* – which was just as important as finding *family* in house churching a few years prior. ([Online source](#))

Heretical birds of a feather will flock together; Morrell next announces:

Enter my ‘family friend’ [Frank Viola](#). I started [reading Frank](#) right at the beginning of my house church journey in 1998,... He was and is one of the most prolific pens in house churchdom (though his relationship with ‘house church’ is as [nuanced](#) as [Brian McLaren’s is](#) with ‘emergent church’). One year later, he crashed on a pallet beside me and three other guys on my parents living room floor! Our church was hosting a men’s conference in ’99 and I got to meet The Man Himself... And so it began.

Around 2005 Frank discovered what dawned on me in 2001; that these ‘emerging church’ folks were valuable friends and conversation partners in discovering the life, meaning and

mission of Jesus' followers in the 21st century. He asked me what he should be reading more of, and who he should be talking to. I introduced him to some friends, and gave him some contacts with the [e-zines](#). After digesting more of 'the conversation,' Frank penned an article that went viral, [Will the Emerging Church Fully Emerge?](#) [Andrew Jones](#) and [many others](#) weighed in... Frank put all his cards on the table... It's been fun watching folks' responses to 'organic church' praxis evolve over the years, from initial [wariness](#) to [active engagement](#). ([Online source](#))

Fast forward to the book [Jesus Manifesto](#) (JM) by Frank Viola and [Emerging Church](#) theologian [Leonard Sweet](#) and we see more confluence of House Church and [Emerging Church](#). As one who also keeps an eye on [Red Letter Christian](#) and [Emergent Church](#) icon [Shane Claiborne](#) and the so-called New Monasticism, as if the old monasticism wasn't apostate enough, it's interesting to note that [The Jesus Manifesto](#) is an online webzine associated with "New Monastic" [Mark Van Steenwyk](#):

A manifesto is a public declaration of intentions—often of a political nature. It is a fun word to say (man-ih-fess-toe), but has negative connotations. Perhaps the two most famous manifestos are the [Communist Manifesto](#) (written by [Marx](#) and [Engels](#)) and the [Unabomber's](#) (Theodore Kaczynski's) [Manifesto](#).

Because of the negative connotations, a website called "the Jesus Manifesto" sounds a bit too communist, leftist, or anarchist—it reeks of revolution, of subversion, of upheaval. That is entirely intentional. This website exists to subvert the Empire (wherever it is found). But more importantly, it exists to call people to embrace the Kingdom of God. ([Online source](#))

Interestingly enough Van Steenwyk himself has done a review of the JM book, although he says he usually doesn't "review books." The mini-flap over Viola and Sweet still using *Jesus Manifesto*, even though "JesusManifesto.com was known to them (at least to Frank)" is quite interesting in itself. In Van Steenwyk's opinion, however, Viola and Sweet are "over-reaching with the name 'Jesus Manifesto'" because:

Frank and Len's "Jesus Manifesto" kinda functions as a flag planted in the earth—gathering folks around their convictions about Jesus. In my mind, it is over-reaching to call what they've penned with their own hands the "Jesus Manifesto." I realize their goal is to exalt Jesus (I deeply affirm that), but it might be the case that their simply exalting their own take on Jesus. Furthermore, they are doing it in such a way that, if you don't agree with their take, you are assumed to be "majoring in the minors." ([Online source](#))

Well, it could also be very likely that Viola and Sweet are actually using a play on words, as in, *Jesus Manifest-o*. In [The Other Side of Emergent: The New Apostolic Reformation](#) the Research team at [Herescope](#) brought out:

Sweet and Viola's book, [Jesus Manifesto](#), is subtitled "Restoring the Supremacy and Sovereignty of Jesus Christ," and it pushes the envelope on redefining Jesus, including "You can be a Jesus Manifest."² A quick glance at the [lineup of key endorsers for this book](#) includes a list of who's who in Emergent, the Latter Rain cult, neoevangelicalism and the [New Apostolic Reformation](#).

In recent posts on this blog we have noticed that emerging church leader Leonard Sweet has

links to the NAR.³ The co-author of his book, [Frank Viola](#), also has roots in the NAR. He has been connected with the House2House group, a movement that is ostensibly about “house” churches, but in reality is concerned with building the [networking apostolic cellular model of church](#) for the purpose of [building the kingdom of God on earth](#).

This is the same [Dominionist](#) goal that is characteristic of the NAR: “This amazing network of churches is rapidly transitioning as a network to embrace the simple church models that the Lord is blessing all around the world,” leading to the “transforming work of God in bringing people to Christ. . . leading to dramatic advances of the Kingdom of God.”⁴ John Arnott of the Toronto “Laughing Revival” has been a notable contributor to the House2House magazine.⁵ ([Online source](#))

A Third Wave Is Sweeping By Becoming A Third Way On The Broad Path

Since the [New Apostolic Reformation](#) isn’t the subject of this article I’ll refer you now to [The Third Wave “New Apostolic Reformation”](#) by Christian apologist Sandy Simpson, who’s with the fine online apologetics and discernment ministry [Deception In The Church](#), where he informs us:

There are many roots to the Third Wave/New Apostolic Reformation and counterfeit revivals we see today... One of the biggest influences on the counterfeit “river” movement of the Third Wave was the New Order of the Latter Rain...

Latter Rain teachings today have evolved and now also include: Kingdom Now/Dominion Theology, Progressive Revelation, Revival/Harvest, Joel’s Army, Replacement Theology, Post-Millennial Eschatology, Signs and Wonders, Territorial Warfare, Ecumenism, Restoration of Apostles and Prophets, Jubilee/Feast of Tabernacles, and the Post-denominational Church. (The Latter Rain Revival, Tim & Barb Aho, 1997, <http://watch.pair.com/rain.html>)...

The Latter Rain has now become almost totally mixed together with doctrines of the Manifest Sons Of God movement... ([Online source](#))

Simpson then shares the major doctrines of the Manifest Sons of God; note carefully the ones I highlighted in bold print from his list:

- **A New Form and Standard for Christianity is emerging.** It will change our entire understanding of what Christianity is. In 20 years it will be entirely different. Change will be so dramatic, the Christian church as we know it will oppose it. The change will come from outside the church.
- Rapture is for the “wicked” (Not of the saved!).
- God is to be revealed when he takes his throne in the temple.
- Christians cannot be deceived.
- City Churches: One church leadership per city. Other churches are to join the under the apostolic authority of one man or group of men and transfer membership to them (or associated churches in other cities), and ultimately close down their churches).
- **Joel’s Army/Kingdom Now/Dominion theology: the church is to conquer and subdue the earth in order to bring in the millennium.**
- New Breed/manifest Son’s of God: We will be perfected into our glorified bodies prior to

Christ's return. This will allow us to subdue the earth.

- **The restoration of “the fivefold ministry”** as enumerated in [Ephesians 4:11](#), with particular emphasis on the offices of apostle and prophet. (Branham was widely touted as the prophet Elijah reborn).
- Christians become “gods”. We have the “divine” nature.
- **Christ comes into us as a “seed”** and grows into a “prophet”. Christ therefore returns “within us”.
- Jesus was sent as a “pattern” for the corporate church (Corporate church in this context means that the church becomes Christ. Christ is not complete without us because he is the head and we are the body).
- The current churches have the spirit of “Antichrist”. ([Online source](#), emphasis mine)

At the very least, you will find these highlighted doctrines in Viola's own teaching, as well as within JM itself. Space allows just one quick example; while speaking as God the Father, and I hope that makes you as uncomfortable as it does me, Viola and Sweet say...to the Christian, I think:

When you were begotten again, **an incorruptable seed** of My life was placed into you by My Spirit. **That seed was Christ**. Within the DNA of **that incorruptable seed** is the nature and character of My Son. [1]

In closing this, for now, let me focus your attention upon another concern we should have with this JM; and that's this idea of a “third way,” or possibly in Viola's case we say should even say, “third wave.” After the lengthy commercial for JM in his post [10 reasons why Len and I wrote JESUS MANIFESTO](#) Frank Viola tells us about “the two most common questions I've been asked” about the book. The first is “why did you and Len write this book? [and] (2) you both have very different writing styles, so what was it like writing together?” Viola then answers the first question.

Following is reason number 10:

To offer a third path that's not part of the left vs. right/conservative vs. liberal debate that has brought so many members of the body of Christ to a grinding halt spiritually. ([Online source](#))

Lord willing, we'll be returning to this another time; so here I'll just make two brief points: 1) liberal theology is not part of “the Body of Christ” in the first place, and 2) the idea of a “third path” is Hegelian-speak. As I previously pointed out in [Richard Rohr And The Emerging Church As The Third Way](#), this “third” path, or way, refers to the Hegelian dialectic. Below Christian apologist Mike Oppenheimer offers a concise definition as he explains:

Traditionally, this dimension of Hegel's thought has been analyzed in terms of the categories of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. Although Hegel tended to avoid these terms, they are helpful in understanding his concept of the dialectic. The thesis, then, might be an idea or a historical movement.

Such an idea or movement contains within itself incompleteness that gives rise to opposition, or an antithesis, a conflicting idea or movement. As a result of the conflict a third point of

view arises, a synthesis, which overcomes the conflict by reconciling at a higher level the truth contained in both the thesis and antithesis. ([Online source](#))

Both Viola and Sweet are mystics; having both been infected with the irrational philosophy of postmodernism they also embrace the Hegelian idea that there's a new "synthesis" coming, one which will come through an evolution into a higher consciousness through mysticism. In [Who Is Richard Rohr?](#) I introduced to Carl McColman, who's "the author of several books including *The Aspiring Mystic* and *366 Celt*, and runs [Anamchara: The Website of Unknowing](#) which we're told "is devoted to Christian mysticism, interfaith spirituality, Celtic wisdom, emergent theology, and assorted other topics."

In other words, though I disagree with many of his conclusions regarding so-called "Christian mysticism," he is an expert witness on the subject of mysticism itself. While reviewing Rohr's latest book [The Naked Now: Learning to See as the Mystics See](#) McColman gives us insight into how mystic musers like Viola, Sweet and Rohr...um, well..."unthink":

Rohr has a clear sense of the paradox and play at the heart of mysticism,... Rohr does not promise his readers that *The Naked Now* will make them become mystics; instead, he promises to invite them to "see" as mystics do. He uses the metaphor of seeing and even of the "third eye" to unpack not only what is wrong with religion in general, but to present mysticism as a shift into all-embracing, nondual consciousness...

Rohr suggests that these principles epitomize what he is trying to say: "All saying must be balanced by unsaying, and knowing must be humbled by unknowing," and "All light must be informed by darkness, and all success by suffering." The key to these mystical axioms, of course, is unlearning the dualistic way of seeing and thinking by relaxing into the naked now: the "sacrament of the present moment." ([Online source](#))

No doubt you've heard this Eastern-style gibberish slithering into mainstream evanjellyfish circles for a while now: "All saying must be balanced by unsaying, and knowing must be humbled by unknowing". Translation: Shut off your critical reasoning skills. Biblical Christians will recognize this better as: Yea, did God really say? Yes, these very complicated, serpentine-like, subjects swirling around *The Great Confluence* of what I've called [The Ecumenical Church Of Deceit \(ECoD\)](#) are really that simple; Satan and his minions are sowing confusion as to what God has said in Scripture.

And this new form of Gnostic mysticism, with its delusion of some "inward journey" into some secret knowledge to be gleaned from the "spark of the divine" within you is, perhaps, the single most dangerous thing you can possibly be doing right now. I'll leave you with an excellent article by Christian apologist Chris Rosebrough, host of the [Fighting for the Faith](#) program on [Pirate Christian Radio](#), that just went online today. In [Believing in a "Third Way" Between the Religious Right and Left Is like Believing TV Wrestling is Real](#) Rosebrough hits the target dead on concerning this foolish "third way":

This type of rhetoric is completely irrational and doesn't make a bit of sense! The time has come to challenge these ideas and assumptions and expose them as fraudulent ways of thinking.

Understanding the Primary Differences That Divide Right and Left Reveals There Is No Viable “Third Way”

If you simply compare what has been the dividing faultline between the theological right and theological left—the primary dividing line being how the Bible is to be understood and applied in the church, then you will understand that believing that a third way exists is like believing that the moon is made of green cheese or that TV Wrestling and TV Magic are actually real rather than theatrical illusion. ([Online source](#))

His “brief list of the radical differences between Right and Left” completely demolishes the idiotic idea of some third way “big tent” Christianity, which you have heard me talk about forms the basis of the latest book [A New Kind of Christianity](#) by [Emergent Church](#) guru [Brian McLaren](#). You may know that McLaren, now a [Living Spiritual Teacher](#) right alongside such as [Deepak Chopra](#), [the Dalai Lama](#), [Thich Nhat Hanh](#), [Eckhart Tolle](#), and [Marianne Williamson](#), has come out of the closet, as it were, and has all but laid out his reimagined i.e. new form of [Progressive Christianity](#) aka liberal theology.

This would be the third way, the alleged “new reformation” of the Emerging Church 2.0 with its [Emergence \[theory\] Christianity](#) that’s slithering its way deeper into the mainstream of the squishy evanjellyfish community; and, maybe into your own local church. If I were you, I’d be closely checking the theology of your Worship leaders and Youth pastors by asking some very hard, and precisely defined, questions. It’s an incontrovertible fact that this spiritual skubalon has been coming out of mainstream evangelical publishing houses for years now aimed right at that demographic; you ignore this at their peril.

Endnotes:

[1] Leonard Sweet and Frank Viola, *Jesus Manifesto: Restoring The Supremacy And Sovereignty Of Jesus Christ*, [Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2010], 44, 45, emphasis mine.

See also:

[FRANK VIOLA AND CORRUPT CONTEMPLATIVE SPIRITUALITY/MYSTICISM](#)

[*UPDATE* FRANK VIOLA PRACTICES CORRUPT CONTEMPLATIVE/CENTERING PRAYER?](#)

[FRANK VIOLA AND THE MERRY MONK](#)

[LEONARD SWEET ON THE GOSPEL](#)

[EMERGING CHURCH THEOLOGIAN LEONARD SWEET AND CALVARY CHAPEL OF ALBUQUERQUE](#)

[CONCERNING LEONARD SWEET OF THE EMERGING CHURCH AND CHRISTIAN EDUCATION](#)

[EMERGENCE CHRISTIANITY: QUANTUM SHIFT TO PANENTHEISM](#)