

News and Current Events :: Proof of Apostacy- Rick Warren & Leonard Sweet

Proof of Apostacy- Rick Warren & Leonard Sweet, on: 2009/7/20 15:58

From Lighthouse Press:

"Rick Warren, Leonard Sweet, and Sweet's "New Light" Leaders"

by Warren Smith

LTRP Note:

While some Christian leaders are issuing warnings about New Age figures such as Oprah, Eckhart Tolle, and A Course in Miracles, this same new (age) spirituality (under a "Christian" disguise) is being promoted and embraced right in the Christian church by popular Christian teachers and authors.

"Rick Warren, Leonard Sweet, and Sweet's 'New Light' Leaders" (from A "Wonderful" Deception)

by Warren Smith

Quantum spirituality bonds us to all creation as well as to other members of the human family. . . . This entails a radical doctrine of embodiment of God in the very substance of creation. . . . But a spirituality that is not in some way entheistic (whether pan- or trans-), that does not extend to the spirit-matter of the cosmos, is not Christian.¹--Leonard Sweet
Shortly after Deceived on Purpose was published, I came across a book titled Quantum Spirituality: A Postmodern Dialectic written by Rick Warren's "Evangelical" colleague Leonard Sweet. Also, around the same time, I was given a cassette tape set of a presentation Sweet had done with Warren in 1995. Their recorded discussion is titled The Tides of Change and was packaged as part of an ongoing series called "Choice Voices for Church Leadership." At the time this audio project took place, Sweet was a Christian author, Methodist minister, and the Dean of the Theological School at Drew University. According to information on the tape set, this presentation was about ministry on the emerging "new frontier."²

Challenging pastors to make changes in their ministry to meet the emerging postmodern culture and the changing times, Sweet and Rick Warren present themselves not only as pastors but also as modern-day change agents. In their conversation together, Sweet enthusiastically remarked to Warren: "I think this is part of this New Spirituality that we are seeing birthed around us."³

In listening to this cassette-tape series, I found it interesting that Leonard Sweet was talking about the birth of a "New Spirituality" with Rick Warren way back in 1995. Since 9/11, "New Spirituality" is the term that most New Age leaders are now using instead of "New Age Spirituality." By simply removing the word "Age" from "New Age Spirituality," the "New Age Spirituality" has suddenly become the "New Spirituality." Emerging church figures like Sweet, Brian McLaren, and others are also employing the term "New Spirituality." They use it to describe the "new" Christianity they are practicing as "New Christians" and "New Light leaders."⁴ What has become clear over the last decade is that the "New Spirituality"--with its bottom line belief that God is "in" everything--is, in reality, the foundational New Age "hub" for the coming New World Religion. This panentheistic New Age/New Spirituality teaching that God is "in" everything will be the "common ground" melting pot belief that the coming New World Religion will ultimately rest upon.

In The Tides of Change, it is clear that Rick Warren and Leonard Sweet are working toward a "New Reformation" of the church.⁵ But as I read Sweet's book Quantum Spirituality: A Postmodern Apologetic, I quickly discovered that Sweet's New Reformation is really just a New Age re-formation of biblical Christianity--a New Spirituality. And his New Age/New Spirituality take on things is just one more reason to be concerned about the further New Age implications that are already so present in Warren's Purpose Driven movement.

Serving Two Masters

Although I was not previously familiar with Leonard Sweet, I knew that his book, Quantum Spirituality, had raised some concerns about his apparent affection for New Age teachings. When I began reading through Quantum Spirituality, I could see why people were concerned.

Highly intellectual and well-read, Leonard Sweet almost dares you to keep up with him as he charges through the spiritual marketplace. Operating at lightning speed and quoting from countless books and articles, he will impress many readers with his quick wit and spiritual insights. However, as he treacherously dives into New Age waters and challenges his readers to go there with him, serious problems arise within his "postmodern apologetic."

In reading *Quantum Spirituality*, I recalled the Sermon on the Mount when Jesus warned that you can't serve two masters (Matthew 6:24). Leonard Sweet may be a professing Evangelical Christian, but he also simultaneously praises New Age authors and their teachings. Observing Sweet's obvious New Age slant to Christianity, I was not surprised to see that he was one of the featured speakers at a 2007 leadership conference at the Crystal Cathedral.⁶ He also co-led two small-group workshops with Warren in 2008.⁷

New Light Leaders?

While some Leonard Sweet defenders have argued that Sweet's hybridized postmodern "New Light" apologetic flies right over the heads of "old light" "fundamentalist" types, the facts tell a much different story. What I learned in reading *Quantum Spirituality* is that Sweet is in the process of trying to transform biblical Christianity into a quantum/postmodern/New Light/New Age/New Spirituality. Without apology, Sweet writes that he is part of a "New Light movement" and he describes those he especially admires as "New Light leaders."⁸

In the "Acknowledgments" of *Quantum Spirituality*, Sweet expresses his deep gratitude and admiration to various "New Light leaders" that he openly praises as "the most creative religious leaders in America today."⁹ Included in his group are a number of New Age leaders I am very familiar with--most particularly Willis Harman, Matthew Fox, and M. Scott Peck. Sweet describes these three men--along with all the others cited--as "extraordinary" and "great" New Light leaders. He goes so far as to say that they are his "personal role models" and "heroes" of the "true nature of the postmodern apologetic." Sweet writes:

They are my personal role models (in an earlier day one could get away with "heroes") of the true nature of the postmodern apologetic. More than anyone else, they have been my teachers on how to translate, without compromising content, the gospel into the indigenous context of the postmodern vernacular.¹⁰

But many of the men Leonard Sweet acknowledges have compromised the "content" of the Gospel by translating it into the "postmodern vernacular" of a New Age/New Spirituality. For example, Willis Harman, Matthew Fox, and M. Scott Peck have all played leading roles in the building and popularizing of today's New Age/New Spirituality movement. Therefore, how can these three leaders be Sweet's "role models" and "heroes"? Sweet's praise of these men says all you need to know about his "postmodern apologetic." Rather than commending these New Age/New Light leaders, a self-professing Christian leader like Sweet should be warning the church about them. A brief look at these three "New Light leaders" and their teachings will make this very clear. (This is an excerpt from chapter 10, *"Wonderful" Deception* by Warren Smith. To read entire chapter, click here.)

Notes:

1. Leonard Sweet, *Quantum Spirituality: A Postmodern Apologetic* (Dayton, OH: Whaleprints for SpiritVenture Ministries, Inc. 1991, 1994), p. 125.
2. Rick Warren and Leonard Sweet, *The Tides of Change*, op. cit., introductory information sheet.
3. Ibid.
4. Tony Jones, *The New Christianity*, op. cit., pp. 2, 40; Brian McLaren, *Everything Must Change*, op. cit., p. 296; Leonard Sweet, *Quantum Spirituality*, op. cit., p. viii.
5. Rick Warren and Leonard Sweet, *The Tides of Change*, op. cit.
6. Faith Forward conference in 2007 at Crystal Cathedral with Leonard Sweet, <http://www.cathedralgifts.com/20fafoco.html>.
7. For information on the small-group workshop at the 2008 Saddleback Small Groups conference: <http://www.lighthousestrailsresearch.com/blog/index.php?p=988&more=1&c=1>.
8. Leonard Sweet, *Quantum Spirituality*, op. cit., p. viii.
9. Ibid., p. ix.
10. Ibid., p. viii.

Sincerely,

Walter

Re: Proof of Apostacy- Rick Warren & Leonard Sweet, on: 2009/7/27 1:00

Part 2

This is Part 2 of the previous post

Chief Saddleback Apologist defends New Age Sympathizer Leonard Sweet

by Warren Smith

LTRP Note: This is part two of an introduction to Warren Smith's new book, A "Wonderful" Deception. In last week's installment, it was revealed that Rick Warren's and Leonard Sweet's evangelical "new reformation" appears to be moving toward the New Age/New Spirituality. In this week's section, Saddleback's chief apologist defends Leonard Sweet's working relationship with Rick Warren, even though Sweet's affinity with New Age leaders is clearly evident.

"Sweet, Spangler, and Quantum Spirituality"
by Warren Smith

If we want to possess a magical crystal for our New Age work, we need look no further than our own bodies and the cells that make them up.¹--David Spangler 1991

I am grateful to David Spangler for his help in formulating this "new cell" understanding of New Light leadership.²--Leonard Sweet 1991

Leonard Sweet, in acknowledging Willis Harman, Matthew Fox, M. Scott Peck, and the others he refers to as "New Light leaders" in Quantum Spirituality, states:

I believe these are among the most creative religious leaders in America today. These are the ones carving out channels for new ideas to flow. In a way this book was written to guide myself through their channels and chart their progress. The book's best ideas come from them.³

Speaking of spiritual "channels," Sweet expresses his personal gratitude in Quantum Spirituality to channeler and veteran New Age leader, David Spangler. Spangler, in attempting to cast off the negative stereotype of a New Age channeler, would now more likely describe himself as a conscious intuitive.⁴ A pioneering spokesperson for the New Age, Spangler has written numerous books over the years that include *Emergence: The Rebirth of the Sacred*, *Revelation: The Birth of a New Age*, and *Reimagination of the World: A Critique of the New Age, Science, and Popular Culture*. His book *Revelation: The Birth of a New Age* is a compilation of channeled transmissions he received from his disembodied spirit-guide "John." At one point in *Revelation*, Spangler documents what "John" prophesied about "the energies of the Cosmic Christ" and "Oneness":

As the energies of the Cosmic Christ become increasingly manifest within the etheric life of Earth, many individuals will begin to respond with the realization that the Christ dwells within them. They will feel his presence moving within and through them and will begin to awaken to their heritage of Christhood and Oneness with God, the Beloved.⁵

Unbelievably, in a modern-day consultation that bears more than a casual resemblance to King Saul's consultation with the witch of Endor (1 Samuel 28:7), Leonard Sweet acknowledges in Quantum Spirituality that he was privately corresponding with channeler David Spangler.⁶ In Quantum Spirituality, Sweet writes about what he calls his "new cell" understanding of New Light leadership, then closes his book by thanking Spangler for "his help in formulating this 'new cell' understanding of New Light Leadership." Sweet writes:

Philosopher Eric Voegelin's word "cosmion" refers to "a well ordered thing that has the character of the universe." New Lights offer up themselves as the cosmions of a mind-of-Christ consciousness. As a cosmion incarnating the cells of a new body, New Lights will function as transitional vessels through which transforming energy can renew the divine image in the world, moving postmoderns from one state of embodiment to another.⁷

I am grateful to David Spangler for his help in formulating this "new cell" understanding of New Light leadership.⁸

Spangler: Still the New Age

In David Spangler's 1991 book, *The Reimagination of the World*, Spangler makes it clear that any "new cell" understanding associated with him is directly related to New Age teachings. While Spangler tries to distance himself from the more narcissistic and superficial aspects of the New Age, he still holds firm to the use of the term "Ne

w Age" to describe his spiritual beliefs. In fact, in referring to the importance of a "new cell understanding" of the New Age, Spangler writes:

To me, a more appropriate symbol for the New Age is the cell. The cell is really a living crystal. It possesses a highly structured internal order, yet this geometry is organized around information rather than around position, as in a crystal lattice. Protoplasm is highly dynamic; it can give birth to endless varieties of new life, yet it can also collect and focus energy in powerful ways. If we want to possess a magical crystal for our New Age work, we need look no further than our own bodies and the cells that make them up.⁹

Was all of this part of the "new cell" understanding that Leonard Sweet received from David Spangler? This paragraph alone--much less Spangler's well documented "New Age work" through the years--should be enough to drive any Christian leader far away from Spangler's heretical New Age teachings. Sweet's involvement with a key New Age leader and channeler of spirit-guides is not innovative or edgy or pioneering--it is spiritually dangerous. The Bible instructs us to reprove and expose the works of darkness--not join forces with them (Ephesians 5: 11-13).

Leonard Sweet's *Quantum Spirituality* and David Spangler's *The Reimagination of the World* were both published in 1991. It seems obvious from their books that both men are attempting to distance themselves from the more faddish, consumer-oriented elements of the New Age--but without actually dispensing with the term New Age itself.¹⁰ To the casual reader, it might look like Spangler and Sweet are actually speaking against the New Age. In fact, quotes taken out of context might even make it appear this is true. But this is definitely not the case. Sweet and Spangler are just doing some New Age/New Spirituality public relations. They are both redefining and refining the term New Age as they try to strip the term of its Shirley MacClainesque pop aspects and put it more in the realm of seemingly authoritative science. The term New Age would no longer be associated with occult spiritual beliefs but rather with a period of time--a new era--in which their seemingly scientifically based spiritual beliefs would manifest. It would no longer be a New Age Spirituality. It would now be a universal "New Spirituality" for a new era--the coming "New Age." This New Age would be equated with a planetary era and a planetary ethic that would reflect a passionate concern for the environment and all of humanity. This new era would also reflect the new "civility" called for by Sweet's "hero," the late New Age leader M. Scott Peck. In his 1993 book *A World Waiting to be Born: Civility Rediscovered*, Peck writes the following about his Utopian New Age:

The distinguishing feature of the citizens of Utopia is not their location, nationality, religion, or occupation but their commitment to becoming ever more civil individuals and their membership in a planetary culture of civility. By virtue of this commitment and membership, regardless of their theology, they welcome the active presence of God into both their individual and their collective lives. . . . Although their primary allegiance is to the development of their own souls, they are all involved in teaching as well as learning civility and dedicated to inviting others into their planetary culture.¹¹

Who is going to argue with this call for ecological responsibility, human compassion, and planetary "civility" in this coming New Era--in this idealized New Age? Only those who recognize that New Age beliefs are being smuggled in under the cover of a new planetary ethic--a New Spirituality and a New Worldview for the coming New Age. Leonard Sweet and Brian McLaren would also try to redefine the term New Age more as a period of time than as a set of occult beliefs. Attempting to marginalize the whole New Age movement by characterizing it as "vague, consumerist, undefined, and mushy," McLaren misses the fact that the New Age is a well-organized spiritual movement with a long-standing hostility to biblical Christianity. The New Age is very serious about what it believes and is anything but "mushy." But as McLaren wrongly defines the New Age as "mushy" while simultaneously equating biblical Christianity with "pushy fundamentalism," he paves the way for a newly emerging theology--a New Spirituality for a New Age. The term "New Age" that characterized an occult belief system neatly disappears as the "New Age" simply becomes the time frame in which this New Spirituality appears. In his book *Finding our Way Again*, McLaren describes this New Spirituality for the coming "New Age":

The word spirituality tries to capture that fusion of everyday sacredness. For many people, it represents a life-giving alternative to secularist fundamentalism and religious fundamentalism, the former offering the world weapons of mass destruction and the latter stirring emotions to put the suicidal machinery into motion.

This dissatisfaction in some cases has led to a reactionary resurgence of pushy fundamentalism--fearful, manic, violent, apocalyptic. And in other cases it has led to a search for a new kind of spirituality. The success or failure of this search will, no doubt, play a major role in the story of the twenty-first century.

In its early stages, this search for spirituality has been associated with the term new age, which for many means something vague, consumerist, undefined, and mushy. However, in the aftermath of September 11, 2001, more and more of us are realizing that a warm but mushy spirituality is no match for hot and pushy fundamentalism, of whatever religious variety . . . More and more of us feel, more and more intensely, the need for a fresh, creat

ive alternative--a fourth alternative, something beyond militarist scientific secularism, pushy religious fundamentalism, and mushy amorphous spirituality.

This alternative, we realize, needs to be creative and new to face the new challenges of a new age, a world gone "post-al"-postmodern, postcolonial, post-Enlightenment, post-Christendom, post-Holocaust, post-9/11. Yet it also needs to derive strength from the old religious traditions; it needs to face new-age challenges with age-old wisdom.¹²

Thus, the new semantics introduced by both New Age and Christian leaders--what had been called New Age Spirituality--would now be a panentheistic New Spirituality for a New Era and a New Age. Leonard Sweet, Brian McLaren, and other Christian leaders were slowly transitioning the church into New Age teachings, but with clever new terms like New Light leadership, quantum spirituality, New Spirituality and a New Worldview that will--for the "good of the world"--transition the church out of an "Old Age"/biblical Christianity into the emerging "New Age" of a New Spirituality.

In 1991, Leonard Sweet was setting the stage for everything happening in the church today. He was saying what McLaren is now saying. He was starting to redefine the New Age as a New Era rather than a set of occult beliefs. In Quantum Spirituality, he writes:

The church stands on the front lines of the coming reign of God. Or as biblical scholar J. Christiaan Beker entitles his chapter on Paul's ecclesial thought, "The Church the Dawning of the New Age." The event of Jesus Christ spells the end of the old age and the beginning of the new age. The church then is the "beachhead of the new creation," in Beker's words, "the sign of the new age in the old world that is 'passing away.'"¹³

Thus while David Spangler, Brian McLaren, and Leonard Sweet all seem to be distancing themselves from the New Age--they are actually helping to bring it on. They are bringing it on because they hold to the basic New Age view that we are all "one" because God is "in" everything, as Sweet shares in Quantum Spirituality. To underline this idea, Sweet turns to contemplative mystic/panentheist Thomas Merton. Sweet states:

If the church is to dance, however, it must first get its flabby self back into shape. . . . So far the church has refused to dip its toe into postmodern culture. A quantum spirituality challenges the church to bear its past and to dare its future by sticking its big TOE into the time and place of the present.

Then, and only then, will a flattened out, "one-dimensional," and at times dimensionless world have discovered the power and vitality of a four-dimensional faith . . . Then and only then, will a New Light movement of "world-making" faith have helped to create the world that is to, and may yet, be. Then, and only then, will earthlings have uncovered the meaning of these words, some of the last words poet/activist/contemplative/bridge between East and West Thomas Merton uttered: "We are already one. But we imagine that we are not. And what we have to recover is our original unity."¹⁴

To continue (and for endnotes),click here. (go to p. 128)

Sincerely,

Walter