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Witness to a Changing World

Lawrence Maxwell

I have been thinking the last few days about the two servants in 2 Kings 5. One was a little girl snatched from her home by a band of soldiers and forced into slavery. The other was the honored assistant to the prophet of Israel. Both knew that Naaman, the Syrian army commander, had contracted leprosy, but how different were their responses! The slave girl’s response was so beautiful that I am sure the angels still feel better every time they think of it. Gehazi’s was a terrible embarrassment.

The little girl might have chortled, “Serves him right! Now he will get what he deserves for forcing me into slavery!” But she didn’t. She is one of but a few ordinary people in the Old Testament who behaved the way Jesus would have—not nearly 800 years before Jesus was born! She not only said she wished Naaman would go to Elisha, but she also believed that God would heal a Gentile, which He did; whereupon, Gehazi used the occasion to make himself rich. God must have been disappointed.

One would like to think that the Adventist church always behaves like the little slave girl. But do we? I fear we are often like Gehazi. No, not because we lie to get our money, but because we lie about our God. Let me explain. Gehazi was an Israelite, and we are very much like the Israelites. God had asked them to be His representatives to the world, and they had agreed. When it was time for them to be established as a nation, God gave them an unprecedented send-off. The sea opened to let them escape; their oppressors were drowned; and God visited them on Sinai with the blowing of trumpets, flashing of lightning, and rolling peals of thunder. Yet, within six weeks they had mixed their worship of God with the music and idols of the heathen.

Compare this with us. God wanted a church that would rightly represent Him to the world in these last days. He got us started by darkening the sun, bloodying the moon, and pushing the stars out of heaven. After the culmination of the longest time prophecy in the Bible in 1798, He stirred a religious revival such as had never been seen, beginning in the camp meetings of 1800, and continuing in the religious fires of Charles G. Finney and William Miller. He added the distilled wisdom of 2,000 years of faithful Bible study and topped it with 2,000 visions channeled through our very own prophet! Surely we will never make the mistake of Israel and pollute our witness with ideas and doctrines brought into the fold from the heathen.

Sad to say, we already have. Remember the pantheism of John Harvey Kellogg? The burden of this issue of Adventists Affirm is that in order to reach postmodern young people, we are currently imbibing ideas and practices from Hindu, Buddhist, and other religions that we have always classified as heathen.

Did you notice that word “postmodern”? It is a word you will need to know before you can make much sense out of this issue. Postmodern. If you are like me, you thought there never would be such a word. Modern always meant “now, up-to-date.” Anything we did “now” was modern. Not anymore! Today, modern is history. If you are keeping pace with the times, today is postmodern.

As these changes are taking place, our culture is changing—our church must not linger. Otherwise, only
moderns will attend our services; as they die, our pews will be left increasingly empty. Sound familiar? Already, we see it happening!

So this issue talks about the church that must emerge—the emerging church. You will see that expression many times. A good place to start your reading is with the article by Karl Tsatalbasidis. It expands on these terms and will disturb you with its claim that England and America, once the great bastions of the Reformation and home bases for Christian missions to the world’s heathen, are now more heathen than Christian. Today, more than ever, whatever changes we may need to make, ADVENTISTS must AFFIRM God’s truth and love to the world.
Emerging to What New Age?

Jay Gallimore
President of the Michigan Conference

Today, influential TV hostess Oprah Winfrey zealously teaches popular new-age beliefs to her hundreds of thousands of viewers. Her programs swarm with emphasis on miracles and spirituality. She was asked how she could reconcile those beliefs with her Christian faith. To be sure, the teachings of the New Age at first sound biblical—until one takes a closer look.

Why is this teaching so attractive to millions today? First, on the surface, it teaches that all religions are good. Second, it assures us that all religions lead to heaven. Third, it believes that you are part of the divine, and that through meditation and spirituality, you can get in touch with your divine self.

On the contrary, biblical Christianity accepts Christ alone as the only human-divine person and Savior of the world. It declares that God alone is immortal, and that humanity is a creation of the divine. Prayer and meditation are the means to get in touch with Him, not you.

Yet, it was this exclusiveness that maddened the old Roman Empire into persecuting the early Christians. Romans were happy to have Jesus added to their many gods but were unwilling to have their gods rejected by anyone. Furthermore, despite its sounds of universal salvation, the New Age, like old Rome, can turn ugly. In no uncertain terms, it declares that anyone who rejects its “many ways to heaven” concept must be destroyed.

When the late Pope John Paul II prayed with leaders of all kinds of pagan religions, he declared, “We are all praying to the same God.” Rome has ever shown herself capable of absorbing pagan beliefs and wrapping them in the clothes of Christianity. It is in a strong position to pull this Babylonian thinking under its umbrella.

Another powerful child of this new-age thinking is the emerging church. One web site strongly proclaims, “We’re NOT your Grandma’s church!” It continues, “We feature strobe lights, heartthumping music, and dangerous messages.” Certainly, they are right about the dangerous messages. One person summed it up this way, the “emergent [church] . . . is . . . repackaging Christianity into a kaleidoscope of ever fluctuating mystical images while we’re seeking to align our wills with God’s will.” They are seeking the will of God, I might add, in mystical images instead of the Scriptures. This is a fast track to deception, spiritualism, and eternal death.

Paul Edwards is a non-Adventist columnist and pastor heard daily on WLQV in Detroit. He is very concerned about the emerging church’s impact on Christianity. His interview with John MacArthur, pastor/teacher of the Grace Community Church explains what this movement is.

**MacArthur:** What he [an emerging church leader] was saying is really simple. . . . It doesn’t matter whether you’re a Buddhist, a Hindu, or a Muslim—doesn’t matter whether you’re a Christian, really; we’re all going to end up in this wonderful, warm-and-fuzzy relationship with God.
What you have here is a . . . form of paganism that basically wants to be thought of as Christian. . . . But the underlying, bottom line of this whole emerging movement is that they don’t believe in any doctrine, they don’t believe in any theology. . . . In other words . . . let’s just be open to everything. Let’s not take a position on theology, or for that matter, on morality or behavior. . . . It is blatantly, flagrantly non-Christian.

**Edwards:** Whenever people like you . . . point out the error both in the emergent church and in the seeker movement, people will immediately run to 1 Corinthians 9, and [say], “You know, Paul said, ’I became all things to all men,’ which means to the grunge, I become as a grunge, to the Universalist, I become as a Universalist.”

**MacArthur:** Every time the Apostle Paul preached to the Jews, he started with the Scripture—the Old Testament Scripture. Every time he evangelized Gentiles, he started with creation. . . . All he is saying . . . is you must understand the starting point of your audience. What are the ideas, the theories, the viewpoints that they hold? It’s not about identifying with their lifestyle [or] being able to converse about every episode of South Park, every R-rated movie, and every rap song. . . . That’s a far cry from saying that to reach this generation we must do their music; we must dress the way they dress; we must live the way they live. That’s a million miles from what the Apostle Paul had in mind.

As Adventists, we should ask, Where is this new-age, emerging church leading? Is it possible that this is a huge step to the fulfillment of this prophecy? “Through spiritualism, Satan appears as a benefactor of the race, healing the diseases of the people, and professing to present a new and more exalted system of religious faith” (*The Great Controversy*, 589).

Although we have been warned about spiritualism, it doesn’t always come packaged in the traditional forms. Today, it masquerades under meditation, prayer, and spirituality. For sure, we need to be spiritual, but from where do the spirits come that make us spiritual? The modern, cavalier attitude toward Scripture has made spirituality in and doctrine out.

I wish I could tell you this emerging church movement is having no impact within the Adventist church, but I can’t.

How does a church test spirituality? Since Jesus, Himself, warned us against false spirituality, surely there must be a way to objectively test people’s claims about spirituality. You know the answer.

Do we know, really know the Bible? Do we know its doctrine? Are we surrendered to it? Are we really ready for the storm of deception whose lightning we can already see? These seducing spirits are very clever. Deception is conditioned for the prey. Adventists are not immune.

From the lips of Jesus we are warned that if it were possible, Satan would deceive the very elect. In the end of time, there will be a counterfeit, emerging spirituality. It sounds so attractive. It feels so good. But it leads, not to a new age of enlightenment, but to the dreaded second death.
What do all things do? They work together. As we view them, they seem to be working at cross purposes, but all things are working together. They are working together for good, not for everybody, but for those who love the Lord. Man has been given the power of choice. It rests with each one whether everything that is working together is working together for his personal good or not. We must never lose sight of the eventual triumph of God’s purpose, the eventual carrying out of His plan. We must never forget those forces that seem to bring defeat are, nevertheless, being used by God.

Notice how Paul spoke of this, "For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth" (2 Corinthians 13:8). Isn’t that wonderful? Even the devil can’t do anything against the truth. He is trying all the time, and here in this world, he seems to be having his way. Let us look behind the scenes. God is working out His will.

In the great crisis that is ahead of the church, which it is even now entering, we shall need the wisdom as well as the courage that comes from reminding ourselves of these promises, appreciating their full import.

"Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain" (Psalm 76:10). God uses even the wrath of man to praise Him. Man shouldn’t get any credit for that, but God should get a great deal of credit for using even the plans of His enemies and the wrath of the dragon to work out His will. Any wrath that doesn’t praise Him, He restraints.

This is no credit to Satan or his devils, and it is no credit to human beings that are used by him. They must all suffer in the final judgment for their rebellion against God and for the specious theories that they have advocated. They are just as guilty as though they had succeeded in subverting the truth of God and unseating God from His throne, but they cannot succeed.

Concerning the security of His children, Jesus said, "No man is able to pluck them out of My Father’s hand" (John 10:29). We can be glad for that.

I’ve been led to study this subject as I have contemplated this inspiring statement from the messenger of the Lord in an article in the Signs of the Times, January 6, 1898:

It is thought by some to be a misfortune when erroneous theories are advanced, but the
Lord has said, "All things work together for good to them that love God." The contention among the Corinthians made it necessary for Paul to write his wonderful epistles to them. If the Gentiles [of Galatia] had not backslidden from the faith, Paul would not have written, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from Him that called you out of the grace of Christ unto another gospel, which is not another." It was a misapplication of the Scriptures, to prove falsehood and error true. If the Thessalonians had not misinterpreted the instruction they received, they would not have entertained the belief that the Lord was immediately to be revealed in the clouds of heaven, thus making it necessary for Paul to present the truth as it is in Jesus, leaving on record truth important for all time. And so opposition against light and truth called from Christ a clearer definition of the truth. Every time that error is advanced, it will work for good to those who sincerely love God; for when the truth is shadowed by error, those whom the Lord has made His sentinels will make the truth sharper and clearer. They will search the Scriptures for evidence of their faith. The advancement of error is the call for God’s servants to arouse, and place the truth in bold relief.

So I want to study with you why God allows erroneous theories to come to His church either from without or from within, for the Scriptures state clearly that both happen. Paul said, "Grievous wolves" shall "enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:29, 30).

Why does God allow His church to be rent and torn with schisms, factions, contentions, discussions over this and that point? Why is the unity of the church threatened at times by these things? We can see already from the texts we have read that God must have a purpose, or He wouldn’t allow them.

Let us look at three great purposes accomplished through the ministry of heresies, three objectives that God has in mind in allowing erroneous theories of various kinds to find their way to you and me. God could stop them. Why does He let them come? As we study the ministry of heresies, we shall find at least three answers.

The first is to sift out the false-hearted.

"Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us" (1 John 2:18, 19). The falsehearted went out. Why? It might be made manifest. That is, clearly revealed, they were not of us.

Notice this wonderful statement on heresies by the servant of the Lord in Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 707: "God will arouse His people, if other means fail, heresies will come in among them, which will sift them, separating the chaff from the wheat."

What do heresies do? They sift the church! What happens to the chaff? It is separated from the wheat! Never forget, as the winds blow, whether they be the winds of heresy or the winds of persecution, it’s the chaff that goes out; the wheat remains.

When I was visiting in Florida, a friend took me to a packing shed where oranges were being sorted according to size. The oranges were on a chute. As they passed over a certain place there were little holes, and the tiniest oranges dropped through them. Presently, as the oranges went along, there were holes a little larger, and the littlelarger oranges fell through them, and so on. Just because we may not fooled by one heresy, we must be careful not to pat ourselves on the back. In my imagination, I have looked at those oranges going along, and I heard a medium-sized orange say, "Well, we are not going to fall through; we’ve already been through that test and this one and we didn’t fall through. We are going to go right on to the end." However, they hadn’t gone the whole length of the sieve yet.

Some of the heresies the devil brings into the church are so crude and bungling that I am amazed they fool anybody. The devil is not finished with the work of placing heresies among God’s people, and God is not finished allowing him to do it. Some far more subtle, more seductive, more difficult to discern and detect than we have yet seen are doubtless on the planning boards of the devil’s corporation. He is
studying our minds and characters, and if there is anything falsehearted, there he will design something that will sift out the chaff. Our only safeguard is to be sure we are anchored in Jesus and His truth, and that we love God and His church more than we love ourselves and our own opinions.

There is a second purpose of the ministry of heresies. I trust that God will use this to bless some heart who may feel secure, who may, indeed, be secure as far as theology is concerned. We get it from the story of Jehu, one of the kings of Israel.

Let us get a picture of Jehu from the sacred record. "The driving is like the driving of Jehu, the son of Nimshi; for he driveth furiously" (2 Kings 9:20). Jehu was a driver, and he has descendents today. He was furious against the apostasy and heresy of Ahab and rightly so, but there was something that he lacked. He lacked love.

Jehu was full of zeal. Watch him in action. "When he was departed thence, he lighted on Jehonadab the son of Rechab coming to meet him: and he saluted him, and said to him, Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart? And Jehonadab answered, It is. If it be, give me thine hand. And he gave him his hand; and he took him up to him into the chariot. And he said, Come with me, and see my zeal for the Lord. So they made him ride in his chariot. And when He came to Samaria, he slew all that remained unto Ahab in Samaria, till he had destroyed him, according to the saying of the Lord, which he spake to Elijah" (2 Kings 10:15-17, emphasis supplied).

Jehu was doing God's work but not in God's way. Yet, God used him. Baal worship needed to be rooted out, and Jehu did it, but I am afraid we won't see Jehu in heaven.

I am calling attention to this because I read something in the book Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, p. 333: "All who are longing for some engagement that will represent Jehu riding furiously will have opportunity enough to distinguish themselves."

So Jehu's chariot still rides, and like Jehu of old, some today will stop the chariot just long enough to say, "Is your heart right as my heart is? If it is, get in and ride with me; we're going to go places and destroy Baal worship in Israel. Let me show you my zeal for the Lord."

Notice this inspired comment, an Ellen G. White statement in The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 2, p. 1038:

Men are slow to learn the lesson that the spirit manifested by Jehu will never bind hearts together. It is not safe for us to bind our interests with a Jehu religion, for this will result in bringing sadness of heart on God's true worshipers. God has not given any of His servants the work of punishing those who will not heed His warnings and reproves. When the Holy Spirit is abiding in the heart, it will lead the human agent to see his own defects of character, to pity the weakness of others, to forgive as he wishes to be forgiven.

Part of the ministry of heresies is to give an opportunity for Jehus to manifest themselves. However, because some in the church militantly defend the faith, get out their swords, and ride the chariot zealously, is no evidence that they will be with God's people at the finish.

Note the warning in Testimonies for the Church, vol. 6, p. 400: "As trials thicken around us, both separation and unity will be seen in our ranks. Some who are now ready to take up weapons of warfare will in times of real peril make it manifest that they have not built upon the solid rock; they will yield to temptation. Those who have had great light and precious privileges, but have not improved them will, under one pretext or another, go out from us."

There is more than one way to go out. We can get out the way Ahab got out, or we can get out the way Jehu got out. God keep us from either path of peril. But, remember, God was using them all.

Finally, there is a third ministry of heresies. Oh, I wish every one of us might be among those for whom it accomplishes this third purpose, that is, to lead us to study the Word of God. Concerning those in Berea, the Scriptures say, "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily whether those things were so" (Acts
17:11).

In *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 707, we are told, "There are many in the church who take it for granted that they understand what they believe; but, until controversy arises, they do not know their own weakness.

"The fact that there is no controversy or agitation among God’s professed people should not be regarded as conclusive evidence that they are holding fast to sound doctrine. There is reason to fear that they may not be clearly discriminating between truth and error. When no new questions are started by investigation of the Scriptures, when no difference of opinion arises which will set men to searching the Bible for themselves to make sure that they have the truth, there will be many now, as in ancient times, who will hold to tradition and worship they know not what."

So one of the reasons that God allows erroneous theories of various kinds to come in is to lead us to go to the Word of God and to study for ourselves what God has said. If heresies accomplish that, has not some good been accomplished?

We need more than a superficial knowledge of the Bible. Satan is adept at quoting Scripture. In the wilderness his first temptation was met by Jesus from the Word. Satan said, "I can do that too." So in the second temptation, he quoted from the Scriptures. Merely, because a man quotes Scripture, does not mean he teaches truth. Just because he gets out leaflets and photocopied material liberally sprinkled with quotations from the Spirit of Prophecy, does not prove that he is an angel of light.

This may be the most important thing: what we need to study most of all are the original sources—the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. Notice this statement in *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 298:

Perilous times are before us. . . . The enemy is on our track. We must be wide awake, on our guard against him. . . . We must follow the directions given through the spirit of prophecy. We must love and obey the truth for this time. This will save us from accepting strong delusions. God has spoken to us through His Word. He has spoken to us through the testimonies to the church and through the books that have helped to make plain our present duty and the position that we should now occupy. . . . I beseech those who are laboring for God not to accept the spurious for the genuine. Let not human reason be placed where divine, sanctifying truth should be. . . . Let not erroneous theories receive countenance from the people who ought to be standing firm on the platform of eternal truth.

Throughout the history of this movement, there have been good men, educated men, experienced men who have lost their way and fallen on the dark mountains of unbelief. The enemy succeeded in leading them away from the truth even while they thought they were pursuing truth with all their heart.

We need God. We need the help of our brethren. We need the Holy Spirit. We need to dig deep into the written Word and the inspired commentary of the Spirit of Prophecy. In *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 273, is this statement: "Our people need to understand the oracles of God; they need to have a systematic knowledge of the principles of revealed truth, which will fit them for what is coming upon the earth and prevent them from being carried about by every wind of doctrine."

God allows these false teachings and heresies to get us to study the original sources and to acquire a systematic knowledge of the principles of truth. We need to see how the different principles fit together, to weave a tapestry of truth into our minds, to build a solid temple of truth, to wear every piece of the heavenly armor. We need all of these elements to wage the battle in which we are now engaged.

Several years ago, the United States government conducted a school in various parts of the country to teach bank cashiers and others how to detect counterfeit money. The instruction lasted for fourteen weeks. How many pieces of counterfeit money did they examine? Not one! The government instructor knew that what they needed was a thorough knowledge of the genuine. Then they could detect the counterfeit.

If we are going to be saved from the many erroneous theories floating around, we need to study the original sources and fill our minds with the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. We will never find our safety...
in going into the false theories and studying them over and over. The better we know the genuine, the more surely will we detect the counterfeit when we meet it.

May God solemnize our hearts. May we not be wise in our own conceits and so sure of our own opinions or those of others that we fail to get on our knees as little children and say, "Dear Lord, there is much I don’t know. I want to know you and your way. Oh, keep me from the delusions of the enemy.” We shall need to pray that prayer again and again. We shall need to intercede with God, for we are entering into the time foretold in Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 80: “Every wind of doctrine will be blowing.”

If we would not have the Scriptures clouded to our understanding, so that the plainest truths shall not be comprehended, we must have the simplicity and faith of a little child, ready to learn, and beseeching the aid of the Holy Spirit. (Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 703)

The original audio version of this sermon, from which this article has been transcribed and edited, is available, along with many other sermons, for free download: www.wdfrazeesermons.com.
The Emerging Church: More than Just a Face Lift

Karl Tsatalbasidis

Difficult to Define

The emerging church—what is it? Frankly, it is difficult to define; yet, we hope that by the end of this article, readers will be aware of the direct relationship that exists between philosophy and theology and the way we do church. "Doing church" usually includes worship, mission, evangelism, spirituality, and church administration. The emerging church has been described as a Christian movement that includes traditions of a wide range of churches. It began in the late twentieth century and is rapidly expanding. Its adherents can be found in many parts of the world, especially in Europe, North America, Australia, and New Zealand. The movement itself is comprised mostly of evangelical Christians struggling to find ways to communicate the gospel in this postmodern age.

The thought leaders within the movement believe that the worship forms of many churches are wed to the modern culture from which they arose. To them, this is problematic because "modern" is now old-fashioned; it has given way to postmodernism. Since faith is grounded in culture, the church should recognize that it no longer speaks a language that postmoderns understand; it should, therefore, change its worship forms, mission, evangelism, etc., in such a way that the gospel makes sense to this postmodern generation.

Eddy Gibbs and Ryan K. Bolger, two popular postmodern writers, have said, "Emerging churches remove modern practices of Christianity, not the faith itself. Western Christianity has wed itself to a culture, the modern culture, which is now in decline. Many of us do not know what a postmodern or post-Christendom expression of faith looks like. Perhaps nobody does. But we need to give these leaders space to have this conversation, for this dismantling needs to occur if we are to see the gospel translated for and embodied in twenty-first-century Western culture." Clearly, this line of reasoning assumes that worship forms, evangelistic strategies, spirituality, and church structure are entirely culturally conditioned, which is something the Bible denies.

The style of worship in emerging churches is sometimes referred to as alternative worship. "Before the name 'alt worship' appeared, early experiments were dubbed 'rave worship' because they were borrowing directly from the culture of dance music in the late 1980s and early 1990s." In addition to the musical style, emerging churches also use the cross, incense, paintings, slides, drawings, and candles as visual expressions. They may show videos, a TV clip, or occasionally an art installation or exhibit functions as the entire "service." They also may display icons that resonate with both ancient and modern cultures. Thus, their worship services integrate the mystical aspects of both Orthodox and Roman Catholic liturgies.

Because similarities in worship style with seeker services and other megachurches include varying forms of rock music, some may be tempted to think that the emerging church is nothing more than another innovative way to attract youth and other unchurched Harrys and Marys. Bolger and Gibbs explain:
We were also concerned to dispel the myths that the emerging church is simply a passing fad representing an avant-garde style of worship, a movement seeking to recoup its losses among young people by developing contemporary worship styles, or a new and improved marketing strategy. Neither do we believe emerging churches to be halfway houses of a parent church, established to provide a holding tank for younger members until they emerge from their adolescent years of "worldly ways. Identifying the emerging church with youth church is to miss the point. 

So then what is the point? What is the emerging church all about? First and foremost, the emerging church is a system of intellectual philosophy grounded in postmodernism. The emerging church is not just a face-lift, or, to use another analogy, it is not the wrapping paper that covers a gift without changing the nature of the gift; the gift is the same when covered with a different wrapping paper. This is not true with the emerging church. We are seeing a change of epic proportions, which has occurred at the foundational level of theology and philosophy; the results affect the entire structure of Christian doctrines and practices. Part of the emerging church’s quest is to express its understanding of Christianity within the context of this philosophy, which is why emerging-church thought leaders state that a study of culture is absolutely indispensable if one is to communicate the gospel today.

In order to better understand the relationship between the emerging church, Adventism, and other churches, it is important to explore the theological foundation. When we’ve done that, we will see why it would be easier to merge tectonic plates than to adopt the worship forms, mission, and evangelistic strategies of emerging churches into the Adventist church.

The Theological Ground

The books of Daniel and Revelation inform us that the devil’s chief target is the heavenly sanctuary because he knows that the sanctuary comprises the overall theological system that provides the very foundation of our understanding of the plan of salvation, worship forms, mission and spirituality. In Revelation 11:19, John recorded this amazing scene: "The temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail." Also, in Revelation 4 and 5, both the Father and the Son are being praised in the heavenly sanctuary for their work of creation and redemption.

- Classical Era
The Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle developed a system of philosophy that the Christian church has been unable to escape for more than 2,000 years. They theorized that ultimate reality is timeless, which means that it is devoid of space and time; it is also both immaterial and nonhistorical. They described this kind of reality as perfect, immutable, and eternal. Both Augustine and Thomas Aquinas developed this idea into the grand system upon which Roman Catholicism is based.

According to Roman Catholicism, the Bible contains timeless truths that are wrapped in historical clothing, thus while times and circumstances may change, the timeless truths never do. An application of this has been made regarding creation. According to the Catholic system, the timeless truth in Genesis 1 and 2 is that God created, but the seven days of the creation comprise the historical wrapping in which the Bible writer expressed this timeless truth about creation. Hence, the seven days, which include the Sabbath, that Genesis 1 and 2 record are relegated to the mere cultural understanding of the Bible writer and have nothing to do theologically with creation. This explains why there can be theological compatibility between Roman Catholicism and evolutionary theory.

This line of reasoning also applies to the wonderful scenes that John described in the book of Revelation that was discussed earlier. Since ultimate reality is timeless, there can be no real sanctuary in heaven where Christ actually moves from the holy to the most holy place. These are “obviously” symbolic representations of heavenly worship that John ascertained from his own cultural understanding of worship. Thus, the forms of worship that are presented in the Bible are culturally conditioned, meaning they are not grounded in theology, which is understood as being built upon timeless conceptions of reality, rather they belong to the ever-changing realm of culture. Therefore, if the forms of worship in the Bible are culturally conditioned, what would be wrong with worshiping God through the cultural forms that exist today? This argument is based upon a false foundation and assumes that the Bible does not provide us with a model that...
demonstrates the causal relationship between theology and liturgy.

This era has been described as the era of classical theology, which reigned from the second to about the thirteenth century. Worship within this era can be described as the integration of paganism and Christianity. In a recent trip to the Vatican, I could not fail to observe this integration within the churches, basilicas, and cathedrals as well as in the vast and costly displays of art. With the Word of God literally taken away from the people, art—along with ritual and ceremony—became the conveyor of “truth.” It was interesting to me to notice that, of all the artwork I saw at the Vatican, there was not one painting of Jesus serving as our great High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary. Of course, there couldn’t be any such painting; it’s incompatible with the philosophical system upon which Catholicism is built.

- **The Modern Era**
  As the classical era gave way to the modern era, the system that Plato and Aristotle developed was still assumed, only now human reason could not reach timeless truths. In the classical age, philosophy and theology were married, but in the modern era, philosophy gained its independence from theology by building on the authority of human reason. Absolute truth still existed in the modern era, but the only way to get there was through reason.

  The modern era placed an unbridgeable gulf between all that exists in the timeless realm and creation. This means that the whole Bible was simply the opinion of the authors and did not contain any cognitive data from God at all; it was merely the author’s understanding of God based on his own cultural background. This brought about a separation between faith and reason, and between theology and science, which has impacted us to this present day. The modern era also set up the separation of sacred and secular.

  With its emphasis on reason, logic, the attainment of absolute truth, and the invention of the printing press, some emerging church thought leaders erroneously suggested that the Reformation grew out of this change in culture that took place during the modern era.

  Furthermore, they stated that the Reformation emphasis on the preaching of the Word as the central part of worship, and the removal of idols and images, was based on this cultural shift. By doing this, emerging-church thought leaders sought to engulf the Reformation within the Platonic system of ultimate reality by stating that the Reformation emphasis on the Word grew out of culture instead of the Bible. They stated that “Protestant church forms were created by a literary age that no longer exists.” Thus, all forms of Protestant worship are completely culturally conditioned, and the criticism of emerging churches is that evangelical churches are continuing to use forms of worship that are wedded to the modern print era and no longer apply in the media image culture of today.

- **The Postmodern Era**
  At last, the philosophical system that Plato and Aristotle erected is gone. Now, no such thing as timeless reality exists. Ultimate reality is now considered to be historical. Gone also is the notion of absolute truth that was built upon the Platonic structure. Absolute truth has been replaced by pluralism, relativism, and interpretation. Instead of an emphasis on reason and logic, the emphasis now is on experience, intuition, and feelings.

  The postmodern era can also be characterized by the tearing down of the division between sacred and secular. The God who transcends the universe and is separate from it no longer exists; instead, God is interpreted from within creation as in pantheism (God and the universe are indistinguishable) or panentheism (the universe is in God, yet God is greater than the universe).

  One of the major implications of this shift in the postmodern era is that there is very little difference between God and creation, which effectually breaks down the barriers of sacred and secular which the modern era had erected. As a matter of fact, one of the chief objectives of the emerging church is to tear down this division between sacred and secular because the shifting of the philosophical ground from modern to postmodern indicates that all of human life and
experience is sacred.

Sacralization, the process of making all of life sacred, represents the interaction of kingdom and culture. Emerging churches tear down the church practices that foster a secular mind-set, namely, that there are secular spaces, times, or activities. To emerging churches, all of life must be made sacred. . . . Sacralization in emerging churches is about one thing: the destruction of the sacred/secular split of modernity. The modern period was characterized by the birth of the idea of secular space, that is, the idea of a realm without God. . . . Thus, in the modern period, many dualisms were introduced to church life that had not been problematic before: the natural versus the supernatural; public facts versus private values; the body versus the mind and spirit; faith versus reason; power versus love; and the list goes on. These capitulations to the dualisms of modernity affected every level of the church, including worship, Bible study, power structures, and mission. Postmodern culture questions the legitimacy of these dualisms. Correspondingly, every one of these modern divisions is greatly opposed by emerging churches.7

This tearing down of the division of sacred and secular helps us to understand the philosophical differences between emerging churches and purpose-driven, seeker-sensitive churches.

The new paradigm, purpose-driven, seeker, and Gen-X churches are not postmodern in this sense. These movements venerate the large gathering and the heart as the primary spiritual domains. They do not challenge the many dualisms of modernity but rather continue the divisions between natural and supernatural, individual and community, mind and body, public and private, belief and action, and they leave controlling power structures in place. In these movements, religion and spiritual practices are activities one does apart from the culture, and spirituality is still very much at the margins.... For emerging churches, there are no longer any bad places, bad people, or bad times. All can be holy. All can be given to God in worship. All modern dualisms can be overcome.8

Implications

1. The foundational role of the heavenly sanctuary is undermined.

When John Harvey Kellogg's book The Living Temple was released, Ellen White recognized immediately that the principles espoused in it were a direct attack on the reality of the heavenly sanctuary via Kellogg's pantheistic beliefs regarding the nature of God. She claimed that if these theories were accepted into our church, it would be the death of Adventism. She wrote, "The subject of the sanctuary was the key which unlocked the mystery of the disappointment of 1844. It opened to view a complete system of truth, connected and harmonious."9

The heavenly sanctuary is the great system that helps us to understand the nature of God, ultimate reality, the plan of salvation, worship, evangelism, and the entire range of doctrines. Yet, in all three eras, the foundational role of the sanctuary was replaced. As a result, our understanding of God, ultimate reality, the plan of salvation, the forms of worship, evangelism, and spirituality has been derived from culture instead of from the Bible.

In the Bible, the sanctuary integrates theology with liturgy. In other words, the worship forms that are employed in the sanctuary service express our understanding of God and the plan of salvation. In 2 Chronicles 29:25, the Bible states that it was God who commanded and ordered the worship forms through His prophets. The liturgical forms came as a result of God's revelation and not from the prophet's cultural understanding of worship.

We must keep in mind that the emerging church is more than just a face-lift because it is inextricably linked with postmodern philosophy. If their worship forms are adopted into the church, the significance of the heavenly sanctuary and its role in the plan of salvation will be completely discarded, with the result that many will be without an anchor to steady them through the troublesome times ahead.

Since liturgy always assumes an underlying philosophy, the adoption of emerging church forms within Adventism would cause an earthquake at the foundational level, which would then be felt...
throughout our doctrines and practices. At the philosophical and theological levels, the doctrine of the heavenly sanctuary cannot coexist with postmodern philosophy; for that matter, it has never coexisted either with the classical era or the modern era.

It's interesting to note the theological compatibility between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism regarding the worship forms of the emerging church. The adoption of emerging church worship forms into these belief systems does not alter their theological foundations because their philosophical system teaches that worship forms are culturally conditioned, which means that they have nothing to do with theology. In Adventism, worship forms are not culturally conditioned; the idea that they are can seriously undermine our theological foundations, which are centered in the heavenly sanctuary.

Furthermore, when the foundational role of the sanctuary is set aside the result is that the preaching of the Word is set aside, replaced by the celebration of the Eucharist and a more visual, sensual style of worship akin to Roman Catholicism. "In emerging churches, the symbolic aspects of worship are central. As a result, there is an appreciation of the Eucharist as the central act of worship." Also, "the experience of many alt worshipers was like that of people suddenly discovering a birthright, a heritage which had been hidden from them. The riches of Catholic liturgical tradition were suddenly spread out before them, overflowing out of the old treasure chest: texts, chants, rituals, use of color, and gesture. The impact of these discoveries was to generate new respect for Catholic tradition."11

2. Everything is now considered sacred.

Instead of profaning the church, secular music becomes holy, and therefore the rest of their lives becomes holy as well. For alternative worshipers . . . music is Christian when they glorify god with it, not because of the lyrics or because a Christian wrote it or played it. All things can be made holy as they are given to God, whether "secular" or not.12

Postmodern philosophy blends God and culture in such a way that they are hardly distinguishable, which makes it impossible to say that certain forms of worship are false. Thus, when the foundational role of the sanctuary is discarded, the result is a reinterpretation of the second angel's message to refrain from the false worship of Babylon by coming out of her (Revelation 14:8; 18:1-4). Yet, in the postmodern system, there can be no such thing as false worship since truth is culturally conditioned. Furthermore, why would anyone want to come out of Babylon when God is operating there? However, in spite of what the emerging church claims, the Bible teaches that there is a difference between the sacred and the common (Leviticus 10:8-10; Ezekiel 22:26). It also teaches that we should not confuse evil with good by stating that everything is holy (Isaiah 5:20).

3. The Sola Scriptura principle is discarded.

It should be very clear by now that the building blocks of theology for the emerging church are not the Scriptures; instead, it's an eclectic use of tradition, culture, and experience mixed with a little Scripture.

Adventism Has Not Been Immune

"Reinventing the Adventist wheel" is the title of a Seventhday Adventist blog site. The subtitle is "Progressive Seventh-day Adventists exploring missional and incarnational expressions of church life in a post-Christian context." What follows is a reinterpretation of our pillars and teachings within the emerging church postmodern framework. Read a few quotes:

- Worship
  "I believe worship should be deep and meaningful expressions of faith within our own cultural settings and context. I believe we should reconsider the worship forms we have inherited from our upbringing, and rediscover ancient and alternative Christian worship traditions."

- Regarding customs, behavior, and lifestyle
  "My lifestyle is perceived as 'liberal' by Adventist cultural standards for reasons such as music and worship style, dress, habits related to food and/or drink or lifestyle choices related to entertainment. However, I prefer to label myself as a 'Jesus follower' because I am a disciple."
“My Adventism doesn’t draw boundaries that determine who or what is in or out of God’s kingdom. It allows for God’s presence in any area of life or culture as I see it.”

- **Regarding doctrines and fundamental messages**
  “I believe we are a ‘part of’ a larger Remnant (Fundamental #13) along with other ‘true churches’ preaching the Gospel. Stressing ‘a part of’ to the official statement would unravel decades of denominational exclusivity and arrogance.” We should observe here that Seventh-day Adventists have always taught that there are true Christians in every denomination; the blog statement can only be understood in the light of the emerging church’s postmodern framework, in which calling one’s church the Remnant makes no sense.

  “I believe that a doctrine of perfection found in the historical Sanctuary message of the investigative judgment (Fundamental #24) is not consistent with the finished work of Jesus’ death on the cross. In updating the meaning, ‘Judgment’ should instead emphasize working to model divine justice on earth.”

- **Evangelism**
  “I do not believe evangelism should be done strictly through large organized events that only further institutional cause to promote Adventism. I regard Adventism as one option among many other options for witnessing to unbelievers about the Gospel.”

These statements make it abundantly clear that worship forms are seen to be culturally conditioned. Also, music, worship, dress, food (clean and unclean?), and entertainment have nothing to do with being a follower of Jesus because these things are all culturally determined and, thus, have nothing to do with genuine spirituality or salvation. They may be defended on cultural grounds but certainly not on theological grounds. In addition, there is nothing theologically unique about Adventism because it’s simply one option among many in this postmodern setting, and when we take this line of reasoning to its logical conclusion, then there’s no reason for Adventists to preach the three angels’ messages to draw God’s people out of Babylon.

The emerging church phenomenon helps us to realize that all of this experimentation with worship styles, spirituality, and evangelism is not something cosmetic. That is the line that we have been fed ever since “worship renewal” was introduced into the Seventh-day Adventist Church. What we are realizing is that the emerging church is an intellectual movement built upon postmodern philosophies and should not be confused with purpose-driven, seeker-sensitive megachurches that still assume a modern framework.

One must see the emerging church as something more than alternative worship styles within the background of mainline evangelical churches. It’s more than a cosmetic change, it’s more than just a face lift: it’s recognition that the message, mission, and worship of the church is inextricably linked to deeper philosophical issues. No attempt can be made to completely understand the emerging church without first coming to grips with modernism and postmodernism.

I close with this paragraph from Ellen White. Written during the time of the Kellogg controversy, it fits well within this setting of the emerging church.

The enemy of souls has sought to bring in the supposition that a great reformation was to take place among Seventhday Adventists, and that this reformation would consist in giving up the doctrines which stand as the pillars of our faith, and engaging in a process of reorganization. Were this reformation to take place, what would result? The principles of truth that God in His wisdom has given to the remnant church would be discarded. Our religion would be changed. The fundamental principles that have sustained the work for the last fifty years would be accounted as error. A new organization would be established. Books of a new order would be written. A system of intellectual philosophy would be introduced. The founders of this system would go into the cities, and do a wonderful work. The Sabbath of course, would be lightly regarded, as also the God who created it. Nothing would be allowed to stand in the way of the new movement. The leaders would teach that virtue is better than vice, but God being removed, they would place their dependence on human power, which, without God, is worthless. Their foundation would be built on the sand, and storm and tempest would sweep away the structure.14
NOTES

3 Gibbs and Bolger, 28.
6 Gibbs and Bolger, 71.
7 Ibid., 66-67.
8 Ibid., 67.
10 Gibbs and Bolger, 228.
12 Gibbs and Bolger, 71.
13 http://reinventingsdawheel.blogspot.com/2006/04/qualifying-this-blog-for-adventists.html. The last update, as of this writing, was March 6, 2008.

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"What will you do when fire falls from heaven upon the wrong altar?"

Thinking back on that exchange, I am considering the challenge cast by postmodern ministers seeking to influence church growth with their focus on the "emerging church." This emphasis is upon meeting the secular, unchurched, postmodern mind in creative, authentic, relational ways that promote self-esteem rather than the stodgy approach upon which evangelicals and fundamentalists have relied for decades. I have discerned a chronic digression that some tout as progress in the right direction. I see less accountability, less discipline, and a lowered standard that in actuality is more problematic to church growth than proponents of the emerging church like to admit. Even as they criticize the apparent stagnation faced by evangelicals and fundamentalist Christians who seem unable to reach these unchurched, I have to ask the question, "Will the real church please emerge?"

Actually, the challenge is not so much in asking the real church to emerge as it is in recognizing how the real church has emerged in times past. How has it revealed its true identity, approved with the signature of God? The dilemma is then in acknowledging the truth when that identity is established (hence, the connection to Pastor Miller’s query).

The identification process will be useless if we cannot agree upon the fundamentals of the process. Those who wish to adhere to their positions, regardless of contrary evidence, will remain unstable in their attempts to minister to the postmodern sophisticate. The only other option is to adhere to the tried-and-true tests of the law and the testimony. Culture may shift, and the mind may change, but God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He is omniscient; His purposes remain changeless. "God being infinite in wisdom and goodness, his purposes and decrees are immutable." So it is important for us to acknowledge that any adaptation occurring on His part has nothing to do with the instability of culture or human thinking but is directly linked to His changeless purposes.

From the time God first sought out the trembling, camouflaged couple, the manner of reconciling the unregenerate heart has remained the same: reproving of sin, of judgment, and of righteousness. In every example given in the Scriptures, we can see that "God does not send messengers to flatter the sinner. He delivers no message of peace to lull the unsanctified into fatal security. He lays heavy
burdens upon the conscience of the wrongdoer, and pierces the soul with arrows of conviction. The ministering angels present to him the fearful judgments of God to deepen the sense of need, and prompt the cry, 'What must I do to be saved?' Then the hand that has humbled in the dust, lifts up the penitent. The voice that has rebuked sin, and put to shame pride and ambition, inquires with tenderest sympathy, 'What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?' We should not seek to improve upon the success of Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Elijah, Daniel, John the Baptist, Peter, Paul, and a host of others, in reaching those who came within their sphere of influence so much as to obtain the purity of character that has the approval of God.

So then, how can we abandon the very method appointed by God for reaching the postmodern mind? Would we not be unfaithful servants if we choose methods that are contrary to the very message we are called to proclaim? We cannot help but conclude that the work of the so-called emerging church is contrary to the work of the three angels' messages. We must persevere with the basic understanding that “there are limits to the forbearance of God; there is a point at which it becomes necessary to interpose his vengeance, and visibly to rebuke the impiety of men. It is no less apparent that those who love and obey God's law will realize that he means what he says, and that all his precious promises to the faithful and obedient will be fulfilled to the letter.”

This is not to mean that we are to be tactless, or without kindness, in our dealings with the postmodern sophisticate. Even in His dealings with His half-brothers, Jesus did not verbally rebuke their misdeeds. But His life of purity and integrity was a "continual irritation" to them. Is the postmodern sophisticate any different from Christ's brethren? Even though the religion of God is unattractive to the world, what business do we have to modify it in any way to make it more pleasing to the carnally minded?

If the worship service is altered to meet the standard of the world, it will be a service without the approval of God. Therefore, it will be devoid of His presence. When extending the invitation to church, we must make it clear to all who attend that we are not the focus of the service. The focus is upon God. The glory is to be His alone.

Our meetings should be made intensely interesting. They should be pervaded with the very atmosphere of heaven. Let there be no long, dry speeches and formal prayers merely for the sake of occupying the time. All should be ready to act their part with promptness, and when their duty is done, the meeting should be closed. Thus the interest will be kept up to the last. This is offering to God acceptable worship. His service should be made interesting and attractive and not be allowed to degenerate into a dry form. We must live for Christ minute by minute, hour by hour, and day by day; then Christ will dwell in us, and when we meet together, His love will be in our hearts, welling up like a spring in the desert, refreshing all, and making those who are ready to perish, eager to drink of the waters of life.

The purpose is not to be focused on entertaining the listeners but on instructing them how we may better serve God and our fellow man as we prepare to live in God's presence.

The object of every sermon should be consistent with the goal of preparing lives for heaven. It should be informative and instructive with the right balance of indicative and imperative, what is and what ought to be. It should remind us that "God's Word and His works contain the knowledge of Himself that He has seen fit to reveal to us. We may understand the revelation that He has thus given of Himself. But it is with fear and trembling and with a sense of our own sinfulness that we are to take up this study, not with a desire to try to explain God, but with a desire to gain that knowledge which will enable us to serve Him more acceptably. Let no one venture to explain God. Human beings cannot explain themselves, and how, then, dare they venture to explain the Omniscient One?" After all, the human heart is deceitful above all things. When a sermon is firmly based on Scripture, instead of being based on some story, it will provide opportunities for instruction in doctrine as well as reproof and correction. Yet, far too often the postmodern minister will spend the majority of his time in the pulpit developing a sermon that is shaped more like a locker-room-motivational-positive-thinking-pep talk geared to building the self-esteem and self-image of the listener. As an ambassador for Christ, no minister should enter the pulpit to preach a word to the people without first obtaining the assurance that God's seal of approval rests upon it!
The music of worship is not to appeal to the carnal or sensual mind, but rather music should turn the mind from selfishness and idolatry to the holiness of God. "Music was made to serve a holy purpose, to lift the thoughts to that which is pure, noble, and elevating, and to awaken in the soul devotion and gratitude to God. What a contrast between the ancient custom and the uses to which music is now too often devoted! How many employ this gift to exalt self, instead of using it to glorify God! A love for music leads the unwaried to unite with world-lovers in pleasure-gatherings where God has forbidden His children to go. Thus that which is a great blessing when rightly used, becomes one of the most successful agencies by which Satan allures the mind from duty and from the contemplation of eternal things."

When it comes to church growth, there can be no success apart from the acknowledgment that from "the beginning it was Satan's purpose to separate man from God. And this purpose he has carried out in every age. Constantly he is at work among the children of men. He sways all classes. The same method of deception, the same logic, that he used to deceive the holy pair in Eden, he has used in all succeeding ages. His plan of work has ever been one of deception. At times he assumes a cloak of piety, purity, and holiness. Often he transforms himself into an angel of light. He has blinded the eyes of men so that they can not see beneath the surface and discern his real purpose. As a result of Adam's disobedience, every human being is a transgressor of the law, sold under sin. Unless he repents and is converted, he is under bondage to the law, serving Satan, falling into the deceptions of the enemy, and bearing witness against the precepts of Jehovah. But by perfect obedience to the requirements of the law, man is justified. Only through faith in Christ is such obedience possible. Men may comprehend the spirituality of the law, they may realize its power as a detector of sin, but they are helpless to withstand Satan's power and deceptions, unless they accept the atonement provided for them in the remedial sacrifice of Christ, who is our Atonement—our At-onement— with God."

True success can only come to those who faithfully adhere to the methods God approves, with the understanding that the sheep in other folds will recognize the voice of their Master. Failure will certainly attend those who manage to distort that voice through the improvisations of their own devisings. As we see a faithful adherence to the methods God approves, then we will see the real church emerge, without spot, wrinkle, or blemish. The real church will emerge victorious.

NOTES

1 Wayne Miller currently pastors the Galesburg Park View Seventh-day Adventist Church, located in Galesburg, Illinois.
2 Isaiah 8:20.
3 Signs of the Times, December 9, 1880.
4 John 16:8.
6 Signs of the Times, December 9, 1880.
7 The Desire of Ages, 88, 89.
9 Ellen G. White, The Upward Look (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1982), 326.
10 Jeremiah 17:9.
11 Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1890), 594.
12 Signs of the Times, July 23, 1902.
13 John 10:3, 4, 16, 27.