

John Jovan Markovic, Ph.D.
Professor of Modern European and Church History
Department of History & Political Science
Andrews University

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THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS AT THE CROSSROADS:
THE NATURE OF THE THREE OPTIONS TO CHOOSE FROM

Introduction

“The seismic events that have happened in the aftermath of the postmodern earthquake have generated tidal waves that have created a whole new world out there. In your lifetime and mine, a tidal wave has hit,” writes Leonard Sweet, well-known among the Seventh-day Adventists. Notice the powerful metaphors Sweet uses—seismic events, earthquake, tidal waves,—each a natural event over which humans have no control. His metaphors suggest a time when there is no more a solid ground under our feet.

Brian McLaren, probably the foremost advocate of the idea that in the last several decades everything has changed, and thus everything in Christianity must change as well, beats the same drum.¹ Speaking to us through his fictional character Neo, McLaren observes that as the medieval worldview and medieval Christianity met their doom, so had, or will, modern worldview and the modern versions of Christianity meet its own doom. “You may disagree with me,” “but I believe that the modern version of Christianity that you have learned from your parents, your Sunday school teachers,”—“and even your campus ministries is destined to be a

¹ See his highly suggestive and thought-shaping work *Everything Must Change. Jesus, Global Crises, and a Revolution of Hope* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007).

medieval cathedral. It's over, or almost over.”²

Leonard Sweet and Brian McLaren are not the only voices on the subject. There is hardly anyone who will disagree with the claim that humanity and the material world in which humans exist is undergoing monumental changes in all realms of life: in economies, in politics, in science and technologies, in environment, and, for this paper of main interest, in the prevailing understanding and knowledge about Reality. It is the objective of this paper to explicate on this transition, that is, the worldview shift the Seventh-day Adventists are facing.

The Emerging/Emergent Church and Emergence Christianity

Much has been written on the Emerging/Emergent Church, and I assume the readers here are familiar with it. The Emerging Church appeared on the public scene around the turn of the twenty-first century. According to Tony Jones, a group of young pastors concerned with the large exodus of young people from institutional churches, on June 21, 2001, over a phone conference, were pondering on how to call themselves. In the years prior they operated under various names, this time they chose to call themselves the “emergent.”³

Jones informs us that the 2001 group did not invent the name which they decided to be known by. Others have called them “emergent” before 2001, which by itself indicates that the idea of the “emergent church” existed before. Research led me to discover that the earliest book titled “The Emerging Church” was published in 1968 in two parts, both volumes with Nihil Obstat and Imprimatur.⁴ Several other books by the same title followed in the decades to come.⁵

² McLaren, 38.

³ Tony Jones, *The New Christians. Dispatches from the Emergent Frontier* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008), xvii.

⁴ Ronald J. Wilkins, *The Emerging Church*, Part One, with the special assistance of Dr. Raymond Schmandt (Dubuque, Iowa: Wm.C. Brown Co., Publishers, 1968); and William J. Kalt

The 1968 publication by Ronald J. Wilkins identifies the Catholic church, and by extension the Christian Church in its entirety, as the Emerging Church coming out of the Second Vatican Council. The work also reveals three major points: first, the idea of the Emerging church goes back to the very first interpretation of the purpose, intent and nature of the Second Vatican Council. Second, the primary meaning of both “emerging” and “emergent” are synonyms to “evolving” and “going through an evolutionary process” rather than the conventional—and assumed by the public—understanding as “coming onto the scene” or “appearing.” Third, the idea of Christianity and the Church as a whole going through an evolutionary process, like supposedly nature and life do, is directly attributed to the work of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, a well-known paleontologist, a Jesuit theologian and a mystic. Wilkins’ work and all the other subsequent titles in one way or the other expound the ideas and spirit of the Second Vatican Council, which in turn reveals that the roots of the Emerging Church “conversation”—go back to the “progressive new theology” (*la nouvelle théologie*) school of thought⁶ which carried the Council.

The Second Vatican Council

The Second Vatican Council was in many ways unlike the previous twenty ecumenical

and Ronald J. Wilkins, *The Emerging Church*, Part Two, with the special assistance of Dr. Raymond Schmandt (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1968).

⁵ Bruce Larson and Ralph Osborne, *The Emerging Church* (1970); H. A. Maxwell Whyte, *The Emerging Church* (1971); A. John Carr, *The Emerging Church* (1980); Johann Baptist Metz, *The Emerging Church* (1981); Ronald J. Wilkins, *The Emerging Church*, edited and revised, in one volume (1981); Dennis M. Doyle, *The Church Emerging from Vatican II* (1992); and Dan Scott, *The Emerging American Church* (1993).

⁶ Jürgen Mettepenningen, *Nouvelle Théologie—New Theology. Inheritor of Modernism, Precursor of Vatican II* (London: T&T Clark International, 2010). On the school’s deep involvement in mysticism see Hans Boersma, *Nouvelle Théologie and Sacramental Ontology. A Return to Mystery* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

councils. This council was convened with an entirely different motivation in contrast to previous councils. Three months after his election, on January 25, 1959, Pope John XXIII announced his intent to call an ecumenical council. His announcement took everyone in the Vatican by surprise for there was no apparent reason for an ecumenical council. Not only Why? but clerics also pondered, What is the council supposed to do?

In his announcement, John XXIII spoke of two aims: First, to promote “the enlightenment, edification, and joy of the entire Christian people;” and second, to extend “a renewed cordial invitation to the faithful of the separated communities to participate [notice, it does not say, *to return*] with us in this quest for unity and grace, for which so many souls long in all parts of the world.”⁷ According to Jesuit John O’Malley, the second aim is remarkable for two reasons: one, “it is couched in positive terms;” and two, “it extended a hand of friendship to the other Christian churches, and they did so, it seemed, without strings attached.”⁸

The words of Pope John XXIII were carefully and deliberately chosen words. It was only years later in the aftermath of the Second Vatican Council that historians of the Council would recognize that John XXIII was taking the Church on a different path, or we may say, this pope had a different vision of the future for the Church than his conservative friends in the Vatican.

It should be noted that John XXIII was wise enough to entrust the drafting of the preparatory documents for the discussion during the Council to the leading conservative Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani, all the while knowing that the final version of the documents will be decided by the Council members. Indeed, during the length of the Council deliberations, no document

⁷ John W. O’Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2008), 17.

⁸ O’Malley, 17-18.

was approved by the Council without having been sent back to its respective commission for revision, some of them being sent several times. As this process of debating, revising and rewriting of the documents was going on, until the bishops of the Council were satisfied with the content of the documents, it was becoming clearer that the conservatives were losing the battle to the progressive “la nouvelle théologie” school of thought whose ideas were previously condemned by Pope Pius XII in his encyclical *Humani Generis* in Aug 1950.

Yet, the conclusion of the Council did not bring about a total victory for the “progressive” voices. The battle for the soul of the Council continued into the decades later, and historians of the Council recognize that we who live in the twenty-first century are actually seeing the fruits of the Council ripening.

According to John O’Malley, three concepts defined the Council: *Aggiornamento*, an Italian term meaning “updating, modernizing;” *Ressourcement*, a French word meaning “return to the sources;” and *Development*, an English term borrowed from the work of Cardinal John Henry Newton,⁹ an Anglican bishop who converted to Catholicism in 1845, and later in 1879 was made a cardinal.

Aggiornamento touched upon things ordinary Catholics considered normative, hence startling effect. It meant a new attitude toward non-Catholics and secular society. No previous

⁹ In February 1843 John Henry Newman publicly retracted all harsh words he ever spoke against the Catholic Church. It was during this period that he was completing his *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* in which he developed an argument that various Catholic doctrines rejected by the Protestants were actually analogous to the development of doctrines accepted by the Protestants, and that Catholic doctrines are a product of reason working out the not-so obvious truth at first from the original revealed truth. Newton’s ideas on the development of doctrine had a major impact on the Bishops of the Second Vatican Council, which is evident in the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (*Dei Verbum*), article 8.

council had ever taken an equivalent as a leitmotif. It introduced an idea that Catholicism is adaptive, it can adopt certain cultural assumptions and values. It adopted a principle of deliberate reconciliation between the Church and the outside. It implied a continuation after the Council was officially closed. It implied that spirit of the Council lives on.

This concept provided a space for the spirit of ecumenical unity that would increasingly spread worldwide. Recognizing that a uniformity of beliefs and practices among cultures and religions is impossible, *aggiornamento* and the call to ecumenical unity follows an unwritten rule that we shall recognize the diversity among ourselves, and talk about what unites us, and set aside what divides us.¹⁰

Ressourcement was a new coined word by a poet in the early twentieth century. The French scholars associated with “la nouvelle théologie” school of thought claimed it as their own. Yves Congar, a renown theologian, gave it a currency in his writings. In practical sense, *ressourcement* provided a vehicle to spearhead a campaign of going back to the Patristic theology as a source for spiritual development of each member of the Church. Thankfully to the influence of Henry de Lubac and Yves Congar, the principle of *ressourcement* became operative at the Council. It influenced the Council in a more pervasive way evident in the adoption of a new style of discourse (in genre, form, content, values, and the spirit of the council).¹¹

The idea of *ressourcement* called upon the authority of the Patristic tradition to legitimize contemporary contemplation, meditation, rituals, and other practices widely promoted and practiced by the Emergent community. People believe that through the use of various spiritual

¹⁰ O’Malley, 37-39 and 299-300.

¹¹ O’Malley, 40-43.

disciplines they will be able to reach a state of consciousness (a state of being) where they will experience a union with the divine, be that the divine from the inner self or from the outside of self. Here we are talking about the very practices the reformers of the sixteenth century rebelled against, and the spiritual disciplines borrowed from the medieval mystics.¹²

Development suggests progress, and the Council subscribed to it. The idea of *development* took “the present as the norm for understanding the past. It searched the past to find evidence to confirm the present—and sometimes to ‘develop’ it into the future for more of the same.”¹³ This idea that the present is always more authoritative than the past is at the heart of evolutionism, and it can be detected in the Constitution on Divine Revelation (*Dei Verbum*). The Council concluded, “This tradition which comes from the apostles develops in the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit. For there is a growth in understanding of the realities and the words which have been handed down. This happens through the contemplation and study made by believers [the members of the Church], who treasure these things in their hearts, through the intimate understanding of spiritual things they experience [contemplative consciousness], and through the preaching of those who have received through episcopal succession the sure gift of

¹² Dan Kimball states: “Many of the very things that we removed from our churches because they were stumbling blocks to seekers in previous generations [read, the sixteenth century reformers and afterwards] are now the very things that are attractive to emerging generations.” *The Emerging Church. Vintage Christianity for New Generations* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 26. Also, Brad Cecil, one of the “founding fathers” of the Emergent Church, at a meeting in 1997 said the following: “The Middle Ages were characterized by *mysticism*. God was the author of all. But in the modern period, starting in the seventeenth century, man was seen as the author, and we entered an age of *empiricism*. Now, we’re experiencing the *postmodern turn*, toward an age of *enlightened mysticism*.” Tony Jones, *The New Christians. Dispatches from the Emergent Frontier* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008), 42-43.

¹³ O’Malley, 40.

truth [pontifical encyclicals].”¹⁴

Although John Henry Newman’s concept of *development* paved a way for theistic evolutionism to enter into the Church’s teachings, the honor of “successful” reconciling the “facts” of science and the revelation of Scriptures goes to Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, a paleontologist and a Jesuit theologian. Newman’s concept of *development* became a platform for Catholic intellectuals to begin flirting with the idea that evolutionary theory may help us make sense of the miracles in the Bible, especially the origins of life and the planet Earth. As Charles Darwin was not the first to speak about an evolutionary process, but was the first to produce a systematic exposition acceptable to the naturalists and atheists, so was Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. Teilhard was the first who “intelligently and effectively expresses the essence of Christianity for the contemporary world” through the language of the evolutionary theory.¹⁵

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin’s Impact on Christianity

When Teilhard de Chardin began writing and expounding his theological ideas on the origins of universe, life and this world the administrative apparatus of the Holy See did not know what to do with his work. They let him teach and publish his work in science, but prohibited him to teach and publish in theology. For them, Teilhard’s theistic evolutionist worldview was undermining some of the foundational doctrines of Catholicism—the doctrine of the original sin, the doctrine of hell, etc. At the same time, Teilhard kept writing on both scientific and theological issues, and kept decimating his work among his friends in Europe, most of them

¹⁴ *The Documents of Vatican II*, Walter M. Abbott, S.J., General Editor (New York: Herder and Herder, 1966), 166.

¹⁵ John W. Cooper, *Panentheism—the Other God of the Philosophers: from Plato to the Present* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2006), 164.

belonging to the “progressive new theology” (*la nouvelle théologie*) school of thought. They welcomed Teilhard’s work because, in their eyes, it was ending the battle between science and the Bible. While Darwin argued it was the principle of natural selection that moved the evolutionary process forward, and toward greater complexity, and thus eliminated God from the discourse on the origins of life on Earth; Teilhard held that it was rather the Principle of Emergence, “the cosmic law of complexity-consciousness,” that was behind the evolutionary process.¹⁶ Teilhard both interiorized nature with the divine and placed nature “in” God.¹⁷ Teilhard “was convinced of the power of ‘living pantheism’ and argued that it needs to be integrated into the Christian faith.”¹⁸ Teilhard’s “pantheism and mysticism combined in a new way the love of God with love of the world. Wanting to distinguish between true and false pantheisms, he was groping to express what is best called ‘panentheism,’ a feeling of the presence and action of God in all things.”¹⁹

Many among the Christians do not comprehend Teilhard’s worldview, and hence do not appreciate the impact of Teilhard’s work on contemporary Christianity. Yet, those who are appreciative of the Second Vatican Council have high regard for Teilhard, even claim Teilhard’s work is finding its true relevance in the twenty-first century. For example, Ronald J. Wilkins ranks Teilhard with no less than Catholic giants Augustine and Aquinas. According to Wilkins, what Augustine meant for the medieval Catholic theology, and what Aquinas meant for modern

¹⁶ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man* (New York: Harper & Row, 1959), 268-270, 300.

¹⁷ Cooper, 161.

¹⁸ Ursula King, *Spirit of Fire. The Life and Vision of Teilhard de Chardin* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 86.

¹⁹ King, 86.

Catholic theology, that is what Teilhard means for our contemporary theology.²⁰ Justo L. Gonzalez, identifies Teilhard as the most original and innovative thinker who laid the groundwork for the Second Vatican Council, right along the renown theologians like Henry de Lubac, Yves Congar and Karl Rahner.²¹ The retired Pope Benedict XVI, states, “With daring vision [Teilhard’s work] incorporated the historical movement of Christianity into the great cosmic process of evolution from Alpha to Omega; . . .”²²

It should be noted as well that the World Council of Churches, the most influential Christian organization in the world, in its first chapter, titled “God in Nature and History,” literally came across as resonating word for word the the worldview of Teilhard de Chardin.²³

The Teilhardian Worldview

Teilhard believed the entire universe and everything that exists originated approximately 15 billion years ago. *All* goes through evolutionary process, a process driven by the Principle of Emergence, and pushed forward through four coexistent stages. They four stages are: *cosmogensis* (the last 15 billion years), *biogenesis* (since the appearance of the first primitive form of life, 2 billion years), *noogenesis* (since the creation became conscious of itself, 1 million

²⁰ Wilkins, vol. 1, 114.

²¹ Gonzalez, 413, 450-454.

²² Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology. Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology*, transl. By Siste Mary Frances McCarty (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), 334. Ratzinger also cites a study by Wolfgang Klein, *Teilhard de Chardin und das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1975).

²³ “God in Nature and History,” in *New Directions in Faith and Order, Bristol 1967: Reports, Minutes, Documents*. Faith and Order Paper No. 50 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1968), 7-31. This article, under the same title, is republished in C. T. McIntire, ed., *God, History and Historians. An Anthology of Modern Christian Views of History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 292-328.

years ago), and *Christogenesis* (from the appearance of Jesus Christ).²⁴ Thus, the evolutionary process goes through *development* (A predictable move forward; “the direction in which a thing must go if its own laws are followed.”) and *breakthroughs* (Unpredictable moves, “because an unknown factor” X, “intelligible in terms of its potential to develop,” “explainable only after the fact.”).²⁵ “This mystery of breakthrough—the X factor in the evolutionary process,” explains Wilkins, “is recognized by Christians as God acting in his universe to bring it to its fulfillment.”²⁶ A movement toward *divergence* and diversity in the creation characterizes the first three stages of the evolutionary process. *Convergence* and a movement toward the union with the Omega Point is at the core of the *Christogenesis*, the fourth evolutionary stage.

Both Figure 1 and Figure 2 show Teilhard’s evolutionary theory, and by extension his worldview. Figure 2 is my graphic version of Teilhard’s depiction of the evolutionary process of the entire universe, and it incorporates information from Figure 1. Figure 1 is taken from his *The Phenomenon of Man*, p. 192., and it depicts only the last 200 thousands of years or so, the focus being on the *development* (evolution) of the human being. Notice the period of socialization starting 10,000 years ago during which *divergence* reaches its peak, and then, starting with the modern period *divergence* evolves (*develops*) into *convergence*. This is a point in time when the final era of the evolutionary process, *Christogenesis*, begins. Teilhard is not precise when exactly it begins, but it is for certain that the last few hundreds of years, and our contemporary time, is the beginning of *convergence*. How long will the convergence stage last is not known—it may

²⁴ Ronald Wilkins, *The Emerging Church* (Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown Co., Publishers, 1975, 1981), 209-210.

²⁵ Wilkins, 211.

²⁶ Wilkins, 212.

take thousands, if not millions, of years as well for the creation under the guidance of the cosmic Christ to *converge* and *reach its fulfillment* in the Omega Point. This is also a point in time where the biblical idea that the Church is the body of Christ comes in, and the Catholic idea of the Church as mystery (sacrament) comes in as well.

The guidance of the cosmic Christ is thus expressed in the Church, where the Church herself evolved, emerged from the Second Vatican Council. The bishops at the Council “rejected the [traditional] image of the Church as only a depository of truth and a ‘guardian of the faith,’ and declared it an historical living [evolving] reality of the saving event of Christ.”²⁷ It is this realization on the part of the Council that the Catholic Church herself is given the task to lead the modern world toward its fulfillment with the Omega Point that launched the Catholic church into a saving role of the humanity and the universe. Hence, it should be of no surprise to read about the change in attitude and language at the Council as it referred to the world. It should be of no surprise why the two major objectives of both the Catholic Church and the Emergents is ecumenical unity of all religions and the making of the Kingdom of God here and now. Also, it should be of no surprise to see the following happening in the years to come: an ever growing papal emphasis for ecumenical unity and for a need to work on resolving human and ecological problems; and a growing reputation of the Pope as the only moral pillar in the contemporary world. Notice how in almost every situation when Pope Francis speaks of ecumenical unity—and he works hard on achieving it—he also throws in the idea that the greatest obstacles to ecumenical unity is “fundamentalism.” Whereas the public in general assumes he speaks of the radical Muslims, tomorrow that same *fundamentalism* will be applied to all those Christians

²⁷ Wilkins, 216.

who refuse to abandon the *sola scriptura* principle. For example, all those who reject the idea of a historical Second Coming of Jesus Christ, or the literal corporal and historical resurrection of the dead, will be condemned as fundamentalists.

The Tri-Polar Spectrum of Worldviews

As stated above, Figure 2 depicts the Teilhardian evolutionary theory of the entire universe starting 15 billion years ago. In order to make a comparison between the Teilhardian and the Seventh-day Adventist worldviews I created Figure 3. It depicts the well known Great Controversy worldview of the Seventh-day Adventists. Matter of fact, even if we were to replace the Seventh-day Adventist Great Controversy story with, let's say, the Scofield dispensationalist scheme, or any other eschatological scheme, none of them would make sense in the Teilhardian paradigm. Whether the Seventh-day Adventists like it or not, they are facing a prospect of being the counter-point to the Teilhardian worldview and the ecumenically united world.

That the Catholic Church and the mainline Protestants who have accepted the Emergent worldview are working hard toward ecumenical unity is without dispute. Resistance to ecumenical unity is found only among the remaining evangelical and fundamentalist groups, as well as among the majority of the Seventh-day Adventists—

The argument here is that there are three primary worldviews: naturalist/atheist worldview; monist/pantheist worldview; and prophetic/apostolic worldview. The first two are known as the closed systems, the last one, prophetic/apostolic, is known as the open system.²⁸ The naturalist/atheist rejects any notion of a divine or an intelligent force behind the evolutionary process. The other two are based on the idea that there is the divine. The difference

²⁸ Sire, 31-32, 70.

between the monist/pantheist and the prophetic/apostolic worldviews lies in the answer we give to the question, “What kind of the divine, that is, what kind of God are we talking about?” At the core of the naturalist/atheist worldview is the presupposition that matter is all there is, ever was, or ever will be. At the core of the monist/pantheist worldview is the presupposition that All is One, and essence of everything is Brahman, a divine essence. At the core of the prophetic/apostolic worldview is the presupposition that Yahweh is the Creator of everything that exists, that Yahweh is the one prime existent, that Yahweh is not mere force, or energy, or essence, that Yahweh is the utterly otherly from His creation. The apostolic dimension claims Yahweh to be triune, and revealed in Jesus Christ. Everything we know about Yahweh is based on His special revelation to the humans: the Scriptures, and in the person of Jesus Christ, again, of who we know through the written witness of the apostles.

Each worldview is derived from the answers we give to the fundamental questions of life.

Before we begin to plot where we as individuals or as a church stand in the reference to the three primary worldviews—most of us somewhere on the one of the three slides between the primary worldviews—we should note that hardly anyone of us is exactly in the dead-center of the prophetic/apostolic worldview. Why? First, because we deal with special revelation, and we all need to grow intellectually in knowledge and understanding toward the complete knowledge and understanding of the special revelation; and second, because it is the Holy Spirit who reveals to us the truth as we grow spiritually and intellectually.

Since the unwritten rule behind the ecumenical unity is: “In order to bring about the reality of the Kingdom of God here and now, as Jesus has commissioned us to do, for the humanity is facing crises on many fronts, let us, therefore, talk about things which unite us, and

let us not talk about things which divide us, for the divisive language is demonic.” Therefore, if a group decides to join the ecumenical table, it needs to honor the rule. Given what is happening in the world of politics, economics, society, the academia, and the moral realm of society, not forgetting ecology, the drive for ecumenical unity is a serious business. Pope Francis and other religious and political leaders take it seriously. This drive for ecumenical unity is going to force the Seventh-day Adventists to choose between marching to the tune or standing tall against the rest of the world. Emergent Christianity is, whether people are aware of it or not, polarizing the Christian world. Many Christians of all kinds, are going back to the Bible, and many are asking some serious questions. This is happening even among the Catholics themselves. Matter of fact, the Seventh-day Adventists, even if they were to approach the ecumenical table, would be told by the ecumenical leaders, “You do not belong here.”

For the Seventh-day Adventists to remain true to the reason d’etre of their existence, to their call and mission, they cannot stop talking about the imminent and historical Second Coming. The Seventh-day Adventists cannot but proclaim that the only way out of the Human Predicament—this sinful and evil world where death rules—is through the sacrificial activities of Jesus Christ: what *He has done* for humanity (on the Cross), what *He does* for His people (in the heavenly sanctuary), and what He will do for His people (in eternity). The Seventh-day Adventists cannot but keep reminding the world about the necessity to honor the holiness of the Sabbath as a reminder of the historical creation of Adam and Eve; that is, the creation of humanity. They cannot abandon the principle of *sola scriptura*. They cannot forget that knowledge about Reality begins with the Word of God, not with Greek and worldly philosophy. The list of what the Seventh-day Adventists cannot abandon is lengthy. The end result is: while

the world is uniting into one camp, the Seventh-day Adventists are more and more becoming a camp of their own. In other words, by default, whether you and I like it or not, people all over the world, in all cultures and regions, are moving toward one camp or the other.

The entire Great Controversy narrative collapses if we adopt the Teilhardian assumptions and presuppositions to the fundamental questions of life. If Teilhardian theistic evolution—evolutionary creationism is merely a version of it—is correct, then the creation of this Earth and life on it is not historical, as all of the Bible authors understood it to be. If he is correct, then Adam and Eve are not historical beings, and Paul’s argument in Rom. 5:12-17 falls apart—that is, we may as well forget about the idea that salvation from this world of sin is possible only through God’s gift of grace and Jesus Christ’s gift of righteousness. The entire idea of sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on the cross becomes confusing and outright non-sense. (It should not surprise us why the Atonement is one of the three most complex puzzles for the Emergents.) Also, both the concept of sin and the biblical teachings about sin do not make sense. (It should not surprise us why the Vatican curia did not allow Teilhard to publish his theological work; because his work directly undermined the Catholic doctrine of the original sin, the doctrine of hell, purgatory and paradise, etc.) If Teilhard is correct, the existence of Satan as a created being, as a person, who rebelled against his creator, would be absurd. The Tree of Life, whose fruit is essential for human beings to eat in order to live eternally, mentioned in both Genesis 2:9; 3:22 and in Revelation 22:2 would be not real but fictional. The Sabbath, instituted by God as “holy” (Gen. 2:3 and Ex. 20:8) would lose its significance. (It should not be a surprise to us why the Emergents talk a lot about the Sabbath, but not as a “holy day” but as a time to rest.) If Teilhard is correct, we have no foundation to base our faith in the historical, real, in-

person, Second Coming of Jesus Christ. It would mean, there is no historical, real, in-person, resurrection of each one of us at the Second coming. In other words, sin and evil will somehow be worked out through the evolutionary process of convergence, and one day we will all be one with God.

The Teilhardian worldview provides room to argue, as many Emergents do, that since God's love is so great, beyond our human comprehension, that eventually ALL of the creation will be "saved." This kind of "salvation," expressed as the "convergence of the creation with the Omega," resonates the Hindu idea of *moksha* and the Buddhist idea of *nirvana*. In other words, Teilhard's idea of "convergence," the Hindu idea of *moksha*, and the Buddhist idea of *nirvana*, all of them tell us that "salvation" should be understood as a state of being where you and I lose our personhood for eternity. That idea translated into vulgar common language means, we should strive for, and look forward to, non-existence, death. It cannot be worse than that. The Teilhardian worldview dictates that we accept death and suffering as the fact of necessity in the "dynamic creativity of God." Death is a necessity for life to continue. This is nothing but a repackaged lie told to Adam and Eve at the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil—"You will not surely die!" Gen. 3:4. It is now being handed to us in a new wrapping paper by the Emergent priests. The question is, what will the Seventh-day Adventists do? How will they respond to these challenges.

To end on the positive note, thousands among the non-Adventists will refuse to give in to the Teilhardian and similar worldviews and move toward and join the people of God. The so-called Emergent Christianity is making many people go back to the Scriptures and re-assess their personal worldview. It is happening as we speak. The world is gradually, and for many

imperceptibly, polarizing into two major groups. There is a need for someone to be a shining light so that the masses would know where to go. Of course, the Light to the world is Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit leads people where to go, but God also needs men and women whom He can use in the final days of this sinful and miserable world.

There are different kinds of Christianities: Orthodox Christianity, Catholic, Coptic, Protestant, Pentecostal, Adventist, and so forth. Each one of these is standing on its own peculiar presuppositions and assumptions (beliefs) to the fundamental questions of life. Emergence Christianity is a new kind of Christianity, a Christianity the leading Emergents Brian McLaren, Tony Jones, Doug Pagitt, Phyllis Tickle, Dan Kimball, Leonard Sweet, and others popularize. Point in fact, many Christian leaders who do not necessarily identify as “the Emergents” also popularize beliefs and practices of Emergence Christianity.²⁹ The Seventh-day Adventists face this new phenomenon, and some are succumbing to it, others are rejecting it, and the rest is oblivious to what is going on.

²⁹ It is beyond the capacity of this paper to compile a list of those who popularize Emergent Christianity. The rest of this paper will show the nature of this new kind of Christianity, and how it is possible to identify who is Emergent and who is not.

TEILHARD'S WORLDVIEW

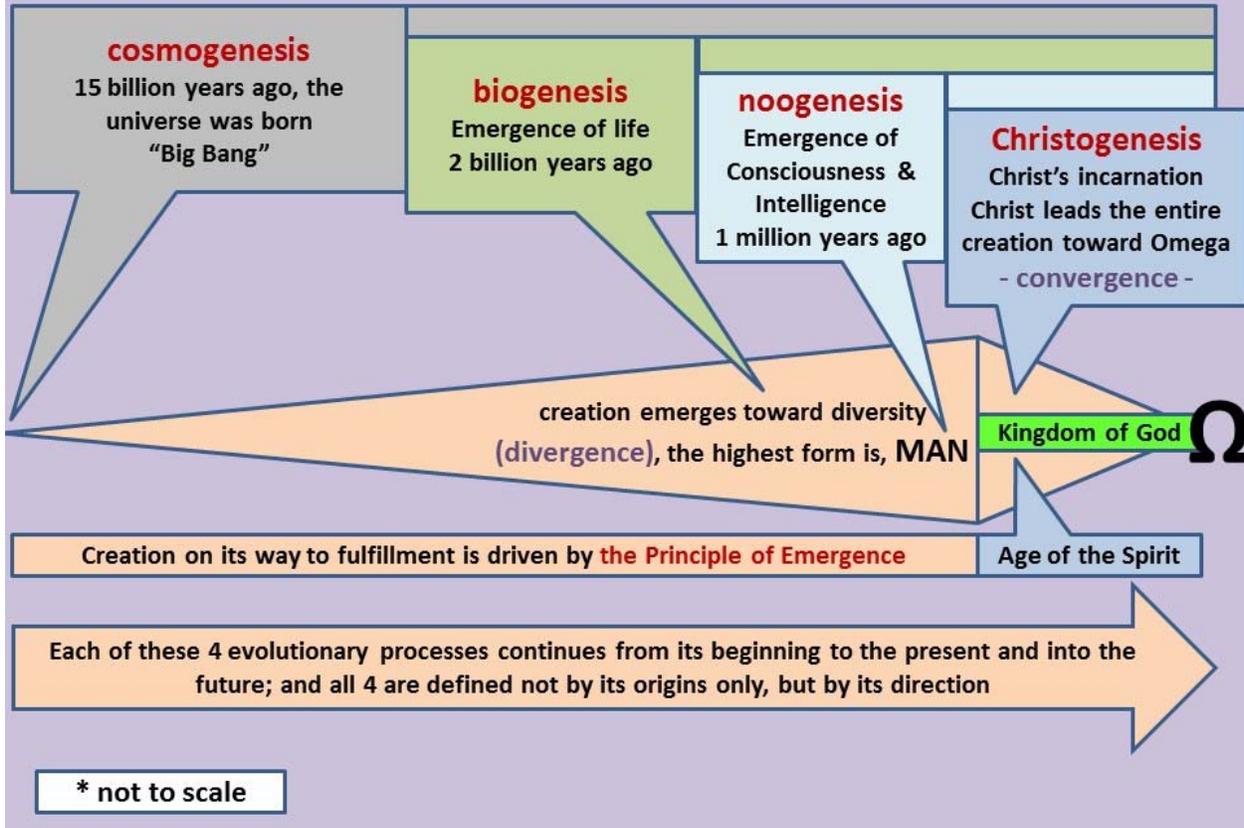


Figure 2

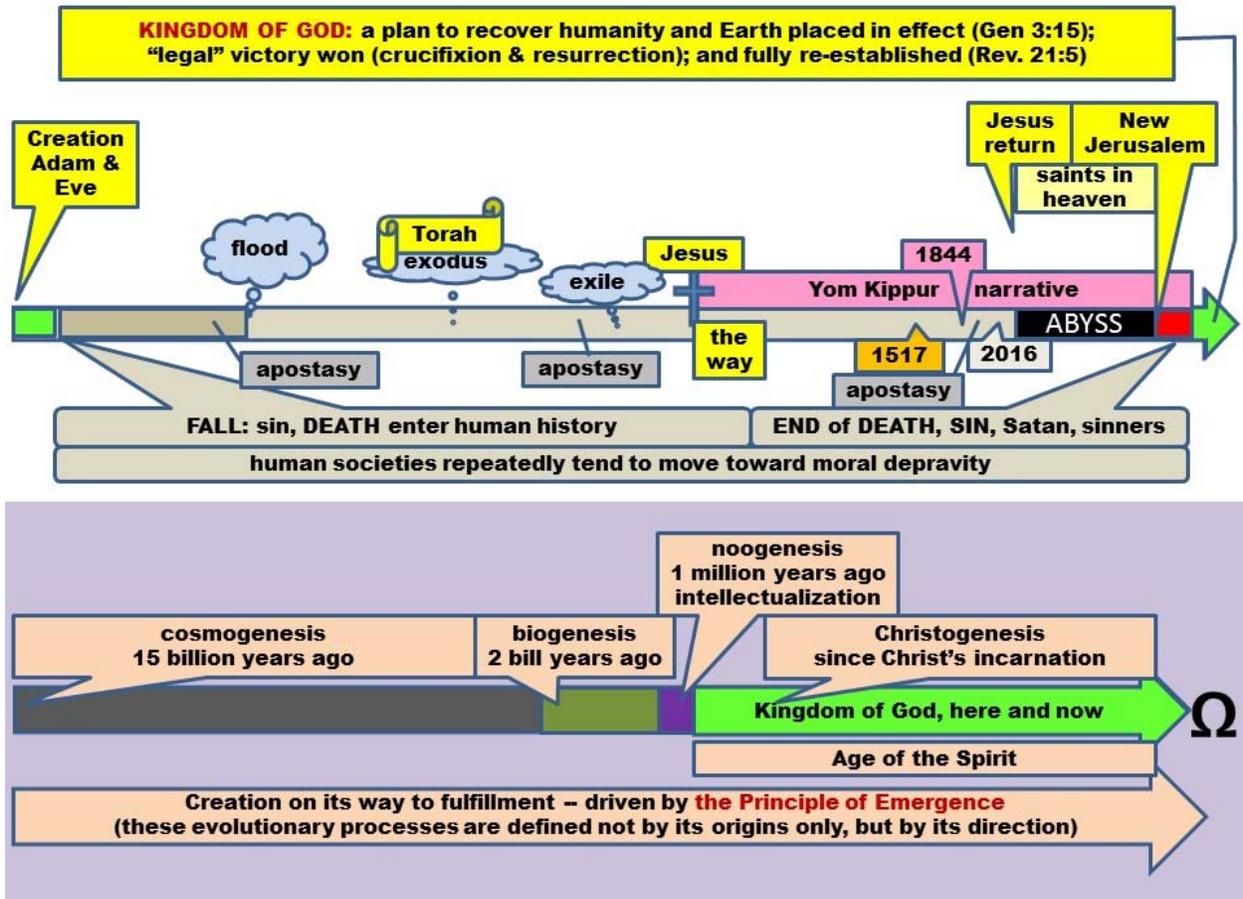


Figure 3

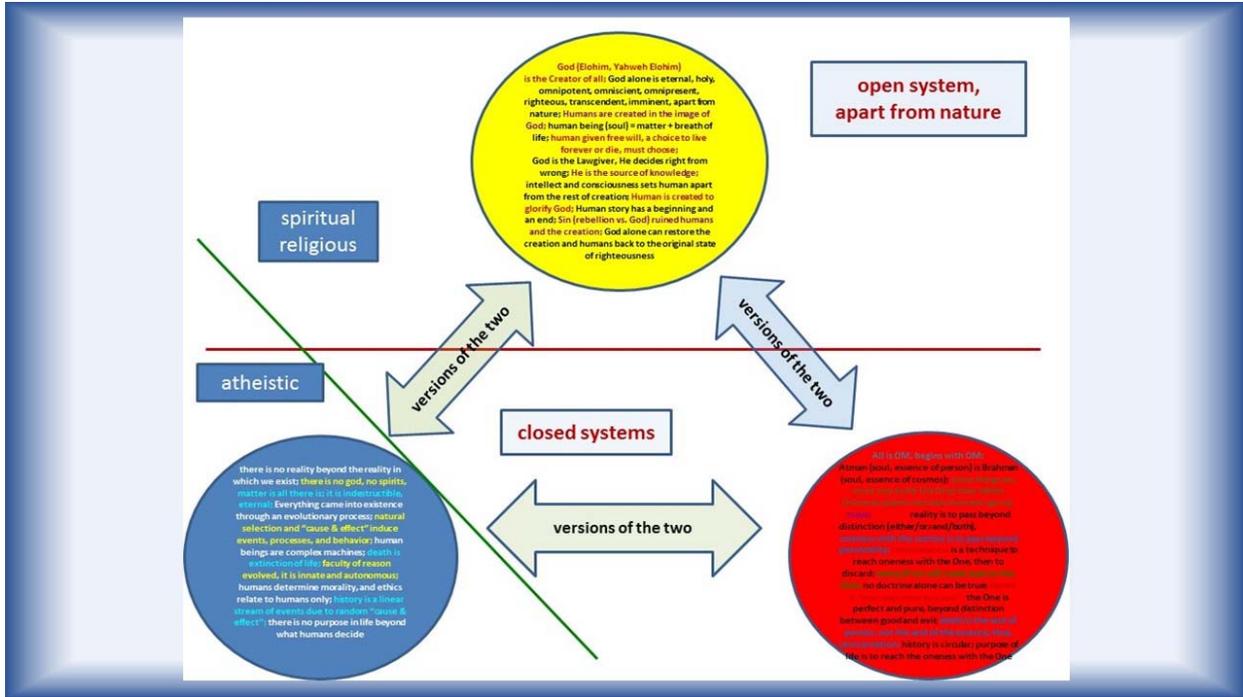


Figure 4