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This document is especially prepared for Max Torkelsen, II, President of NPUC,

by Ron Fleck, MD, June 22, 2012

(grammar, spelling, and typos corrected)

The Roman Catholic Connection with Spiritual Formation & the Emerging Church

(Part-1)

DEFINITIONS: At the very start we need to define a pertinent term.

A. Emerging Church Movement: This refers to a loose-knit organization of Protestant leaders, pastors, and authors, who are trying to re-invent Christianity and make it more attractive to people today. It is not a denomination, and has no national headquarters. Although there is no official doctrine, there are certain basic tenets or beliefs, which are generically accepted and taught. A new or different spirituality is being promoted with the following characteristics:

(1) The youth are especially targeted; the Bible is misinterpreted and subtly undermined and de-emphasized; it has a strong pantheistic foundation; it stresses mysticism; there is a low regard for Bible doctrines; it is very ecumenical and non-sectarian, it emphasizes that everyone's beliefs are equally valid; there is a very big emphasis on social justice.

(2) The average church member probably does not really know what's going on, but hears the pastor using new catch phrases and promoting different ideas and concepts. Many Adventist administrators and leaders are not sure exactly what are all the implications of adopting these new ideas.

(3) A new type of spirituality is promoted:

- Revelation is re-interpreted
- The kingdom of God is re-interpreted
- A Social Gospel is promoted instead of the Gospel of Salvation.
- The mystical and experimental is emphasized, and mystery is to be embraced rather than conquered. Emerging Church leaders are urging a return to Catholic mystic spirituality.

(4) There is a big push on ecumenism and non-separatism. Emerging Church leaders want all religions to blend together, and they are working with Rome to do exactly this. We are supposed to accept everybody as part of Christ's body, no matter what they believe. As we experience Christ together, doctrine will become less important.

(4a) On October 11, 2012, exactly 50 years after the start of the Vatican II Council, the Roman Catholic Church will start the celebration of the YEAR OF FAITH (October 11, 2012—October 11, 2013). Pope Benedict XVI has invited the bishops and theologians who, like him, served as members or experts at the 1962-65 Second Vatican Council to be present at the opening ceremonies, which include a Mass in St. Peter's Square on October 11. Since Vatican II was considered as one of the most monumental events in modern religious history, its golden anniversary will be a huge year for the Catholic Church. There will be many commemorative events, liturgical celebrations, publications, and academic conferences.

(4b) On December 25, 1961, Pope John XXIII signed the bull convoking the Second Vatican Council to be opened on October 11, 1962. He opened Vatican II in St. Peter's Basilica with over 2,500 bishops and heads of religious orders from all over the world. This important council lasted for 3 years until December 8, 1965, and issued 16 major "pronouncements" which are very much living issues in the world today. These documents covered the authority of the church's hierarchy, interpretation of Scripture, and the proper roles of clergy and laity. This council was considered to be the most important council in the history of the Catholic Church. Pope John XXIII envisioned all religions coming back to the Roman Catholic Church, and his council was considered an ecumenical council. There was an "apparent" attitude of conciliation and openness towards the separate Christian churches, and the respect of the Catholic Church for all religions. The council exhorted Christians to speak and cooperate with the followers of other religion, including Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam.

(4c) During this YEAR OF FAITH” (October 11, 2012 through October 11, 2013) every Catholic bishop and priest all over the world, in every worship service, is supposed to find ways to bring back the “separated brethren” (Protestants) back into the Catholic faith. It is not surprising then, that at this very time, Satan is working to blind the eyes of Adventist leaders, theologians, pastors, professors, teachers, and general laity, as to what is happening in the Emerging Church and Spiritual Formation. The prophecies given in the Spirit of Prophecy are literally being fulfilled in front of our eyes. And yet, many of our theologians and leaders seemingly do not realize that there is an agenda, and that the primary mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is to give the Gospel to the world in the context of the 3 Angels’ Messages of Revelation 14.

(5) Emergent Church leaders like to call themselves “Christ’s followers,” and not “Christians.” They don’t call for people to accept Jesus as their personal Savior from sin. Anyone can say, “I’m a follower of Christ. Yea, that Jesus, He had some good teachings.” This is much different from confessing that you are a sinner, and are saved by the blood of Jesus on the cross, and by His intercession in the heavenly Sanctuary.

(6) It is being promoted by many large mega-churches, such as those run by Rick Warren (*The Purpose-Driven Life*), Bill Hybels (Willow Creek), and others.

(7) It has also entered into the Seventh-day Adventist Church big-time, with several well known highly respected Adventist leaders and pastors strongly promoting it. The concepts of the Emerging Church Movement are unfortunately entering the Remnant Church through Spiritual Formation, and they are sweeping into our ranks. This is causing turmoil, confusion, anger, and perplexity among many of the faithful Adventist believers.

(8) There is not time in this document to detail the reasons and results of why this movement has infiltrated the SDA Church. But I would like to mention at least the following:

(8a) Many Seventh-day Adventists have swallowed these concepts completely, due to the over-emphasis on a legalistic Adventism back in the 1950’s and 1960’s. Many of my classmates from academy and college days were turned off by church leaders, teachers, and administrators, who were more concerned about student’s length and style of hair, and certain standards of behavior, than they were about getting to personally know the students, and being concerned about the student’s eternal welfare. Of course,

there were many notable exceptions with loving, caring teachers and administrators who really cared about the Adventist youth of those days. Now, the pendulum seems to have swung completely from the far right of legalism, to the far left of liberalism.

(8b) Another reason for the ready acceptance by many Adventists of the Emerging Church Movement, is that for many, church became boring and non-relevant to them. Many young people were seldom asked to lead out in church activities, and this effect can be seen in the age stratification, which still exists to a large extent in the SDA Church in North America. In countries where the Gospel is spreading the fastest, older Adventist leaders are often enabling and encouraging the youth to lead out in the Church. When a new, exciting and different emphasis is placed on Jesus, and the doctrines of Jesus are not that important, this is seen as a breath of fresh air by many who were fed up with legalism.

(8c) A huge reason for this movement creeping into our Adventist ranks is because of the large numbers of our professors and theologians who received their advanced degrees in Religion and Theology at non-Adventist universities. Not recognizing that Protestantism became apostate and fallen when it generally rejected the messages of the soon Advent of Christ and the importance of keeping God's Ten Commandments, including the Sabbath, back in the mid-nineteenth century, many of our current crop of Adventist theologians and professors have tried (quite successfully) to meld the corrupt doctrines of apostate and fallen Protestantism into the SDA Remnant Church. We are now reaping the whirlwind, so to speak.

(8d) Whenever the common people in the SDA Church see their leaders straying away from historic Seventh-day Adventist beliefs, including belittling the Spirit of Prophecy, this give a massive impetus for the starting of so-called "self-supporting ministries and schools," loss of membership, loss of tithe dollars, and in general, loss of confidence in the SDA leadership and in the denomination as chosen Remnant of God for these last days. I believe this is a desired effect of Satan, who is very angry at God's Remnant Church, knowing he has only a little time left. (1 Peter 5:8)

(8e) A major reason that the Emerging Church Movement has infiltrated our Remnant Church is due to lack of serious Bible Study and study of the Spirit of Prophecy warnings of the last days. This lack of study involves all tiers of our membership. It seems people would rather read what someone (maybe a respected church theologian or leader) says about the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy, rather than just study it out for themselves.

(8f) A major downturn in spirituality of the SDA Church occurred in the 1930s and 1940s, when the Seventh-day Adventist Church ignored the pleadings and warnings of some of our great, genuine, dedicated Adventist theologians and administrators about the dangers of accepting the modern versions of the Bible. Most sincere people in the Adventist Church, and many Christians in general, do not realize the agenda of the Bible translators of the modern versions. Almost every new modern version uses the Roman Catholic manuscripts (corrupt Sinaiticus and Vaticanus, and Jerome's Latin Vulgate). It is important to read and study the tried and true Authorized Version, which served the church well for hundreds of years. Few members are memorizing Scripture and studying it as we should, due to the plethora of all kinds of study Bibles and Bible versions, derived from corrupt manuscripts. My upcoming book, *Battles for the Bibles*, will be published very soon, and will outline many of the dangers of using modern Bible versions. Many people keep asking me when it will be finished, and are anxious to get this heavily researched material on Bible versions. Over 250 bibliography references are listed in the footnotes, for those who want to study the subject deeper.

(8g) Apathetic Christians are open for deception by a new type of non-biblical spirituality that will make them feel good.

(8h) Another big factor is a distorted view of the history of the Reformation and of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Because of misrepresentation of history by some current Adventist authors, many of our pastors, teachers, administrators, and members have been given a false view of our wonderful history. By casting in a negative light many of our pioneers, these popular Adventist historians, have seriously damaged people's view of what actually happened in our heritage.

(8i) Many Emergent Church leaders actually see the Protestant Reformation of the 15th and 16th centuries in a negative light, and are calling for a return to the spirituality and ritualism of the Medieval Romish Church. The Protestant Reformation is sometimes called the Protestant "Deformation," with attempts to discredit everything the heroic Reformers did to bring the Dark Ages to a screeching halt.

The U.S. News and World Report, December 13, 2007, contains an interesting article, *A Return to Tradition*. This article was like a prophecy of what is happening right before our eyes today. It documented a large shift back to tradition and ritualism in the Catholic and Protestant churches in America. This shift includes a renewed emphasis on confession, reciting the rosary, the Tridentine Latin Mass, the Eucharist, and a renewed interest in

traditional monastic and religious orders. This article showed how large Protestant and Evangelical churches are adopting the weekly Eucharist, saying the Nicene and Apostolic Creeds, reading the early desert church fathers of the Catholic Church, and doing other things that are downright Roman Catholic. Daniel Wallace, is a professor of New Testament studies at Dallas Theological Seminary. He trains pastors for inter- and non-denominational churches. In this article he is quoted, *“There is a growing appetite for something more than ‘worship that is a glorified Bible class in some way.’”*

(8j) The Bible predicted this would happen, *“Preach the Word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine...having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.”* (2 Timothy 4:2-4 KJV)

(8k) Most Emergent Church leaders erroneously think that the Catholic desert church fathers in northern Africa (Alexandria and Carthage) were precursors of God’s true church today. These concepts are being taught in our schools today in many places. A serious study of the desert fathers will reveal that they were pagans who tried to mix pagan philosophy with Bible truth. This is why there is so much evidence of paganism in the Vatican, which is easily identified if you’ve ever visited Rome.

(8l) Many Adventist theologians and teachers, ignoring serious historical evidence to the contrary, believe and teach that the Waldenses in Italy were nothing special, and that they came from Peter Waldo in the 12th century. I have much historical evidence that the Waldenses actually existed hundred of years before Peter Waldo joined them to avoid persecution in France. Their greatest enemies, Claude Seyssel of Turin and Reynerius the Inquisitor (1250) have admitted the antiquity of the Waldenses and stigmatized them as *“the most dangerous of all heretics, because the most ancient.”* (Ron Fleck, *Fire, Sword, and Cord, The Story of the Most Ancient and Despicable Heretics*, 2005, p. 34)

(8m) **Tony Campolo**, a popular Christian writer and speaker who has been invited to speak at Walla Walla College (now WWU) several times, recently said,

- *“Yes, what I’m saying is that, when we had the Protestant Reformation, we left so much good behind us in Catholicism! We need to have a rapprochement. We need to get back in touch with our Catholic brothers and sisters. We need to*

*say, 'We can teach you some things, but you can teach us even more.'
Catholics have spent centuries developing relationships with God in many forms of prayer and, as Protestants, we're largely unaware of those wonderful forms of prayer. There's a spirituality in Catholicism that we need to reclaim. We can hold only our Reformation Theology, but we had better get back into pre-Reformation spirituality.'*

(8n) These Emergent Church leaders are basically saying, “You can keep your doctrines, but we’re going to come together on something much bigger—on spirituality.”

(8o) The reason that doctrine is being relegated to the back burner now, can be explained in this way: It is said that William Miller was a deist, and his methods of Bible study (using a concordance and proof-text method) is faulty. According to this new interpretation of Adventist history, William Miller was a bad Bible student, came up with wrong conclusions, and his doctrines were godless. Since many of our Seventh-day Adventist beliefs and doctrines derived from his study of the Holy Scriptures, our doctrines are godless and should be set aside. Instead of doctrines, the “new” Emerging Church slant on Adventism is that we should just focus on Jesus. This faulty reasoning ignores the fact that true Bible doctrines involve the teachings of Jesus. The new spirituality being promoted at Walla Walla University and other SDA campuses implies that if we just “cradle Jesus in our arms all day long, from morning to night” (quoted from **Alex Bryan**’s sermon a few weeks ago at WWU) then we will grow spiritually, without the need for doctrines.

(8p) Catholics have basically two type of Jesus—baby Jesus being cradled in Mary’s arms with a halo over His head, and Jesus on the cross, with a halo over His head. In Rome, recently, I actually found a tall cross outside the main Mary basilica in Rome (Santa Maria Maggiore). On one side of this cross is Jesus hanging, and on the other side is Mary on the cross holding baby Jesus. To depict true Christian formation and growth to the members of the WWU Church as Alex Bryan did in a sermon several months ago, as “cradling baby Jesus in our arms all day long, every day,” is pure Catholic language and Emerging Church language.

(8q) There is nothing in the Bible (or Spirit of Prophecy) telling us that we should cradle Jesus in our arms all day long. It is the other way around—Jesus is holding us in His hand: “**And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand. I and my Father are one.**” (John10:28-29 KJV)

It would be somewhat difficult to cradle Baby Jesus in our arms, when He and His father are holding us in Their hands! This only illustrates the fallacious logic and theology being promulgated from the pulpit at Walla Walla University. My Bible professors from Walla Walla College wouldn't believe such foolishness could be preached at the same educational institution where they taught true Bible doctrines in the context of the 3 Angels' Messages, back in 1960-65.

(8r) One week ago I visited Mt. Hope Cemetery, in College Place, taking photos of the graves of many of my former professors. It was sobering to remember, as I stood at Professor Herbert Alcock's grave, what he had told me over and over: "Ron, you have to know the truth from the Bible for yourself, and not trust anyone to dictate truth to you. You will probably have to stand before councils and defend the Seventh-day Adventist Bible truths." That's why he required so much memorization of proof texts for our beliefs of what Jesus taught (Bible doctrines). Incidentally, the Bible proof-text method of defending our Remnant Church beliefs is mocked and derided by our many leaders involved in Spiritual Formation. Thankfully, Dr. Alcock tried to prepare us for the onslaught against our Adventist doctrines that he saw would come in the last days.

(9) Underlying the Emerging Church Concept is Spiritual Formation.

To be Continued.....