

The Emerging Church, Oprah Winfrey, and the Reshaping of American Consciousness: Implications for Seventh-day Adventist Ecclesiology

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Traditional church has birthed a materialistic culture¹ of competing claims to truth, and an essential disease with/in the faith community. A deep sigh for something more rises above the noise of ecclesiological dogmas evident in the rush for books on spirituality - meditation, ego reduction, the nature of consciousness, and paranormal experience. While the emerging church phenomenon is a response to the spiritual vacuum, Oprah Winfrey, “the world’s most famous woman”² and a confessing Christian steps forward on a huge media platform in emergent mode. With the aid of a diverse team of ministers – spiritual/social action leaders she sets out with the express goal to transform America (and the world). By drawing upon multiple religious traditions, social, scientific and cultural disciplines she functions as high priestess of the most pervasive form of the Emerging Church, and demonstrates the extent to which many people seek God beyond traditional church even if they are still part of it.

This paper sketches the basic nature and reach of the emerging church. It discusses it in the context of its academic roots and calls attention to the way Oprah’s media platform enables its outreach by what I call the “Oprah Project”. It then briefly observes an antagonistic Seventh-day Adventist ecclesiological stance towards emergence in order to hint at a christocentric transformational ecclesiology that may render the “threat” of this emergent ecclesiology benign.

What is the Emerging Church?

The current emerging conversation began out of perceived gap between established church practice and Jesus’ own example and teachings about the kingdom of God, between the church and contemporary culture, and between church dogmatic structures and the shifting epistemology of the age. The emerging church resists hierarchical structures and claims of absolute truth that prove destructive or otherwise irrelevant to the search for spiritual fulfillment and peace in the world. Its approach is relational in that it rejects the dualism between the church and the world and engages the church in the entire evolving social process towards just and peaceful community.³ While many attempt to define the emerging church in terms of worship styles, ideological views, biblical approaches and New Age spirituality, all these concede to its all encompassing *relational ecclesiology*.⁴

The emerging church phenomenon I am attempting to describe cannot be dismissed as a dangerous ecclesiastical rendezvous with post-modernity⁵ (given the assumption that post-modernity is an

anomalous imposition upon the face of history). Also, the emerging church transcends the Emergent Village started by Brian McLaren, Tony Jones, Doug Pagitt, Tim Keel and others.⁶ When these pastor-theologians came together with others in a conference call in 2001 and adopted the label “Emergent”, the emerging conversation had already been in progress. The Emergent Village whose leaders had already been tagged “emerging leaders” gave the conversation widespread visibility, so that today the terms emerging and emergent appear interchangeably (and appropriately since both words mean the same). It is however important to note that “emergent” was the original designation used around the 1960s by H. Richard Niebuhr and John Baptist Metz to explain the messianic transformational way of being in the world.⁷ Other current leading voices in the emerging conversation include Eddie Gibbs, Dan Kimball, Marcus Borg and Rob Bell among others.

While particular congregations exist that we may label emerging or emergent, the emerging church in essence is not so much a group as it is a happening that is seeping into American consciousness in a stealthy cultural paradigm shift. Thus more than a church movement, it is a social movement.⁸ It does not recruit members, rather it advocates a way of being in the world and as such it engages all cultural streams.⁹ It is a de-privatization of faith and church¹⁰ - a sacralizing of the world and a desacralizing of the church.¹¹

It is significant to note that the emerging conversation represents a crucial stage in an ongoing intellectual process not so much “within the cutting edge of ministry, but within the hallowed halls of our most esteemed universities.”¹² The conversation echoes thoughts that go as far back as Schleiermacher (maybe the father of emerging Christianity),¹³ of H. Richard Niebuhr, Martin Heidegger, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Walter Brueggemann, John Caputo, Jacques Derrida, Stanley Grenz, Nancy Murphy, and Jürgen Moltmann who I consider to be the dean of Emerging Christianity. Through its conduit post-modernism the emerging church has flowed “right out of the musty corridors of academia into the world of popular culture.”¹⁴ This is where it encounters its most powerful mediator Oprah Winfrey.

Post-Modernism, Revelation, and the Emerging Conversation

Post modernism is the conduit of emerging church. Emerging church is the affirmation of the sacredness of the historical process.

Post-modernism eludes the simplistic definition that pits it against modernism and modernism’s claims to absolute truth. It has the same epistemological mode as modernism, namely that both cultures issue from rigorous self critique in all areas of the cultural process – art, science, religion...resulting in the evolution of the collective consciousness. Postmodernist thinkers observe the historical process as an ongoing movement between the subjective and the objective – between what is, and what we conclude from what is, based on prior conclusions. Heidegger argues that we do not answer the question of being by laying down axioms, rather we lay bare the grounds of being by our involvement in it.¹⁵ Here the epistemological foundation is “Being-in-the-World”.¹⁶ This does not necessarily overthrow scientific method, rather, it rigorously judges pre-conceived notions “in terms of the things themselves”¹⁷, i.e., experience.¹⁸ This epistemological approach is not new, but postmodernism is conscious of and

embraces the historical process in a way modernism has not. This enables postmodernism to authenticate all cultural experiences (without regard for ancient or modern) that may elucidate the question of being.

The emerging church attracts the label “post-modern” because it embraces the historical process as authentic revelation in the world. It perceives itself to be the essential aspect of that process to guide and direct it towards peace and justice given the epistemological results of the process. “Being-in-the-world” is the experiential aspect of emerging conversation that one may perceive to be arbitrary. But in emerging conversation, “Being-in-the-world” is God in the world transforming it through the Spirit. This is the overarching burden of Jürgen Moltmann whose body of work mirrors and informs the emerging conversation. He articulates the idea *via* his pantheistic/panentheistic Social Trinitarian proposal by arguing that true spirituality is not a “not of this world” life in God, rather it is conscious living in the space that is God’s Spirit – the entire community of being.¹⁹ As such, “the creative and life-giving Spirit...arrives at consciousness of itself in the human consciousness. ... The human consciousness will then itself become a new, relatively holistic organizational form of life. It then ministers to life, and intensifies it....”²⁰ In this sense “the dwelling of God is among mortals....” (Rev. 21:3).²¹

This idea reflects the Christian Moral philosophy of H. Richard Niebuhr in what he unpacks in two loaded terms: 1) “responsible self” which “affirms” that God is acting in all actions upon it, and thus responds to all actions upon it as to respond to God’s actions,²² and 2) “radical monotheism” which describes this organizing “principle of being” as the One (Being²³).²⁴ Thus for Niebuhr, all institutions, all religions, all ideological processes, all nations, all cultural activities and scientific breakthroughs, all life forms, all living experiences connect in the One (beyond the many) as essential parts of the process of being.²⁵ Nothing is arbitrary because of this organizing principle – the “Spirit” (in Moltmann’s terminology).

The “uncertainty” of postmodernism and the emerging movement comes to light in this context. This uncertainty, is not about not knowing for sure what to be or not to be. There is certainty in being, but being is dynamic, in process - enveloping the *full* participant in mystery and anticipation, in love and responsibility.

Thus the conversation subjects Scriptures to the principle of being, because Scriptures issue from being. “We... work out whatever in the text furthers life,” writes Moltmann, “And we ... subject to criticism whatever is hostile to life.”²⁶ Niebuhr argues: “The community cannot think the mind of Christ without the training of Scripture...but Scripture always points to the authority which it mediates, and like the able teacher, seeks to make itself unnecessary.”²⁷ The emerging approach to scripture²⁸ is one that stresses the Messianic Spirit of life which Moltmann articulates in his book *The Spirit of Life*.

In essence, this emerging church is a call to full participation.²⁹ Moltmann uses the phrase “relational ecclesiology” to describe this full emersion in the “power of the Spirit”.³⁰ The God-talk of the emergent Rob Bell positions itself on the deep infinite connectedness of everything.³¹ This relationality defines the emerging conversation. What then is emerging?

What is Emerging: Relational Ecclesiology

What is emerging is a reverence for “Being-in-the-world” as the site of divine revelation, and the object and subject of salvation. This relational aspect renders the emerging church a universal social movement as we observe this emerging theme permeating the ongoing spiritual project of Oprah Winfrey. From this relationality issue three main factors: 1) a radical ecumenism, 2) a spirituality that embraces the mystical, and 3) a *kerygma* of love and justice.

Ecumenism

In emerging conversation, Jesus does not found a religion, rather he announces a new way of peace to all people of every religion.³² Marcus Borg expresses the basis of emerging ecumenism by arguing that religions are “human constructions *“in response to”* (authentic) “experiences of the sacred” (though he admits that they have often been shaped and distorted to serve human desires).³³ This ecumenical outreach advances the Social Trinitarian agenda of Moltmann. McLaren argues that the Holy Trinity “...are *interpersons or interpersonalities*. And as creatures made in the image of God, so are we.” Thus the same Spirit that inhabits the Holy trinity “interpenetrates the depths of all creation.”³⁴ Elsewhere³⁵ McLaren articulates a Christocentric ecumenism among all faith traditions, all ideological mindsets - all life forms.³⁶ The Christ event brings reconciliation uniting the entire cosmos in a new creation. Thus Marcus Borg argues that he could not be a Christian if he had to believe it is the only way. He writes: “When Christianity is seen as one of the great religions of the world, as one of the classic forms of the primordial tradition, as a remarkable sacrament of the sacred, it has great credibility.”³⁷

Spirituality

Emerging Spirituality seeks transformation through awareness of the connectedness of being. In general, it is the practical exercise of responsible being in the world. Christ symbolizes the best that humanity can be – the “moral emergent”³⁸ who demonstrates the reality of the Spirit in the world and the world in the Spirit,³⁹ “we in the spirit and the Spirit in us.”⁴⁰ The awareness of the universality of the Spirit allows open access to the wisdom of multiple spiritual traditions.

Emerging Spirituality is about living consciously in mystery, open to possibility. Brian McLaren expresses this mystery in poetic terms,⁴¹ but Rob Bell peeks into it through the eyes of quantum physics⁴²- a significant frame of reference of the Oprah Project. Quantum physics demonstrates that we are infinitely enmeshed in the world. In the very observation of an atom, one is not outside of it looking in, rather one is inside looking in, and thus the very observation alters it. Thus there is no “clear distinction between the physical world and the spiritual world.”⁴³ Quantum physics reveals that matter is ultimately energy, and that our “interactions alter reality. Thus the contemplative aspect of emerging spirituality involves a conscious channeling of energy towards life affirming goals, which Moltmann terms “the vitalizing energies of the Spirit.”⁴⁴ Contemplation makes the self aware of what it means to be in the image of God, and leads one to encounter God as Christ encounters God.⁴⁵

Love/Justice Kerygma

Emergent spirituality then is a commitment to love - to peace and justice at every level of relationship in the world. Moltmann articulates it thus:

If God's Spirit puts people on 'the path of life', that means the path of righteousness. In the Christian New Testament it is also called the path of love, which binds together justice and mercy. This love, hard though it is to practice is the royal path of life. In this love there comes into being the reciprocal Shekinah of God in human beings and human beings in God.⁴⁶

In new age language it is about "Christ consciousness" – the best that humanity can be. This is the basis of its radical ecumenism, its egalitarianism, and its mission. Its mission is not to indoctrinate but to transform consciousness – who we *really* are. This indeed is the stated mission and purpose of Oprah Winfrey.

The Oprah Project

To the consternation of many, Oprah has torn the veil of holy academia and the religious institution to reveal God who engages *all* in the private and public spheres of personal struggles and social (dis)content. Though she has been dubbed "America's Pastor" (and justifiably so as she listens, encourages, and exhorts), "America's High Priestess" may also be an accurate title. "I am defined by the world as a talk show host," she told her audience as she explained the nature of her new spiritual direction launched in 1994, "but know that I am much more. I am spirit connected to greater Spirit."⁴⁷ The New York Times dubbed her program "the secular Chapel"⁴⁸ but Oprah's spiritual program consistently negates a secular reality. "I live in the space that is God," is a mantra of Oprah, as she consistently exhorts millions of Americans to experience God in the sacrament of everyday life, and individual and collective experiences.⁴⁹ ("God is the living space of his world,"⁵⁰ is how Moltmann puts it). Thus Oprah guides America towards a vision of God in every mundane event – from the inevitable tragedy and pain of everyday interactions, to Beyonce's power surging performance at the 2013 Super Bowl of which Oprah declares "that is where art meets God."⁵¹

At "The Prayer for America" event in 2001 the nation saw at the podium a talk show queen who in the eyes of the media and the blogosphere had replaced Billy Graham as America's Pastor.⁵² She sets out to transform America with a growing team of ministers and their publications. East-west and west-east gurus Deepak Chopra, Eckhart Tolle, Shirley Maclaine, and Gary Zukav through the disciplines of neuroscience, quantum physics, philosophy and psychology explain the interconnectedness of all life forms seen and unseen. Oprah recruits these and others such as Marianne Williamson, Iyanla Vanzant, Elizabeth Lesser and Rob Bell. She ministers with and through them in the media, online, and on the road in order to encourage and teach access to inner power leading to life affirming relationships.

On her growing OWN network Oprah approaches her spiritual project with deepening intention. She hosts *Super Soul Sunday* “to help viewers awaken to their best selves and discover a deeper connection to the world around them.”⁵³ Often the show is full of the extraordinary - the Nobel Prize winner who claims to have seen during his acceptance speech his departed father sitting in the audience,⁵⁴ the neurosurgeon whose journey to and return from the realms of death converted him from an atheist to a Christian,⁵⁵ and the ivy league atheist psychiatrist who became a believer after his hypnotherapy sessions with his patient “Catherine” morphed into what he believes to be her regression into former lives.⁵⁶ These and countless other surprises seem to be Oprah’s strategy to goad her audience beyond the boundaries of the five senses. *Oprah’s Life Class* celebrates the sacrament of life by teaching “to honor and validate each other’s experience.”⁵⁷ This affirms her enduring mantra “there is no such thing as co-incidence” because every experience and encounter in life articulates Divine purpose. The program *Oprah’s Help Desk* dramatically demonstrates Oprah’s deprivatization of church. Here any member of her team ministers to the day to day struggles of people in public gatherings all over America both individually and collectively. Each of these ministers bring their own peculiarity to the desk and millions of Americans get to experience it every Sunday on OWN in the space of an hour.

Should one doubt Oprah’s radical ecumenism, she constructs her teaching plan from all strains including a professed atheist,⁵⁸ the eccentric artist Lady Gaga, and mega church leaders such as T.D. Jakes and Joel Olsen who do not fully share her views on sexuality. Should one doubt her widespread influence, consider the many books that repeatedly make the New York Times best seller list because of her promotion. She has America reading about improving themselves and the lot of humanity in ways it has never done before. She takes her ministry on the road to huge audiences, and online to over loaded capacity. During this study, I approached a group of millennials and asked them who they believe to be the most influential *religious* leader In America. After someone said tentatively, “the pope,” they all chanted, “Oprah!”

Should one question Oprah’s intention, she boldly professes her Christian commitment to awaken the “Christ consciousness” (Moltmann’s Messianic Spirit).⁵⁹ Yet she does not set out to answer life’s big questions. Rather she encourages Americans to ask them, and remain present - in every moment for life’s big “aha” moments.⁶⁰ Take note of the declaration of each of the three leading members of Oprah’s team: Deepak Chopra : “The world is changing and I am part of the transition team...rewiring the global brain for a more peaceful, just and sustainable world.”⁶¹ Iyanla Vanzant : “My purpose for being on this planet is to facilitate the evolution of human consciousness.”⁶² Eckhart Tolle: “...to help all human beings all over the world bring about a shift in consciousness” because “the world can only change from within.”⁶³

Though *Christianity Today* refers to the Oprah Project as “the Church of Oprah,”⁶⁴ she insists that it is not about her.⁶⁵ The Oprah Project represents the emerging conversation at work. It is church in the world – sacralizing of the world and de-sacralizing of church in a manner unprecedented in Western religious history. It asks no one to join any particular movement other than the movement towards a full understanding of self as authentic – having a life affirming place and purpose within the network of existence.

Implications For Seventh-day Adventist Ecclesiology

In his sermon “Go Forward” at the 2010 General Conference Session, the then newly elected SDA World Church leader exhorted the church: “Stay away from non-biblical spiritual disciplines or methods of spiritual formation that are rooted in mysticism such as contemplative prayer, centering prayer, and the emerging church movement in which they are promoted.” The great burden of his sermon was to reinforce the “historic beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.” He also warned against the compromising activities of ecumenism assuring the church that we are “not just another denomination,” but “a unique, heaven-initiated movement” and that we are called “to be a peculiar people to lift up Christ.” On that same day he proudly read a letter from the nation’s president Barak Obama. It appears ironic that the letter affirms the American culture of faith that has helped the nation “find the vision to see the world as it is, and address the most challenging questions of our time.” It seems ironic that the nation’s president wishes for the Seventh-day Adventist church that same faith that will move it to “unite in the common cause to serve our fellow brothers and sisters” – indeed ironic that the letter exhorted the congregants under the Georgia Dome to remember the “abiding truth that each of us has the power to create a better world for ourselves and our children when we do our work here on earth.”

President Obama’s letter affirms the essential vision of the emerging church. President Wilson warns against its encroachment upon Seventh-day Adventism. Note however that in emerging conversation each individual and each institution in society is indeed peculiar, for each brings to the world peculiar gifts to be honored as God’s gifts to the world. Seventh-day Adventist community has been God’s greatest gift to me in my life’s journey, and so it is for millions. Thus the Seventh-day Adventist Church is really not at risk here. It would appear that the real threat to Seventh-day Adventism is a dogma-centric mission that for millions of Americans may have run its course. This is not to say that the church should relinquish dogma (for while spiritual interest is on the rise in America,⁶⁶ church going and biblical knowledge is at a low). It is to say rather that it must adopt a genuinely christocentric stance that may eclipse dogma rather than a dogma-centric stance that may eclipse the messianic vision.

Thus I propose that the church begins earnestly a study of Christology. Let us not go back to Chalcedon. We have been there so many times and back. Let us go to the Scriptures in search of the messianic profile. What do they really tell us about Jesus the Christ - his message and mission? How do we make that message our message, that mission our mission, that cross our cross, and that resurrection our resurrection?

Are we willing to take that scary journey to encounter God

-God of Abraham – and Hagar - and Jacob

-God of Amos – and Isaiah - and EGW
-God of DaVinci – and Mozart – and I.M. Pei
-God of Copernicus - and Einstein - and Jobs
-God of Ghandi – and Malala – and MLK
-God of Wilson?
and (dare I say) God of Oprah?

Will we place on pulpit Isaiah’s scroll
and then boldly declare to a sighing world
“today the scripture is fulfilled in your hearing!”

Will we clean up the temple?

Will we stoop and write in the sand?

And then ascend the mount like Jesus

And proclaim the new law of the land

Love! Justice! Righteousness!

“America has become a new missionary frontier,”⁶⁷ observes Dan Kimball. Its unchurched population is the largest mission field in the English speaking world and the fifth largest globally.⁶⁸ Among the unchurched are children and grandchildren of faithful church goers and church leaders. Yet interest in spirituality is on the rise and an increasing number of these believe that the church is not Christian.

Oprah and Deepak Chopra, Iyanla Vanzant, Eckhart Tolle, Rob Bell and so many *others* unite to fill the spiritual longing of millions with a (professed) Christocentric missiology of inner power, oneness in being, and peace in the world. If indeed, or whether or not these serve (an)*other* God, I think it is high time the remnant go to the table to review *its* Christology. For I do believe in the depths of *my* being, that Christ Jesus *is* the answer for this church.

¹See Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans., Talcott Parsons (New York, Scribner, 1958).

²Stephen Mansfield, *Where Has Oprah Taken Us? The Religious Influence of the World's Most Famous Woman* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2011).

³See Brian McLaren, *A New Kind of Christianity: Ten Questions that are Transforming the Faith* (HarperOne, 2010), 33-45.

⁴The term "relational ecclesiology" entered through Jürgen Moltmann. This phrase recapitulates his universal understanding of church. Church is the consciousness that God's Spirit equally fills up all aspects of life thus making all living experiences sacred. See Jürgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999).

⁵See, D.A. Carson, *Becoming Conversant With the Emerging Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005).

⁶Jim Belcher, (*Deep Church* [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2009], 47) notes that Emergent Village (for which McLaren, Jones and Pagitt are the "most visible writers and speakers") is the most visible branch of a "large and growing movement."

⁷See John Baptiste Metz, *The Emergent Church*, trans. Peter Mann (New York: Crossroad, 1981). See also footnote # 58.

⁸Tony Jones, *The Church is Flat: The Relational Ecclesiology of the Emerging Church Movement*: (Minneapolis, MN: The JoPa Group, 2011), 11-17.

⁹McLaren, 139.

¹⁰Jason Clark, "Consumer Liturgies and their Corrosive Effects on Christian Identity," in *Church in the Present Tense: A Candid Look at What's Emerging* ed. Scott McKnight, et. al. (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2011, 39-57).

¹¹Jones, 166.

¹²"Hope for the Kingdom: Moltmann and the Emerging Church in Conversation,"

<http://www.dualravens.com/cawing/essays/emergingMoltmann.html>, (accessed September 13, 2014).

¹³Schleiermacher was the first to expound on the inaccessibility of absolute truth to human beings. Also, emergent Christology finds roots in his idea of "God-consciousness" wherein Jesus is the ideal human who was fully God-conscious. See, Friedrich Schleiermacher, Jack C. Verherdren, and S. MacLean Gilmour, *The Life of Jesus*, ed. Jack C. Verheyden, trans. S. MacLean Gilmour (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1975).

¹⁴Dave Tomlinson, *The Post-Evangelical*, (London: Triangle Press, 1995), 75.

¹⁵See Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John McQuarrie and Edward Robinson (HarperSanFrancisco, 1962), 28f.

¹⁶Heidegger calls this *Dasein* which includes all beings, yet ultimately transcends the historical being. See Ibid, 78f.

¹⁷Ibid, 153.

¹⁸Evaluating Heidegger's "Being-in-the-World", Gadamer concedes that "the metaphysical value of history" should not be underestimated. See Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, second revised ed., trans., Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum Press, 1998), 202

¹⁹Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, 84

²⁰Ibid, 228-229

²¹Jürgen Moltmann, *Sun of Righteousness Arise*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2010), 27.

²²H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Responsible Self* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1963), 126

²³_____, *Radical Monotheism and Western Culture* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1943)

²⁴Ibid, 42-43.

²⁵What some may label "pantheism" Niebuhr calls "radical monotheism".

²⁶Jürgen Moltmann, *Experiences in Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 4. In earlier arguments he examines the Biblical arguments of the coming of the Spirit and concludes that the Spirit is no longer mediated through revelation and tradition, but grounded on the contemplation of God and his glory. See *The Spirit of Life*, 57.

²⁷Niebuhr, *Responsible Self*, 24.

²⁸See McLaren, Jones, Bell.

²⁹See Brian McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy* (Grand Rapids, MI, 2004).

- ³⁰ Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 20.
- ³¹ Rob Bell, *What We Talk About When We Talk About God* (HarperOne, 2013).
- ³² McLaren, *A New Kind of Christianity*, 139.
- ³³ Marcus J. Borg, *The Heart of Christianity* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1989), 213.
- ³⁴ McLaren, *Why Did Jesus, Moses, the Buddha, and Mohammed Cross the Road?* (New York: Jericho Books, 2012), 129.
- ³⁵ See McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy*.
- ³⁶ The Christology echoes Niebuhr and Moltmann.
- ³⁷ Borg, 221.
- ³⁸ Niebuhr, *The Responsible Self*, 174.
- ³⁹ Moltmann, *Sun of Righteousness Arise! God's Future for Humanity and the Earth* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 164-169.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid, 167.
- ⁴¹ McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy*, 161-174.
- ⁴² Bell, 32-49.
- ⁴³ Ibid, 44.
- ⁴⁴ Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, 196.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid, 102-208.
- ⁴⁶ Moltmann, *Sun of Righteousness Arise*, 115.
- ⁴⁷ Leah Garchik, "The Oprah Backlash," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 29 October, 1998, E10 quoted in Mansfield, 68.
- ⁴⁸ Frank Bruni, "A Sapphic Victory, but Phyrhic," *New York Times*, November 15, 2009.
- ⁴⁹ The segment "Remembering Your Spirit" at the end of each show signals the interconnectedness of all experiences in one divine purpose in keeping with Oprah's mantra "there is no such thing as co-incidence."
- ⁵⁰ Moltmann, *Sun of Righteousness Arise*, 168.
- ⁵¹ Beyonce, interview by Oprah, *Oprah's Next Chapter*. OWN, February 17, 2013.
- ⁵² Mansfield, xii-xiii.
- ⁵³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Super_Soul_Sunday (Accessed October 9, 2014).
- ⁵⁴ "Oprah and Nobel Prize Winner Elie Wiesel: Living With an Open Heart," *Super Soul Sunday* OWN, December 9, 2012.
- ⁵⁵ "Oprah and Neurosurgeon Eben Alexander: Proof of Heaven" *Super Soul Sunday*, December 2, 2012.
- ⁵⁶ "Oprah and Dr. Brian Weiss: Reincarnation, Past Lives and Miracles," Ibid, June 2, 2013.
- ⁵⁷ "Oprah and Iyanla Vanzant," *Oprah's Life Class*, OWN, September 21, 2014.
- ⁵⁸ Oprah attempts to convince marathon swimmer Diana Nyad that she is not an atheist if she is "in awe" of the creation. This "awe" is compatible with Oprah's pantheistic/panentheistic spirituality. "Oprah and Swimming Champion Diana Nyad: Dare to Dream," *Super Soul Sunday*, October 13, 2013.
- ⁵⁹ This became evident when a Roman Catholic lay minister in Oprah's audience testify to her new understanding of Jesus' mission of Christ consciousness through the teaching of Eckhart Tolle. While not forsaking her Roman Catholic faith she no longer looks at Jesus as the sacrificial lamb, but as the great exemplar of Christ consciousness, i.e. how to be fully human. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4MpkYzvnCRM> (accessed November 12, 2014).
- ⁶⁰ "Soul to Soul: Asking Life's Big Questions," *Super Soul Sunday*, December 16, 2012.
- ⁶¹ "Meditation 101 With Deepak Chopra," Ibid, November 4, 2012.
- ⁶² Iyanla Vanzant in advertisement of *Iyanla Fix My Life*, OWN.
- ⁶³ <http://www.eckharttolle.com/>
- ⁶⁴ LaToya Taylor, "The Church of O," *Christianity Today*, April 1, 2002.
- ⁶⁵ Oprah believes that she is divinely appointed. She declares: "God is with me. That's why I succeed...I am God-centered." See Kitty Kelly, *Oprah: A Biography* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2010), 223. Also, in December 2010 when 10,000 Australians along with their first female prime minister came out to meet Oprah in Melbourne, behind the scenes Oprah chided her production team for not working in an adequate preaching platform for her,

complaining that the event focused too much on her. See Oprah Behind the Scenes of Season 25 – Australia (TV Series 2011, Episode 12).

⁶⁶ Dan Kimball, *The Emerging Church: Vintage Christianity for New Generations* (Grand Rapids, MI, 2003), 85.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 68.

⁶⁸ Leslie Newbigin, *Unfinished Agenda* (London: SPCK, 1985), 242.