what the official records may indicate. This does not preclude occasional visits to the church.

**Disfellowship** is a term used to indicate separation from the church through a vote by the members at a properly announced business meeting. A person should not be disfellowshipped unless all the steps outlined in the Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual have been followed.¹

**Dropout** is a contemporary term used to describe a mature person who deliberately ceases to attend the church he once joined by faith and baptism. It means far more than disinvolve in church activities and here refers to any person who for known or undisclosed reasons, has lost interest in the church and drifted out.

**Membership** means inclusion on church rolls of those persons who join the church through baptism by immersion as prescribed in the Bible, preceded by faith, repentance, and a definite commitment to the Lord. Members are also accepted by official letters of transfer from other Adventist churches. Occasionally, a committed Christian who has been previously admitted to another denomination by faith and baptism and who desires to join the Adventist Church is admitted by profession of faith. Infants, children baptized as infants, and children who are unbaptized are not counted as members in the Adventist Church. However, all children from faithful Adventist homes are considered as belonging to the family of God.

Transfer growth is gain in membership by official letters of transfer.

During the search of the literature it was discovered that no specific term is used consistently for disassociation from the church. This makes it difficult to find references to published articles and other literature. Therefore, the following list of the more general terms used to describe defection is included in order to assist those interested in further research of the problem. The terms listed have been used interchangeably in this study for the concept of church disassociation:

1. Abandonment  
2. Alienation  
3. Apostasy  
4. Atrophy of membership  
5. Attribution  
6. Attrition  
7. Backsliding  
8. Break with church  
9. Defection  
10. Desertion  
11. Deviation  
12. Disassociation  
13. Discontinuance  
14. Disfellowship  
15. Dissentation  
16. Dissolution  
17. Dropout  
18. Excommunication  
19. Expulsion  
20. Fall away, fall out  
21. Former member  
22. Forsaken God, church affiliation  
23. Go out  
24. Heresy, heretic  
25. Leakage  
26. Leaving  
27. Loss of faith  
28. Membership loss  
29. Nonattendance  
30. Quitting the church
31. Rejection 35. Secession
32. Religious disaffection 36. Separation
33. Retrogression 37. Shaking out
34. Schism 38. Turncoat

Methodology

This study is based primarily on 150 personal interviews with a representative cross-section of white, adult persons who were or still are disassociated from the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Michigan. The study was designed to determine the contributing factors and the identifiable causes leading to backsliding, nonattendance, and church disassociation.

Methods and Techniques of Research

The descriptive research method is the principal method used in this study. Investigations were carried out by:

1. Surveying literature on the reasons for loss of church members.
2. Reading articles in Adventist journals which present the views of ministers and denominational leaders on the problem of apostasy.
3. Corresponding with church pastors, evangelists, and various other resource specialists about their perceptions of the reasons for church disassociation.
4. Conducting a field study which included interviews with former members and observation in the participating churches.
5. Analyzing and interpreting the data collected.
The techniques employed in the study include the following:

1. Recording of data and classifying and filing of notes.
2. Mailing of inquiries to former members, church pastors, and denominational leaders.
3. Conducting two pilot studies to gain interviewing experience and to sharpen the interview schedule.
4. Preparing a final draft of the interview schedule to be used as a guide during visitation of former members.
5. Contacting individuals by telephone to arrange for personal interviews.
6. Searching records, directories, and files to find the addresses of persons to be interviewed.
7. Visiting and interviewing former Adventists.
8. Writing case histories and interview summaries following each interview.

Preparations for the Investigation

It is not only important to employ sound methods, but careful preparation is also an indispensable part of scientific research. The following steps were taken in preparing for the study.

Review of Literature

The current literature on ecclesiology, church life, the problem of loss of members, church discipline, and church renewal was investigated. A survey was also made of the many articles pertaining to apostasy and backsliding which have appeared in
Seventh-day Adventist periodicals. Furthermore, the extensive writings of Ellen G. White, including unpublished letters and manuscripts, were searched for her views on the problem under investigation.

**Pilot Studies**

Two pilot studies were conducted, one in Michigan and one in Denmark, to test the preliminary interview schedule and to gain experience in interviewing. It was found that the first instrument was too limited in scope and did not allow for in-depth interviewing. Reading literature on the methods of interviewing and practice acquired during these two pilot studies were beneficial preparations for the actual interviews.

**Interview Schedule**

As a result of the pilot studies, a more extensive interview schedule was developed which covered general information about the respondent as well as specific information about religious background; previous church affiliations; church relationships; and feelings and attitudes toward the beliefs of the church, standards of religious living, organization and activities, and leaders and members of the church. Also included were questions which offered opportunity for evaluations of the respondent's religiosity and perceptions of personal religious changes over the years. The nineteen-page interview schedule contained 485 fixed-alternative items and twenty open-ended questions (appendix A). Selection of the items for this instrument was based on
research in the literature, findings during the two pilot studies, and many years of experience as a minister and educator. The interview schedule was intended as a guide to be used during the interviews; however, under certain circumstances, it could be used as a questionnaire. For example, if a third person was interfering with the interview by suggesting answers, the respondent was asked to fill in the answers to all pertinent questions. Whenever a question was not understood it was explained. The use of such an instrument was highly beneficial in assuring that somewhat similar coverage of questions was directed to all the respondents. Inasmuch as the instrument was only a guide to the content of the questions, great freedom was allowed in its application. Therefore, the respondents were not always expected to answer all the questions listed in the schedule.

Inquiries

A letter of inquiry was sent to each of forty Seventh-day Adventist Church leaders to sample their opinions as to why members leave the church (appendix B). Thirty-six replies, or 90 percent, were received. Ninety letters, inquiring specifically as to what they considered the five principal factors of church disassociation and requesting their estimate of how many of their members did not attend church were mailed to pastors of Adventist churches in Michigan (appendix C). Thirty-nine replies, or 43.3 percent, were received. Furthermore, introductory letters explaining the nature of the study and requesting the privilege of an interview at a
convenient time and place were sent to former members. A stamped, self-addressed response card was enclosed (appendix D). Initially about one hundred such letters were mailed. One person returned the card with a refusal to be interviewed and omitted both name and address; less than 5 percent returned the card agreeing to an interview; and the remainder were returned from the postal services stamped "addressee unknown."

Since this approach was not successful other methods were used to contact the persons who had left the church.

Telephone Contacts

The telephone, as well as correspondence, was used to make contacts with the Michigan Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, the district leaders, and the local church pastors for permission to conduct this investigation in their territories and to invite their suggestions and cooperation. The majority of the pastors were positive in their responses, and some were extraordinarily helpful during the preparation and execution of the study.

Search of Records

When church pastors were contacted for suggestions on how to obtain the needed names and addresses, they usually referred the interviewer to the church clerks who have charge of the official church records. The search was then conducted by the investigator and a seminary student, in full cooperation with the pastor and the church clerk. Some churches provided long lists of names of former members but no addresses. A few churches
stalled the researcher's efforts to obtain the needed information for many months, but in the end they did open up their records. It was learned that church records are not always well kept nor easily accessible. Nevertheless most churches were very cooperative and extremely helpful in providing all the needed information. The great mobility of the American people made it time-consuming and often very difficult to trace the whereabouts of former members. Many had left the area without leaving a forwarding address; some had married or remarried and acquired new surnames; while others were deceased by the time of the study.

Since the acquisition of addresses from the official church records proved unsatisfactory, a variety of other means were explored. Telephone directories, mailing lists, relatives, friends, and church members were consulted. Subsequently, it was found that the two most efficient sources for current addresses were (1) former Adventists who had kept in contact with friends who had left the church, and (2) present church members. Therefore, the participating churches were visited and a personal appeal was made to the members to assist in the study by providing the needed names and addresses of former members, rebaptized members, and nonattending members. An insert in the church bulletin provided ample opportunity to list names and current addresses of those to be interviewed. The advantage of this approach was that the address usually was correct and, in some instances, the informant called up the person and told him that he could expect to be interviewed. However, the researcher was not always successful
in obtaining the needed lists of former members. A church official in the Lake Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists had over a period of time collected names and addresses of apostate Adventists in Michigan. When he left the area for another appointment, he passed all the information on to his successor. When approached, the collector of the information gladly agreed that the information be made available; unfortunately the successor was of a different opinion and the study had to proceed without this vital information.

Selection of the Population and the Sample

When deciding what population to study, consideration was given to selected churches from three conferences in the Lake Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. For practical and financial reasons it was necessary to restrict the study to a much smaller area in order to give preference to the method of personal interview rather than mailed questionnaires.

The population chosen was all the disassociated and non-attending members from twenty-two predominantly white Seventh-day Adventist churches in four districts situated in the Michigan Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Because one district leader failed to respond favorably within the time limit set for the conducting of the interviews, it was finally necessary to limit the population to disassociated and nonattending members from sixteen churches in three districts. These districts had a total Adventist membership of 6,544 on 31 December 1975. The number of persons who disassociated during a ten-year period was reported to be 609 (1966-1975). The number of persons who returned
to church fellowship was unknown, but it appeared to be small. The exact number of nonattending members was unavailable.

However, the pastors of the participating churches reported the following estimates of nonattenders during February 1977. For two large churches with a membership between 500-3000 the estimate was 10 percent. The five medium-sized churches with a membership of 200-499 had an estimated mean of 22 percent. The nine smaller churches with a membership from 20-199 had reported an estimated mean of 30 percent.

The sample for this study was made up of 150 disassociated members from a selected area in Michigan. It was composed of four groups that were distributed as follows:

The first category of fifty-three persons were those who had left the Adventist church either voluntarily or compulsorily, and who were no longer listed as members in the official records. The second category was composed of twenty-four former members who had returned to membership. Some of the persons in this group had been rebaptized several times. The reason for including this category was that it was considered a possibility that they might be more accurate in stating the factors leading to defection and assist in identifying the actual reasons. The third, and largest, category was comprised of sixty-six persons who, though still listed as church members, do not attend church regularly and in many cases do not consider themselves as church members. The fourth category consisted of six people who could not be classified in any of the first three; for example, one person who was brought
up in an Adventist home and was considered an Adventist but had
never been baptized and had finally left the church fellowship.

Random sampling was considered but rejected due to the fact
that disassociated members would not have an equal chance of being
interviewed and also because of the small population. A con-
trolled sample was also impractical. Therefore it was decided
to concentrate on the most representative sample which would be
available for interviewing under the circumstances described in
this chapter.

The sample had a number of limitations and built-in biases.
Some of these were: (1) more women than men were at home during
the day; (2) more students and young people were available in an
institutional church; (3) more interviews were conducted in the
immediate area of the interviewer than on the periphery of the
surveyed area (which had a radius of 125 miles); (4) some churches
were more helpful in providing names and addresses than others;
(5) accessibility to the disassociates varied considerably depend-
ing on circumstances (for example, some persons who had experienced
traumatic conflicts, or those who were ashamed, angry, or anguished
were less accessible than those who were quite anxious to share their
views); (6) accessibility was at times influenced by the attitudes
of the church pastor, church members, and relatives; and (7) many
more names and addresses of non-attending members were available
than of persons who had been disfellowshipped from the church.

Sampling was further limited by not including those
persons: (1) who refused or ignored the invitation to be interviewed;
(2) who were not found at home even after repeated visits; (3) who had moved out of the area; (4) who had no available addresses; or (5) whose names were received too late to be included in the study.

In spite of these and perhaps other limitations, maximum diversity was sought in providing an adequate sample of persons who in some way or another had disassociated from the Adventist church. Upon completion of the interviews it was felt that a very adequate sample was provided by this approach. Among the 150 respondents previously described in four categories, seventy-seven had been disfellowshipped from the church at least once, and seventy-three were persons who rarely or no longer attended the church services even if their names were still retained in the church registry.

Obtaining Data in the Field

Several approaches were used to obtain the data for this project. The persons who had disassociated from the church were interviewed; denominational leaders and church pastors were asked by correspondence to express their opinion about the factors leading to disassociation; and the researcher also made a number of visits to participating churches for the purpose of observation and explanation of the project. Many former members were approached first by mail or telephone to arrange for an interview; others were visited "cold" without any previous warning.

Interview

The 150 in-depth interviews were conducted over a period of eight months. They lasted anywhere from thirty minutes to four
hours, depending upon the circumstances and the interest of the respondent. Sometimes more than one interview was conducted with the same person. The respondents were always given a choice of the time and place for the interview. Most interviews were conducted in the homes of the respondents, but some also took place in an office at Andrews University, and others in the home of the interviewer.

The interviews were intended to be open-ended but they often turned out to be semi-structured. The interview schedule, which is described on pages 15-16, was used as a guide and a record for the data obtained. The respondent was also encouraged to speak freely about his feelings, attitudes, and experiences in the church. He was urged to be candid and reveal all the factors that he felt had influenced him to disassociate from the church.

The approach varied according to circumstances, but in general was as follows. After the person was at ease, the interviewer explained the purpose and nature of the study, and the person was assured of anonymity, which has always been strictly adhered to throughout the study. Frequently, a statement similar to this was made: "Unfortunately more than thirty people leave the Adventist church for every one hundred who are baptized. Responsible church leaders are very concerned about this loss, and they are anxious to learn why so many separate from the church and what can be done to retain the members. Maybe you have read articles in the church papers in which the ministers presented
their views of why people leave the church. So far no one has asked the persons who left the church for their opinion. Therefore, we would like to learn from you how you feel about the Adventist church and its beliefs, and why you decided to leave."

An interview would often be terminated by saying: "Thank you for giving so much of your time to share your feelings about the church and your relationship to God. We really appreciate your frankness, and it was helpful that we could explore this together." The respondent was always assured that the church is anxious for his return, and some other appropriate remarks were made that fit the situation. Frequently, the respondent would agree to a prayer by the interviewer.

To interview and listen intelligently was no easy task. Sometimes a person would put on a mask or false facade, but the extent of the visit, the variety of approaches, and the attempt to carry on a genuine, friendly conversation, usually resulted in the person being frank and honest. Therefore, sincere attempts were made to be empathetic rather than sympathetic, accepting instead of condemning, genuinely interested rather than inquisitive; and no attempts were made to refute charges, points of disagreement, or defend other church members.

Guidelines for Interviewing

Some basic pointers for interviewing were gleaned primarily from Annette Garrett's *Interviewing: Its Principles and
Methods and Delbert Miller’s *Handbook of Research Design and Social Measurement*, among other sources. ¹

1. Begin where interviewee is. Help him to relax and feel comfortable. Let him first speak of what is on his mind.

2. Observe all details. People do not always say what they mean or act as they feel. Therefore, it is essential to look for clues to different attitudes.

3. Listen more than talk. It is essential to be attentive. Avoid the temptation to introduce personal experiences and opinions. Encourage the respondent to keep talking. Stimulate him to present his point of view, but do not presuppose his answers.

4. Show no disapproval. Do not point out mistakes. Do not tell the person what to do and what not to do, unless especially requested.

5. Improve art of questioning. Voice, manner, and expression are more important than questions asked. Too many questions will confuse and block the person; too few questions will leave significant unexplored areas. Use leading rather than pointed questions. Be friendly, empathetic, and use a conversational

style of questioning. Avoid tricky cross-examination, sarcasm, accusations, and probing for the esoteric.

6. **Make words intelligible.** Many misunderstandings are due to semantic problems. It is essential that words be understood as meant and not just understood. Do not hesitate to define words and have the respondent define his words if necessary.

7. **Guard against association of ideas.** The danger is always present that a person will read into another person's problems, feelings and ideas that he does not have. Likewise, that misunderstandings are overestimated as are concealed ideas and apparent inconsistencies and contradictions.

8. **Remember purpose of interview.** The respondent may divert your attention by asking questions and requesting advice. If an answer is needed you can point out the consequences of various alternatives, and otherwise stimulate his reflection and decision making. Perhaps he is not really looking for an answer but needs help to get out of a confusing situation. Do not attempt to persuade him to accept a doctrinal viewpoint or to convince him on points where he has a variant opinion.

9. **Maintain leadership role.** When the respondent begins rambling, lead him back to the subject; when he has given exhaustive answers redirect him to new areas of inquiry. Avoid wasting time on irrelevant topics.

10. **Maintain professional relationship.** Watch your mannerisms. Never give any reason for wrong ideas about your intentions. Do not overrespond, and do not introduce your own
pet ideas or experiences. Make the respondent the focus of attention and ask for his interests, ideas, and opinions. Avoid flattery, patronage, and offensive and irritating remarks.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Interviewing

The interview approach offers many obvious advantages and opportunities. It enables the interviewer to:

1. Make a more direct approach and break down any existing barriers.

2. Establish rapport and make the person feel at ease.

3. Make the questions more understandable and less ambiguous, inviting spontaneous replies.

4. Clarify terms and concepts which were not well understood.

5. Improve the communication with the person by forming new questions and exercising greater flexibility.

6. Probe beyond mere opinion into deeper feelings and attitudes.

7. Differentiate between firm and hazy answers.

8. Consciously test the validity and reliability of answers, and sometimes be able to make inferences.

9. Control which person answers the questions.

10. Phrase questions that would stimulate continuous interest in answering.

11. Assess the personality and the sincerity of the respondent.
There are also some negative aspects of the interview method which must be taken into consideration. In this case, the interviewer must:

1. Avoid the tendency to distract or color the answers.
2. Be able to phrase questions that will elicit reliable and valid responses.
3. Be aware that when he touches questions of conflict the respondent automatically releases his defense mechanisms.
4. Realize that the respondent sometimes will try to impress him by presenting agreeable and acceptable answers, and that he may attempt to appear in a favorable light.
5. Understand that it is human to try to "psyche out" the interviewer and find out what kind of answers are preferred.
6. Realize that an interview is always influenced by the interplay of participating personalities, and that it is difficult to achieve complete objectivity.
7. Understand that blocking may occur to the extent that a person becomes unable or unwilling to associate certain concepts, ideas, beliefs, or behaviors to his former church.
8. Remember that if he is too directive it will stifle the interview, and if he is not directive enough the person may flounder.
9. Watch that the respondent does not get off the subject so that the intent of the interview will not be achieved.
10. Know when to terminate the interview.
The validity of the answers obtained during an interview are always subject to an evaluation. Therefore the interviewer should be aware of:

1. Consistency in replies
2. Extreme exaggerations
3. Frequent generalizations
4. Impressions of sincerity and integrity
5. Excessive use of the "scape goat technique," that is, blaming others for what happened.

One method the interviewer frequently used to test the validity of answers was to rephrase a question until he was satisfied that the person was presenting the situation as he perceived it.

**Limitations in Interviewing**

In addition to limitations stated elsewhere in this study, the interviews were sometimes restricted by:

1. Time available by respondent.
2. Difficulties by some persons in communicating their personal feelings, experiences, and convictions.
3. Presence of other persons during the interview.
4. Interruptions, such as long-distance telephone calls, arrival of unexpected visitors, and children seeking attention.
5. Pressing assignments, appointments, and a desire to escape by using a variety of excuses.
6. Irritation by those who still consider themselves members even if they do not attend church services.
7. Specific request by a few individuals who preferred an interview over the telephone rather than a personal visit.

8. Adverse effect by those persons who were hostile, ashamed to relate past unpleasant experiences; untruthful; fearful of the consequences to a third person; or tense, suspicious, or impatient.

**Preview of the Study**

Chapter I has introduced the problem of disassociation from the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The background, problem, purpose, hypotheses, and objectives were presented. Terms used in the project were defined, and the assumptions and limitations of the study were stated. The methodology used in the investigation of the factors contributing to disassociation from the church was discussed.

Chapter II is a review of the literature on church disassociation and some works of the related literature. Chapter III presents a theoretical framework and the theological implications of church disassociation.

In chapter IV, the respondents are described and the findings of the project investigation are presented. In chapter V the data collected during personal interviews are interpreted and evaluated as well as compared with the findings from similar and related research. Finally, in chapter VI, the findings are summarized and recommendations are presented.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There is a very comprehensive literature on the church and its activities, but it is beyond the scope of this study to review even the more important works. For more than a decade a multitude of books have also been published criticizing the institutional church and advocating renewal. In many of these books the writers offer their opinions of why people are disenchanted with the church and losing interest in attending. Likewise, for a number of years, religious commitment has been researched by both sociologists and theologians, but practically no studies have been made of religious defection or disassociation from the church. The few books and articles published on the subject usually present the views of clergymen rather than the people who left the church. "It is probably indicative of a bias in social science that religious commitment is considered a research project, but religious defection is not—or so it would seem from the paucity of available research literature on the subject of religious defection."¹

During the past fifteen years numerous studies have been written on the distress and problem of drop out from the ministry


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and religious orders, but because most of these people transferred to another vocation rather than out of church fellowship, this literature is not being reviewed in this study.

When the bibliographies of religion and church are searched, it is noticed that they rarely present such topics as apostasy, backsliding, defection, disassociation, dropout from the church and nonattendance. Therefore, an extensive search of the literature on religion, ecclesiology, and the psychology and sociology of religion failed to produce more than a few books, some articles and reports, and an occasional oblique reference to the problem in connection with some other topic.

No significant study on the problem of disassociation, as perceived by the former members themselves, has been conducted and reported in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The problem has always been there, and down through the years alerted church leaders and concerned ministers have offered their opinions and, sometimes, made constructive suggestions on how to counteract the tendency to apostatize from the church. Many of these articles contain valuable information from veteran pastors and others who lived close to the people, but it should always be remembered that they usually reflect the opinions of the clergymen. (For those interested in reading the articles, special lists of references are given in appendices E and F.)

Seventh-day Adventists are always interested to learn what E. G. White wrote on significant issues; therefore some selected quotations on the problem of apostasy and the reasons people
depart from the church have also been included in appendix G. Other Adventist literature deals extensively with the problem of apostasy from a historical point of view, but as it has no direct relationship to the problem being investigated, it will not be reviewed in this study. The literature in the following categories will be reviewed:

1. Literature on the specific problem of disassociation from the church

2. Related literature

3. Seventh-day Adventist periodicals


Specific Literature on the Problem of Disassociation

James H. Smuts¹ (1950) examined the reasons for apostasy in the Adventist church. He defines apostasy as the forsaking of God and the forsaking of church affiliation by an individual. His sources were primarily Adventist literature, statistical information, an unpublished report on apostasy among Adventists in England from 1943 to 1947, and the written responses to eighty-eight returned questionnaires from Adventist ministers.

The source of interest to this study was Smuts' questionnaire. He received thirty-three replies from North America and fifty-five replies from overseas divisions (66.2 percent return).

He does not provide much information regarding the respondents. Were they all active church pastors? Were some of them evangelists, teachers, or administrators? Were they missionaries or nationals? Smuts used four questions in his questionnaire of which only two are relevant to this study. They were: (1) do apostasies, in general, occur soon after membership is granted, or rather after a number of years? and (2) would you please indicate a few of the reasons which you consider to be most important in leading Adventists to apostatize?

The opinion of the respondents was that withdrawal from the church takes place (1) within the first two to three years after baptism (41.9 percent), or (2) after six to seven years (28.4 percent); and 29.7 percent indicated that apostasies were evenly distributed over the years of membership. The church leaders in England and M. V. Campbell, a former president of the Central Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, came to the conclusion that most apostasies take place after eight to ten years of membership.

The eighty-eight respondents to question 2 gave sixty-eight different reasons for apostasy, and Smuts arranged them in the following five categories:

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1The writer has corresponded with M. V. Campbell to inquire about the findings of his study. The response was that it was unpublished, that it no longer is available, and that he does not recall the details.
I. Reasons which place the responsibility upon the church

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Lack of sufficient indoctrination prior to baptism</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Lack of pastoral work for members</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Lack of postbaptismal instruction</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Failure to engage new converts in missionary work</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Lack of positive recreational program</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Lack of kindness, friendliness, and understanding</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is interesting to notice that only four ministers considered premature baptism a significant reason. None of the American respondents believed that members left due to any failure on the part of church leaders.

II. Reasons placing the responsibility upon the individuals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Not converted</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Worldly influence—property and wealth</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Neglect of spiritual life</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Failure to live according to Christian teachings</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Failure to study Bible and Spirit of Prophecy</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Quarrels, factions, and jealousy in the church</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Critical disposition</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

III. Social conditions engendering apostasy, and

IV. Economic background to blame for apostasy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Employment troubles because of Sabbath</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Financial reasons</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Youth marrying unbelievers</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

V. Educational background to blame for apostasy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Weak home training</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Failure to get Adventist education</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Difficulties in relation to church group</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In referring to the British survey, Smuts quotes the following reasons for apostasy observed over a five-year period, 1943-1947:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Change of conviction</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Missing members</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Discouragement due to weak faith</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Intermarriage with non-Adventists</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Other reasons</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summarizing his findings, Smuts concludes that the major causes of apostasy in the Seventh-day Adventist Church were due to:

a. Methods of gaining new members  
b. Failure in pastoral activity  
c. Lack of true conversion  
d. Disinterest in spiritual things  
e. Failure to live according to Christian standards  
f. Economic struggles

James Christensen¹ (1961) is not only concerned about how to increase church attendance but also reports on a study of the reasons why people do not attend and eventually drop out. Based on a questionnaire used in one hundred churches from various denominations, he discovered that the most common reasons for defection are:

a. People don't feel the need of the church  
b. Church does not satisfy spiritual need  
c. Church is unfriendly and cold  
d. Waste of time to go to Sunday School class  
e. Need rest because I work all week  
f. Live too far away  
g. Dislike minister  
h. Controversy with member  
i. Don't feel at home because I do not know the people  
j. No place to park  
k. Church does not need me  
l. Do not have good enough clothing  
m. Church is pressing for money

Christensen believes that often "these excuses are only alibis from the uncommitted backwash of many churches. They are neither convincing nor factual." Still he suggests that "the findings should be a soul-searching inventory for the church itself. For, indeed, in most congregations there is much which gives added strength to the weakest alibis for staying away from church."²

²Ibid., p. 45.
Fordyce W. Detamore's book[^1] (1965) is primarily a recollection of his personal experiences as an Adventist evangelist working to reclaim backsliders whom he defines as former members of the church. It also contains some suggestions on how to approach and work for those who left the church.

Detamore states that every year he visits, personally, 1,500 homes with 4,000 to 5,000 people, and that nearly half of these are backsliders. Many backsliders still consider themselves Adventists but are unattached to the church. He claims that his evangelistic team members have found 25,000 backsliders during the past several years.[^2] He also reports that in a city survey three thousand people listed themselves as Adventists while the church membership was only seven hundred. If these numbers are correct, Detamore may well have more direct contacts with former Adventists than any other minister known to the investigator, and he might be considered an authority on the subject.

He divides the backsliders into two groups: those who are difficult to reclaim; and those who are easier to reclaim. In the first category he includes: (1) former institutional employees; (2) former professors; (3) physicians and surgeons; (4) spiritual neurotics; (5) the overly prosperous; (6) the intellectually proud; (7) the independent; and (8) the apostates, whom he defines as those who left in pride and rebellion and who fight back the truth they once loved.

[^2]: Ibid., pp. 10, 15.
The second category consists of (1) former denominational workers; (2) young people from weak or divided homes; (3) those who married unbelievers; (4) the young mothers who became separated from the church while caring for their infants; (5) wage-earning Sabbath breakers; (6) those who experienced a moral breakdown; (7) those who became victims of habits; (8) the weak and the fearful; (9) those who love pleasure more than they love God; (10) those indebted to God and man; (11) the injured, that is, those with hurt feelings; (12) the sincere doubters; (13) the "Gypsy backsliders," that is, those who keep moving; (14) those who lost membership when churches disintegrated; and (17) the sick.

While it is true that there is great diversity among the backsliders, it is probably unnecessary to categorize them according to profession. For example, that a person is a medical doctor or a professor is only incidental to the problem of backsliding and not necessarily causative. The chances that professionals will return to membership cannot be known by intuition and may be as good as for any other profession, unless the contrary can be established through a thorough study of a large number of such defectors. According to Detamore, one third of the backsliders can be reclaimed for the church while a minister can only expect one out of every twenty from a list of prospects provided by church members.¹ He feels that "backsliders are the very finest

¹Ibid., p. 16.
prospects you can find," except those he calls "spiritual neurotics," who are beyond hope and will only do harm to the church."\(^1\)

For those interested in working to regain backsliders, Detamore suggests that names and addresses be obtained from the following sources: (1) literature evangelists; (2) singing bands; (3) Adventist neighbors; (4) doctors and nurses; (5) Bible schools; (6) religious census surveys; (7) church clerk's books; (8) church visitors' register; (9) references from Adventist relatives; (10) inquiries to church officers or pastors; (11) church school leads.

Sidney Parker investigated the problem of the church dropout for his doctoral dissertation at Columbia University (1970) and published his findings in a small book in 1971.\(^2\) It was hoped that his study could have served as guidelines for this investigation, because he proposed to investigate the views of the laity and compare the findings with the views of the clergy. Unfortunately, the views of the laity do not really stand out in his presentation of the study.

Parker's study was comprised of: (1) group interviews with 312 college students; (2) data from 1201 returned questionnaires received from seven major denominations (80 percent return); and (3) personal experience as an Episcopalian clergyman, as well as reading of the literature.

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\(^1\)Ibid., p. 30.

It would have been helpful to know more details about his methods of obtaining the data. For example, how was it possible to get more than a general impression from the group interviews? How did he weigh the answers and report the data? What were the percentages of black and white respondents? With regard to the questionnaires sent to the churches, it would have been helpful to learn the names of the denominations or at least to know if they were main-line liberal or conservative-fundamentalist types of churches. Again, were they predominantly black, Spanish-American, or white churches?

Parker is deeply concerned about the diminishing role of the church and the clergyman. It is evident that he is strongly influenced by the writers of the church-renewal literature, and he feels that the church is disintegrating from within rather than due to external forces. Paradoxically, he believes that "unsuspecting factors play a major role in membership atrophy." He discusses some of these factors. (1) Increased income and greater efficiency seem to result in the emptying of the church. Still, it is known that the more money a person receives the better his church attendance. Parker explains this paradox by suggesting that people who have always been financially secure attend church regularly, but those who have rapidly acquired wealth leave the church. (2) Rise and expansion of the Middle Class as well as technological development cause decline of the churches and drop out of members.

\[Ibid., p. 41.\]