first husband. Considering the church's strong stand against divorce, and, perhaps, other reasons, she now feels strongly condemned for a divorce she did not want but agreed to. It appears that she not only feels condemned but also is an object for severe criticism and gossipping by certain church members which made her feel ashamed and unwilling to attend the church services. She would like her present husband to become an Adventist, and he is apparently interested, but various inhibitions keep her from bringing him to the church. She is very concerned about her child. Perhaps if she can continue her friendship and association with certain Adventist families in the area, she might eventually return to active membership.
REPORT ON DISASSOCIATION FROM THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

RELIGIOUS HISTORY AND EVALUATION

Interview type: 1
Interview no.: 51
Interview date: 7-1976
Interview time: 3 hours

Present situation:

The respondent is a 34-year-old, white, North American male who officially left the church in 1974. He was listed as a member of a medium-sized church for 21 years. He claims that while he has not lost his faith in God, he is no longer attending church, and he has not joined another denomination. However, he has some doubts about a life after death. Therefore, he is very concerned with life now and wants to enjoy it fully. His desire is to get to understand himself better, to learn the art of human relationships, and to live a respectable life as a good person. He appears to be a humanist more than a Christian.

General information:

He is a professional employed in a large city. He is unmarried, has moved away from his parental home, and now lives in his own apartment. His education was not in Adventist schools. His highest degree is an M.A.

Religious background:

Both parents are members of the Seventh-day Adventist church, but they are apparently fringe members who do not attend faithfully. Two aunts and two uncles as well as five or more cousins belong to the Adventist church. A brother is no longer a member.

The respondent was baptized at the age of twelve. It was his own decision but he was motivated by a desire to please his parents. He states emphatically that he was not spiritually mature at that time. Still he entered the church with great expectations. His hope was that the "church would enlighten him" and that he would be able to develop into a true Christian. However, he became more and more disappointed. He was an MV leader and attended faithfully for some years but eventually became more and more lukewarm and critical, and he began to doubt some of the Adventist beliefs. He attended worship services and youth meetings but never attended prayer meetings and other church functions.

Perceptions and evaluations:

In answer to the question: How do you rate your past relationship to the Adventist church? He rates himself as a strong, active member in the first years after baptism, and as weak, lukewarm,
critical and disappointed in the years prior to leaving the church. Comparing his own religious life with that of the parents, he answered "less religious" and "less faithful" on all questions. Presently he has more peace of mind, is happier, and is more satisfied than when he was a member of the church. He is not sure if God can forgive him, but he is worried less by guilt than before. He is also less sure of salvation. He no longer believes in prayer and in man's accountability to God. Still he thinks that God might interfere in the events of the world and of man. He has apparently given up prayer, worship, Bible reading, and church attendance. Presently he is involved in reading literature on world religions and other religious persuasions.

Most of the members in the church are friendly to him, but he strongly disapproves of the attitude some Adventists have to non-Adventists. He feels that those who were concerned about salvation of others are kind of "paternalistic." Of course, like so many others, he did not fail to point out that there is a certain amount of gossip, slander, intolerance, and condemnation of others in the Adventist church. And still he feels that there is also a fair amount of love and that many Adventists are friendly and very willing to help others. Not all are living up to their profession as some are people with double standards.

He points out some weak areas in the work of the church. First he feels that the church should be far more involved in the community. One area especially pointed out is that Adventists are rarely involved in adult education. Counseling of church members, group activities, and strong fellowship are also badly neglected in most churches. He feels that pastoral visitation and the sermons are in need of strengthening. When he was losing interest in the church and was drifting out, only one single member was ever concerned and visited him. There never was any attempt by the pastors and church leaders to encourage him to return. He refrained from evaluating the pastors of the church.

As far as the Adventist doctrines are concerned, he says he used to believe all of them, but now he has doubts about the Sabbath, the resurrection and the afterlife, and several others. He summed it up this way. "It is not that I doubt all of them but they have lost their importance to me and I no longer desire to build my life around them. For example, where a person goes after death is no longer of any concern to me. I am interested only in this life and what I can get out of it. He used to be very opposed to vegetarianism but has become interested in that more recently, as well as healthful living in general. Presently he feels that healthful living, including abstinence from alcohol and tobacco, is very recommendable, but should not be used in religion to the extent that it instills in people strong guilt feelings. He feels that the Adventists are doing that with their strict demands that all members adhere to the regulations or get out of the church. As far as Ellen G. White is concerned, he feels she may be all right, but that she is being misused and misquoted by many Adventists.
Factors leading to disassociation:

When the respondent was asked, "Why did you leave the church?" the answer was, "I simply left because I felt more and more that I was not getting enough out of attending". Furthermore, he stated that he was annoyed by the Adventists being "hung up" on certain minor things: for example, regulations against playing cards, eating meat, wearing jewelry, and the overemphasis on Ellen G. White and her writings. He felt this was pettiness and to the neglect of more important issues in life. He mentioned that there were some inconsistencies between the standards and the practices by many of the members. He feels strongly that too many Adventists are judgmental and condemning of those who have different points of view. He told of an experience which had upset him and his brother. One day when the parents were out, a leader from the church came to visit. The person was rather critical and made the statement that their mother might not be saved because she insisted on wearing a wedding ring. "As a matter of fact," he said, "the person claimed that my mother was bad. There always seems to be a multitude of judges in the Adventist church." He feels that many Adventists find it difficult to accept others as they are and for what they are as persons.

The respondent was asked how he felt the church could improve and how it could retain its members. He expressed the thought that the church could improve by less stress on rules and regulations, and by giving people a chance to think for themselves and make their own decisions. It would be to the advantage of the church if it would stress the importance of human relationships, community involvement, adult education, and the love of others. He mentioned that it was not that he disagrees with much of what the church stands for but rather with where the church placed its emphasis. He has no plans at present for returning to church fellowship.

Comments:

It was the impression that this young man actually was interested in the church in his late teens, but that he drifted out due to various factors. He apparently did not have strong religious support from his home, as the parents were somewhat weak members who did not attend regularly. He was involved a little for a short time with MV but was not otherwise engaged in church activities. As he outgrew the children's Sabbath School, the church failed to provide challenging activities and involvement. He did not find that church services emphasized what he considered the more important issues in the life of the Christians. The church concerned itself far more with what he considered less significant. He feels the church is too critical and condemning, and that he did not grow spiritually. He probably perceives many things differently from how they were intended. Unfortunately he did not receive his education in Adventist schools. In his case that might have made a significant difference as he was far more receptive in his early youth.
REPORT ON DISASSOCIATION FROM THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

RELIGIOUS HISTORY AND EVALUATION

Interview type: 2  Interview date: 7/28-1976
Interview number: 58  Interview time: 2 hours

Present situation:

The respondent is a 32-year-old, white, North American female who returned to the church 4 years ago. She and her husband are now members of a small church. They do not attend the large church in the community where they live but have chosen to travel some distance to a small church. She loves the church but her husband is not a steady member and is weak in his faith.

General information:

The person is married and has two children. The husband is off and on a student in college and works in the area. She has completed two years of Adventist college and some professional training but does not presently work outside the home on account of the children, even if they need the money.

The marriage seems to have its ups and downs. They have very different personalities, and she is superior to the husband both intellectually and when it comes to initiative and work. She is desperately trying to make a go of the marriage, but the husband often disappoints her. She is aggressive and he is not; she is ambitious and would like him to be a minister, but he feels that it takes too much effort and time.

They like to associate with young people who have been in trouble and need understanding people to confide in. She likes to counsel those who have run away from home, are addicted to drugs, and who have a criminal record. They do not give the impression of being too stable themselves, at least the husband is up on a "cloud" one day and full of despair and ready to give up the next.

Religious information:

The respondent was raised in an Adventist home and has more than 10 Adventist relatives. She was baptized at the age of 12 to "please the parents." According to her statements she was definitely not ready for baptism at that time and feels it was a mistake. When she was about 14-15 she rebelled against parental authority, started to attend parties with non-Adventist young people, and began to drift out of the church. The congregation was, in her estimation, very dull, the services boring, and there was nothing for young people to do. Eventually she had a child out of wedlock.
She moved to a town close to an Adventist college and attended the local community college. Every Sabbath she went to the Adventist college church in the hope of finding friends and an Adventist boyfriend, but she was unsuccessful. Therefore she started to visit smaller churches in the area, but she was still unsuccessful at making close Adventist friends. Eventually she gave up and joined a group of non-Adventist youth. As a result she started partying and attended dances. One night she met a young man at a dance who became her husband. They left for another state where they both got jobs. At this time she was smoking and did not uphold Adventist principles at all. However, she told the interviewer, the Lord had not forgotten her, and the Holy Spirit kept reminding her. Eventually she started talking to her husband about Adventists. When an evangelist came to town, they attended the meetings. He made a "call" for decisions and she went forward to indicate her decision. The husband reluctantly followed her. She was rebaptized and he was also baptized and they joined the local church which they liked. Eventually they moved back to the college area where she had lived previously, and it was difficult for them to find a satisfactory church home.

Perceptions and evaluations:

Looking back upon her religious experiences, she feels strongly that she was converted at the time of her second baptism. She is not so sure about her husband. It seems that he was coerced into joining the church. To the question, why did you leave the church? she said that it was due to many reasons. The church neglects to develop the members spiritually. They want to baptize you and then leave you there. Pastors frequently are indifferent and too old-fashioned. When she "slipped," which she does not try to hide or excuse, no pastor or members were willing to help. Rather they treated her in such a way that she did not feel comfortable in the church. When she moved away, and when she tried to find friends and fellowship in several other churches, she was unsuccessful. She is a very sociable person and requires friends around her but when unsuccessful in getting Adventist friends, she left the church again and joined a group of non-Adventists. She went dancing, drinking, and working on Sabbath, even though she knew it was wrong and really did not want to live that kind of life. But she desperately wanted friends, and that was the price she paid.

A large number of her friends have left the church, and she volunteered much information on the problem in general. She feels that the church does not understand young people, that it does not do enough to help and entertain the young people of the churches, and that real Christian fellowship frequently is absent. There is also far too much gossip, slander, condemnations, and criticism in the church. Members are frequently intolerant of young people, especially if they are different from the conservative Adventist model of youth. She feels there are certain ambiguities in the church, primarily the stand on not using the wedding ring. Furthermore, she cannot understand why church pastors never visit members, especially those who are slipping out of the church. She knows many who have left or do not attend church, and she feels that if they were visited and shown some interest and under-
standing, they would rejoin the church. None are opposed to the Adventist doctrines, and none have joined other churches.

Comments:

This young lady seems to want to be a good Christian, but she got off to a bad start, and she has since been hemmed in by circumstances which make it difficult for her to become the kind of parent, wife, and church member she ideally would like to be. She has tried a number of things to improve both marriage and church relations, but it always seems that the husband eventually lets her down. He may feel inferior to her, become angry and irritated, because he can't quite live up to her expectations. Consequently, the marriage suffers and he "punishes" her by threatening to quit the church. Perhaps she has too ambitious dreams. It may be necessary for her to be content with the kind of husband she has, and she should give him a chance to develop on his own. The question is, Will he remain in the church? Another question is, Will she remain faithful if he drops out? They both need pastoral counseling and need to join some congregation where they can become actively involved. It seems that his parents, who lived in the area, had a negative influence on the religious life of the husband. Therefore a move from the area might improve the situation. If the respondent would overcome the problem of trying to improve her husband (social prestige in Adventist community of having a college degree), they would, in the opinion of the writer, be well on their way to restore marriage and church relationships.
REPORT ON DISASSOCIATION FROM THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

RELIGIOUS HISTORY AND EVALUATION

Interview type: 1
Interview no.: 62
Interview date: 8-3-1976
Interview time: 1 hour

Present situation:

The respondent is a 26-year-old, white, North American female who left the church three years ago after a membership of ten years. Since she disassociated with the church, she has visited another Adventist congregation a few times when her mother came for a visit. She has no plans to join any other denomination at the present and would like some day to become an Adventist again. The respondent lives alone and does not like to go to church by herself. No pastor or any other person has contacted her since she separated from the church. It is possible that she is trying to hide because she asked, "Who told you about me, and how did you ever find me?"

General information:

The informant has a good position as a clerical worker with an annual income of $10-15,000. She confided that she is divorced but did not want to separate from the former husband who is an Adventist minister in another part of the country. Most of her education was in Adventist schools with one year in public high school and one year in a non-Adventist college. She is a little short of qualifying for a B.A. degree. By her own evaluation she is very shy and does not make friends easily. She had no friends in her last Seventh-day Adventist church. In the town where she lives, she has made some acquaintances with whom she associates and plays golf. Her apartment is tastefully decorated and well kept. At the time of the interview she was wearing earrings but no other jewelry. She had no children and no contact with the former husband who had remarried.

Religious background:

She was born in a non-Adventist home but her mother joined the church some time after her birth. Her maternal grandparents were Adventists and she had ten or more uncles and aunts as well as many cousins who are church members. Her former in-laws are well known Adventist leaders.

The respondent was thirteen years of age when she was baptized. She was spiritually ready for baptism at that time and it was definitely her own decision. The prebaptismal instruction was very adequate and she was well acquainted with all Adventist beliefs. At that time she lived in another part of the country, the church was small, and she loved it and its members. The strongest influences in encouraging her to become an Adventist were: relatives, church pastor, and a medical person. She joined because she believed and was convinced it was the
truth. While attending Adventist secondary schools she felt that she did experience personal spiritual growth, increased faith, had peace of mind, and had a sense of commitment and closeness to the Lord. Her home church was wonderful and the members were very friendly.

During college years she married and eventually moved to a very large church where she was unable to find any friends and no fellowship. The members were cold and unfriendly and she hated that church. No people ever talked to her, and the sermons did not speak to her. Although her husband was a ministerial student, he never showed much interest in church attendance. Whenever they came to the church it was always after Sabbath School. He would frequently suggest that they stay home on Sabbath morning. They rarely attended any other church functions. She used to be actively involved in the church but not after they moved to the large institutional church. She supported her husband financially and she paid tithe faithfully.

Perceptions and evaluations:

The respondent rates herself as a former member who was kind of weak, extremely shy, and very, very lonesome. Gradually she became critical and doubting. Considering the years at home she rated herself more religious on all counts than her parents. She has not lost her faith in God but admits that God is not very present in her life any more. She still believes a person should pray to God, but she practices neither worship, prayer, reading of Bible or religious literature at present. Neither does she ever witness about Christ nor attend church, except when her mother comes for a visit from out of state. Still she would really like to become an Adventist again; however, she admits that it will be difficult because she has changed a lot.

To the question: "What did you look for in your last church but did not find?" the answer was: "I found no love, understanding, or interest in individuals as persons. When my husband asked for a divorce I did not want, and when I needed the church the most, there was no one who was willing to help. He had some friends, I had none. The pastors did nothing to comfort and to encourage. I felt terribly lonesome and lost and walked out of the church."

The attitudes of the members and the leaders were rated very high in her first church and very low in her last church. Still she admitted that it was possibly her own fault because she was so shy and withdrawn. Still she feels that they have very little concern for the salvation of others and rates them very low on friendliness, tolerance, sincerity, willingness to help, and sociability. All other ratings were listed average. Music and choir are good, sermons, average, Sabbath School and youth activities, poor, and pastoral visitation and counseling nonexistent as far as she is concerned. She has no criticisms of the beliefs and of the standards of Christian living expected by the church.

Factors leading to disassociation:

According to the respondent she had no plans to leave the church. But marital problems, which resulted in the divorce (which
she insisted she did not want), brought her to the situation where she felt abandoned by all. The husband, whom she had supported financially during his studies and who was kind of a nominal Adventist came from a very influential Adventist family. Therefore, all sided with him, and she was blamed for the divorce. In her despair she left the church. She admits that during her marriage she had become rather lukewarm and gradually drifted out of the church relationship.

Comments:

This person willingly accepts much of the blame, but she also stated that it could have been avoided. She inferred that the influence of the former husband had been of little help. During college days in another state, he progressively showed a declining interest in attending church. Reportedly he also feels that the church is too strict and demanding of its members. When they moved to another place for advanced training, he continued the same trend of nonattendance. He had some friends but she had none. He was busy with sophisticated studies with which she could not relate. Her feelings were expressed this way: "The wives are just working to put the men through the school, the men are all absorbed in their studies and have no time for the spouses. Some of them think they are very pious and better than the rest, but they are not."

A major factor leading her to leave the church was the strong feeling of condemnation she felt by all concerned. The people she knew deserted her, she received all the blame, and not a single person was willing to help. Therefore she was utterly disappointed in the church and decided to make it without being a member. When she later went to a medium-sized church in a nearby town, neither the pastor nor one single person greeted her or talked to her.

She insists that she would like to return to the church one day but it would be in a different place. The question is how long will she postpone it and will she in the meantime enter into another marriage relationship with a person of another faith or no faith? Another possibility for the person not fully committed to Christ is that she may become involved in practices and acquire habits which at a later time will make it most difficult to decide to rejoin the church.
REPORT ON DISASSOCIATION FROM THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

RELIGIOUS HISTORY AND EVALUATION

Interview type: 4  Interview date: 10-28-76
Interview no.: 79  Interview time: 2 hours

Present situation:

The respondent is a 40-49-year old, white, North American female who lives in a predominantly Adventist community. Three close neighbors are actually former members of the church but of this she is unaware. Several Adventist ministers live on the same street. She and her family have never been contacted by any of the Adventists in the area.

General information:

The person is married and has a family of four children. None have ever joined the church. She completed 9 years of Adventist school and went to a public school for one year. Her parents experienced marital difficulties and were divorced. This troubled her and influenced many of her decisions in her early teens. When she was 15 she was married.

Religious information:

The respondent was brought up in an Adventist home. Her grandparents and other relatives were also Adventists. Her brothers and sisters have left the church. When she was about 12 years of age she decided for baptism, but due to the marital problems of her parents she was encouraged to wait another year. When the parents were divorced, she went to live with a relative for a while. On account of unfair treatment of her boyfriend by some school and church officials, she decided not to be baptized.

All down through the years she has strongly believed that the Adventist church is the only true church and that it is the only church that has "all the truth." Consequently she never joined any other church. Both she and the husband believe in all the doctrines of the church but feel the church is too strict on some of the church standards.

Perceptions and evaluations:

Actually she was never a baptized member of the church. Yet she considered herself an Adventist for many years and still believes in the doctrines. She expressed the idea that she would like to become an Adventist, but certain events of the past are still not erased from her mind and both she and her husband have strong feelings of being "unwanted" by the church.

During his senior year her boyfriend was expelled from the
Adventist school for undisclosed reasons. They still feel it was un-
fair. He left for another school where he graduated, and he was also
baptized and became a church member. He worked for a while but re-
turned eventually to his home community. Even before being baptized
he had faithfully paid his tithe and attended regularly. Now he was
baptized and they refused to accept his membership, and even worse,
denied him access to attending church services. He still feels that
a well-known person in the area held a grudge against him and caused
this unreasonable attitude of the church.

As a result of the problems between her parents, the divorce,
and the "unfair and harsh treatment" of her boyfriend, the respondent
decided against baptism, they were married and continued to live in
the area, but they both felt "booted out" by the church. He still
seems to be quite bitter and resentful. She appears willing to forget
and to join the church.

They were invited to evaluate the Adventist community. They
feel that Adventists are often critical of others, exclusive, and
keep from associating with non-Adventists. They gossip a lot and
some are hypocrites and live double lives. They are very critical of
the business dealings of an Adventist in the area, and they were unable
to understand how the church could avoid disfellowshipping such a per-
son. Therefore, the church was discriminating and partial. What
amazes them is that no Adventist minister in all these years had ever
tried to contact them and invite them to join the church. Likewise
that Adventist neighbors never try to witness to them (as it was
unknown they were former Adventists). They also remarked that once
when they went to a movie in a theater, they saw a high church official
in the audience. This and some other observations still make them
feel that either the church has double standards or that no discipli-
nary action is taken against those who are influential and hold high
office.

Comments:

This family was very friendly and greatly surprised that for
the first time in all the years since they left the church they were
to be visited by an Adventist minister. The respondent wanted to tell
in detail why her husband was expelled and some incidents that took
place, but the husband asked her to refrain from that. It was evident
that he is still very bitter and feels that he was discriminated against
and unfairly treated. He observes the Adventist community and, as a
result of what happened to him, notices every time an Adventist fails
to live up to his profession. Still no disciplinary action is taken
in the church. The wife appears willing to forget and forgive and
join the church again. He is not unwilling but wants an apology from
the person(s) who prevented him from joining the local church. Un-
fortunately this family have their eyes on human weaknesses and on
what others do, rather than on Jesus Christ and what He can accomplish
in a person's life. And still it is the impression that this family
could be led back to Christ and to experience conversion, but they are
not prepared to take the initiative. Perhaps God is waiting for some
person who is willing to convey His calling to these "lost sheep."
REPORT ON DISASSOCIATION FROM THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

RELIGIOUS HISTORY AND EVALUATION

Interview type: 1 Interview date: 11-28-1976
Interview no.: 93 Interview time: 3 hours

Present situation:

The respondent is a white, North American male in his 40s who left the church after a membership of only four years. His wife left the church at the same time, and his mother-in-law, who now resides with the family, has been a nonattending member for some time. Neither of these persons have joined any other denomination even though they are searching and are presently visiting at Methodist and Baptist churches.

General information:

The informant is a skilled worker with an income that exceeds $25,000 per year. He has completed 12 years of education, and the wife has also completed high school. Neither ever attended an Adventist school. They live in the country and have about a one-half hour drive to the church in the city.

Religious background:

He has no Adventist relatives, except a brother- and sister-in-law which he acquired by marriage. As mentioned, the wife and his mother-in-law no longer consider themselves Adventists. He came from a Methodist background and became acquainted with the Adventists through a friend and an evangelist. He was in his 30s when he was baptized after having been prepared satisfactorily. It was definitely his own decision but he is no longer sure that he really was ready to become an Adventist. He stated, that he joined the church because he liked the preacher-evangelist, but it is possible that his wife and mother-in-law also may have influenced him. During the period following his baptism, he did not experience: continuous instruction, personal spiritual growth, increased faith, and he had no sense of closeness and commitment to the Lord. He did, however, desire to talk to others about Christ. He usually attended church about three times a month but for some reason avoided Sabbath School. He attended some campmeetings, and he usually paid his tithe but he rarely or never attended any other church activities.

Perceptions and evaluations:

He considers himself less religious on all counts than his parents. He also admits that he is now less happy and satisfied than when he was a member. He has less peace of mind and is less sure of salvation. It is significant that he was unwilling to answer the
questions pertaining to his present religious habits and his commitment to Christ.

The attitude of Adventists to non-Adventists he considered bad. He elaborated some on that and felt that Adventists in general are very intolerant of those who differ from the norm they have established. This affects their friendliness and sociability.

Both he and his wife are very dissatisfied with the church services. Worships, sermons, and the Sabbath School are inferior and need to be strengthened. Pastoral visitation and counseling are non-existent. Music, choir, youth activities, and evangelistic meetings are very good.

When they left the church no pastor, church leader or church member ever came to visit or to attempt to bring them back into the church. The only persons who showed any concern were the Adventist relatives of his wife. He admitted that he strongly disapproved of the leadership of the church.

As far as the doctrines are concerned neither he nor the wife seem to have any disagreements. However, he strongly disagrees with many of the standards of living proposed by the church while she indicates that they are all very good and that she is in full agreement with the church. The only thing she criticized was the harvest ingathering. He appears to disagree with the following Adventist standards: vegetarian diet, no jewelry, no wedding ring, no use of alcohol, tobacco, coffee, tea, etc., and with the church stand on movies, dancing, and music.

Factors leading to disassociation:

The respondent stated that he just drifted out. He felt that he really did not get anything from the church, and since his job was conflicting with his church interests, he started working Sabbaths once in a while. He was unwilling to answer many of the questions, but eventually it was learned from the respondent and his wife that they had some conflicts with the leaders of the church before they left. One contention was the Sabbath. He was in the food service business and was sometimes needed on Sabbath. If he had worked in an Adventist institution he would have been required to work some Sabbaths. He made an interesting observation. Adventists will go out to a restaurant to eat on Sabbath, but they condemn an Adventist who sometimes has to prepare the food for them.

While they liked the preacher who brought them into the church, a change of pastor seemed to have a strong influence on their increasing displeasure with the church. They stated that the new pastor always ignored them, did not want to talk to them or even greet them, and that after he arrived church members and leaders also changed their attitude toward them. All were more or less unfriendly. Deacons even avoided seating them in the church. As a result they started noticing that the church members were two-faced and hypocritical, so they gradually stopped attending.
Comments:

It was evident that this family had left the church with hurt feelings. The change of pastor apparently was the cause of changed attitudes both on the part of members, church leaders, and the respondent and his family. It appears very likely that the family did not quite live according to Seventh-day Adventist standards of Christian living. The reactions from the church were interpreted as cold and unfriendly criticism, and as a result, the family was further alienated from the fellowship. They kept emphasizing that not a single person from the church had ever come to visit or had shown any genuine interest in their spiritual welfare.

The respondent and his wife gave the impression that they are looking for another church home. He was a former Methodist and would like to be a Methodist again, she was a former Presbyterian and thought about joining a Baptist church. It seems that if they join another church it will be a conservative, fundamentalist church in the neighborhood. It seems a question of convenience rather than of conviction.
REPORT ON DISASSOCIATION FROM THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

RELIGIOUS HISTORY AND EVALUATION

Interview type: 3
Interview no.: 94
Interview date: 11-28-1976
Interview time: 2 hours

Present situation:

The respondent is a 74-year-old, white, North American female who no longer considers herself an Adventist church members. Still she is listed on the official church record but has not been in the church for about seven years. Last year she was seriously ill in the hospital and as she expected to die she sent for the Baptist minister. She did not send for an Adventist because she is out of touch with the church and does not know the Adventist minister.

General information:

The informant is a widow who has six married children. When she lost her husband she became very despondent and has several times considered suicide. Presently she is residing with a married daughter and appears to be an unhappy and dissatisfied woman. She completed 9 years of schooling.

Religious background:

She was baptized in her late 40s, apparently shortly after her husband passed away. None of her relatives are Adventists, except a son and his wife. A daughter formerly belonged to the church. Her son was the person who acquainted her with the Adventist church and who brought her to an evangelistic series. She came from the Presbyterian church. The church she joined is situated in the suburbs of a city and has about 500 members. It was definitely her own idea to become an Adventist, and she feels that she was well instructed before the baptism. She joined the church because the doctrines impressed her, and she felt it was the truth. Furthermore, she was very down-hearted and grieving because her husband had passed away, and she was looking for a church home. Unfortunately the church lost interest in her as soon as she was baptized. There was no further instruction, no involvement, and she did not grow in the faith or develop spiritually. For a while she did have peace of mind and felt the Lord was willing to forgive and save her. She attended church and Sabbath School regularly but no other church activities.

Perceptions and evaluations:

Looking back, she feels that she always was a strong Adventist member, because she believes 100 per cent in what the church is teaching. Yet she has lost interest in the church. She reads her Bible and various religious literature but no longer attends church, has
worship, or prays to God.

The attitude of the members and church leaders was good, but when the pastor left, she had a strong dislike for the one who took his place. He has never visited her, even when she was ill in the hospital. After his arrival she no longer felt welcome in the church, and she also felt that some of the members changed their attitude and snubbed her. Deacons failed to seat her when she came to church. At this time she also discovered that some of the members were hypocrites, had double standards, and were unwilling to help others.

She does not feel that the sermons, worships, or the Sabbath School activities need to be improved, but the lack of pastoral visitation and counseling in the church is very bad. No person from the church has ever visited her, and, apart from her son, no one has shown any concern or interest in her spiritual well-being. She has no friends in the church and she strongly feels neglected and "snubbed" by the church.

Factors leading to backsliding:

It was difficult to ascertain why she no longer attends church and actually considered herself a nonmember. The only reason she gave was as mentioned, that she felt as a stranger in the church and that she got nothing from attending.

Comments:

The impression was that she left the church partly because she had no friends in the church, but probably also because she was strongly influenced by her daughter and son-in-law who also had left the church due to controversy with the pastor and some member. It is possible that this sister took sides with her children and after that no longer felt at home. Unfortunately, no attempts were ever made to bring her back into the fellowship. The change of minister apparently was a contributing factor as well. The present minister is unknown to her but the former "was a pain in the neck" which may be a strong indicator that her relationship with him was a major reason for her alienation.
REPORT ON DISASSOCIATION FROM THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

RELIGIOUS HISTORY AND EVALUATION

Interview type: 3
Interview no.: 100
Interview date: 12-9-1976
Interview time: 1 1/2 hours

Present situation:

The respondent is a 36-year old, white, North American female who is not attending the church where she holds her membership. Therefore she was contacted as a nonattending member, but it was learned that she visits other Adventist churches searching for a more satisfactory church home. She has been attending another small church for more than a year. During all that time the pastor of the church she now attends has never visited her or talked to her even once. When asked, "What do you think of the Adventist church? Her reply was, "Do you really want to know? It stinks?" From this point a very pleasant conversation developed in which she poured out her heart and expressed her feelings about a church she does not want to separate from but which, according to her, shows very little interest in her as a member and child of God.

General information:

The person interviewed is a divorced mother with two children. In talking about the divorce she simply stated that her former husband left her and the church. She is capable of caring for herself as a skilled worker with an income between $10,000-$15,000. per year. She was educated in Adventist schools and has completed about three years of college. The two children do not attend church schools which makes her feel badly. She attempted to arrange for transportation but was unsuccessful. Apparently she offered to pay other Adventists to pick up her children when they brought their own children to school but they were unwilling. Due to her work schedule she is unable to bring them herself.

Religious background:

She was brought up in an Adventist home and nearly all her relatives are Adventists. The parents were the strongest influence in her decision for baptism. She was only eleven years of age and not spiritually ready at all when she was baptized after being well instructed in all the beliefs of the church. It was not that she was unwilling, but she did it more to please her parents and because her peers were baptized. After baptism she continued to receive religious instruction in the Adventist schools, and she seems to be well grounded in all the major beliefs of the church.

Perceptions and evaluations:

Why does the church stink? Well, it isn't all that bad. She
actually loves the church. Otherwise, she would have left it a long time ago. But the major problem, as she sees it, is that the church has no use or interest in single, unmarried adults, especially if they are divorced and have children. For ten years she has been alone, and that also means that she feels very lonesome in the church. She stayed in one church for years but when she was unable to break through the ice, she finally started visiting other Adventist churches in order to make a change. For this reason a particular church reported her as a former member, apparently without any serious attempt to find out why she no longer attended and what had happened to her. Consequently, she was not very well impressed by the attitude of those church members. She feels that one of the major problems in the Adventist church, from the point of view of the divorced mother who has not remarried, is that it is impossible to find close friends and become part of a fellowship. The divorced person is in many places treated like a leper. She feels the members are cold and unfriendly. Several instances were told where she had attempted to solicit their help but they declined. Therefore she did not see much Christlikeness among the members. After her divorce she felt closer to the church and to God but as far as the church is concerned it has not reciprocated. Consequently, she does not attend regularly as she should but has always faithfully paid her tithe and offerings. She feels that she is an average member who over a period of time has become very critical and very, very disappointed in her church. As far as the beliefs are concerned she accepts all the beliefs of the church, but she does feel that the church is somewhat narrow when it comes to some of the standards of Christian living. For example, she feels that it is ridiculous and unbiblical to forbid a wedding ring. However, when it comes to drinking, use of tobacco and going dancing, she firmly believes and upholds the church standards. There are many things that could be strengthened in the church. For example, the church is too dogmatic and legalistic and needs to stress more the love of Christ and how a person is saved through faith in Jesus. Counseling and pastoral visitation are not existing as far as she is concerned. The pastor has never talked to her. When she listens to him in church, she feels he is a "phony" and a hypocrite. He is out of contact with his members and lives away from the community of the church.

She admitted that lately her own spiritual life has suffered somewhat, as she was no longer all that faithful in praying to God and attending church even if she does keep up reading her Bible. An interesting point is that she evaluated herself more religious than the parents (former missionaries) which may indicate that she does not accept their brand of religiosity. She did express herself to some length on that point but it is irrelevant to this case history. Comparing her present religious life with the one of her younger days, she admitted that she has lost some of her first love, and that everything taken into consideration, she is less happy, satisfied, close to God, and with less peace of mind. However, she is not troubled by any guilt feelings and still feels that God is willing to forgive.