out of school, left home because he could not get along with his father, and eventually became heavily involved with drugs. She stated that originally she had strong principles about not getting involved in all of it. He is also a drug pusher and got her involved to the extent that she was arrested. She was released on probation but on the condition that she would not associate with the boyfriend the following two years. She admitted that she is terribly torn in her feelings toward this young man. She knows that he is "bad" and always has a negative influence on her and that he has persuaded her to do many things she does not want to do. At times he is mean and very cruel to her, and she told of several such experiences. From time to time she leaves him but he always pleads with her to return, and she usually gives in. When asked why she does not stay away from him since he made her do things she does not want to do, she said that the reason is that she loves him. Many times she has made him promise that he would reform and turn his heart to God, but it is apparent that he only agrees to get her back. It is significant that she feels sorry for him because he has no mother, because the father is cruel to him, and because he is generally disliked and always in trouble.

Religious information:

The respondent states that she was a very religious girl at the age of 12 when baptized. She feels now that it was too early but she did it to please her parents and because her peers were baptized. Her pre-baptismal instruction in doctrines was very adequate, still she thinks that she did not have any concept of conversion at that time. It was two years later that she started drifting out of the church, partly due to the negative influences of her boyfriend, and partly because she did not get along with her father at home. When she was sent to a boarding school, her boyfriend came to the same school. However, he was unwilling to follow the regulations and was expelled. According to the respondent he later sent her "joints" in the mail, and the dean of the school got some of his letters in which he discussed their mutual sexual experiences. Therefore, she told the principal that she wanted to leave the school. She liked the principal and the school, but she apparently wanted to move back home where the boyfriend resided. Later the parents took her to an unaccredited school in the south. However she talked her mother into bringing her back home. Thereafter, she moved in with grandparents and attended a public high school. She enjoyed that time because there were no regulations, no dress code, and she really had a "good time." Apparently it was shortly afterwards that she was arrested by the police because her boyfriend, who still influenced her by long distance telephone calls and the mail, had her deliver some drugs for him.

It was during the time she spent in jail that she finally awoke to what she was in to, and that she received an urge to become converted. She had a Bible in the jail and spent most of her time reading it. When she was released on probation she went to stay with an Adventist aunt whom she really loves and who is the best Christian that she knows. While she had little interest in religious things
during her early teens, she now responds and is beginning to pray. Attending a week of prayer assisted her in deciding to commit her life to Christ. Still she seems to have the problem of falling back to her former sinful life every time she returns to her hometown and associates with the former boyfriend.

The respondent comes from a strong Adventist background, most of her relatives belong to the church, including both maternal and paternal grandparents. The parents and grandparents were the strongest influences at the time she decided to be baptized and join the church, but she was also influenced by her peers. After baptism nothing was done to help her develop spiritually or to involve her in the work of the church. Of course, she did continue to receive religious instruction in the school, but looking back she now feels that she was too young to grasp the importance of a relationship to the Lord. For a while she did feel that she was a good little Adventist girl, but after she entered into the relationship with her boyfriend she quickly drifted out of the church.

She was positive about her relationship to the church. The church members were friendly and she had many Adventist friends. She does find that some of the church members are very critical and judgmental but most of them are warm and friendly. When she moved away from home and lived in an Adventist community with a large church, she felt completely lost in the crowd. The sermons and the church services no longer appealed to her, and she stopped attending.

At the time of the interview she had a changed attitude to the church. She stated that she has returned to God and church fellowship because she knows that she needs God and feels a strong urge by the Holy Spirit to make things right in her life. God has something special for her to do in the future. Therefore, she is struggling to remain faithful after having given up her former sinful habits.

Perceptions and evaluations:

She readily admits to being less religious on all counts than her parents. While she had resisted the church for years, primarily due to the strong influences of the former boyfriend, at the time of the interview she expressed a strong desire to be a converted Christian and live a life in service for Christ. When questioned about her religious life, she admitted that there was no commitment and no attempt to communicate with God in the past. She was weak, lukewarm, and somewhat critical of the church. Presently she is faithfully attending church, praying to God daily, reading her Bible and other religious literature as well as witnessing about Christ to other young people. This is a very satisfying experience to her, and she only hopes that she will remain faithful. It seemed to be very painful to her that after she had given up her boyfriend and her life with him, and then, when she becomes discouraged or depressed, returns to live with him again.

In her home church she did not like one older pastor but his replacement is very good. Like so many other young people she feels
strongly about some people who have a tendency to gossip, slander, have double standards, and condemnation of others. On the whole she is satisfied with her home church. There is no criticism of Adventist doctrines or beliefs, but when she was younger she was annoyed by dress codes and the like. She stated that while she did not live like an Adventist for years, she still believed it was the right thing to do. While living with her boyfriend and even in the years before that, she frequently had strong guilt feelings because she was doing what she was not supposed to do.

Factors leading to disassociation:

The two principal factors which influenced her to leave the church were: (1) family problems in the home, including marital trouble between her parents (The mother reportedly saw both psychiatrists and a marriage counselor. The attitude of the father and his strong disapproval of her and her friend worsened the situation until she finally rebelled against the home and, as a consequence, the church); (2) strong negative influences from her boyfriend who gradually influenced her to give up her former standards (When she got sexually involved with him, and after she started using alcohol, tobacco, and drugs, she felt like a hypocrite in the church, and consequently stopped attending services.) When she was admonished by the church leaders, she asked to be disfellowshiped, but the church took no action. It was during this period that she also started to work on Sabbath, attended movies, dances, and followed her boyfriend, and lived a very sinful life. Likewise, she no longer had any desire to pray to God, read the Bible or attend the church. She feels that it was due to serious crisis, such as her arrest and time in jail, that brought her back to her senses again. The loving attention from some of her relatives, an Adventist evangelist, and others helped her not to lose her faith in God, but rather to start over again. She feels that she will be victorious as long as she keeps close to the Lord, and does not go back home and associate with the former boyfriend.

Comments:

The respondent appears to be sincere and has a genuine desire to change her life. Yet she has a strong fear of the former boyfriend influencing her to return to their former relationship. She insists that she loves him but does not want to return to him, unless he becomes a Christian and would marry her. Apparently he has no such thoughts.

She admits that she is a very weak person who easily gives in to others. She cried during both interviews and asked for special prayers to help her overcome her weaknesses and to remain strong. She still does not get much support and encouragement from home, but relatives and some friends are of great comfort to her.

The impression is that every time she visits her home and home church, the former boyfriend attempts to get hold of her. He seems to have a mesmerizing influence over her, she always feels sorry for him, and she somehow hopes that in the end she can influence him to
turn to the Lord. Considering her weak character, a fear of failing, which is stronger than her faith in the power of the Lord to help her overcome, the only hope might be that she stops visiting the hometown, and that she moves far away to another part of the country. The impression is that she is able to live a respectable life in several other places where she has lived for more than two years. Hers is a case where the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. Under the guidance of a concerned and dedicated pastor she should be able to overcome her problems by the power of the Holy Spirit, subject to daily surrender to Jesus Christ.
Interview type: 1
Interview no.: 17
Interview date: 7-2-1976
Interview time: 2 hours

Present situation:

Respondent is a 60-year-old, white, North American male who made the statement that he and his family were disfellowshipped from the church without first being contacted. They have no plans to join any other denomination and consider themselves Adventists. They were members of the church for about ten years. They still attend church once in a while.

Personal information:

The person interviewed is married and has two adult children. One is living at home, the other is married to a Roman Catholic. He is an unskilled worker with an income of less than $10,000 per year. The wife works in a nursing home, and seems to work on Sabbath most of the time. The two adult children also work on Sabbath at times. He has completed six years of elementary school, and his wife has completed nine years of schooling. Like the parents, neither of the children ever attended an Adventist school, even though there are four in the immediate area.

Religious background:

The informant has no Adventist relatives. He was baptized together with his wife when he was in his late thirties after he learned about the Adventists from a co-worker and later attended a series of meetings by an evangelist who visited his town. He feels that he was very adequately instructed in all the beliefs of the church before baptism, and it was definitely his own decision. He joined the church because "it has the truth." During the time following baptism he was disappointed that the church did nothing to further instruct and to build him up spiritually. He also admitted that he had no sense of commitment, did not feel close to God, and that he was never actively involved in the church. He and his wife found little fellowship in the church which they considered very cliquish, and they really didn't have any friends. The church is a medium-sized church in a small town but they live in the country. They were quite pleased with the church in the beginning, but when the evangelist and the pastor left for other assignments, they never learned to appreciate the new pastor. Therefore they do not attend church very often, probably only about once a month. They do not attend any other church functions but pay tithe and offerings regularly.
Perceptions and Evaluations:

It is significant that he still considers himself a strong Adventist. Occasionally he will attend church with his adult son, but his wife either works or stays home to rest. They have no family worships, but he reads the Bible and other religious literature. He often listens to religious services on the radio.

He had only few complaints about church members. Most of them are friendly but a few are very judgmental and critical. The church is divided over a certain issue, and there are several factions in the congregation. He does not care for the present pastor of the church, and he is very critical of the worship services. When he comes to church it is to listen to a good sermon, but much time is wasted with announcements, promotional talks, and irrelevant remarks. Therefore, there is no sense in going since it usually is a waste of time. The church needs to improve its worships, sermons, Sabbath School, pastoral visitation, and church fellowship.

Factors leading to disassociation:

As far as he is concerned he has not left the church. Still he can not give any reasons why they disfellowshipped him and the family. They were well pleased with the church for some time, but after a change of minister they became critical and started to attend less frequently. Apparently he had a dispute with one of the other church members, and he is also complaining that the church was not very accepting when it came to their two children. Both children were baptized when they were 12 years old. The actual reason for disfellowshipping is unknown, but it is suspected that the whole family sometimes was involved in working on Sabbath.

Comments:

The respondent did not belong to any particular denomination at the time he joined the Adventist church. He visited a number of churches, apparently interested in finding a church home but was not attracted to any one in particular. He came from a Roman Catholic background but did not consider himself a Catholic. When he joined the Adventists he was convinced that the evangelistic sermons presented the truth, but he was disappointed when he came to the weekly services, because they were not as reverent and formal as he had hoped, and he did not find the kind of preaching and spiritual growth he had hoped for for some years. Therefore, when the pastor and the evangelist whom he admired left town, he became critical and disappointed of the successors. Unable to break into any of the groups in the church, and generally displeased with certain conditions and some people in the church, smarting and from hurt feelings, he decided to stay away most of the time.
Present situation:

The respondent is a 60-69-year-old, white, North American female who left the Adventist church voluntarily after a membership of ten years. She is religiously inclined and joined a Baptist church one year ago. It is possible that this choice was influenced by the fact that one of her sons is studying to become a Baptist minister. She has no hard feelings against the Adventists and spoke very highly of some of the members. No pastors, church leaders, or the members in general have made any attempts to visit her, except for one layperson. Therefore, she feels that the church really has no interest in retaining her as a member.

General information:

The respondent is a married homemaker with ten years of education in non-Adventist schools. The husband was raised in a Roman Catholic home but he is himself only a nominal Catholic. She has four married children one of which is a Baptist, one a Methodist, and two others with no religious affiliation. The husband is a self-employed skilled worker. The socio-economic level is rather low, and the respondent lives in a low-priced dwelling in the country.

Religious background:

The respondent had no Seventh-day Adventist relatives. However she recalls that her father told her as a child, that the true day of rest is the seventh-day Sabbath. She became acquainted with the Adventists when she attended a meeting on health in a city she visited, and she was immediately attracted to the "health message." Later some young students from an Adventist school came to her door, they repeated the visit and gave her a few Bible studies. Without further instruction and without having attended an evangelistic series, the pastor of a nearby Adventist church baptized her when she was in her early fifties. The church she joined is in a rural area, and she has about thirty minutes travel by car to the church.

Formerly she had been a member of the Reorganized Latter Day Saints for seven years after a period of no church affiliation. Her parents belonged to another Fundamentalist church in her childhood. She was an Adventist for ten years and has now joined a Baptist congregation. Her husband was extremely anti-Adventist but did not attend any church himself. He is extremely hostile and listened into the conversation for a short time, apparently to assure himself that his wife was not being persuaded to return to the Adventist church.
The respondent admitted that she was very inadequately instructed in Adventist beliefs before the baptism. She felt very attracted to the Adventist people because they were noble and clean people. She was especially interested in the aspect of healthful living. When she was baptized after three or four months acquaintance with the church, it was definitely her own decision and she is quite sure that she was spiritually mature. Besides the reasons stated for joining the church, she said that she was seeking for friends and fellowship. During the time following the baptism she received some instruction but did not really feel that she developed spiritually. She already felt close to the Lord and believed in the Second Coming. The persons who were so eager to get her baptized showed no further interest as soon as she had joined the church. And even if she did try to become actively involved in the church, she had no friends and found no fellowship. Many of the members were cold, unfriendly, and reserved. Consequently, she attended less and less and eventually dropped out of the church. She had paid her tithe and offerings, attended Sabbath School and worship services, but she never went to prayer meetings and most of the other functions.

Perceptions and evaluations:

Considering the time she was an Adventist, she now looks back upon the experience as a disappointment and feels that she probably was a weak member. Since leaving the church her surety of salvation, social acceptance, degree of closeness to the Lord, peace of mind, and degree of general satisfaction all have increased. Strangely enough her degree of happiness, of being troubled by guilt, and feeling of receiving forgiveness from God, is unchanged. There is no form of family worship in the home, but she maintains personal devotions, Bible reading, reading of other religious literature, and attends the Baptist church regularly.

She perceives of the Adventist church members as cold and generally without any personal interest in her. She feels Adventists have a bad attitude toward those of other persuasions. There are cliques in the church and it is difficult to break into the circles. Sabbath School programs are good, music and choirs excellent, but sermons mediocre and not spiritually uplifting. Pastoral visitation and counseling were non-existent in her former church. She does not understand some of the doctrines very well, nevertheless she believes in and upholds all the standards of Christian living advocated by the church.

Factors leading to disassociation:

The primary factor leading to her separation from the church is the hostility of her husband. As long as she was in the Adventist church, they had marital troubles because he was strongly opposed to her attendance of the church and her attempts to follow the Adventist way of living. There was constant tension in the home, and she found that to keep peace she had to stay at home and away from the church. As a result, the members of the church considered her a backslider and treated her accordingly. Consequently, she left the church.
If it had not been for the attitude of her husband and the fact that the marriage was at stake, she would have remained in the Adventist church. One of the reasons the husband disliked Adventists was their attitude toward and preaching against the Catholic church. Now she is hoping that there is more than one road leading to heaven and that she will gain salvation by serving the Lord as she is doing it presently. Really, she does not dislike the Adventists and feels that she always had a good relationship to the church, apart from not attending during the last years of her membership.

She feels that there is really no spiritual nurture offered by the minister of her former church. The decision to separate was also influenced by the indifference of the members and the pastor who rarely, if ever, paid her a visit and failed to encourage her in the difficult family situation. She was unaware of any Christian fellowship in the church, and that was one of the things she was looking for when she joined the congregation.

Comments:

The respondent is rather reserved and appeared a little suspicious when the interviewer arrived unannounced at her home. However, she readily agreed to the interview and after some time opened up and told of her experience. After the interview some time was spent talking about spiritual matters. It is evident that she is deeply religious and honestly trying to seek the Lord.

Her husband appears mean and hostile and did not give any audible response when the interviewer tried to strike up a friendly conversation with him. He left in apparent disgust when she told him that it was an Adventist minister. Her old mother who was visiting at the time later joined in the conversation about the hope of the soon-coming Christ. The respondent was asked the question: "What did you look for in the Adventist church but did not find?" The answer was simple and sad: "A close relationship with the Lord and spiritual growth, but I did not find it." In talking about her relationship to several churches over the years, she stated that she felt it was not one church or another that saved, but Jesus Christ.

The impression is that this lady was admitted too quickly into the church without sufficient prebaptismal instruction. When she did become a member she was initially involved in Sabbath School and welfare work but, partly due to the hostility of the husband, she eventually ceased to take part. For reasons unknown, the church members had little interest in her and failed to support her in the conflicts with her husband. Eventually she gave up and consoled herself with the idea that she could serve the Lord without attending the Adventist church. Her statements appear genuine and she obviously is telling it as she sees it. If she is a "switcher" who after some time will transfer to another denomination, it could not be ascertained at this point. She is very happy to be a member of the Baptist church, but she was perhaps equally satisfied in the beginning of her membership of the other denominations.
REPORT ON DISASSOCIATION FROM THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

RELIGIOUS HISTORY AND EVALUATION

Interview type: 1
Interview no.: 23
Interview date: 7-8-1976
Interview time: 2 hours

Present situation:

The respondent is a pleasant 40-49-year-old, white, North American male who left the church about nine years ago after a membership of only two years. Neither of them have joined any other church because they consider the Adventist church the only true church and the only one they would ever join again. They have often thought about returning but feel that no one in the church really cares and expressed dismay that ever since they left no pastor or church leader has ever visited them. They are presently studying the Bible with some Adventist layperson.

General information:

He is a skilled worker with an income of $10-15,000 per year, but has sometimes been unemployed for long periods of time. His wife is also a skilled worker but presently unemployed. He completed the ninth grade and she completed both high school and trade school. Her trade is well paid and jobs are available, but no reason was given for not working. They have four teenage children who all live at home. Several have dropped out of school without completing the high school. The family live in a rather dilapidated home in the country within a thirty-minute drive of several Adventist churches. It is evident that they feel very inferior to other church members both educationally and socio-economically.

Religious background:

The respondent had some Adventist relatives; for example, his parents, brothers, sisters and their spouses, as well as nephews and nieces. The father left the church in his youth but was rebaptized about ten years ago. Apparently one of the brothers and his wife joined the church at first, then they worked together with an Adventist layperson to bring the others into church membership, and they were all baptized about the same time. The respondent's wife has no Adventist relatives and previous knowledge of the church. Looking back to the time of baptism they feel they were persuaded to join before they were actually ready to become church members. He feels that he was adequately instructed in all the beliefs but she was not. She admits that they had some marital troubles at the time, and she felt that perhaps joining the church would be of help. Actually she joined just to please her husband and the other relatives. The person interviewed stated that he joined the church because he was convinced that the beliefs of the church are the truth. Following the
baptism both of them felt strongly that all concerned lost interest. No attempt was made to help them grow and they felt rather lost. They attended the church services but always felt out of place, they feel that Adventists are rich, too education minded, and that they really do not belong. They attended a small church with about a hundred members. They had no friends and found no fellowship. The members are critical and appear somewhat aloof. They attended Sabbath School and worships regularly, but never attended any other church functions and never had been to a campmeeting. They associated with no other Adventists but their relatives. Tithe was paid only occasionally.

Perceptions and evaluations:

The respondent rated himself as weak and disappointed when he was a member. He said that he had been very interested in the doctrinal teachings of the church, but felt that he was baptized prematurely before he was really converted. Both he and the wife admitted to being smokers and it is possible that they never stopped even after the baptism. Shorty after joining the church they encountered financial difficulties and he started working Sabbaths at times. He knew it was wrong but they needed the money. Comparing his religiosity with the one of the parents, he felt that he was less religious on all counts. He admits that he does not have peace of mind, that he is not sure of salvation, and that he has guilt feelings for not living up to what he knows is right. Both of them state that they would like to return to the church, but in their own time, as they do not want to be pressured. It is apparent that they really would like to be Adventists but have not overcome the habit of smoking and have not found a solution to working on Sabbath. He believes the doctrines of the church, and in praying to God, but does not put it into practice. The family had no form of religious life, except some occasional Bible studies and reading some religious literature.

They feel that the attitude of the church toward non-Adventists is not good. It is difficult for them to describe their relationship to the church, since they never really felt accepted. In the beginning the church had donated some used clothing to them and the wife felt very offended. She also felt that there was too much interference in their personal lives by the church. Their Adventist relatives, the pastor, and some of the members were all the time "telling her what to do" and trying to run her life. He was less critical of the church but did have some unfortunate experiences when the pastor approached him with a negative attitude and unwise remarks. On discussing an issue which is not a test of fellowship, the pastor said: "If you feel that way you might as well drop out of the church." He did. The wife stated that during her one year of membership she became more and more confused and upset and finally quit attending. She enjoys good sermons but the sermons preached in this particular church always made her very depressed. Her biggest problem was the social disparity in the church. She felt the members were snobbish and always showing off their fancy clothes. The husband also said that there was a certain amount of gossip, unfair criticism, and too much stress on Ellen G. White in the church. The
standards of Christian living were all right, except that he did not follow them. The greatest weakness of the church is no pastoral counseling and visitation, and the church has done nothing for their children. He asked the interviewer to advise him on how to deal with problems in the home and teenagers.

Factors leading to disassociation:

In response to why he left the church, he stated that it was primarily due to financial reasons, but also because the wife did not attend and they continued to have marital problems, for which they received no help from the church. The wife felt as a social outcast in the church and she did not get along well with his relatives who pressured her to return to the church fellowship and to live up to Adventist standards of Christian living. No pastor or church leader showed any real interest in helping them. Therefore, since they did not live up to the high standards of the church, and since no one really cared anyway, they left the church again. The only time the pastor came to the house was when he came to ask them to give a large donation for a new church, which their financial situation did not permit at the time. This should have been obvious as their own living quarters are in a basement of an unfinished home.

Comments:

It is evident that this family was pressured to join the church before they were really converted and had decided to commit their lives to Jesus Christ. He was attracted by some well-presented Bible studies about prophecies and doctrines by an able layperson; he was also somewhat pressured to join like the rest of the relatives in the area; and he was hoping that a church relationship might solve his marital problems. If the family had been better integrated into the church family, and if the leaders had worked to build up the family spiritually and to guide them without making them feel that they were trying to "run their lives," it is possible that they would have remained in the church. It should have been possible to solve his problems of Sabbath work since there are many Adventist employers in the area. The problem of smoking still remains. Both declared that they actually would like to become Adventists again. The disheartening thing is their repeated statement that the interview was the first and only visit by an Adventist minister in nine years. They confided that they have strong feelings that the church does not want them and that they are not good enough.
REPORT ON DISASSOCIATION FROM THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

RELIGIOUS HISTORY AND EVALUATION

Interview type: 1  Interview date: 7-10-1976
Interview no.: 26  Interview time: 4 hours

Present situation:

The respondent is a 22-year-old, white, North American female who left the church at her own request after a membership of about five years. For several years she attended the Methodist church but is now critical of that church as well and is presently associating with a charismatic group in another town. According to her statements it is only now that she has become a committed Christian and found the Lord. She is so pleased with her new faith that she has a burning desire to go and preach it to all Adventists and encourage them to join her new "church." She has contacted several Adventist neighbors and friends but they have shown no interest. Her parents are concerned and attempt to persuade her to return to the Adventist church, but she counteracts their efforts by quoting them long lists of Bible texts which are supposed to disprove such Adventist doctrines as the Sabbath and the abstinence from unclean meats. She never attends Adventist church, but will occasionally come to the children's Sabbath School to get ideas for a class of fourth graders she is teaching every Sunday.

General information:

The respondent is married and has one infant child. The husband is a skilled worker with an income of less than $10,000, but she is not working outside the home. She completed ten years of education in Adventist schools and received a high school diploma after two years of public high school. It was there she met her husband who is also a high school graduate. She admits having conflicts with the teachers in the Adventist school and with her parents just before she left the church. In the high school it was easier to make friends, get good grades, and to get along with the teachers. Her husband was a Methodist but he has now switched to a charismatic group. It is very apparent that he had a great deal to do with her present views of religion and life in general. She confided that for several years they had serious marital difficulties and were contemplating divorce. However, she went to an Adventist marriage counselor who, according to the respondent, was of great help. The husband stated that the relationship had improved due to the fact that they had now found the Lord and joined a new "church." He appears to be a nice young man but does not hide that he dislikes Adventists in general and he made several scornful remarks about their beliefs.

Religious background:

Both of her parents are members of a large Adventist church in
a predominantly Adventist community. Likewise, her sister, two uncles, and at least six cousins and a niece are church members. She was baptized when she was 12-13 years of age because parents and others persuaded her, even though she did agree herself. Prebaptis-
mal instruction was very adequate, still the instructors sometimes
failed to answer the questions she presented. However, she stresses
that she had not reached spiritual maturity at that time, and that
the real reason for her baptism was that some of her friends were bap-
tized. The strongest influences in making her decide for baptism
were: parents, a sister, a few close friends, and a pastor. She did
receive postbaptismal instruction in the school, but she does not re-
call having any sense of commitment to the Lord. She never felt close
to God and did not experience any increase in her faith. She attended
church and Sabbath School as long as she stayed at home, because she
had to, not because she enjoyed the church services. She never at-
tended a prayer meeting, and she held no office in the church nor was
she actively involved.

All through the interview it came through that she had frequent
conflicts at home. Only recently could she begin to appreciate her
parents a little more. Apparently she is more attached to her father
than her mother. She referred to her father as a "saved Adventist"
who is more tolerant and understanding from her point of view, while
the mother is "churchy," legalistic, and more concerned with giving
good impressions than with genuine Christianity. Her mother made her
do things she did not want to do, and it is evident that she strongly
resents parental and any other authority.

Perceptions and evaluations:

The respondent considered herself lukewarm, doubting, critical,
and disappointed prior to leaving the Adventist church. Today she be-
lieves that she is converted to Christ and rejoices in the Lord. She
feels more happy, satisfied, close to God, and with greater peace of
mind than when she was an Adventist. She is less troubled by guilt
feelings, feels more sure of salvation, and feels that she has finally
attained freedom. She considers herself a person committed to Jesus
Christ. She has worship by herself daily and weekly with the husband.
She continually reads the Bible, other religious literature, attends
church, and witnesses about Christ.

She is very critical of her former church and makes frequent
generalizations. The attitude of the members to her is not good but
their attitude to others of different persuasions is very poor. She
observed no Christlikeness among the Adventists. As a matter of fact
she rates Adventists "bad" on practically all questions pertaining to
likes and dislikes. She was one of the few respondents who made an
almost completely negative evaluation. It is significant that she
seems to find the same kind of faults with the Methodists after she
had joined another group. In regard to the church services she rates
everything inferior except the children's Sabbath School and the
choir. Again only few people were consistently negative, most re-
pondents would rate certain things high, others low, but this young
lady may have found some satisfaction in "hitting back" at the church. No pastors or church leaders ever visited her to encourage her to remain in the church. Two laypersons and her parents repeatedly have tried to bring her back. The preaching of the church pastor is not relevant to her, he is boring and she gained little.

Factors leading to disassociation:

She readily admits that the major factors leading to her separation from the church were parental problems and conflicts with some teachers in the Adventist secondary school.

Other reasons for leaving are: she was not converted while in the Adventist church; and she lost interest and found that she no longer upheld the standards of living as proposed by the church. For a while, she did many of the things considered worldly by the church, such as, attending movies, going dancing, working on Sabbath, and eating unclean meats.

She also feels that an important reason for leaving the Adventists is that the church is very condemning, critical, judgmental, and espouses too narrow views on what she considers rather trivial things. To belong to a church really does not get you to heaven, it is more essential to have a warm personal relationship with Jesus. "Mrs. E.G. White is stressed too much and misused by the church. Adventists think they know everything and have the answers to all things, but they don't," she said. Her rejection of the Sabbath, laws on unclean meats, and other doctrines apparently came some time after she left the church. However, she does state that she previously had some personal doubts about Adventist beliefs but her statements were not very convincing.

Comments:

This respondent was very eager to participate in the series of interviews. However, it is evident that both she and the husband envisioned a heated discussion on Adventism. Since the interviewer permitted them to talk freely for hours without opposing their statements and generalizations, without correcting their rather naive and uncritical interpretations of certain Bible texts, and did not appear shocked or annoyed by some of the things they "pulled," they eventually cooled down. The husband at first did not give her much of a chance. He had all the answers ready for her, and there is no doubt he has greatly influenced her present stand. When the interviewer counteracted this by asking the respondent to read the interview guide herself and mark the answers, he was put out of the action and went to sleep on the couch. A rather amusing situation arose when the interviewer was ready to leave. The young man woke up and said, "Are you leaving, I want to pray with you before you go." The wife informed him that we had already had prayer while he slept. The point was clear all through the interview that this couple had planned to witness to the Adventist preacher, and so they did—in a way.
It appears that they are strongly attracted by the emotionalism of the religious group they now associate with. They also keep emphasizing how they are free and it is of no importance to keep any laws or regulations from the Bible. They seem to be sincere but very misguided. One present problem for them is what to do about the infant's baptism. He seems to favor infant baptism by sprinkling, she still believes in adult baptism by immersion. It is encouraging that the respondent seems to have an increasing interest in religion, that she now feels closer to the Lord, and that she reads the Bible all the time. If it were not for the strong negative influences from her husband and some friends, she might well return to the Adventist church after she matures a little more. She declared emphatically that she plans never to return to the Adventist church.
REPORT ON DISASSOCIATION FROM THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

RELIGIOUS HISTORY AND EVALUATION

Interview type: 1
Interview no.: 32

Interview date: 7-15-1976
Interview time: 3 hours

Present situation:

The respondent is a European immigrant in his forties who was a church member for twenty-two years. He is no longer an official member of the medium-sized church in his town, but he still considers himself an Adventist and claims that he was disfellowshipped without being contacted and for no good reason.

He appears to be a troubled and lonely man who finds it difficult to get along with other people, and who may not have adjusted as well in the United States as do many other immigrants. Rather than going to church he often drives around in his car enjoying nature and worshipping God in his own way. The person is extremely suspicious and it was very difficult to arrange for an interview. During the first part of the interview he was very cautious and attempted to present himself in the most favorable light. Later he became more open and finally requested future contacts and help in returning to a new relationship with God.

General information:

The respondent is a skilled worker with an income of $10-15,000 per year. He received his elementary education in Eastern Europe but made no attempts to further his education in the United States. More than ten years ago his wife passed away rather suddenly, leaving him with two small children and a difficult financial situation. Through some friends he learned about a European single person about his own age. He contacted her by correspondence suggesting that she come to the state where he lived for a visit in order that they could get acquainted. He proposed and they were married after a short time. She is a devout Seventh-day Adventist who continues to attend the church with the children, even though he only attends occasionally. Apparently there have been a series of marital difficulties in the home, and he admitted to having a violent temper and to often harboring hatred in his heart. It was also learned that he often finds it difficult to get along with his employer on the job and with neighbors and others.

Religious background:

His immediate relatives are all Adventists and many of them are immigrants to the United States. Even his paternal grandparents were Adventists. He came from a strong, conservative Adventist stock.
from Eastern Europe, and he found some variances in Adventism in this country. He was baptized when he was seventeen and was disfellowshipped against his will when he was thirty-nine years of age. He kept stressing that he had always been faithful to the church, and that he felt bad about being disfellowshipped. He feels that the pastor "kicked him out," and that he chose to misinterpret his actions. For example, he came once to visit in his home. He immediately went to the bathroom to shave and clean up, but the minister interpreted it as a refusal to see him and left without talking to him.

He believes that he was truly converted when he joined the church, and that he became an Adventist because the Holy Spirit urged him and convinced him that it was the true church. He feels that Adventists in general are warm and friendly but there are a few who always gossip and carry harsh and unfair criticism. It is significant that he admits to having no close friends in the church. It was just polite greetings and an exchange of a few words when he came to church, and he did not really experience a close Christian fellowship with the others. It appears that in the beginning he attended church very faithfully, but after the death of his wife he attended more sporadically and often visited other Adventist churches in the area. This was probably to some extent due to his feelings about the church pastor who challenged him on tithe and other problems. While living in another part of the country, he faithfully attended all church activities and considered himself a good member of the church. In his last church he attended only Sabbath School and worship services and only occasionally. He never took part in any other church activities and rarely paid his tithe.

Perceptions and evaluations:

Presently he conceives of himself as a disappointed, critical, and lukewarm Adventist who does not have to be a church member to be saved. He still keeps the Sabbath, he abstains from alcohol, tobacco, and unclean foods but he rarely goes to church. He admits that he now is far less religious on all counts than his parents were. Comparing his present life as a Christian with his past life when he faithfully attended church, he categorically states that he is less happy, satisfied, sure of salvation, close to God, feels less forgiven of his sins, and has less peace of mind. He is more troubled by guilt but still believes in praying to God. When discussing the religious life of the family, it is perhaps significant that he makes the claim that his present wife has taken control of the family worship and the religious habits in the home. He admits that he should be praying, reading the Bible, attending church and witnessing for Christ (as he used to do in former days) but that he doesn't.

His evaluations of the church are perhaps more neutral than positive, but in general he has few criticisms of the church members. However, he feels strongly that one pastor and some church leaders have a negative attitude towards him. He has strong convictions about the lack of interest by the pastor and leaders in those who are no longer
church members. He has lived for more than 10 years in the present town, but no one from the church ever comes around to visit or to encourage him to come back to the church. He wishes they would, and he wishes some of them would become his friends, but he feels ostracized and unwanted by the church. When his first wife died he felt let down by the church and God, because neither pastor nor leaders ever came to visit and to encourage him, except for a church elder who came a few times. Perhaps he has a point when he states that Jehovah's Witnesses come around to visit him all the time, but the Adventists had no desire to bring him back to the church. He does admit that his present wife sometimes encourages him to come back to the church, but that he does not go because he feels unwanted. He said, "I am a terribly lonely person and I wish that I had someone to talk to."

He has no criticism of the beliefs of the church, except that some overemphasize the importance of vegetarianism, and he wonders if that might not be more an emphasis by man rather than a demand from God.

In response to questions on crisis events in his life and why he is no longer a church member, he states the following: 12 years ago his wife became critically ill. Four ministers prayed for her and she was anointed but did not survive the surgery. This was a terrible blow to him, and he felt that even if God may not listen to prayers of sinners like himself, he certainly felt that God should take notice of the four preachers. He felt God let him down at that time as he was left with two infant children and it was from that time on he slowly drifted out of the church.

Comments:

This man has no desire to join any other church. The initial anger with God over the death of his first wife seems to be subsiding, and he realizes that he can't blame her death on God. He seemingly wants to return to the church but also has some strong reservations because he does not feel accepted by the others. He is unable to make friends and his relationship with his second wife may still be such that he does not feel at ease going to church. For example, he said: "I sometimes feel full of hatred in my heart, and one can't come to church with that kind of feelings." This raised a question which was frequently asked by the informants, "Is the church only for good and perfect Christians or is it also open to sinners and those who do not always live up to the high standards of the church?" This person feels that he has no business in the church as long as others found faults with him.

As far as could be ascertained the man is still faithful to the beliefs and standards of the church, except for tithe paying. The tension and uneasiness about attending the church seems to focus on the marital troubles and his inability to control his temper and strong feelings of hatred. If ever there is a man who is in need of a minister to lead him back to the fold and the great Shepherd, Jesus Christ, he is the one.
REPORT ON DISASSOCIATION FROM THE SEVENTH DAY-ADVENTIST CHURCH

RELIGIOUS HISTORY AND EVALUATION

Interview type: 1
Interview no.: 40
Interview date: 7-22-1976
Interview time: 2 hours

Present situation:

The respondent is a 41-year-old, white, North American female who left the church after a membership of 21 years. She left involuntarily and still considers herself an Adventist. While she no longer attends church services, she frequently listens to radio sermons and associates with a small group of Adventists.

Personal information:

The respondent is remarried and has one child from a previous marriage. Her first husband, a nominal Adventist, at least during their marriage, had a strong Adventist family background. Marital trouble and sexual difficulties contributed to a divorce she did not want but finally agreed to. Her parents were also divorced. Her present husband is not an Adventist but seems interested and he is acquainted with the church, because his mother is an Adventist. Both she and the husband are employed professionals with an income that exceeds $40,000. She holds a B.A. and is working on the M.A. degree.

Religious background:

The informant comes from a background of Seventh-day Adventists. Both her paternal and maternal grandparents were Adventists. Her father was a minister before he disassociated from the church. She was baptized at the age of thirteen and was disfellowshipped from the church when she was thirty-four years of age. She was very adequately instructed before her baptism but is not sure if she was ready for baptism at that time. She was baptized to please parents and peers. Those who influenced her most to join the church were her mother, a musical group, and two teachers. Her postbaptismal experience was good. She had continuous religious instruction, her faith increased, and she felt close and committed to the Lord. She was also actively involved in church work. The members of the church were friendly at first, and she found good fellowship and had some close friends. Later the church members became critical and gossipy, and when she needed help the most during her marital troubles and the process of divorce, the church just was not there. This disappointed her, and she started attending other Adventist churches in the area, but not her own pastor. She still enjoys visiting with Adventist friends, but has become rather critical of what she considers the institutionalized church close to her residence.
Perceptions and evaluations:

The traumatic experience of divorce has brought her to a closer personal relationship with the Lord, but she no longer attends church. She has daily worship, reads the Bible regularly, reads other religious literature, witnesses about Jesus, and loves to sing the religious songs of the church. She stated, "I am struggling to remain an Adventist. I am less faithful than my mother, and I am trying to keep the Sabbath faithfully. I think my present husband would like to go to church with me, but on account of all that happened, I just can't go." She feels very much let down by the church which failed her when she needed it the most. The church leaders only press for money, and the pastors are indifferent to the needs of the members. They never visit and are not available for counseling and spiritual guidance. She has some hard feelings that she was disfellowshipped against her will, and that the pastors and church leaders from the church where she held membership failed to visit and show any concern for her. She is grateful for visits and help from some Adventist friends, Adventist teachers, and laymembers. The respondent feels that the church is constantly fostering guilt feelings in its members, and, as she is of a very sensitive nature, she always feels condemned when she comes to the church. The church needs to emphasize the weightier matters, like true Christian love and real fellowship. There is also too much legalism and some double standards by church members. She told of an episode which hurt her feelings and warped her concept of the church. Right after her divorce a church elder called her to talk to her. At the close of the conversation he made the unbelievable suggestion that since she was now free maybe she would consent to go away on a little honeymoon with him. He is a married man in a large church in the area. The respondent told a number of incidents of similar hypocritical behaviors of those who are supposed to be the spiritual leaders.

Factors leading to disassociation:

As mentioned, she was disfellowshipped against her own will and apparently without being properly contacted first. It was not possible to ascertain the actual reason for disfellowshipping, but it seemed to be related to the divorce.

She gave no reasons why she feels so strongly that church leaders and the pastors have a negative attitude toward her, but it may all be on account of the marital difficulties she described to some extent and the resulting divorce. She feels that the church neglects the spiritual development of its members and all too often seems to concentrate on dogmatic issues and what is of little consequence. During her first marriage she did go to a marriage counselor but her first husband refused to cooperate and to seek help. They had no sexual relationships for more than 10 years.

Comments:

The person appears very sincere but deeply hurt. The church she loves is unable or unwilling to assist in the major problem with her