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# An Examination of the Reasons Leading Individuals to Apostatize from the Seventh-day Adventist Church

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APOSTASY AMONG S. D. A.

AN EXAMINATION OF THE REASONS LEADING INDIVIDUALS TO APOSTATIZE  
FROM THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

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A Thesis

Presented to the Faculty of the  
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary  
Washington, D. C.

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

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Department of Church History

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by

James H. Smuts

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The problem of apostasy must be faced by every denomination including the Seventh-day Adventist church. The membership losses of this denomination have long been a source of concern to the ministry, many of whom have expressed their belief that apostasy is due primarily to failure to indoctrinate, and to care for new members. There is, however, no available documentary data or experimental evidence supporting this conjecture, although there is observational evidence supporting these opinions.

#### I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. It is the purpose of this study to investigate the causes of Seventh-day Adventist apostasies (1) as expressed in the writings of Mrs. E. G. White; (2) through the study of a few individual cases; (3) through the results of a questionnaire sent to Seventh-day Adventist ministers; and (4) through the statistics of denominational membership losses.

Importance of the investigation. The importance of conserving the membership of the church cannot be overestimated. The task of the true church is to take the knowledge of Christ to every man, woman and child on the face of the earth. Naturally this task is greatly retarded by continual losses through apostasy. Therefore if the reasons for defection are determined, the church will have a valuable aid in stemming such losses. In this investigation an attempt is made to supply that tool.

## II. DEFINITION OF TERMS

Apostasy and defection. Fundamentally, apostasy is the forsaking of God by an individual. However, for the purposes of this study the term will be interpreted to indicate also the forsaking of church affiliations by an individual; for many who are church members, are such only nominally, and since they have never accepted God, cannot be said to forsake Him, but only apostatize in the sense of forsaking the church. This second definition is the one used most extensively in this study; however, the context must be taken into account to determine the meaning. The term "defection", is used synonymously and interchangeably with "apostasy" throughout the thesis.

## III. ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

The discussion of the problem, and data supporting it, is presented in four chapters, each chapter dealing with one of the four points mentioned under the statement of the problem.

## IV. HISTORY AND PRESENT STATUS OF THE PROBLEM

Very little material is available from previous investigations of the causes of apostasy among Seventh-day Adventists. H. V. Campbell, president of the Central Union of Seventh-day Adventists, in North America, made a survey in Illinois "many years ago", to determine possible reasons for apostasy. Unfortunately he has disposed of the results of his survey, and was able to supply only that material which he could recall from memory. In England a special committee was appointed, in 1948, to give study to apostasy. The results of that investigation



which were made available, proved to be of much value and are included in the Appendix of this study.

#### V. SOURCES

The sources for this work are: the writings of Mrs. E. G. White; the denominational periodicals not of the denomination; works dealing with general Christian trends; the files of the Chairman of the Committee on Defense Literature (Seventh-day Adventist); the files of the E. G. White Publications; The Annual Statistical Reports of Seventh-day Adventists from 1917 to 1949; additional materials from the Statistical Department and the headquarters offices of the various world divisions of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist ministers; private letters received by the writer; and private interviews with individuals possessing personal knowledge of the subject. Because of various reasons, such as the personal and controversial nature of some aspects of the study, as in the cases of specific individuals who have left the Seventh-day Adventist church, it was not possible to gain access to all the extant data. The return from the questionnaire as well as the statistics are incorporated into tables and figures to facilitate discussion.

## CHAPTER II

### PROTESTANT TRENDS AND THE UNDERLYING CAUSES OF APOSTASY

AS SEEN BY MRS. ELLEN G. WHITE

Apostasy has been with the church since its foundation. The apostle John records that even during the life of Christ "many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him," (John 6:66). Subsequently the apostles indicated their awareness of the dangers of apostasy by warnings which they included in their letters to the churches (Hebrews 3:12; 2 Corinthians 11:3; 2 Peter 3:17; 1 Timothy 1:12). John Alcock, taking the reference from the epistle to Timothy as his text, applies these warnings to our days.<sup>1</sup>

Any candid examination of the Christian church today reveals conditions which indicate the necessity for the apostolic warnings. In a sermon preached a few years ago on Founders' Day at the University of Bristol, the bishop of that diocese lamented the formalism in the Christian church, a formalism which has grown until sincere souls despair of ever finding real spirituality within the ranks of the church.<sup>2</sup> More recently, another British churchman pointed out that the hunger of men for fellowship is being better satisfied by organizations outside the church, than by the church itself.<sup>3</sup> The Gospel is

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<sup>1</sup> John Alcock, The Apostasy of the Latter Times as Predicted by St. Paul.

<sup>2</sup> Clifford Salisbury Woodward, Religion in Our Day, pp. 7, 8.

<sup>3</sup> Cecil Northcott, "The British Isles," Henry Smith Leiper, editor, Christianity Today, p. 112.

the same today as when the apostles stirred the whole Roman Empire, but it would seem that its propagators today have failed to apply that Gospel to the life of the times. The church has failed to adapt itself to the changes brought about by modern education, prosperity, and the ceaseless procession of novelties and gadgets produced by the age, especially in America.<sup>4</sup> In a recent article in the Christian Century,<sup>5</sup> Charles Clayton Morrison points this out very clearly, as he does also in another article where he expresses his convictions in such a way as to constitute a real challenge to Protestantism:

Great changes have come about in the habits, the mood, the intellectual outlook, the associational contacts, the family life, the moral standards, the general mores and the cultural composition of the American community. The question we are asking is, has Protestantism kept up with these changes in a degree which justifies the belief that it is making progress in winning America? My reluctant answer is that Protestantism in relation to its contemporary environment is such weaker than it was in relation to its environment before these changes occurred.<sup>6</sup>

Walter H. Horton points out that in this weakened condition Protestantism is threatened even more by the forces of secularism, than by Catholicism or Communism.<sup>7</sup> Morrison concurs with this view in his previously cited article,<sup>8</sup> and expresses the conviction that "secularism has been growing much faster in American culture than Protestantism."

<sup>4</sup> Justin Wroe Nixon, Protestantism's Hour of Decision, p. 14 ff.

<sup>5</sup> Charles Clayton Morrison, "The Protestant Task", Christian Century, 63:518, May 15, 1946.

<sup>6</sup> Charles Clayton Morrison, "The Protestant Situation", Christian Century, 63:159-60, April 10, 1946.

<sup>7</sup> Walter H. Horton, \_\_\_\_\_, Henry Smith Loiper, editor, Christianity Today, p. 401.

<sup>8</sup> Morrison, Loc. cit.

In his opinion there are three factors involved in this growth of secularism: secularized education, preoccupation with science, and organized and commercialized entertainment.<sup>9</sup> Of these three factors, contemporary thinkers seem to give most weight to the influence of science. Jay William Hudson in The Old Faiths Perish, a work dedicated to an inquiry into the reasons for the breakdown of religion in modern life, believes that the swift and triumphant progress of the natural sciences, with the numerous benefits resulting from their development, has waned men from their trust in the supernatural. The success of science in bringing about this shift of confidence, he says, is due largely to its efficiency in serving a revised notion of human needs.<sup>10</sup> These changed emphases have brought about the conditions described by Cecil Northcott, who points out that the mass of men today do not regard religion very seriously, thinking of it merely as a system of ethics to be adhered to or discarded at will.<sup>11</sup> The disregard for religion among the masses indicates not so much an irreligious attitude, as the failure of the church to supply their basic spiritual needs, thus losing its place of leadership. This pathetic condition within the church drove Hugh F. Kerr, while he was moderator of the Presbyterian church, to admit that "there is grave danger today that the church reflects rather than directs the conscience of our civilization."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Jay William Hudson, The Old Faiths Perish, pp. 6, 7, 12, 13.

<sup>11</sup> See Cecil Northcott, "The British Isles," Henry Smith Loiper, editor, Christianity Today, p. 112.

<sup>12</sup> See Lewis Gaston Leary, Problems of Protestantism, pp. 20, 21.

Such foreboding and disquieting sentiments as the above are symptoms of conditions in the religious world which do not inspire the average layman with faith and confidence, especially when such statements come from religious leaders. Disinterest in religion is becoming so prevalent that an editor of the Christian Century remarks "whether it is easy or hard, so far as creedal requirements are concerned; to get into a church of any given denomination, it seems to be distressingly and uniformly easy to get out of any of them."<sup>13</sup>

The difficulties described above have, in themselves, the nature of systems rather than causes of apostasy. However, these systems have become so widespread that they are exerting a strong influence upon the mind of the average man, and the apostate uses them to shift individual responsibility for apostatising from his own shoulders. The teachings of Jesus require a radical change in the life of any man, and where this change is not made, there can be no inner power to keep the nominal Christian in the church. Thus when education, science, or prosperity offers a security which requires no change in character, the unconverted will turn to one of them.

Concerning such apostasies from the ranks of Seventh-day Adventists, a denominational leader has expressed himself as follows:

The popular denominations are not making converts from Seventh-day Adventists; but many honest souls are drawing away from them to us, and they know not how to hinder the process.

Our dangers of losses of members come from an entirely different direction. In that remarkable little volume "Early Writings" written for the benefit of our people near the

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<sup>13</sup> Editorial, Christian Century, 11-2:372, July 21, 1927.

beginning of our work and still widely circulated, much is said about the "shaking time," a condition which would be more or less manifest throughout the history of this cause, but especially as we draw near the end of our work.<sup>14</sup>

The nature of this "shaking time" is explained in a citation from Early Writings, "The mighty shaking has commenced and will go on, and all will be shaken out who are not willing to take a bold and unyielding stand for the truth and to sacrifice for God and His cause."<sup>15</sup> These two citations place the problem of apostasy in a new light. It is an unwillingness to yield to the ideals of the church which constitutes the basic reason for apostasy. The turning to other securities is the result and not the cause.

After Mrs. White made the statement concerning the "shaking" in Early Writings, she repeatedly pointed out the failings which led to apostasy and thus to the "shaking out" of the individual who refused to overcome these failings. Such revelations from the pen of Mrs. White bring to light many phases of apostasy as related to the individual, and give a clearer understanding of this problem as related to Seventh-day Adventists in particular and to the Protestants in general.

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<sup>14</sup> George I. Butler, "Early Beginnings," Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, August 17, 1911, p. 3. [Hereinafter this periodical will be referred to as the Advent Review.]

<sup>15</sup> Ellen G. White, Early Writings, p. 50. Ellen G. White is considered by Seventh-day Adventists to be a prophetess and their leading authority in Biblical interpretation. Because they believe her to be guided by inspiration her writings are held to be second only to the Bible.

## APOSTASY AND ITS CAUSES AS SEEN BY MRS. E. G. WHITE

Apostasy has its roots in rebellion against, and disobedience to, the laws of God. This disobedience stems from a mere outward, nominal profession of Christianity which leaves a man fundamentally unchanged, for only a complete surrender to the will of God can result in a lasting Christian life. In this connection Mrs. White says:

Although there are many who preach the oracles of God, there are some among them who are not made better by the truth which they preach. The law of God is on their lips, but it has not been written upon their hearts. After a time, if they are not sanctified by the truth, they will develop the fact,—they will work the works of unrighteousness. The development of those who are not of the truth, will become of more frequent occurrence, as we near the close of time. Many will show that they are not one with Christ, that they are not dead to the world, that they may live with Him; and frequent will be the apostasies of men who have occupied responsible positions. To be dead with Christ, means to be dead to all sin,—dead to the pleasures, the enjoyments, the profits, the honors, of the world; and, if we are partakers of Christ's self-denial and suffering, we shall lose nothing by it, for we shall be partakers with Him of His glory. It is at the peril of our souls that we prove unfaithful.<sup>16</sup>

One of the principal causes of apostasy is unbelief. On every hand one can find those who openly scoff at the idea of a personal God to whom they are accountable for their lives. This scepticism has become so widespread that Mrs. White states:

The prevailing spirit of our times is that of infidelity and apostasy. The spirit manifested in the world is one of pride and self-exaltation. Men boast of illumination, which in reality is the blindest presumption; for they are in opposition to the plain word of God. Many exalt human reason, idolize human wisdom, and set the opinions of men above the revealed wisdom of God. This

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<sup>16</sup> E. G. White, "The Work of the Minister", Advent Review, September 11, 1888, p. 577.



HOLDING POWER OF THE CHURCH UPON THE  
YOUNGER GENERATION BY HOME TYPES

Age of baptism	Totals		Complete S.D.A. home		Divided home		Broken home	
	Members	Withdrawn	Members	Withdrawn	Members	Withdrawn	Members	Withdrawn
Below 7	33.3	66.7	0	100.0	100.0	0	0	100.0
7	66.7	33.3	75.0	25.0	75.0	25.0	50.0	50.0
8	80.0	20.0	90.0	10.0	81.8	18.2	59.0	31.0
9	83.9	16.1	87.5	12.5	91.9	8.1	70.2	29.8
10	80.3	19.7	33.9	16.1	90.9	18.1	70.0	30.0
11	57.3	12.7	90.8	9.4	88.3	11.7	75.3	24.7
7-11	83.6	16.4	67.7	12.3	55.3	11.7	71.3	28.7
12	80.9	19.1	85.5	14.5	78.0	22.0	70.1	29.9
13	81.2	18.8	82.5	17.5	84.9	15.1	72.8	27.2
14	75.6	24.4	81.3	18.7	72.8	27.2	68.5	31.5
15	79.2	20.8	83.8	16.3	81.8	18.2	64.8	35.2
16	71.3	28.7	72.8	27.2	75.0	25.0	63.5	36.5
12-16	78.6	21.4	82.6	17.4	78.4	21.6	68.9	31.1
17	72.7	27.3	77.1	22.9	69.2	30.8	70.7	29.3
18	77.6	22.4	83.1	16.9	76.7	23.3	68.8	31.3
19	82.9	17.1	79.3	20.7	81.6	18.4	100.0	0.0
20	71.8	28.2	75.0	25.0	77.4	22.6	61.5	38.5
21	73.8	26.2	83.3	16.7	68.8	31.3	62.5	37.5
17-21	75.7	24.3	79.7	20.3	75.4	24.6	69.8	30.2
22	86.4	13.6	90.9	9.1	75.0	25.0	85.7	14.3
23	83.3	16.7	90.0	10.0	85.7	14.3	75.0	25.0
24	81.1	18.9	90.0	10.0	85.7	14.3	69.2	30.8
25	80.6	19.4	77.8	22.2	73.3	26.7	91.7	8.3
Above 25	85.2	14.8	91.8	8.2	85.1	14.9	78.4	21.6

Total cases 4,882.

Each horizontal pair equals total baptisms or 100 per cent.

7-11, 12-16, and 17-21 are group percentages.

Member and withdrawal percentages are shown by home types.







INFLUENCE OF ADVENTIST SCHOOLING UPON CHURCH RELATIONSHIP  
IN THE YOUNGER GENERATION

Amount of S. D. A. schooling	Church affiliation		
	Members	Withdrawn	Never baptized
All years	87.7	12.3	0.0
College level only	92.5	5.7	1.9
Less than half S. D. A. on any level	81.3	14.5	4.2
No S. D. A. schooling on any level	35.5	16.7	50.8
All years	70.6	24.7	4.7
Academy level only	77.5	17.6	4.9
Less than half on any level	58.1	26.3	15.6
No S. D. A. schooling on any level	35.4	18.8	45.9
All years	47.9	36.2	16.0
Half or more church school	37.7	39.3	23.0
Less than half church school	35.0	35.0	29.9
No S. D. A. schooling	28.0	22.4	49.6

Total cases 4,858.

First section--college graduates.

Second section--academy or high school graduates.

Third section--church school or eighth grade graduates.

affords opportunity for the working of Satan, and the spirit of antichrist is far more wide-spread than any of us imagine. . .<sup>17</sup>

When men open the door of the heart to let Satan in as their guest, they follow his promptings, and let unbelief bear sway. They misinterpret and misapply the Scriptures; for they read the Lord in the light of their own perverted imagination. While they put on an appearance of sanctity, and profess to be doing the service of God, there is no end to the crimes they will commit in circumstances but fewer than.<sup>18</sup>

Thus the individuals who indulge in unbelief and scepticism become instruments in the nefarious work of spreading doubt, disaffection, and criticism within the church. Graphically Mrs. White describes the course of some of these sceptics:

The men who have lately apostatized say that the Sabbath does not amount to much. It makes no difference whether we keep it, or do not keep it. They say they are preaching sanctification, but where does their sanctification come in? They began the work of disaffection by their criticism. Here is where they fall, and here is where many will fall. To complain of our brethren in the ministry, to be suspicious of the gifts the Lord has set in the church, to always be finding spot and stain in something said or done is to follow the enemy. If one chooses to obtain this class of education, Satan will help him in a masterly manner. After the critics tell all that appear to them to be out of joint, they go into the manufacturing business, and commence to weave webs of falsehood. They abuse the confidence that has been reposed in them, and strive to destroy the reputation of the very ones that have ever been their truest friends.<sup>19</sup>

It can readily be seen that such a course will cause some to "lose faith and leave because of the calumnies and falsehoods brought

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<sup>17</sup> Ellen G. White, "Imperative Necessity of Searching for Truth", Advent Review, November 8, 1892, p. 690.

<sup>18</sup> Ellen G. White, "Words of Warning", Advent Review, May 24, 1890, p. 1.

<sup>19</sup> Ellen G. White, Letter 126, 1897, p. 5. (unpublished manuscript. E. G. White Publications, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Takoma Park, Washington, D. C. )

to them concerning their fellows."<sup>20</sup>

Tests and trials are also factors causing those who are not positive in their faith to lose courage and fall out. "When the test and trial come to every soul, there will be apostasies. Traitors, heady, high-minded, and self-sufficient men, will turn away from the truth, making shipwreck of the faith. Why?--Because they did not dig deep and make their foundation sure."<sup>21</sup> The same writer continues:

There will be apostasies from our own ranks, because men and women, even those who are teachers of the truth, have not brought the truth into their lives, and have not become sanctified through it. They have no living connection with God; and so slight is their hold upon the doctrine for the present time, that when trials come upon them, they depart from the faith, thinking that error is preferable to the truth.<sup>22</sup>

In 1878 Mrs. White wrote that prominent men, who had been trusted, would yet fall away when some trial or test came to them. She warns that such experiences will tempt those who remain to feel that, if these prominent ones fell, no one would be able to stand. Such experiences are to be as "beacons of warning" to teach those who remain that "the word of God alone can keep men steadfast in the way of holiness."<sup>23</sup> Writing of the great disappointment in 1844, she says that "Some left because of wounded pride, which would not let them

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<sup>20</sup> Ellen G. White, Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, p. 111.

<sup>21</sup> Ellen G. White, Manuscript 66, 1897, p. 6, (unpublished manuscript of the E. G. White Publications.)

<sup>22</sup> Ellen G. White, "In Demonstration of the Spirit", Advent Review, September 1, 1868, p. 1.

<sup>23</sup> Ellen G. White, Manuscript 151, 1898, pp. 3, 4, (unpublished manuscript of the E. G. White Publications.)

face scorn."<sup>24</sup>

Another reason given by Mrs. White as a cause for apostasy is that "Some will depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of the devils. Why? (Because they failed to work diligently."<sup>25</sup> In the light of this statement, missionary activity is of prime importance. Lack of such activity quenches interest in spiritual things, provides an opening for the introduction of error, and eventually leads to apostasy. Many a Seventh-day Adventist is in danger of being in this state of spiritual lethargy which makes him a potential apostate.

Another cause for apostasy is self-esteem. A false estimation of one's own powers leads away from reliance upon God. Mrs. White speaks very plainly against such an attitude, showing the danger of being affected by it, and the need of making Christ the object of faith.<sup>26</sup> She says, "God has permitted apostasy to take place in order to show how little dependence can be placed in man. We are always to look to God; His word is not Yea and Nay, but Yea and Amen."<sup>27</sup> And again, "So long as you look to Christ, you are safe; but the moment you trust in yourself, you are in great peril."<sup>28</sup> There is no greater fallacy than to

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<sup>24</sup> Ellen G. White, Life Sketches, pp. 61-2.

<sup>25</sup> Ellen G. White, Manuscript 42, 1901, p. 6, (unpublished manuscript of the E. G. White Publications.)

<sup>26</sup> Ellen G. White, "Apostasies", Note Book Leaflets, 1:19, p. 2.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>28</sup> Ellen G. White, "The True Standard of Manhood", Advent Review, July 11, 1907, p. 8.

for sake a basic principle, and at the same time try to build upon that which is forsaken. Christianity without the power of Christ is an utter impossibility.

In a recent article in the Advent Review, we are warned by C. J. Ritchie against Criticism of the administration of the church, for such criticism almost inevitably leads to apostasy. And as Ritchie ably states, "Egotism, jealousy, and selfishness most often lie at the root of this type of apostasy. . . Strife for supremacy fills the world today, and it is not surprising that the evil one should seek to introduce it into the church."<sup>29</sup> This selfish ambition causes the jealous, unregenerate heart, whether of the full-time worker or the layman, to criticize destructively the leaders of the church, and finally to bring about his own spiritual ruin and death in apostasy. .

Yet another cause of apostasy is the yielding of Christian standards to the popular standards of the world. The danger is not that the openly evil practices of the world will draw the Christian, but it is the things which the world regards as respectable and honorable which are dangerous for the Seventh-day Adventist.

There are lovers of the world, even among those who profess to be waiting for the Lord. There is ambition for riches and honor. Christ describes this class when He declares that the day of God is to come upon all that dwell upon the earth. This world is their home. They make it their business to secure earthly treasures. They erect costly dwellings and furnish them with every good thing; they find pleasure in dress and the indulgence of appetite. The things of this world are their idols. These interpose between the soul and Christ, and the solemn and awful realities that are crowding upon us are but dimly seen and faintly realized.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup> C. J. Ritchie, "The Remnant Church and its Dangers", Advent Review, May 4, 1950, p. 10.

<sup>30</sup> Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, V, 456.

These good things of the earth are not evil in themselves, and there is nothing intrinsically wrong in possessing earthly goods, for many of the great men of faith, (Hebrews 11) including Abraham, the father of the faithful, had great possessions. But when Christians are so obsessed with riches that "the things of this world are their idols," and Bible study and spiritual matters become secondary matters, they are in grave spiritual danger, for:

Those who have step by step yielded to worldly demands, and conformed to worldly customs, will not find it a hard matter to yield to the powers that be, rather than subject themselves to derision, insult, threatened imprisonment, and death. . . [for the cause of Christ.]<sup>31</sup>

In order to grow and develop in any sphere of activity, whether mental or physical, it is necessary to apply oneself diligently along that line. This is doubly true in spiritual pursuits, but, unfortunately, many Christians do not realize the extent of the danger to their spiritual welfare when they no longer study the Scriptures for truth. "There can be no greater peril to the souls of those who profess to believe the truth, than to cease their research for light and knowledge from the Scriptures."<sup>32</sup> It is not enough to obtain an extensive knowledge of the Scriptures, and then to rest upon that knowledge. There must be a continuous search for truth.

Those who have had great light and precious privileges, but have not improved them, will, under one pretext or another, go out from us. Not having received the love of the truth, they will

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 81.

<sup>32</sup> Ellen G. White, "In Demonstration of the Spirit," Advent Review, September 4, 1888, p. 561.



give heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, and will depart from the faith."<sup>33</sup>

The writings of Mrs. Ellen G. White play a very important part in the progress and development of this denomination, for they have guarded the movement from fanaticism and error, and have pointed out the way for new progress. They contain much reproof and counsel for the church, and many individuals have been counselled and reproved. Pride, however, has caused some to reject the messages and leave the church. Mrs. White writes concerning them:

Those who have disregarded the messages of warning [in the Testimonies,] have lost their bearings. Some, in their self-confidence, have dared to turn from that which they knew to be the truth, with the words, "he has told Sister White?" These words show the measure of their faith and confidence in the work that the Lord has given me to do. They have before them the result of the work that the Lord has laid upon me, and if this does not convince them, no arguments, no future revelations, would affect them.<sup>34</sup>

A stronger, more positive statement taken from a manuscript of the same year states: "One thing is certain: those Seventh-day Adventists who take their stand under Satan's banner will first give up their faith in the warnings and reproofs contained in the testimonies of God's Spirit [the writings of Mrs. White.]"<sup>35</sup>

These statements from the pen of Mrs. White are supported by G. I. Butler, who wrote, "Another remarkable feature conspicuous all the way along has been the fact that all these disaffected ones have

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<sup>33</sup> Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, VI, 400.

<sup>34</sup> Ellen G. White, "To my Brethren in Battle Creek," Advent Review, May 19, 1903, p. 8. (a letter to the church in Battle Creek.)

<sup>35</sup> Ellen G. White, Letter 156, 1903, p.2 (unpublished manuscript of the E. G. White Publications.)

opposed the testimonies of the Spirit of prophecy [the writings of Mrs. White,] which have been accepted by our people [Seventh-day Adventists] ever since this work began."<sup>36</sup>

Those who have thus rejected light are led into darkness by their own deluded minds, for, having rejected light and truth, nothing but delusion remains for them.

Many have so long chosen their own standard, rejecting the infallible standard that will judge them at the last day, that they are themselves deluded. They misconstrue the teaching of the word of God; and steadfastly setting their face against His commandments, they exalt the precepts of men. . . . Those who have turned away from a plain, "Thus saith the Lord," will be blinded in a superstitious faith in every kind of apostasy, . . .<sup>37</sup>

And again, "The mind that resists truth will see everything in a perverted light."<sup>38</sup> The importance of these statements lies in the fact that those who reject truth will themselves not realize it, but will continue to believe that they are actually in the right. Such a conviction can drive men in error, to tremendous lengths with tragic results, but while they persist in this condition nothing can be done for them. Concerning such persons Mrs. White writes:

. . . There are among us men whom in the past God has used to His name's glory, but who are now being ensnared by Satan's deceptions. Many who once prized the truth, because they have refused to heed the instruction God has sent, have become independent and full of self-justification.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> G. I. Butler, "Many Voices," no. 2, Advent Review, August 24, 1911, p. 4.

<sup>37</sup> Ellen G. White, "What the Revelation Means to Us," Advent Review, August 31, 1897, pp. 515-516.

<sup>38</sup> Ellen G. White, "The Sin of Unbelief," Advent Review, January 24, 1899, p. 50.

<sup>39</sup> Ellen G. White, "Stablished in the Faith," Advent Review, April 2, 1906, p. 8.

Many of those who have thus rejected the light, and now seek refuge in self-justification, have made it their business to oppose and denounce their former beliefs and friends. And we are told, they will not stop at mere opposition.

In rejection of light, the hearts of men are hardened, and they finally unite with the agencies of apostasy in a work of compelling the conscience of those who do not agree with them, in persecuting and putting to death those who love God and keep His commandments.<sup>40</sup>

. . . [They] will be led into that terrible iniquity which God's word represents as being drunken with the blood of the saints.<sup>41</sup>

In summing up the chapter then, we find that Mrs. White lays the responsibility for apostasy upon the individual member, stating the causes to be: lack of full surrender to God; unbelief in the fundamentals of Christianity; tests and trials; lack of active Christian missionary work; undue self-esteem; yielding to worldly practices; failure to study the Bible for truth; rejection of the Spirit of prophecy; and delusions caused by the rejection of truth.

Modern Leaders of Protestantism, believe the reasons for losses in membership to be the result of the church's tendency to accept formalism, secularism, philosophy and science, thus placing the responsibility on the failings of the church. But a little thought by the reader will suffice to show that these are not reasons in themselves, but rather symptoms shown by the individual members, who have neglected the real principles of Christianity described by Mrs. White. However,

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<sup>40</sup> Ellen G. White, "Our Help in Times of Apostasy," Signs of the Times, September 3, 1912, p. 536.

<sup>41</sup> Ellen G. White, "What the Revelation Means to Us," Advent Review, August 31, 1897, pp. 545-546.

the fact that so many individual church members fail to live out the principles of Christianity, reflects upon the church and its ministry. Much apostasy might be prevented if the ministry were what it ought to be. The old saying "Like priest, like people," is often only too true. The Bible lays down a general principle on the responsibility of parents: "Train up a child in the way that he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6). The same principle holds true for the leaders of the church. The messages to the seven churches are addressed to "the angel of the church of \_\_\_\_\_" etc. Thus, while it is true that the basic responsibility for apostasy rests upon the individual, yet a large share of the responsibility and guilt rests upon the shoulders of the shepherds of God's flock, who fail to put forth sufficient efforts to care for the weak and erring.

## CHAPTER III

### THE CASES OF LEADERS WHO APOSTATIZED FROM THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

The cases of several men who have left the Seventh-day Adventist church are presented in an effort to find the reasons for their defection. But it must be kept in mind that their own testimony contains a certain amount of bias because of the very natural desire to justify oneself.

In the case of Conradi, additional information was gained through personal interviews with some of his former colleagues. Materials concerning the apostasies of Hull and Conright, who left the church during the lifetime of Mrs. White, were found in the messages of reproof and warning which she sent to them before their defection, and also in the statements she made concerning their apostasy.

In view of the unique position held by Mrs. White, and the fact that her writings are accepted as inspired (see footnote ch. 2-6), her statements concerning these men are considered unbiased by Seventh-day Adventists and constitute, therefore, a firm foundation upon which to build one's conclusions concerning the reasons for their apostasy. The actions of all the men under consideration will also be interpreted in the light of the material presented in chapter II.

It is not our purpose to present a detailed interpretation of the theology which may have been involved in these cases, except to state the teachings rejected by these men, as it is not within the scope of this paper to go into the fallibility or otherwise of their theology.

The three men mentioned above were chosen for our present discussion because of the positions they held within the church and because they apostatized at different times in the history of the denomination, thus not personally influencing each other.

#### I. MOSES HULL

The first indications of the apostasy of Moses Hull appear in the year 1862. During that year Hull had been repeatedly involved in debates with spiritualists, in which he defended Christian orthodoxy against the teachings of spiritualism with good effect. He had been a successful minister gifted in preaching and debating. In March 1862, Uriah Smith reported in the Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, a discussion of Hull with one F. L. Wadsworth, a spiritualist.<sup>1</sup> In August of the same year J. H. Loughborough reported a similar incident at a campmeeting.<sup>2</sup> It must have been during this time that Hull began to be affected by the teachings of spiritualism, for in a document dated November 5, 1862, Mrs. White writes:

I was shown the condition of Brother Hull. He was in an alarming state. His lack of consecration and vital piety left him subject to Satan's suggestions. He has relied upon his own strength, instead of the strong arm of the Lord, and that mighty arm has been partially removed.<sup>3</sup>

This statement is in harmony with the reasons for apostasy

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<sup>1</sup> Uriah Smith, News item, Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, March 25, 1862, p. 133. (Hereinafter this periodical will be referred to as Advent Review.)

<sup>2</sup> J. H. Loughborough, Advent Review, Aug. 19, 1862, p. 96.

<sup>3</sup> E. G. White, Testimonies for the Church, IV, 426.

presented in Chapter II, in which it was pointed out that lack of a vital connection with God left the way open for the insinuations of the adversary, thus leading to erroneous views and an exalted opinion of self. This self-reliance is further illustrated by the following warning taken from the same document quoted above:

I saw that you have felt strong in yourself, felt that you had argument which could not be gainsaid, and you have not relied upon the strength of the Lord. You have too often rushed upon Satan's ground to meet an opponent. You have not waited until you know that the truth, or the cause of God, demanded a discussion, but have engaged with opponents where, with a little forethought you would have decided that the truth could not be advanced, or the cause of God benefited.

After having pointed out his rashness in rushing into debates without due consideration as to whether or not he would harm the cause of God, she again warns him of his lack of true devotion and piety:

Bro. [Brother] Hull, God wants you to come nearer to Him, where you can take hold of His strength, and by living faith claim His salvation, and be a strong man. If you were a devotional, godly man, in the pulpit and out, a mighty influence would attend your preaching. You do not closely search your own heart. You have studied many works to make your discourses thorough, able, and pleasing; but you have neglected the greatest and most necessary study, —the study of yourself. A thorough knowledge of yourself, meditation and prayer, have come in as secondary things.<sup>5</sup>

After pointing out these shortcomings in his character, she warns that if he does not change, he will "fail of everlasting life."<sup>6</sup> Another warning is uttered in concluding the document, pointing out his impatience at restraint, and the necessity for a change:

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<sup>4</sup> E. G. White, Testimonies for the Church, I, 127-8.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 133.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 134.



I saw that you would be tempted to feel that your brethren want to gauge you; that they want to put too much restraint upon you. But your brethren only want you to live according to the instructions of God's word, and God wishes to bring you there, and angels are watching you with the deepest solicitude; You must conform your life to the word of God, that you may be blessed and strengthened of Him, or you will fall out by the way, and while you preach to others, you yourself will be a castaway.<sup>7</sup>

Within three months after he had received this message of warning from Mrs. White, Hull gave some indications of a change of heart. In a letter written by him on January 21, 1863, and addressed to Elder James White, he expressed regret at some of his actions, and a conviction that he had been in error. He felt that erroneous stories were being circulated about him, and these he wished to correct through the pages of the Advent Review.

It is true that I held a discussion in the village of Paw-paw, Mich. with a trance-speaker, or rather with some demon professing to be the spirit of Mr. Downing, speaking through W. F. Jamieson. I now doubt the propriety of discussing with such spirits. It is also true that I went to engage in that discussion without the counsel of my preaching brethren; that I went alone, and too much in my own strength, into a community where we have no church, but where spiritualism has a strong hold. This I now regard as very imprudent in me. God's Holy Spirit was grieved, and I was left in a measure to fall under the power of the devil, and the seducing charms of spiritualism.

There was not only an unseen intelligence speaking through Mr. Jamieson, but there was an influence over the audience, and, I am now satisfied, over myself, such as I had never before witnessed; the power of which was so strong that for several days I was not only bewildered, but was really not myself. I imagined that I was outgrowing my Advent clothes; that I was getting upon higher ground than that occupied by my brethren. In this state of mind I made some concessions to certain friendly spiritualists, which I now very much regret.

I now have in my own unfortunate experience the proofs of the deceptive power of spiritualism which I have warned others against

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 137.



from God's word for the past five years, and can better warn others to beware of it. The arguments given through Mr. Jamieson were no stronger than those used by normal speakers with whom I have debated, but the influence I was not prepared to resist. I hope to profit by the things I have suffered, and hereafter not be ignorant of the devices of Satan.

I am well nigh recovered from the snare of the devil ingeniously set for me. Since the discussion referred to, I have had great freedom in presenting the evidences of Christianity, and have been happy to see several infidels soundly converted.<sup>8</sup>

One might expect that after such a confession there would be evidence of a change of heart but, on the contrary, by the end of 1863, he had left the Seventh-day Adventist church and united with the spiritualists in Battle Creek. His course of action forced the General Conference Committee of Seventh-day Adventists officially to sever his connection with the denomination and to publish in the Advent Review a statement explaining their decision, an extract from which reads as follows:

We will state some of his present views, which not only releases him from any further duties in this cause, but excludes him from the fellowship of all who revere the word of God. The points are as follows:

1. His rejection of the Bible, as a rule of life.
2. A denial of the divinity of Jesus Christ.
3. Rejection of the vicarious merits of the blood of Christ, and consequently the whole doctrine of the atonement.
4. Believes in the almost total unaccountability of man.
5. Maintains that every individual of the race of Adam will progress, until all will become good, happy, and saved.
6. Denies the doctrine of the physical resurrection.
7. Questions the existence of a personal devil.
8. Discards the idea of future punishment to the wicked.
9. Denies the mortality of man.
10. Believes in the conscious state of the dead.
11. Rejects the Bible view of the saint's inheritance.
12. Disbelieves entirely the view of Christ's atoning work as a High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary.

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<sup>8</sup> Moses Hull, letter to James White, published in the Advent Review, January 21, 1863, p. 64.

13. In short, he has adopted the theory and philosophy of Modern Spiritualism almost in toto.<sup>9</sup>

These points were gained as the result of an interview with Hull by two members of the General Conference Committee, and as a result of private conversation. Further it is stated that Hull was an "impressible medium" who wrote under spirit influence and had already made some converts to spiritualism.<sup>10</sup> This change had come about between his printed confession in the Advent Review of January 21, 1863 and the statement of the General Conference Committee of January 5, 1864.

Concerning his reputation and character while connected with the denomination, the Committee stated that he had been "labored for patiently and faithfully since he came among us, both by preachers and leading members, for his imprudence, especially in regard to those females who wish to distinguish themselves by being very intimate with a young preacher."<sup>11</sup> With the hope of benefiting the young man, the church invited him to move to Battle Creek, but first required him to sign a written document to the effect that he would behave himself consistently.<sup>12</sup>

Due to his good qualities as a speaker, he was given opportunity to preach at such occasions as General Conference sessions, but at

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<sup>9</sup> General Conference Committee, "Astonishing Apostasy. Elder Moses Hull departed from the Faith, and gone to spiritualism." Advent Review, January 5, 1864, pp. 45-46.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

Battle Creek, where he was best known, he was not "considered a safe counsellor in matters pertaining to the cause."<sup>13</sup> This lack of confidence was further increased by the incident with the spiritualist in law, referred to above, and the General Conference felt it advisable to send him to a new field where his reputation would not be a hindrance to his work. Accordingly he was sent, with his acquiescence, to work in New England under Elder J. H. Loughborough. However, he soon became impatient at the restraint of having to work under another. After about three months "some of his old doubts began to assail him again and he returned to Battle Creek where he went into business for himself and began to associate with spiritualists and to attend their meetings, and finally joined them."<sup>14</sup> ". . . In the short space of less than four months, he has abandoned every point of faith which he was then professedly defending, and has made a complete, not to say unparalleled, somerset [sic.] in his religious belief."<sup>15</sup>

The week following the appearance of the statement of the Committee concerning Hill's apostasy, Uriah Smith reported in the Advent Review, that "Moses Hill had preached his first two discourses before the spiritualistic congregation in Battle Creek."<sup>16</sup>

Almost ten years later, in an article entitled "The Present Standing of Spiritualism," J. H. Waggoner cites letters of both Moses

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Uriah Smith, "Backpage Editorial," Advent Review, January 12, 1864, p. 56.

Hull and his wife published in a spiritualist publication called Woodhull and Claflin's Weekly.

"I lived years 'in the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity' especially the bond that said 'Forcaking all others I will cleave unto thee.'

"Several years have passed since the first choice between the law of God and the law of man, [From the context, it is evident that he refers to his sexual lust as the Law of God,] and I have never regretted the step but have continued to repeat the offense against the man-made institutions whenever God's law in me commanded."

Of his home relations, he says:— "My wife, so far as I am concerned, has had the same privileges I had taken. Whether she used them or not is not for me to say."

But his wife is not willing that he and the public should remain ignorant on this point. In a letter on the same subject, dated Aug. 21, 1873, published in Woodhull and Claflin's Weekly, she says: "I am a firm believer in the doctrine, and my friends who know me best will say that I will not preach what I dare not practice."<sup>17</sup>

Such was the apostasy of Moses Hull as described by his contemporaries and as seen in the warnings sent to him by Mrs. White. The evidence presented points to a rash, hasty nature inclined to overconfidence, coupled with undue ambition and impatience under restraint. To these may be added selfishness, for after his departure, Mrs. White, in warning another, points to Moses Hull as an object lesson, and says, "His hold of the truth was not strong enough to overcome his selfishness."<sup>18</sup> These qualities placed him in a position where he was completely out of harmony with the practises and ideals of Seventh-day Adventists, and naturally led to his separation from the church.

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<sup>17</sup> Quoted by J. H. Waggoner in "The Present Standing of Spiritualism," Advert Review, November 18, 1873, p. 179.

<sup>18</sup> Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, II, 625.

In conclusion it may be stated that Hill's lack of consecration and his overconfidence led him into situations where the protection of God left him (see reference from Mrs. White, p. 20 above). When God's protection was withdrawn he came wholly under the influence of evil, which led him to make such statements as those in Woodhull and Claflin's Weekly. He had neglected prayer, meditation and heart searching; did not "conform his life to the word of God," thus leaving himself open for delusion as Mrs. White warned (see pp. 15, 16).

### III. D. M. CANRIGHT

In the month of January, 1887, D. M. Canright, who had been a Seventh-day Adventist for about twenty-eight years, announced that he was leaving the Seventh-day Adventist church. On February 17 of the same year he made a public statement of his reasons for severing his connections with the denomination. On this occasion he was very conciliatory in his attitude, avoiding unpleasantness, but this attitude soon changed.<sup>19</sup>

Canright began to oppose Seventh-day Adventists, and changed his views to suit his circumstances with seeming inconsistency. He rejected most points of doctrine peculiar to Adventists, and even some which they hold in common with other evangelical groups. Outstanding among the beliefs which he rejected are the Sabbath,<sup>20</sup> the doctrine of

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<sup>19</sup> G. I. Butler, "Why This Extra is Issued," Advent Review Extra, November 22, 1887, p. 1.

<sup>20</sup> G. I. Butler, "Canright Versus Canright on the Law and the Sabbath," Advent Review Extra, November 22, 1887, p. 7.