

The Primary Authority

PART ONE OF TWO

— Part One —

What is the highest authority in the Seventh-day Adventist Church?

— Part Two —

Is there salvation outside the Church?

What is the basic, the highest authority in the church? This is a bedrock issue which, if the truth is accepted and obeyed, is able to return the Seventh-day Adventist denomination to the faith of its fathers. It can change the live of every member; it can quicken our evangelism and hasten the Second Coming of Christ.

A disconcerting trend has been developing in recent years. It is openly stated that the highest authority in the denomination is that of the church.

Eventually we learn that “the church” consists of the decisions of committees on various levels, culminating in those of the General Conference in Silver Spring, Maryland and, ultimately, in the General Conference in Session.

As for our fifth year General Conference Sessions, in theory, these could be of high-level importance in decision-making. But, in reality, those Sessions make few of the decisions in a five-year period of the denomination. The few consists of those on a prearranged agenda by a small committee at Silver Spring. In addition, over 90% of the delegates to the Session are church employees who rarely vote contrary to the positions advocated by their superiors.

Just as with a Democratic or Republican convention, each delegation is required, during voting hours, to sit in its own block of seats and every raised hand is noted by leaders sitting in back. The delegates are locked into obedient voting.

A quinquennial (fifth year) Session, which only lasts ten days and spends less than 25 hours on business meetings, cannot deliberate on many issues. And the only ones it is presented with are a preselected few. Session delegates do, indeed, have legal authority to broach any issue and take any

action. Yet, because they are employees, they know better than to do that.

All levels below the Session level consist of board meetings or executive decisions. In nearly all instances, one man or a small coterie of men makes each decision.

Unfortunately, on various levels of the denomination, a great variety of decisions are being made, many of which are in conflict with clear statements in the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy. Yet this is not viewed with alarm by leadership, since the sentiment now prevails that the highest authority in the church—is that of the church. If the church decides to do it, it must be all right. This is why so many Pentecostal, and even vaudeville, techniques of the other churches are adopted. Celebrationism, women ministers, clown evangelism, and barbecue sales; all are acceptable because there is no objection by the highest authority, which are the church leaders.

This is why so many unscriptural practices are current in our churches. Worldliness is considered to be all right, because the church decided to do it! The church is becoming a law unto itself.

As long as nothing is said criticizing leadership, any church publication or committee decision which runs counter to the Bible or Spirit of Prophecy appears to be acceptable. We can all do what is right in our own eyes, as long as we do not question the authority of those who make the decisions.

But I am here today to question the church as the highest authority. On my side are the clear words of Inspiration. The church does have its sphere of legitimate authority, no doubt about that. But it must always be subservient to the Word of God.

The God of heaven has not transferred His authority to the church. Although ignored in many circles, He is still in command. His directives have been given us in the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy. Whether or not any of us like it, they are the highest authority in the church.

But the matter is even deeper than that: Those Books are also your highest authority! What are you to do? What decisions are you to make? Who are you to obey? Which principles have transcendent authority over your conscience and your actions?—It is God's Inspired Writings which are to rule your life; it is not the saying of men. We may counsel with men, but we are to obey God.

To place man's words above God's words is to Romanize our lives! Church leaders who maintain that the church is the highest authority are unthinkingly heading down the path which, in ancient times, the bishop of Rome called upon all Christians to follow.

The sorry results are clearly stated in the history books (and in chapter three of *Great Controversy*). Strange new teachings; pagan errors; worldly customs; and, eventually, the persecution of dissenters. I present to you the primary authority in the church and in your life. You can accept or reject it, but you will suffer the consequences later if you make a wrong decision:

— PART ONE —

THE ULTIMATE AUTHORITY

THE AUTHORITY OF GOD AND HIS WORD

“The Lord God of heaven ruleth. **He alone is above all authority, over all kings and rulers.**”—*Temperance*, 53.

“God has established immutable principles, which He cannot change without a revision of His whole nature. If the Word of God were faithfully studied by all who profess to believe the truth, they would not be dwarfs in spiritual things. **Those who disregard the requirements of God in this life would not respect His authority were they in heaven.**”—*4 Testimonies*, 312.

“Christ was establishing a kingdom on different principles. **He called men, not to authority, but to service**, the strong to bear the infirmities of the weak.”—*Desire of Ages*, 550.

“It is too often the case that those who are looked up to are not what they are supposed to be. Often sin lurks in the heart, and wrong habits and de-

ceptive practices are woven into the character. How does our heavenly Father regard this? His counsel is always reliable, and He has evidenced His great love for the human race, and **He looks on with sadness when His children are encouraged to turn away from Him and place their dependence upon finite men, whom they know not, and whose judgment and experience may not be reliable. But this has been done, and God has been made secondary.**

“In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, I beseech the people of God to depend upon the Lord for strength. **Beware how you place men where God should be. We are not safe in taking men as our authority or our guide**, for they will surely disappoint us. Individually, we are to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, ‘for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.’ ”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, 385-386.

“**‘The Word of our God shall stand forever.’** ‘All His commandments are sure. They stand fast for ever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness.’ Isaiah 40:8; Psalm 111:7, 8. **Whatever is built upon the authority of man will be overthrown; but that which is founded upon the rock of God's immutable Word shall stand forever.**”—*Great Controversy*, 288.

“**God's law must be exalted, His authority maintained; and to the house of Israel was given this great and noble work.** God separated them from the world, that He might commit to them a sacred trust. He made them the depositaries of His law, and He purposed through them to preserve among men the knowledge of Himself. Thus the light of heaven was to shine out to a world enshrouded in darkness, and a voice was to be heard appealing to all peoples to turn from idolatry to serve the living God.”—*Prophets and Kings*, 16.

“Shall we then allow any consideration of earth to turn us away from the path of truth? **Shall we not challenge every doctrine and theory, and put it to the test of God's Word?** We should not allow any argument of man's to turn us away from a thorough investigation of Bible truth. **The opinions and customs of men are not to be received as of divine authority.** God has revealed in His Word what is the whole duty of man, and we are not to be swayed from the great standard of righteousness. He sent His only-begotten Son to be our example, and bade us to hear and follow Him. **We must not be influenced from the truth as it is in Jesus, because great and professedly good men urge**

their ideas above the plain statements of the Word of God.”—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, 127-128.

“There was contention among the angels. **Satan and his sympathizers were striving to reform the government of God.** They wished to look into His unsearchable wisdom, and ascertain His purpose in exalting Jesus and endowing Him with such unlimited power and command. **They rebelled against the authority of the Son.** All the heavenly host were summoned to appear before the Father to have each case decided.”—*Early Writings*, 145-146.

“Because so many rank themselves under the banner of the prince of darkness, will God’s commandment-keeping people swerve from their allegiance? Never! **Not one who is abiding in Christ will fail or fall. His followers will bow in obedience to a higher authority than that of any earthly potentate.** While the contempt placed upon God’s commandments leads many to suppress the truth and show less reverence for it, the faithful ones will with greater earnestness hold aloft its distinguishing truths. **We are not left to our own direction. In all our ways we should acknowledge God, and He will direct our paths.** We should consult His Word with humble hearts, ask His counsel, give up our will to His. We can do nothing without God.”—*2 Selected Messages*, 368-369.

“The angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said, Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.’ **We see here that the men in authority are not always to be obeyed, even though they may profess to be teachers of Bible doctrine.**”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, 69.

“**Mighty issues for the world were at stake.** Those who had accepted the reformed faith met together, and their unanimous decision was, ‘Let us reject this decree. **In matters of conscience the majority has no power.**’—*Merle d’Aubigne, History of the Reformation*, b. 13, ch. 5. This principle we in our day are firmly to maintain.

“The banner of truth and religious liberty held aloft by the founders of the gospel church and by God’s witnesses during the centuries that have passed since then, has, in this last conflict, been committed to our hands. The responsibility for this great gift rests with those whom God has blessed with a knowledge of His Word. **We are to receive this Word as supreme authority.** We are to recognize human government as an ordinance of divine appointment, and teach obedience to it as a sacred

duty, within its legitimate sphere. **But when its claims conflict with the claims of God, we must obey God rather than men. God’s Word must be recognized as above all human legislation. A ‘Thus saith the Lord’ is not to be set aside for a ‘Thus saith the church’ or a ‘Thus saith the state.’** The crown of Christ is to be lifted above the diadems of earthly potentates.”—*Acts of the Apostles*, 68-69.

“The masses of the people turn away their ears from hearing the truth and are turned unto fables. The apostle Paul declared, looking down to the last days: **‘The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine.’ 2 Timothy 4:3. That time has fully come. The multitudes do not want Bible truth,** because it interferes with the desires of the sinful, world-loving heart; and Satan supplies the deceptions which they love.”—*Great Controversy*, 594-595.

“Terrible have been the results of rejecting the authority of Heaven.”—*Great Controversy*, 36. [Read the entire page.]

“**The opinions of learned men,** the deductions of science, **the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils,** as numerous and discordant as are the churches which they represent, **the voice of the majority**—not one nor all of these should be regarded as evidence for or against any point of religious faith. **Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain ‘Thus saith the Lord’ in its support.**”—*Great Controversy*, 595.

“**Christ foresaw that the undue assumption of authority indulged by the scribes and Pharisees would not cease** with the dispersion of the Jews. He had a prophetic view of **the work of exalting human authority to rule the conscience, which has been so terrible a curse to the church in all ages.** And His fearful denunciations of the scribes and Pharisees, and His warnings to the people not to follow these blind leaders, were placed on record as an admonition to future generations.”—*Great Controversy*, 596.

“**The Roman Church reserves to the clergy the right to interpret the Scriptures.** On the ground that ecclesiastics alone are competent to explain God’s Word, it is withheld from the common people. Though the Reformation gave the Scriptures to all, yet the selfsame principle which was maintained by Rome prevents multitudes in Protestant churches from searching the Bible for themselves. **They are taught to accept its teachings as interpreted by the church;** and there are

thousands who dare receive nothing, however plainly revealed in Scripture, that is contrary to their creed or the established teaching of their church.

“Notwithstanding the Bible is full of warnings against false teachers, **many are ready thus to commit the keeping of their souls to the clergy.** There are today thousands of professors of religion who can give no other reason for points of faith which they hold than that they were so instructed by their religious leaders. They pass by the Saviour’s teachings almost unnoticed, and place implicit confidence in the words of the ministers. But are ministers infallible? **How can we trust our souls to their guidance unless we know from God’s Word that they are light bearers?**”

“A lack of moral courage to step aside from the beaten track of the world leads many to follow in the steps of learned men; and by their reluctance to investigate for themselves, they are becoming hopelessly fastened in the chains of error. They see that the truth for this time is plainly brought to view in the Bible; and they feel the power of the Holy Spirit attending its proclamation; **yet they allow the opposition of the clergy to turn them from the light.** Though reason and conscience are convinced, **these deluded souls dare not think differently from the minister;** and their individual judgment, their eternal interests, are sacrificed to the unbelief, the pride and prejudice, of another.”—*Great Controversy*, 597.

Important: It should be mentioned here that *Great Controversy*, chapter 37 (*The Scriptures, a Safeguard*) was included in all three editions of that book. The chapter stands unique, for it is in the middle of the final chapters while presenting principles for those who must face that future crisis. God had that chapter placed there as a warning to us about these very issues.

There are those among us who declare that men wrote the 1888 and 1911 editions of *Great Controversy*. That is not true; God protects His Inspired Writings. If unscrupulous men had tampered with any of those three editions, they would have omitted chapter 37! Read it for yourself (593-602).

“Satan is constantly endeavoring to attract attention to man in the place of God. He leads the people to look to bishops, to pastors, to professors of theology, as their guides, instead of searching the Scriptures to learn their duty for

themselves. Then, by controlling the minds of these leaders, he can influence the multitudes according to his will.”—*Great Controversy*, 595.

“The truth and the glory of God are inseparable; **it is impossible for us, with the Bible within our reach, to honor God by erroneous opinions.** Many claim that it matters not what one believes, if his life is only right. But the life is molded by the faith. If light and truth is within our reach, and we neglect to improve the privilege of hearing and seeing it, we virtually reject it; we are choosing darkness rather than light.

“‘There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.’ Proverbs 16:25. Ignorance is no excuse for error or sin, when there is every opportunity to know the will of God. A man is traveling and comes to a place where there are several roads and a guideboard indicating where each one leads. **If he disregards the guideboard, and takes whichever road seems to him to be right, he may be ever so sincere, but will in all probability find himself on the wrong road.**

“God has given us His Word that we may become acquainted with its teachings and know for ourselves what He requires of us. When the lawyer came to Jesus with the inquiry, ‘What shall I do to inherit eternal life?’ the Saviour referred him to the Scriptures, saying: ‘What is written in the law? how readest thou?’ Ignorance will not excuse young or old, nor release them from the punishment due for the transgression of God’s law; because there is in their hands a faithful presentation of that law and of its principles and claims. It is not enough to have good intentions; **it is not enough to do what a man thinks is right or what the minister tells him is right. His soul’s salvation is at stake, and he should search the Scriptures for himself.** However strong may be his convictions, **however confident he may be that the minister knows what is truth, this is not his foundation.** He has a chart pointing out every waymark on the heavenward journey, and he ought not to guess at anything.

“It is the first and highest duty of every rational being to learn from the Scriptures what is truth, and then to walk in the light and encourage others to follow his example. We should day by day study the Bible diligently, weighing every thought and comparing scripture with scripture.

The Primary Authority

**PART TWO
OF TWO**

Continued from the preceding tract in this series

With divine help we are to form our opinions for ourselves as we are to answer for ourselves before God.

“The truths most plainly revealed in the Bible have been involved in doubt and darkness by learned men, who, with a pretense of great wisdom, teach that the Scriptures have a mystical, a secret, spiritual meaning not apparent in the language employed. **These men are false teachers.**”—*Great Controversy*, 597-598.

“The more he searches the Bible, the deeper is his conviction that it is the Word of the living God, and **human reason bows before the majesty of divine revelation. Those are blessed with clearest light who are willing thus to accept the living oracles upon the authority of God.** If asked to explain certain statements, they can only answer: ‘It is so presented in the Scriptures.’ They are obliged to acknowledge that they cannot explain the operation of divine power or the manifestation of divine wisdom. It is as the Lord intended it should be, that we find ourselves compelled to accept some things solely by faith.”—*5 Testimonies*, 700-701.

“While the divine Ruler bears long with perversity, He is not deceived and will not always keep silence. His supremacy, His authority as Ruler of the universe, must finally be acknowledged and the just claims of His law vindicated.”—*9 Testimonies*, 94.

“When the testing time shall come, those who have made God’s Word their rule of life will be revealed. In summer there is no noticeable difference between evergreens and other trees; but when the blasts of winter come, the evergreens remain unchanged, while other trees are stripped of their foliage. **So the falsehearted professor may not now be distinguished from the real Christian, but the time is just upon us when the difference will be apparent.** Let opposition arise, let bigotry and intolerance again bear sway, let persecution be kindled, and the halfhearted and hypocritical will waver and yield the faith; but the true Christian will stand firm as a rock, his faith stronger, his hope brighter, than in days of prosperity.”—*Great Controversy*, 602.

THE AUTHORITY OF THE CHURCH

Whenever it does so on the basis of God’s Word, the church on earth is authorized to settle matters of dispute and discipline its members.

“‘Verily I say unto you,’ Christ continued, ‘Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.’ This statement holds its force in all ages. On the church has been conferred the power to act in Christ’s stead. It is God’s instrumentality for the preservation of order and discipline among His people. **To it the Lord has delegated the power to settle all questions respecting its prosperity, purity, and order.** Upon it rests the responsibility of excluding from its fellowship those who are unworthy, who by their unchristlike conduct would bring dishonor on the truth. Whatever the church does **that is in accordance with the directions given in God’s Word,** will be ratified in heaven.”—*Gospel Workers*, 501-502

“In the commission to His disciples, Christ not only outlined their work, but gave them their message. **Teach the people, He said, ‘to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.’ The disciples were to teach what Christ had taught. That which He had spoken, not only in person, but through all the prophets and teachers of the Old Testament,** is here included. **Human teaching is shut out. There is no place for tradition, for man’s theories and conclusions, or for church legislation. No laws ordained by ecclesiastical authority are included in the commission. None of these are Christ’s servants to teach.** ‘The law and the prophets,’ with the record of His own words and deeds, are the treasure committed to the disciples to be given to the world. Christ’s name is their watchword, their badge of distinction, their bond of union, the authority for their course of action, and the source of their success. **Nothing that does not bear His superscription is to be recognized in His kingdom.**”—*Desire of Ages*, 826.

“The Lord does not sanction arbitrary authority.”—*7 Testimonies*, 179.

“Those who did not search the Scriptures for themselves were content to accept conclusions that were in accordance with their desires. **By argument,**

sophistry, the traditions of the Fathers, and the authority of the church, many endeavored to overthrow the truth.”—*Great Controversy*, 455.

“**These men give evidence of fallibility** in very many ways; **they work upon principles which the Word of God condemns.** That which makes me feel to the very depths of my being, and makes me know that their works are not the works of God, is that **they suppose they have authority to rule their fellowmen.** The Lord has given them no more right to rule others than He has given others to rule them. Those who assume the control of their fellowmen take into their finite hands a work that devolves upon God alone.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, 76.

“The spirit of domination is extending to the presidents of our conferences. **If a man is sanguine of his own powers and seeks to exercise dominion over his brethren, feeling that he is invested with authority to make his will the ruling power, the best and only safe course is to remove him,** lest great harm be done and he lose his own soul and imperil the souls of others. ‘All ye are brethren.’

“**This disposition to lord it over God’s heritage will cause a reaction unless these men change their course.** Those in authority should manifest the spirit of Christ. They should deal as He would deal with every case that requires attention. They should go weighted with the Holy Spirit. **A man’s position does not make him one jot or tittle greater in the sight of God;** it is character alone that God values.

“The goodness, mercy, and love of God were proclaimed by Christ to Moses. This was God’s character. When men who profess to serve God ignore His parental character and depart from honor and righteousness in dealing with their fellowmen, Satan exults, for he has inspired them with his attributes. **They are following in the track of Romanism.**”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, 362.

— PART TWO —

THE BASIS OF SALVATION

A second trend that is developing in our denomination is the concept that “salvation is only in the church.” This is the teaching that a person can only be saved if he is registered on the church books. (While writing this tract set a friend called and, learning its topic, said that his conference president in the Northwest regularly tells audiences, “To be outside the church is to be outside of Christ.”)

All agree that every faithful child of God who knows the Advent truths, given us through the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy, is quite content to be a member of the church, there to enjoy its blessed fellowship—when a majority of the members of the church are also living in harmony with our historic beliefs.

The problem occurs when, for one reason or another, faithful believers have become separated from the church through no fault of their own. Although they love the Lord and are trying to do the best they can,—they are then told that they cannot be saved unless they are on the church rolls. “There is no salvation outside the church,” is the message.

What does history and the Word of God tell us about this matter?

It is an interesting fact that the power of Rome over men’s souls came from its decree that there is no salvation outside the church. This effectively tied the members to obedience to whatever church leaders told them was right.

There is a relationship between authority and salvation. If the highest authority belongs to God and His Word, then we must come to Him and obey His Word in order to receive that salvation. But if the highest authority is the church, then its leaders soon proclaim that no one can be saved outside the church.

What does the Word of God teach on this matter?

IS SALVATION FROM THE CHURCH OR FROM GOD?

“A familiarity with the Word of God is our only hope. Those who diligently search the Scriptures will not accept Satan’s delusions as the truth of God. No one need be overcome by the speculations presented by the enemy of God and of Christ. We are not to speculate regarding points upon which the Word of God is silent. **All that is necessary for our salvation is given in the Word of God.** Day by day we are to make the Bible the man of our counsel.”—*1 Selected Messages*, 228.

“**That which God required of Adam before his fall was perfect obedience to His law. God requires now what He required of Adam, perfect obedience,** righteousness without a flaw, without shortcoming in His sight. God help us to render to Him all His law requires. We cannot do this without that faith that brings Christ’s righteousness into daily practice . . .

“**Salvation is not to be baptized, not to have our names upon the church books,** not to preach the truth. **But it is a living union with Jesus**

1 **Christ** to be renewed in heart, doing the works of
 0 Christ in faith and labor of love, in patience, meek-
 4 ness, and hope. Every soul united to Christ will be
 a living missionary to all around him.”—*Letter 55, 1886; 2 Selected Messages, 380-381.*

“Many at ___ will not consent to be saved in God’s appointed way. They will not take the trouble to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling. The latter they do not experience; and, rather than be at the trouble of obtaining an experience through individual effort, **they will run the risk of leaning upon others and trusting in their experience. They cannot consent to watch and pray, to live for God and Him only.** It is more pleasant to live in obedience to self.”—*2 Testimonies, 397.*

“You have been too liberal with your means, for the very reason that **you have thought this was to obtain salvation for you** and buy you a position in the church. No, indeed! it is you that is wanted, not the little means you possess. If you would be transformed by the renewing of your mind and be converted, deal truly with your own soul. **It is all that the church require.**”—*2 Testimonies, 86.*

“**A salvation that could be bought with money was more easily obtained than that which requires repentance,** faith, and diligent effort to resist and overcome sin.”—*Great Controversy, 128.*

“The ‘great house’ represents the church. **In the church will be found the vile as well as the precious.** The net cast into the sea gathers both good and bad.”—*7 Bible Commentary, 918.*

“The message of salvation is communicated to men through human agencies. But **the Jews had sought to make a monopoly of the truth** which is eternal life.”—*Desire of Ages, 36.*

“Jesus not only tells Nicodemus that he must have a new heart in order to see the kingdom of heaven, but tells him how to obtain a new heart. He reads the inquiring mind of a true seeker after truth, and presents before him the representation of Himself: ‘As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.’ Good news! good news! ring throughout the world! **‘For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.’** This lesson is one of the greatest importance to every soul that lives; for **the terms of salvation are here laid out in distinct lines.** If one had no other text in the Bible, this alone would be a guide for the soul.”—*Testi-*

monies to Ministers, 370.

“No matter who you are or what your life has been, **you can be saved only in God’s appointed way. You must repent; you must fall helpless on the Rock, Christ Jesus.** You must feel your need of a physician and of the one only remedy for sin, the blood of Christ. This remedy can be secured only by repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.”—*5 Testimonies, 218.*

“**How are you to know that you are accepted of God? Study His Word prayerfully. Lay it not aside for any other book.** This Book convinces of sin. It plainly reveals the way of salvation. It brings to view a bright and glorious reward. It reveals to you a complete Saviour, and teaches you that through His boundless mercy alone can you expect salvation.

“Do not neglect secret prayer, for it is the soul of religion. With earnest, fervent prayer, plead for purity of soul. Plead as earnestly, as eagerly, as you would for your mortal life, were it at stake. Remain before God until unutterable longings are begotten within you for salvation, and the sweet evidence is obtained of pardoned sin.

“**The hope of eternal life is not to be received upon slight grounds. It is a subject to be settled between God and your own soul—settled for eternity. A supposed hope, and nothing more, will prove your ruin. Since you are to stand or fall by the Word of God, it is to that Word you must look for testimony in your case. There you can see what is required of you to become a Christian.** Do not lay off your armor, or leave the battlefield until you have obtained the victory, and triumph in your Redeemer.”—*1 Testimonies, 163-164.*

“The great principles of the law, of the very nature of God, are embodied in the words of Christ on the mount. Whoever builds upon them is building upon Christ, the Rock of Ages. **In receiving the Word, we receive Christ. And only those who thus receive His words are building upon Him. ‘Other foundation can no man lay** than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.’ 1 Corinthians 3:11. **‘There is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved.’** Acts 4:12. Christ, the Word, the revelation of God,—the manifestation of His character, His law, His love, His life,—is the only foundation upon which we can build a character that will endure. **We build on Christ by obeying His Word . . .**

“Religion consists in doing the words of Christ; not doing to earn God’s favor, but because, all un-

deserving, we have received the gift of His love. **Christ places the salvation of man, not upon profession merely, but upon faith that is made manifest in works of righteousness. Doing, not saying merely, is expected of the followers of Christ.** It is through action that character is built. 'As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.' Romans 8:14. Not those whose hearts are touched by the Spirit, not those who now and then yield to its power, but they that are led by the Spirit, are the sons of God.

"Do you desire to become a follower of Christ, yet know not how to begin? Are you in darkness and know not how to find the light? Follow the light you have. **Set your heart to obey what you do know of the Word of God. His power, His very life, dwells in His Word. As you receive the Word in faith, it will give you power to obey.** As you give heed to the light you have, greater light will come. You are building on God's Word, and your character will be builded after the similitude of the character of Christ . . .

"But **every building erected on other foundation than God's Word will fall. He who, like the Jews in Christ's day, builds on the foundation of human ideas and opinions, of forms and ceremonies of man's invention, or on any works that he can do independently of the grace of Christ, is erecting his structure of character upon the shifting sand.** The fierce tempests of temptation will sweep away the sandy foundation and leave his house a wreck on the shores of time."—*Mount of Blessing, 148-151.*

"No repentance is genuine that does not work reformation. The righteousness of Christ is not a cloak to cover unconfessed and unforsaken sin; it is a principle of life that transforms the character and controls the conduct. **Holiness is wholeness for God; it is the entire surrender of heart and life to the indwelling of the principles of heaven.**"—*Desire of Ages, 555-556.*

"**Obedience to the law is essential, not only to our salvation, but to our own happiness** and the happiness of all with whom we are connected."—*1 Selected Messages, 218.*

"**We cannot earn salvation, but we are to seek for it** with as much interest and perseverance as though we would abandon everything in the world for it. **We are to seek for the pearl of great price, but not in worldly marts or in worldly ways.**

The price we are required to pay is not gold or silver, for this belongs to God. **Abandon the idea that temporal or spiritual advantages will win for you salvation. God calls for your willing obedience. He asks you to give up your sins.** 'To him that overcometh,' Christ declares, 'will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne.' Rev. 3:21."—*Christ's Object Lessons, 117.*

"There is salvation for you, but only through the merits of Jesus Christ."—*Testimonies to Ministers, 97.*

Before concluding this study, we should briefly consider why faithful souls ever conscientiously separate from the church.

Since they are desperately searching for ways to increase membership, leaders would do well to consider why the cream keeps separating.

From the Fall in the Garden, down to the Second Advent, there will always be tares in the church. What then are the conditions that, in every age, causes the faithful to start leaving the church? Let me describe it this way:

In the 1940s, although there were tares in our church, the majority adhered to our historic beliefs and standards. But, by the late 1980s, a shift had occurred and, led by their pastors, the majority in many of our local congregations were abandoning crucial beliefs and standards. Separation began occurring.

The reason for a church's existence is to provide fellowship, encouragement in the faith, shelter from worldliness, plus opportunity for proper worship and missionary work. When these break down, and the majority scorns the minority pleading for reform, eventually the minority are either crowded out or choose to depart, to save their children and their own faith.

There is no mystery here. The causes are quite obvious. The solutions are just as obvious. In any age, it is not wrong to choose God and His Word instead of deepening apostasy. We are thankful for those who remain in their local churches and try to help others individually find their way back to historic Adventism. Unfortunately, others find they can no longer remain in their particular congregations, lest they and their children be swept downward by the onrushing current of error. It surely is a time to pray that God will awaken our leaders to what they are permitting to take place.