

Lessons from the Titanic

Vance Ferrell. WM 822 Apr 98

The keel of the Titanic was laid on March 31, 1909, and it was launched on May 31, 1911. After nearly a year of being fitted with the finest in equipment and furnishings, it passed its trials before the Board of Trade officials on March 31, 1912, at Belfast, Ireland.

Arriving at Southampton, England, on April 4, it was hurriedly prepared for its first paying trip. The following Wednesday, April 10, it embarked with 2,208 passengers and crew, on its maiden voyage to New York. But the voyage was never completed.

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Over half a century earlier, our denomination was launched. God was the architect and shipbuilder. The vessel was constructed of sturdy Biblical teachings, and a special reason for existence: to obey God's Writings by faith in Jesus Christ and to teach others to do the same.

In the course of the decades that followed, it passed through many trials as a people were being fitted for the double task of preparing a group to pass through the Final Crisis of this earth's history, and warning and instructing others, both before and during that Crisis. Will the voyage be completed?

In an earlier book by the present writer (*Origin of Life*), it was noted that the first ship built by men larger than Noah's Ark, was not constructed until about 1850. The *Titanic* was built after that, and, at the time it was constructed, was the largest ship ever made.

When completed, it was 882.5 feet long, 92 feet broad with a height from keel to bridge of 104 feet, and a gross tonnage of 46,328. It had 8 steel decks, a cellular double bottom, which was 5 feet thick through both one-inch "skins," as they were called.

The ship also had two bilge keels projecting 2 feet for 300 feet of its length. They were designed to help prevent the ship from rolling from side to side in rough weather.

Its machinery was the result of the latest advances in Western Civilization. Special low-pressure turbine engines, working with reciprocating engines, provided the maximum head of steam power with the least amount of coal.

It was a triple-screw ship. To drive those propellers, this remarkable ship had 29 enormous boilers, each one over 25 feet tall and about 50 feet long! They were fed by 159 furnaces.

As time passed, God gave our denomination light on a great variety of truths, ranging from doctrinal to educational, and health to family guidance. Everything needed to take a people through to the end of time had been provided.

By the turn of the century, we had entered many foreign countries and were rapidly increasing our mission force. Both at home and overseas, the people of God were earnestly building medical institutions in accordance with the divine blueprint. Publishing houses were being erected, and city evangelism was increasing.

The *Titanic* was fitted with 16 lifeboats, each 30 feet long. They were attached to a new type of hanger: the Welin double-acting davit. These davits were specially designed to let down, in turn, two or three sets of lifeboats. As one lifeboat was lowered into the water, another could be hauled into place by the crew, and it could be rapidly let down.

So the *Titanic* had enough davits, 16 of them, to rather quickly let down 48 lifeboats into the water; that is, if the crew had been properly trained to use the Welin davits. In case of emergency, there should be enough lifeboats to save everyone on board the vessel.

But the owners of the White Star Line had only installed 16 lifeboats, and, in their hurried six-day preparation for the first voyage, the crew had not been trained how to use the new davits.

Our denomination had been endowed with safety devices also; the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy writings. As long as we clung to those books, and submitted our lives to their guidance, we were safe. The ship could not collide, nor sink in the fiercest storm.

But, with the passing of the years, those in charge of general church administration moved from a Scripture-based orientation to one that was policy-driven.

In the field of education, we switched from a Bible-Spirit of Prophecy-based pattern to one which was approved by worldly accrediting associations, and managed by men who had obtained their training and degrees in outside universities.

Our medical work had gradually changed from natural preventatives and remedies, as found in the use of the eight laws of health (water, fresh air, sunlight, rest, exercise out-of-doors, proper diet, abstemious living, and trust in divine power; *MH 127*) to reliance almost solely on chemical compounds, which generally had poisonous side effects, surgery, and deadly radiation.

An added, and much-advertised, safety feature of the giant ship, was its 16 giant compartments, which were divided by 15 transverse watertight bulkheads. These bulkheads reached from the double bottom to the upper deck in the forward end, and to the saloon deck in the after end; in both cases, well above waterline.

Communication between the engine rooms and the boiler rooms was through watertight doors, each of which could be closed instantly from the captain's bridge. A single switch, controlling powerful electro-magnets, operated them. They could also be closed by hand with a lever, and, in case the floor below them was flooded by accident, a float underneath the flooring shut them automatically.

These watertight compartments were so designed that, if even the two largest were flooded with water, a most unlikely possibility, the ship would be quite safe.

As a people, we had the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. Such a blaze of light was in our possession, as no people in history have ever had. Yet, as the leaders moved from God's Word to guidance by committees, educational accrediting associations, and medical boards, the church members also began

drifting away. Theaters in the home; meat-eating; worldly clothing, adornment, and conduct lowered standards. All reflected a yearning to depart from the constraints of God's holy Word, and move into fellowship with other denominations and acceptance by the world.

The machinery and equipment on the *Titanic* was the finest obtainable and represented the last word in marine construction. All her structures were of steel, of a weight, size, and thickness greater than that of any ship yet known. The girders, beams, bulkheads, and floors were all of exceptional strength.

To this had been added a variety of entertainment devices below deck: Turkish baths, gymnasiums, a tennis court, game rooms, banquet rooms, gambling halls, and a sizeable swimming pool.

There were also places where more boats and rafts could have been stored on deck, without sacrificing any of the luxuries. The space was there, but the boats were not.

In spite of our divinely appointed guidance system, we wanted what the world had to offer. Gradually, changes occurred and, by the mid-1920s, we were locked into medical boards controlled by the American Medical Association. By the late 1930s, our colleges were fast slipping under the control of the accrediting associations.

Shortly after noon, on Wednesday, April 10, 1912, the *Titanic* slipped its moorings, and moved slowly out into the harbor at Southampton, England. Dropping down Spithead, past the shores of the Isle of Wight, the ship exchanged salutes with a White Star tug that was waiting for an incoming liner and then moved out into the ocean.

After briefly stopping at Cherbourg, the largest ship in the world headed across the Atlantic.

Changes were made in *Bible Readings* in the mid-1940s (they are weeded out of our edition), but a major crisis came in the 1950s, which greatly accelerated a doctrinal changeover of our beliefs from those of historic Adventism to positions held by other denominations. Called the "*Evangelical Conferences*," a series of meetings were held by Evangelical church leaders with our General Conference leaders between 1954 and 1956. These resulted in major concessions, from which our church has never recovered. Gradually, in the years that followed, the doctrinal compromise accelerated.

As the *Titanic* journeyed, day after day it encountered excellent weather. Because it was early spring in the North Atlantic, the air was cold and, due to the fast pace of the ship, those on the outer decks faced a bitter wind. Actually, there was not even a breeze; the wind was generated by the speed of the fast liner.

By Sunday, April 14, the ship had been traveling for four days. The passengers thoroughly enjoyed this stately new ship, which, some of the passengers reported, provided a smoother ride than any other ocean liner.

Some of the three promenade decks were open to the sea, and some were enclosed by glass. The sky was clear with brilliant sunlight that seemed to augur a fine night and a clear day tomorrow. In just two days the ship would arrive in New York harbor.

On Sunday evening, people were in high spirits, and a variety of entertainments were in full swing. Card games were active, and the saloons were full. Everyone enjoyed the luxury of the spacious rooms, with their mahogany furnishings, white columns, and expensive appointments.

But, as the skies darkened that evening, a Church of England minister, Mr. Carter, walked around, inviting people to one of the large rooms on the promenade deck. About a hundred gathered there after supper and he led out as they sang Christian hymns. Remembrance of those hymns probably helped many people in the hours to come.

By the 1960s, many of our people were doing very well financially. Adventism had its rewards. No cigarettes, no alcohol, hard work, a private educational system; it all paid off. But men and women were forgetting their mission, and far too many were living for this world.

In addition, the new method of public evangelism had taken hold all too well. The two-week evangelistic series (instead of the former six-month series) were bringing people into the church who were not grounded. They knew little of our historic beliefs and standards, and even less of the Spirit of Prophecy. The situation was not looking good.

In the 1960s, several official committees began meeting to review our doctrinal positions. But, since many of the committeemen had received their training in outside universities, they questioned whether our people actually had the truth after all.

A little after 10 o'clock, the hymn singing broke up, and many of the people gradually begin retiring to their rooms. But there was so much to see, so much to do, so many new people to meet—among the thousands on board—that a large number were still awake by 11. Card games were in full progress, as were also the exercise machines, the saloon, and the other gambling rooms. Some were still in the library, writing and posting letters, which would be mailed when the ship reached New York in two days.

Outside on deck, the strong wind caused by the ship's flight through the darkness, was as strong as ever. Few there were among the passengers who braved the outer deck for even a few minutes.

But, at about 11:30 p.m., some of the passengers later recalled that the great ship increased in speed. No one would ever know why. But a noticeable increase in vibration from the giant engines in the ship's bowels were churning harder than they had earlier in the voyage.

Yet it brought no thought of concern, for was this not the mightiest ship in the world, and was not the weather outside so unseasonably mild?

As a people, we had been given a most wonderful system of truth, complete in every way. There are those among us who cry for more light. Yet we have received vast amounts already through the Bible

and Spirit of Prophecy. One cannot help but wonder whether God has much more light for us, until we use the light we have. There is a great danger in having so much, and not valuing it, not obeying it, not sharing it with others.

Gradually a cancer was at work in our denomination, a cancer of neglect and worldliness, which kept growing larger.

In the late 1970s, Desmond Ford was given a call to come to America and teach at Pacific Union College. Many of our people on the West Coast opened their hearts to him, for did he not have just the message they desired? A message of peace and tranquility, and freedom from standards. "We have already been saved at the cross, and now we need do little more than accept it, and enjoy the good life. Heaven is assured. There is nothing to fear. The judgment is past. We are entering upon the most glorious part of our church's history." The ship was being changed, yet people thought it unsinkable.

Such teachings were traitorous to the God of heaven, who called us out of the world to be His special messengers to the world in these last days, to tell all men that they must return to obedience to the law of God, by faith in Jesus Christ, or be lost. Surely, could judgments be averted from such a rebellious people as we were becoming?

On board that immense ship, the peacefulness of the evening was remarkable. Some were still reading in their rooms, late that evening.

Then, at 11:45 p.m., some of those who were still awake heard—or thought they heard—the slightest thump from somewhere below. As the bunks were fixed to the walls, those in them could have been flung out into the room, but there was hardly the slightest jar. The crisis had come, but none of the passengers realized it.

The explanation was simple enough: The *Titanic* had struck an iceberg with a force of impact of over a million foot-tons; but the plates on the ship (each of the "skins" of the double hull) were less than an inch thick. So, what had happened, was that the unbending ice had sheared through the plates the way a table knife would slice through butter. When you slice butter, it does not jar the table. When the ice tore through the *Titanic*, it was hardly noticed.

In our denomination, we are on an increasingly accelerated downhill run. Yet, when we first started, the direction of motion was hardly felt. The changeover was so gradual, and the increase of speed so unnoticed, that, even today, few realize how fast we are moving downward. We are already in a crisis; the collision is coming.

There was no sudden cry, no alarm in the night, no hurried efforts to escape the approaching doom. Most were asleep, and the few passengers who were awake knew nothing of what had happened.

But the officer in command at that time knew. The captain of the ship was E. J. Smith; the first officer was W. M. Murdock. And the second officer was Mr. Lightoller. Mr. Murdock had come on duty as commander of the ship at 10 p.m.

The ship had been moving rapidly through an inky, moonless darkness. Nothing could be seen anywhere. As the liner hurtled forward, heedless of any possible danger, suddenly a gigantic iceberg, appeared, almost directly in front of the ship!

In an instant, Mr. Murdock tried to turn the ship, but there was no time to hardly move the wheel. Indeed, no one later reported noting any swerving at that moment. The massive berg towered over the ship, and an immense portion of the ice was underwater.

Part of the iceberg struck the bilge keels. Those immense ridges on the ship, which projected downward 2 feet for 300 feet of its length along the bottom center of the giant ship, were forced inward by the collision, and made the work of smashing the two "skins" of the cellular double bottoms easier. At the same time, the iceberg ripped a 300-foot gash in the right side of the liner, which was later reported to be steaming at 22 knots, and ruptured five of its six watertight compartments. As mentioned earlier, the ship was designed to easily withstand a break in two of those giant compartments, and it could even survive a gash in four. But the ocean was now pouring into five.

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It is a question of how many areas of worldliness and apostasy our church could have survived. Could it have withstood two? or three? But an ever-increasing number of them have occurred: administrative, financial, theological, personal standards, dietetic, educational, medical; the list goes on.

Few realize the full extent of it. Yet every passing issue of the *Review* and *Ministry* magazines reveals some new aspect of the apostasy, some new defense of error, some new innovation, some new entertainment. Topics such as denominational bankruptcy, pastoral training in meditative hypnotism, Pentecostal Celebration churches, mid-week cell meetings, and seminars in regressive therapies for lost memories, were not dreamed of in the 1970s, but now they are well in place in our denomination.

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Captain Smith immediately came to the bridge, and Murdock told him what had happened. The captain and a few top officers knew immediately that the ship was doomed, but they were careful to tell no one. Keep everyone calm was the silent rule. They reasoned that, otherwise, there would be disorderly riots to get off the ship as soon as possible.

Deep in the ship, one of the stokers had been working in the engine room, when, suddenly, the whole side of the compartment came in, and water rushed him off his feet. Picking himself up, he sprang for the compartment doorway, and barely made it through, when the watertight compartment door behind him dropped suddenly "like a knife." It came close to crushing him. Up on the bridge, as soon as the slicing occurred, Murdock immediately reached over and pulled the switches which shut the compartment doors down in the lower hold of the giant vessel. Because of the number of compartments which were flooded, he knew the ship was doomed.

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Apart from a direct miracle by our kind, heavenly Father, our denomination is doomed. Why? Because, first, the apostasy has made such deep inroads in nearly every possible area of the church, and, second, the key leaders who hold the reins of management in the administrative committees and halls of learning, believe that the various elements of the apostasy are good for the church. It is thought that

the liberal worldliness and the Evangelical theology will help pull us out of a moribund nineteenth century mind-set, which we have been gripped by for over a century.

The leaders see where the church is headed. But the larger part of the members cannot believe that the apostasy has already reached the point of no return. It has reached that point, precisely because many of the members do not know, and because many others do not care, while the leaders are determinedly moving us all deeper into it. If the members were to arise as one man, and strongly, unitedly, demand reform in the church, it could still be turned around.

But the few who are concerned, are being pushed out. And the peace and safety message continues to be sent out through the church papers, and proclaimed in the pulpits and campmeetings.

At 5 p.m. that afternoon, Captain Smith had received the first radiogram warning that there was an iceberg zone ahead. He sent out spotters and, at 7 p.m. posted the warning so all incoming officers would see it. Second Officer Lightoller was relieved at 10 p.m. by First Officer Murdock, to whom he handed the instructions and iceberg zone warning. It was clear that officers and crew were to keep a special lookout for ice. At about 9 p.m., the officers stood on the bridge and reviewed in their conversation how to identify an iceberg in the darkness of night. Then at 10, Murdock came on duty, and Captain Smith retired for the night. Why then, was the ship accelerated to a higher speed later in the evening?

There are men hurtling our denomination toward a tragedy. They have received the warnings, yet, obdurately, they will not take heed, but instead seem to do what they can to accelerate the downward plunge.

The massive ship had almost hit the massive iceberg dead center. But, instead, the bow of the ship only chipped off part of it, sending chunks of ice all over the forward top deck.

As the iceberg sped on the right (starboard) side of the ship, slicing below waterline as it went, a group of gamblers looked up from their poker game, just in time to see the gigantic, towering mass rush by next to the window!

We live today in a sea full of icebergs. They are numerous and they are deadly. It can only be amid earnest, ceaseless pleading with God for help that any of us will make it. Yet there are many of us who care not for these things. "This praying and studying the books! That is for the foolish who have time for such things," so think the careless among us. They want their entertainments to continue, and they have no time to waste on concerns about spiritual experience or upholding standards.

As soon as the iceberg struck, everyone on board the ship, who was not sound asleep, knew something was different. What was it? Yes, that was it! The mighty engines, which had run incessantly for four

days, had slowed, and then stopped entirely! The ship was sitting in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, not going anywhere.

One passenger who arose, dressed and climbed the three flights from D deck to the lowest promenade. But in the hallways and up on deck, there was no sign of disturbance or uneasiness. Nothing seemed to be wrong. Stewards stood about as usual, waiting through the long night with nothing to do.

Stopping by, the gamblers over by the window looked up and, amid their liquor drinking and wagering, told him about the iceberg that rushed like a freight train by the window shortly before. They looked at it as it sped by, and then returned to their game. When asked the height of the iceberg, one of the men spoke up, and, saying he was an engineer and used to estimating distances, replied, "I would gauge it at between eighty or ninety feet higher than we are." They were all sitting seventy feet above the surface of the ocean as they spoke.

Then, laughing, one of the men added, "I expect it took off some of Captain Smith's new paint, and he doesn't want to go on until it is repainted!" All laughed, and another held up his whiskey glass and said, "Run along the deck and see if any ice has fallen. I would like some for this!"

When the crisis is at its worst, there are those who will not realize it. They have been so lulled to sleep by all that has gone before, that when the emergency arrives, they do not even believe it exists.

So it is now in our own ranks. Many of us seem totally ignorant and unprepared for the wrenching apostasy which has gripped our church. Tell many there is any problem at all, and they look at you strangely. If you dwell too much on it, they call you a troublemaker. "Please, do not disturb us; we are at rest, and quite satisfied with the situation."

Returning downstairs, that same passenger was surprised to note that there was the slightest tilt of the ship toward the bow, the front end. But still no one around him was concerned. Yet, by this time, the ship had not been moving forward for about 15 minutes. Somebody laughed and said, "Maybe it's a grand party that's about to begin!"

Uncertain what to do, he reentered his cabin and sat down again on his bunk. Just then, a loud shout was heard from the other end of the hallway, "All passengers on deck with life belts on!" What could this be all about? Gradually the passengers made their way up from the passenger quarters decks below. Many were poorly clad. All wondered what was taking place. As they watched, the crew tried to swing the lifeboats out, using the new-fangled Welin davits, which no one had ever operated before. They were having a difficult time doing it.

We have been bequeathed a precious set of books which contains all the operating instructions we need to get safely to heaven. But few want to bother with them.

Yet those guidebooks are more valuable than life jackets. I plead with you to begin reading in your guidebooks. There is a wealth of basic information in the *Bible*, the *Conflict Series*, *Christ's Object Lessons*, *Ministry of Healing*, and the others.

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As they stood there on deck, the passengers wondered why there could possibly be any concern. They were on the most-solidly constructed ship in the world. It was also the largest ship ever built. The Atlantic had icy-cold water, but it was far below them. They were standing on the deck of one of the greatest, man-made objects in the world. This ship they could trust, just as they could trust its officers and the men who had built and outfitted the fabulous vessel. Why worry?

In addition, the scene about them was totally peaceful. Everything was quiet, almost unnaturally quiet, here in the middle of the Atlantic on an ocean liner that was no longer moving forward. Not a cloud was to be seen in the sky, not even ocean mist. There was not the slightest breeze; it was totally still.

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Why does anyone worry about our church? It appears as solid as ever. The buildings are strongly built, the administrative headquarters are nicely constructed, the workers are rushing around preaching and holding committee meetings.

But, if you know where to look for it, you can see the signs of decay, indications that something is wrong. Board meetings which disfellowship the most faithful ones in the local churches. Financial meetings to discuss in whispered tones the likelihood that Adventist Health Systems' debt will soon cause it to go down, and take the church with it. Sensual apostasies by leading workers, which are quickly hushed up, amid transferals to distant pastorates. Colleges turning out young pastors who have been trained in saved-at-the-cross theories. Leaders who eat meat and drink coffee. Workers willing to betray the trust placed in them by their flock, if by so doing they can hold on to their own jobs.

The clock is ticking. The end is nearing. A most terrible crisis, predicted in Revelation 13, is soon to come on all of us. And few are preparing to meet it.

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Gradually, the boats began filling with a few of the passengers. As they were lowered, they floated away in the darkness. Some, fearing to get into the little boats when they were standing on such a secure ship, would not board them. Many boats were lowered half full. Keep in mind that, at no time, were the people told the danger. Instead, the ship's officers and stewards told inquirers that the ship might not sink at all, and if it did so, probably would not do so for several days, and by that time rescue ships would have arrived.

In the minds of many, it was just a matter of transferring from ship to ship. Some were going on lifeboats now; others would transfer directly from the *Titanic* to another ship. This is what people believed.

Besides, how could a ship, a sixth of a mile long, sink? It was laughably impossible. It was solid beneath their feet right then, even though there was a slight list to the bow.

When it was discovered, on the first-class deck, that the forward lower deck was covered with small chunks of ice, arrangements were made for a grand snowball fight the next morning! Some even went there and brought back pieces of ice, which were passed around.

Gradually the lifeboats were filled, lowered, and sent off. A few rafts were inflated and also sent down. The terrible truth was not to dawn upon many until later: First, there were not enough lifeboats for everyone. Second, the ship would be gone within two hours.

In spite of the subterfuges of men, there are enough lifeboats for you and me! In submission to God and obedience to His Written Word, there is a safe haven for all of us! None need be lost. Not one who pleads with Christ for admittance, will be left outside when the storm of fury breaks. The promised shelter is for all who will enter it. But we must enter in God's appointed way. The specifications are clearly outlined in books such as *Steps to Christ*—and that includes the last part of the book, as well as the first part.

Beware of the assurances of men! Your only safety is to be found in submission to Jesus and obedience to His Written Word.

By this time, it was about 12:30 a.m., Monday morning, April 15, 1912. If the passengers needed warning of what was to come, they had it in two events which occurred.

The first was the engines blowing off steam. This one could have been attributed to the wrong cause. Do not railroad train steam engines blow off steam as they stand in the station? But there was a different reason here: The captain knew the boilers would be less likely to thunderously explode when the ship sank, if the steam was earlier let out of the boilers. They were preparing for what they, but not the passengers, knew was coming.

Then, as if to warn the most sleepy of the passengers to awaken, a rush of light from the forward deck suddenly occurred, and with it a hissing roar which made everyone turn from watching the boats. A white rocket leapt upwards to where the stars blinked overhead. "Rockets!" men called out. This was a signal from the ship that the emergency was so great, that a pleading message was being sent to any ships which might be in the area, to please come! Then another, and a third rocket were sent up.

What the passengers did not know, was that, very soon after the iceberg struck, Captain Smith walked over to the radio room and told the telegraphers to send repeated wireless calls for help.

Mr. Phillips was the chief wireless operator, and his assistant was Harold Bride. CDQ had for years been the distress call, but only a few months earlier a new one had been devised: SOS. The captain told them the ship had been struck amidships, and to send the SOS call. They were among the very few who had been told.

They joked as they sent the message; surely the situation could not be that serious. They notified the *Frankford* and the *Carpathia*. It was agreed that the *Carpathia*, 58 miles away, would immediately come to their rescue. A little later, they wired the *Carpathia* that their engines were failing and soon they would be able to send no more messages. Of the two, only Harold Bride lived to tell what happened in the wireless room. Eight ships were within 300 miles of the *Titanic*. Nearly all heard the message, except the nearest, the *California*, 18 miles away, whose wireless operator went off duty about 15 minutes before midnight, and a few minutes before Phillips and Bride began calling for help.

As if to warn the most sleepy of the members today, in God's providence every so often a warning signal is received:

The Davenport collapse, taking with it \$20 million in church investments and \$20 million in member investments. But then word was sent down that all was well; the church had regained part of its loss (forget about the other \$20 million).

The bankruptcy of Harris Pine Mills, when the trustee and others declared the company did not need to ask for bankruptcy, since it had enough assets and sales to keep the company going. At the same time, other unrelated Harris Pine timber properties were sold by the church, bringing in a large amount of money.

The fall of a leading pastor/writer, with nearly twenty women ready to testify, but then it was covered up by a committee which feared the loss of so many unsold copies of his books.

The waste of three quarters of a million dollars in tithe funds, in an effort, through non-Adventist lawyers, to close down an eleven-member private church in Hawaii which was bothering no one.

The loss of thousands of faithful church members, who are being disfellowshipped for studying the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy and sharing what they found. Signals, like rockets, are going up. But few pay attention.

Gradually more and more boats were lowered. Slowly, men worked the oars and pulled them away from the massive ship. A few crewmen were placed on each boat to man the oars. They knew what the passengers did not: that the giant vessel was going down, and, when it did, it would suck under anything close to it.

As those in the boats watched, they could see all about them the stars shining in utter clarity—even down to the horizon! As for the sea, it was so smooth, one might have guessed it was oily. Not the slightest wind was blowing.

But all eyes were on the giant ship. It was fully lit up, with lights from nearly every porthole. As the people left their rooms, they frequently forgot to turn off the lights. Perhaps some thought they would return soon to their beds.

From the upper decks, the sound of music could be heard. Throughout the time that the boats were loading, the band continued playing! Why was a band playing at a time like that? It was a time of great emergency, yet the band was playing. What was it playing? Not "*Nearer My God to Thee*," as sometimes suggested, but, according to eyewitnesses, that band was playing worldly, low-class *ragtime*!

There are those today who are trying to soothe the concerned with the assurance that all is well. But all is not well. We are in even a greater emergency than was that ship out on the ocean. Several steamers were headed toward it from several directions.

But we, today, have no one but God to help us. Are we daily seeking Him for that help? Are we reading His books, pleading with Him for guidance in understanding and obeying them?

Gradually the fully lit *Titanic* listed more heavily toward the bow. As the entranced watchers sat in the lifeboats and rafts a distance from it, their gaze was fixed upon it. Little by little, the back end of the giant ship lifted farther out of the water, and slowly the front section sank deeper. Everything was quiet, except for the playing of the band.

There was no howling wind, no fierce waves, no storm. Just an eerie silence, and a ship gradually moving into position to destroy itself.

My friend, there are no howling winds today either. Everything seems so peaceful. Yet there are men in our denomination who are gradually destroying it, and far too many of us are letting it happen.

We let it happen in the Sabbath School class and church service when error is taught, in the take-home papers we let our children read, in church board meetings when unjust decisions are made, at conference constituency meetings and in the General Conference Sessions when actions are approved which should not be. We let it happen; we are part of the problem. Others may lead out in the deepening apostasy, but we are too willing to follow along uncomplainingly.

The mere bulk alone of the ship, viewed from the sea below, was an awe-inspiring sight. Imagine a ship nearly a sixth of a mile long, 75 feet high to the top decks, with four enormous funnels above the decks, and masts high above the funnels. Along its side are hundreds of portholes. All its saloons and other rooms brilliant with light, plus many of the portholes. About it are little boats filled with those who, until a few hours before, had trod its decks, read in its libraries, made new friends, discussed plans, sang and ate together, and were now looking in amazement as the giant ship which had been their home was slowing getting ready to sink out of sight!

Our denomination is our home, yet there are those who are trying to steal it from us! And they seem to be succeeding in their objective. There are men who are determined to change the beliefs, drive out the faithful, and win the prize for themselves. The prize is not heaven, nor is it obedience to God's Word. It is the capture of an entire denomination, with all its properties and committee positions.

But, because of the principles they operate on, those men will ere long transform it into a sterile doctrinal void or a bankrupt hulk.

For all of us, it is a tragedy. It is a crisis to plead with God about.

Ironically, many of those willing to let the apostasy continue, will be the ones who will go down with it in the general ruin. While the few who sigh and cry and try to stop the apostasy, will be saved, but as by fire. When news of the National Sunday Law is sent across the nation, you will see a sellout by many of our people.

By now it was 2 a.m. Gradually, those manning the oars rowed the boats farther away. All were hoping that the ship would not sink before help arrived.

All the while, as they watched, the *Titanic* sank lower and lower in the water, and the tilt kept increasing. Slowly, the stern porthole lights lifted and the bow lights sank. It was obvious that the ship, which so many had praised as wonderful, the epitome of human workmanship, was not going to stay afloat much longer.

But there was also fear of what might happen when the ship did go under. First, it could suck down any boat near it, and, second, a great wave might be produced, which would swamp the small, overloaded boats.

But there was more: When the ship sank into the ocean, an immense explosion might occur as water poured in upon one or more of the boilers.

Where should we be today? We should be pleading with God for souls, and we should be working for those souls! souls in the world, and souls in the church.

Should we be hiding out, fearful to do anything? Should we turn our backs on those who have had great light? No, we should show our colors, declare where we stand, and do all we can to warn and encourage others to flee to the stronghold of Revelation 14:12.

Should we be running from the church, fearful that its waves will swamp us? No, we should stand where we are and, as long as we are able, reprove, rebuke, encourage, inspire, help!

Do not give up! Do not stop! Keep going. Keep at your work. The reward will come by and by. But, just now, there is work to be done.

As long as you are permitted to do so, remain in or close to your local church and help others.

As long as you are able, share the final truths of salvation with every unbeliever you can contact. Work for everyone about you. Scorn concealment. Fear only that you might displease your Master.

It was now 2:15 a.m. Most of the little boats had been afloat for about an hour and a half.

By this time, the water had crept up almost to the sidelights and captain's bridge of the mammoth ship. It seemed only a question of minutes before the ship would go under.

Everything was totally silent. The band, ever anxious to relax those still on board the fated ship had somehow finally decided to stop playing.

Those in the darkness wondered, "Surely, those in charge have provided enough boats for everyone! Surely, my loved ones are safe!"

What they did not know was that the company managers had only provided 1,178 boat spaces for the 2,224 persons on board the ship! But, in the darkness, those in the boats did not yet know that. All eyes were now fixed on the huge craft, as it hung in space. Had everyone gotten off safely? The lights still shone with the same brilliance, but there were not so many of them now.

Is everybody safe? Oh, my friend, while there is still time, plead with those about you to seek shelter in God! Surely, we are near the end of time! The crisis ahead, the crisis of the Sunday Law, will try to

crush everyone who does not accept the mark. Only those trusting and obeying Jesus will be safe when it comes. At that time, being in or being out of an organization will not be the issue. The question will be whether we are in Christ, and, in His strength, faithfully obeying the divine Word. Those only who are doing so will then be in the church! For that is what the church, God's true church, really is. Those in the church are those obeying the commandments of God by faith in Jesus Christ, His Son.

The issue will not be seeking the favor of the organization, or running from it. The great issue at stake in the great controversy will be our relation to God and His law, and our continued efforts to help those around us. The organization will not be the issue then, and it is not the issue now; it is our relation to Jesus Christ and obedience to His Word.

As the people in the little boats watched in awestruck wonder, the great ship slowly tilted up, until it was almost vertical. Then it stopped and just hung there for a time!

As it was making that final swing upward, all the lights suddenly went out; then back on for a moment, and then out forever. Another moment or two, and a gigantic crashing sound was heard.

You will recall our earlier mention of the gigantic engines and boilers in the hold of the ship. Those huge hulks, weighing tons apiece, suddenly tore loose from their moorings—and plunged downward toward the bow, crashing through the sealed compartments as they went. It was a steady crashing sound, which went on for fifteen or twenty seconds.

This final, great crash came just before the end. Then, once again, all was silent. The *Titanic* was still upright like a Roman column standing against the horizon. Only about 150 feet of the stern remained above water. It appeared to be suspended there for about five minutes. And then the end came. Sinking back slightly at the stern, like a tired warrior, the ship slowly slid forward through the water, and dived slantingly down. The sea closed about it. And it was gone.

There was no giant wave, and no outward explosion had occurred. But a few heard something muffled from below the surface. (The Ballard expedition in the 1980s revealed that, after the ship went under, an explosion tore it in two.)

It was 2:20 a.m., Monday, April 15, 1912., at Lat. 41° 46' N. and Long. 50° 14' W., 1,600 miles northeast of New York City. Nothing marked the spot. All that was left was the silent sea, and little boats scattered here and there.

But now, suddenly, there were hundreds of people in the water, screaming and crying for help! What had happened? Where were the boats? *It was only then* that the survivors realized that the company had not provided enough lifeboats. In the icy waters the sounds gradually weakened, and then died away.

At 4 a.m. the Cunard liner, *Carpathia* arrived, and began picking up those in the little boats. That work continued until 8:30 a.m. Of the 2,224 on board, the liner picked up only 705 survivors. As the sky lightened, the survivors saw icebergs all about them. Two of them towered high over the *Carpathia* and were gigantic. One of them had sunk the *Titanic*.

This we can know for a certainty: God will guide His own, even to the end. Who are His own? those who submit their lives to Him and obey the written instructions He has given in His Word.

In the Final Crisis, brought on by the National Sunday Law, His own will be Seventh-day Adventists in faith and practice. Will they all be in the main, organized church body? That is a question we cannot know at this time. But it is unlikely. Indeed, as we look about us, we see more and more faithful ones being cast out of the organized body! Then there is the fact that, when the Sunday law is enacted, the Adventist denomination, as such, will be illegal.

But, even when the Crisis breaks, the invisible church, All of those faithful to God and His Word, and to the historic beliefs He gave to His people a century and more ago, will be on that ship of faith! I promise you that. We are not saved in organizations or by organizations. We are saved by our personal, daily relationship to Jesus Christ and His Scriptures. It is a personal matter. No man, no organization, and no slick-talking itinerate preacher can save you.

In view of this, we can have faith that God will work everything out for the best, in spite of what may have happened to us individually. Some of the faithful will be church workers, some laymen, some will have been disfellowshipped for standing for the right. Yet all the faithful will be in that special ship of faith which will go through to the end.

“Let us have faith that God is going to carry the noble ship which bears the people of God safely into port.” *Review, September 20, 1892.*

“Fearful perils are before those who bear responsibilities in the Lord’s work—perils the thought of which makes me tremble. But the word comes, ‘My hand is on the wheel, and in My providence I will carry out the divine plan.’ ” *Review, May 5, 1903.*

But we can know that, if a ship has false teaching, it will not survive the rigors of the ocean of strife and turmoil.

“You have had too great confidence in the ability of these men. A ship may be sound in nearly every respect; but if there is one defect,—a bit of timber worm-eaten,—the lives of all on board are imperiled.” *4 Testimonies, 322.*

“I have lately read of a noble ship that was plowing its way across the sea, when at midnight, with a terrific crash, it struck upon a rock; the passengers were awakened only to see with horror their hopeless condition, and with the ship they sank to rise no more. The man at the helm had mistaken the beacon light, and hundreds of souls were at a moment’s warning launched into eternity. If we present a phase of character that misrepresents Christ, we present a false light, and souls will surely be misled by our example.” *2 Selected Messages, 128.*

We can know of a certainty that those who have been faithful to God and stood resolutely for His Written Word, will not be lost, even though they may have been ejected from the synagogues of men. They will still be in the ship of faith. It is personal relationship with Christ which decides whether a man’s ship is sunk.

“You are in danger of failing to hold fast the faith once delivered to the saints, of making shipwreck of your faith. The words were spoken: ‘A very small leak will sink a ship.’ ” *8 Testimonies, 158.*

“Small leaks have sunk many a ship.” *7 Testimonies, 207.*

“During the calm, what firmness they manifest! what courageous sailors they make! But when the furious tempests of trial and temptation come, lo! their souls are shipwrecked. Men may have excellent gifts, good ability, splendid qualifications; but one defect, one secret sin indulged, will prove to the character what the worm-eaten plank does to the ship, utter disaster and ruin!” *4 Testimonies, 90.*

Every soul obedient to God’s Word, by faith in Christ, will make it through to the harbor safely.

“May God give every man a sense of his own personal helplessness to steer his own vessel straight and safely into the harbor. The grace of Christ is essential every day. His matchless grace alone can save our feet from falling.” *6 Bible Commentary, 1109.*

“I am filled with sadness when I think of our condition as a people. The Lord has not closed heaven to us, but our own course of continual backsliding has separated us from God. Pride, covetousness, and love of the world have lived in the heart without fear of banishment or condemnation. Grievous and presumptuous sins have dwelt among us. And yet the general opinion is that the church is flourishing and that peace and spiritual prosperity are in all her borders.

“The church has turned back from following Christ her Leader and is steadily retreating toward Egypt. Yet few are alarmed or astonished at their want of spiritual power. Doubt, and even unbelief of the testimonies of the Spirit of God, is leavening our churches everywhere.” *5 Testimonies, 217.*

“Many are drifting about without knowledge, like a ship at sea without compass or anchor.” *Counsels on Health, 38.*

“As one poor timber will sink a ship, and one flaw make a chain worthless, so one demoralizing trait of character revealed in words or actions will leave its influence for evil, and if not overcome, will subvert every virtue.” *4 Testimonies, 606.*

In 1904, an interesting testimony was published. John Harvey Kellogg was intent on converting the entire denomination to his pantheistic views.

One evening, Ellen White was given a vision of a ship striking an iceberg. The meaning was obvious: God was telling her to oppose Kellogg’s pantheism error, as hard as she could. She was obedient to the vision.

“One night a scene was presented before me. A vessel was upon the waters, in a heavy fog. Suddenly the lookout cried, ‘Iceberg just ahead!’ There, towering high above the ship, was a gigantic iceberg. An authoritative voice cried out, ‘Meet it!’ There was not a moment’s hesitation. It was a time for instant action. The engineer put on full steam, and the man at the wheel steered the ship straight into the iceberg. With a crash she struck the ice. There was a fearful shock, and the iceberg broke into many pieces, falling with a noise like thunder to the deck. The passengers were violently shaken by the force of the collision, but no lives were lost. The vessel was injured, but not beyond repair. She rebounded from the contact, trembling from stem to stern, like a living creature. Then she moved forward on her way.

Well I knew the meaning of this representation. I had my orders. I had heard the words, like a voice from our Captain, “Meet it!” I knew what my duty was, and that there was not a moment to lose. The time for decided action had come. I must without delay obey the command, ‘Meet it!’

That night I was up at one o'clock, writing as fast as my hand could pass over the paper. For the next few days I worked early and late, preparing for our people the instruction given me regarding the errors that were coming in among us." *1 Selected Messages, 205-206.*

Even though one thinks of the *Titanic* tragedy when reading the above vision, she wrote it about ten years before that sinking occurred.

It is an interesting fact that, in real life, a ship cannot strike a giant iceberg and crack it into pieces. *But when God says to do something, it can be done even though it is otherwise impossible!*

You are I today have icebergs to crack. God has given us our commission. We must be faithful to it, and, by and by, we shall enter through the gates into the city because, in His strength, we have kept the commandments.

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"Perhaps what made so many people declare their decision to remain [on the *Titanic*] was their strong belief in the theory of the *Titanic's* unsinkable construction. Again and again it was repeated, 'This ship cannot sink; it is only a question of waiting until another ship comes up and takes us off.' Husbands expected to follow their wives and join them either in New York or by transfer in mid-ocean from steamer to steamer. Many passengers relate that they were told by officers that the ship was a lifeboat and could not go down; one lady affirms that the captain told her the *Titanic* could not sink for two or three days."—*L. Beesley, The Loss of the Titanic, 1912.*

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Be faithful my brother; be faithful my sister! Heaven is nearing rapidly. We must meet one another there! Yes, there are icebergs, but in the strength of God we can resist them all.—*vf*

"God wants men connected with His work . . . whose minds, when necessary, will act like the lightnings. The greatest promptness is positively necessary in the hour of peril and danger. Every plan may be well laid to accomplish certain results, and yet a delay of a very short time may leave things to assume an entirely different shape, and the great objects which might have been gained are lost through lack of quick foresight and prompt dispatch." *3 Testimonies, 498.*

"Often in the night season I am bidden to urge our brethren in responsible positions to make earnest effort to follow on to know the Lord more perfectly. When our workers realize as they should the importance of the times in which we live, there will be seen a determined purpose to be on the Lord's side, and they will become, in truth, laborers together with God. It will be well for us to consider what is soon to come upon the earth. This is no time for trifling or self-seeking. If the times in which we are living fail to impress our minds seriously, what can reach us? . . .

"Men of clear understanding are needed now. God calls upon those who are willing to be controlled by the Holy Spirit to lead out in a work of reformation. I see a crisis before us, and the Lord calls for His laborers to come into line. Every soul should now stand in a position of deeper, truer consecration to God than during the years that have passed . . .

"There are some who do not even now view matters in the right light; but these may learn to see eye to eye with their co-workers, and may avoid making serious mistakes by earnestly seeking the Lord at this time and by submitting their will wholly to the will of God . . . God will make known unto them His

pleasure; but all who do not work with an eye single to the glory of God, making Him their dependence and trust, who lean rather upon human wisdom, will make blunders. It is in doing the work of God that the richest experience will be gained. Here is where you get wisdom and find the promises of God verified." *Testimonies to Ministers, 514-415.*

"We should rather dispense with selfish gratifications than neglect communion with God . .

"The 'time of trouble, such as never was,' is soon to open upon us; and we shall need an experience which we do not now possess and which many are too indolent to obtain. It is often the case that trouble is greater in anticipation than in reality; but this is not true of the crisis before us. The most vivid presentation cannot reach the magnitude of the ordeal. In that time of trial, every soul must stand for himself before God." *Great Controversy, 622.*

"In the heat of the conflict, unseen agencies will be by our side, commanded of heaven to aid us in our wrestlings; and in the crisis, strength and firmness and energy will be imparted to us, and we shall have more than mortal power. But unless the human agent brings his will into harmony with the will of God, unless he forsakes every idol and overcomes every wrong practice, he will not succeed in the warfare, but will finally be overcome." *Counsels to Teachers, 237-238.*

"All are in constant danger. I warn the church to beware of those who preach to others the word of life but do not themselves cherish the spirit of humility and self-denial which it inculcates. Such men cannot be depended on in a crisis. They disregard the voice of God, as did Saul, and like him are ready to justify their course. When rebuked by the Lord, through His prophet, Saul stoutly asserted that he had obeyed the voice of God . . In the same manner many today assert their loyalty to God." 5
Testimonies, 88.