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The Theology and Practice of Baptism

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ABSTRACT

THE THEOLOGY AND PRACTICE OF BAPTISM

by

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The subject of baptism has a high level of consciousness in the corporate mind of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (SDA). There are only two sacraments recognized by the church. Baptism is one of them. Baptism is the focus of the mission of the church. Numbers of baptisms is the evident object of that mission. It is the rite of entrance into church membership. It is the criteria for evaluating the pastor, the local church, and the work of the corporate church. Even though baptism holds such a central place in the life of the church, it is still a point of controversy, misunderstanding, and discord. This conflict involves both the theology and the practice of baptism.

These issues provide a rationale for this project, which can help resolve the conflict surrounding baptism by affecting the way we perceive baptism and the way we practice baptism.
This study views baptism as a sacrament, a means of receiving the grace of God. It does this by focusing our faith on the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. If baptism is conducted in the proper way, then faith unites both the candidate and the participating membership with Christ thus the grace of God is imparted. Thus it becomes a sacrament.

Second, baptism is viewed as ordination. This concept is predicated on the reception of the Holy Spirit in baptism. When the Holy Spirit comes to us it annoints or ordains us for ministry and at the same time equips us for that ministry. Baptism as ordination functions to keep before the church is mission which, in the context of baptism as ordination, gives meaning and purpose to our discussion of the role of the laity in the work of the church.

This project also sees baptism as initiation. While we have in the past viewed baptism as the rite of entrance into the church we have not conducted baptism as a service of initiation, nor have we conducted this service in such a way as to achieve initiation.

The empirical data uncovered the startling and yet encouraging fact that a strong majority of our members hold theological views of baptism consistent with the theology developed in the project. However, the findings reveal a different picture of the practice of baptism. Our practice of baptism does not always correspond to our theology. With more attention given to this vitally important sacrament within the life of the church, the spiritual life as well as the work of the church can be greatly enhanced.
THE THEOLOGY AND PRACTICE OF BAPTISM

A Research Project
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

By
John W. Fowler
June 1987
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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Project

This study will attempt to develop a biblical theology of baptism that can be used as a criteria for evaluating the theological perceptions of SDAs in the North American Division, and to gather empirical data regarding the theological views of SDAs in the North American Division and their perceptions regarding the practice of baptism. These studies would provide a basis for drawing conclusions and making suggestions that might enhance the theology and practice of baptism in the North American Division.

Justification of the Project

The fact that the church is just beginning to develop a theology of baptism merits additional study and reflection in this area. Only two books have been written by SDA writers which deal with the theology of baptism. One by William Johnsson and the other by Raymond Holmes. The fact that baptism is central to the mission of the church justifies this project. We might add the lack of involvement of pastors and laity in leading people to be baptized as well as the evident criticism of both our emphasis on baptism and our practice of baptism.

The Task of the Project

The task of this project is divided into two sections. The first section seeks to develop a biblical theology of baptism. The
second attempts to discover attitudes toward the theology and practice of baptism in the North American Division, and to draw conclusions and make suggestions that could enhance both the theology and practice of baptism.

Limitations of the Project

The theology of baptism developed in the project does not attempt to be definitive. The writing of a theology is for the purpose of comparison with the empirical data obtained from the surveys used in the project.

The resources used in this project will be limited to the Scriptures, the writings of E. G. White, other SDA and non-SDA literature and a survey questionnaire sent out to a random sampling of 500 members in the North American Division.

Expectations from the Project

The student expects to gain considerable experience from this project as well as sharpening of his skills in study, research, and writing. The very fact that this is a required project will bring a self-discipline that will permanently and positively affect the author's life. Discovery is an important goal of every motivated student. To discover new ideas and concepts, to broaden one's understanding and grasp of the issues relating to the theology and practice of baptism will be reward enough. However, that will be only part of the blessing. My effectiveness as a soul-winning leader in worship and as a trainer of other pastors and evangelists is a glad expectation. And then to think of enhancing the work of the SDA Church through the finding of the project is no
small consideration. To think that part of the project might be fulfilled in book form so as to inform and encourage others is an important expectation as well.

**Definition of Terms**

The following terms are defined according to their use in the context of the study.

**Ordination.** When speaking of ordination at the time of baptism, it is used to mean an ordaining or appointing to ministry in a general sense. This is contrasted with ordination in a specific and formal sense as used by the church to ordain individuals to a specific office or ministry.

**Sacrament.** A means of grace by which a believing Christian can receive the divine grace of God. This is a Protestant view of sacrament as contrasted with a Roman Catholic view that claims an inherent power in the sacrament itself to infuse the grace of God into the believer irregardless of his or her faith.

**Initiation.** Initiation is defined as the act of initiating, introducing, or establishing a person in the church. Its function is to bring mutual commitment to both parties involved--namely the baptismal candidate and the church.
PART I

A THEOLOGY OF BAPTISM
INTRODUCTION

Throughout recorded history the spirit of man has sensed individually and collectively that he is disconnected and broken, lost and alone, guilty and estranged. This awareness has dominated his consciousness leading him in an incessant search for forgiveness, cleansing, and acceptance with the spiritual forces that control human life. History also demonstrates that man has sought that acceptance with the "gods" through religious ritual that has almost always involved water as a means of purification and cleansing, a practice that is "common in all parts of the world and in all stages of history."\(^1\)

Christianity is no exception to this phenomenon. According to the great commission water baptism is the focus of the mission\(^2\) of the church and the message\(^3\) itself. John, who prepared the way for the founder of Christianity, made baptism so central to his work that he is called John the Baptist. Soon Jesus and His disciples were practicing this rite so extensively and effectively that the disciples of John became jealous of Jesus, consequently Jesus moved His ministry to another place to avoid contention.\(^4\)

For Jesus, baptism involved not only cleansing and

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\(^2\)Matt 28:19, 20.  \(^3\)John 3:3-5.  \(^4\)John 4:1

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forgiveness, as did John's, but a broader spiritual meaning that met man's need at a deeper level of consciousness. The problem of man's lostness and aloneness, his guilt and estrangement are also addressed in Christian baptism. Jesus told Nicodemus that he could never satisfy his deepest needs, the need for purpose and meaning, for peace and security, for joy and happiness; in short he could never enter the kingdom of heaven, except he be baptized by water and spirit. Even though it is understood and practiced differently around the world, baptism is still today at the center of Christian thought and activity. It continues to be the focus of studies by laymen and scholars.

As one studies the subject of baptism the conviction grows that one is not approaching a single subject, but several different and complex topics. The failure to recognize this has been the failure of many theologies of baptism and has caused a great loss to the churches' understanding and practice of baptism. While many issues are involved in the study of baptism, they are at the same time naturally connected and related. The theology of baptism by its probing of the plan of salvation touches at this most central point, soteriologically, missiologically, ecclesiologically, and sacramentally. However, no attempt is made in this study to develop a definitive theology of baptism. Its purpose is to develop a theological awareness that provides a basic understanding of the subject with which empirical data relating to a Seventh-day Adventist understanding and practice of baptism can be compared. The key to

1John 3:3, 5.
understanding this subject is the relationship of water baptism to spirit baptism.

The focus of this project, therefore, is both theological and empirical. It focuses on scripture, the writings of E. G. White, Seventh-day Adventist literature, and other related literature in the development of a theology of baptism. It also seeks to discover, through empirical study, the perception of Seventh-day Adventist church members in the North American Division regarding not only the theology but also the practice of baptism. These findings are evaluated and interpreted in part 2 of this study in the light of the theology of baptism found in part 1. A careful study is made of the findings from the empirical study to discover trends and to draw conclusions that could serve as a resource to the church as it seeks to improve its theology and practice of baptism.
CHAPTER I

BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST

Baptism is bound up with all that is Christian. Christianity is Christ. A Christian is one who possesses Christ. The Scriptures state clearly that "He that hath the Son hath life. He that hath not the Son hath not life." If baptism takes place at the beginning of the Christian life, then baptism must be related to and play a significant role in establishing the sinner's relationship with Christ.

Scripture, in fact, tells us that is exactly what baptism does. "For as many of us as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Baptism is a putting on of Christ as a garment is put on; it implies a vine-branch relationship with Christ Himself. The clear inference here is that baptism brings man into an intimate and dynamic relationship with Christ. This is what is meant by being baptized into Christ.

Taking these Biblical concepts seriously, one can conclude that baptism is a Biblical means of grace whereby a sinner is not only taught the redemptive process but is actually brought into a saving relationship with Christ. Baptism then becomes a watershed experience for the Christian. It is at this point that his

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1 John 5:12.  
2 John 3:1-5.  
3 Gal 3:27 (Emphasis supplied).  
4 John 15:1-5.

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relationship with Christ is established; without this relationship he is no Christian at all.

Baptism and Man's Relationship with Christ

How does baptism function to establish one's relationship with Jesus Christ? In Rom 6:1-15, Paul explains the significance of that union with Christ through baptism and how baptism establishes one in a saving relationship with Christ. Paul's focus here is the new life that is available to all who come to Christ, a life that makes Christianity unique among all the religions of the world. He states that men are baptized into the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Via baptism mankind comes to take part in these three unique experiences of the representative Adam, Jesus Christ. Herein lies the wonderful power of the baptismal experience.

Baptized into Death with Christ

By virtue of identifying with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection through the baptismal experience, three great realities take place. First, when men identify with Christ in His death, they die to law in a forensic or legal sense. Because Christ died in the sinner's place, thus satisfying the demands of the law, mankind, by accepting His substitutionary death in their place, are saved from the condemnation of the law. The law then has no further claim against the sinner because its requirements have been met.

\[1\text{Rom 5:14, 6:3, 4.} \quad 2\text{Rom 6:15; 8:1.}\]
Implicit in this is the realization that man is a sinner and that he can do nothing to atone for his sins. His only hope is in the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ. When man comes to the point of recognizing his helplessness and lostness, confesses his sins and his need of a saviour, and accepts Christ as his personal Saviour through baptism, his sins are forgiven. Thus the law no longer condemns him.

E. G. White states that it is impossible for man to perfectly obey God's law and to make himself righteous. However, man is not without hope. Christ has made a way of escape. Christ, in coming to this earth lived a perfect, sinless life. He rendered perfect obedience to the law of God. When men give their sinful selves to Jesus and accept Him as their Saviour, they are counted as being righteous and perfect. Christ's character stands in the place of their character. They are accepted before God just as if they had not sinned.

Some Adventist writers have espoused this view of baptism. Mary E. Anderson, writing in Ministry, says of the ordinance of baptism: "It is at this service that the legal adoption takes place in heaven."

Baptized into Burial with Christ

Second, being baptized into the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ makes significant and crucial man's understanding

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2 Ibid.
of and identification with Christ in His burial. Christianity is not simply a legal religion whereby, through some legal enactment, man is forgiven and finds acceptance with God. He must progress beyond a profession of faith, recognizing the need to put away the "old man" of sin. In Rom 6:3 Paul speaks of being baptized into His (Christ's) death. Then in vs. 6 he reveals that to be baptized into His death is to be "crucified with Him that the body of sin might be destroyed and that henceforth we should not serve sin."

Paul speaks in Rom 6:11 of being "dead unto sin." In 7:4, he shows that men must be "dead to the law." He speaks here and throughout Rom 7 of the law of sin within all mankind and shows that men must not respond to its claims. In Rom 8:13, Paul amplifies this concept by saying: "If ye live after the flesh ye shall die but if ye through the spirit do mortify the deeds of the body ye shall live." He makes it very clear in vs. 6 that to continue to be "carnally minded" is death.

Throughout Christ's ministry the concept of self-denial is prominent. This concept recognizes the principle of selfishness in the heart of man and the necessity of dying to self, of not allowing the willful heart of man to govern and control his life. Even though Christ in His human nature had no propensities to evil\(^1\) He still came to earth to show men how to live. In the Garden of Gethsemane His human nature drew back from the prospects of shame and suffering on the cross. Three times he prayed that if it were

possible, the cup would pass from Him. However, His denial of self in submission to the Father is expressed in the words, "not My will, but Thy will be done."¹ When men identify with Christ in His death, they are acknowledging the sinfulness of their own natures and the necessity of depending upon the wisdom of heaven to guide them. Men commit themselves to keep God's commandments and to live by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

Baptized into Resurrection with Christ

Third, the most unique aspect of baptism results from man's identity with Christ in his resurrection. Christ was raised from the dead through the power of the Holy Spirit.² That same power that raised Christ from the dead is given to men at their baptism. As by faith men are united with Christ in baptism, the power that raised Him from the dead becomes dynamic in their lives enabling them to walk in the newness of life.³

This is the uniqueness of Christianity. Not only does God forgive men's sins but He lives within their hearts and changes their lives so that the things they once loved they now hate and the things they once hated they now love. Because of the gift of the Holy Spirit men are alive unto Jesus Christ. For this reason baptism of the water and of the Spirit are inseparable in scripture.⁴ Gottfried Oosterwal, well-known theologian and missiologist, emphasizes this point when he writes of Christ's baptism: "His baptism also clearly signifies that a baptism that does not convey

¹Luke 22:42  
²Rom 6:4; 8:2.  
³Rom 6:4, 12.  
the Spirit is no true baptism and must be completed by receiving the Spirit."\(^1\)

William Johnsson points out that because of the work of the Holy Spirit baptism is something very special. "At one's baptism the triune God draws near with unusual power and the candidates can expect a unique blessing through the unseen presence of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."\(^2\) This is why Paul speaks of being "raised from the dead" to "walk in newness of life," of "living unto God," of "being alive unto the Lord Jesus Christ," of "being the servants of righteousness."\(^3\) Thus it is that men put on Jesus Christ, becoming one with Him in His death, burial, and resurrection and receive all the blessings available through Christ.

**Baptism and the Kingdom of Heaven**

Ellen G. White has a great deal to say about the significance of baptism and clearly agrees with Paul's theology. She indicates that at baptism a door is opened to communication with heaven.\(^4\) She believes that at baptism men enter the spiritual kingdom of God,\(^5\) are united with the three great powers of heaven,\(^6\) and are received

\(^{1}\)Gottfried Oosterwal, "Every Member a Minister," Ministry, February 1980, p. 6 commenting on Acts 8:15-17; 19:2-6.


\(^{3}\)Rom 6:4, 10, 11, 18.


\(^{6}\)Ibid.
as sons and daughters of God. It is interesting to note that she goes further to say:

The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, powers infinite and omniscient, receive those who truly enter into covenant relation with God. They are present at every baptism to receive the candidates who have renounced the world and invited Christ into the soul temple. These candidates have entered into the family of God, and their names are inscribed in the Lamb's book of life.

Seventh-day Adventists are not alone in this view. Oscar Cullmann's position is clear. He writes:

The baptism of every believer is a matter of saving action. . . . The important doctrine of baptism in Romans 6:1 forward does not refer to those not yet baptized. It presupposes baptism as a saving fact. It is not a baptismal catechism but rather indicates subsequently to those already baptized what happened to them in baptism.

Baptism and Conversion

This raises the question regarding baptism as regeneration or baptism as conversion. An exegesis of the famous passage of John 3:3-5 can help us understand this topic better. In vs. 5 Jesus says, "Verily, verily I say unto thee except a man be born of the water and the spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." These penetrating words of Christ were given in the context of His announcement of the imminent establishment of the "Kingdom of heaven." The kingdom Christ announced was a spiritual kingdom of grace to be established at His death and realized in the heart and

1Ibid.


4Mark 1:14, 15.
mind of man. In Luke 17:20, 21, Jesus explained the spiritual nature of this kingdom. He said, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation, neither shall they say, lo here! or, lo there! for behold the kingdom of God is within you."

Nicodemus came to Jesus seeking to discuss this kingdom. Jesus responded by explaining the nature of that kingdom and stating that the natural man, the man born of the flesh, could not even see this kingdom, let alone enter into it. Christ then explained that only a spiritual being could understand and appreciate the kingdom and that the only way to become a spiritual person was (and still is) by baptism. Through baptism of the water and of the spirit, Nicodemus could be born again as a spiritual being and thus enter into the kingdom.¹

Paul further develops the nature of the natural man who cannot understand spiritual things except he becomes a spiritual person. In 1 Cor 2:11, Paul shows that a man can know the things of other men because they all have the same spirit or nature. Then he asserts that "the things of God knoweth no man but the spirit of God."²

In vs. 14 he is even more direct, saying that the "things of God are foolishness" to the natural man. Man cannot know spiritual things because they are "spiritually discerned." The only way to know spiritual things, then, is to become a spiritual being. Jesus told Nichodemus that baptism would change him and enable him to understand spiritual things.

When these texts are compared with the study of Rom 6, the reasons why baptism is so important and how it works to change men's

¹John 3:3-7. ²1 Cor 2:12.
hearts and make them new creatures in Christ can be understood. When men see the love and righteousness of God manifested in the passion of Christ, they are led to repent of their sins and to accept Christ as their personal Saviour. The scriptural way to publicly express repentance and faith in Christ is through baptism. When men are baptized, God forgives their sins, accepts them as His own, and gives them the fullness of the Holy Spirit. This is what is meant by baptismal regeneration.\(^1\) John Bailey confirms this by stating that "baptism is inseparably connected with regeneration or being born again."\(^2\)

But while one may acknowledge that baptismal regeneration is a reality, one may be asked to explain Ellen White's statement in *Evangelism*, i.e., "salvation is not to be baptized."\(^3\) In this statement, made under the heading "Conversion, Not Just Baptism," White is appealing for an inward experience of true conversion in all new converts. She appears to be countering an emphasis on externals such as numbers of baptisms, etc. In that context, the meaning of baptism is not simply to be immersed but to be united with Christ. Salvation comes when the sinner establishes a saving relationship with Christ by confessing his sins, accepting Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour, and being baptized. Baptism then becomes the focal point of the salvation experience.

Why, then, are blessings reserved until baptism? Is it for


\(^3\)White, *Evangelism*, p. 319.
the same reasons as in marriage? Establishing the relationship is the key to receiving the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit who brings with him all other blessings in His train. Establishing that relationship is referred to in scripture as a spiritual marriage and is said to take place at baptism. J. C. Stevens, an Adventist writer, uses this comparison.

In baptism, Christ and the individual believer become One. Baptism might be properly spoken of as a spiritual marriage ceremony when the individual takes Christ's name.

This being true, it should not be surprising that the full blessings of the covenant relationship between Christ and the repentent sinner be reserved until the marriage ceremony has been performed. It is quite clear in scripture that God accepts sinners and gives Himself fully to them only when they have turned from their sins, renounced the world, and publicly accepted Christ as their personal Saviour and Lord. Baptism is the Biblical way of making a public confession of that commitment. It is in that context that baptism establishes a saving relationship with Christ.

A personal encounter with Christ has always been a life-changing experience. If baptism brings such an encounter, it becomes the means of salvation to all who come to Christ in this way.

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2Rom 7:4.
3Gal 3:27.
CHAPTER II

BAPTIZED INTO THE BODY OF CHRIST

Baptism brings men into a saving relationship with Christ. Now another spiritual dimension to baptism that has equally great opportunities for meaning and purpose, for happiness and fulfillment will be considered. This is the newly baptized person's relationship to the church. However, before one can realize the greatest benefit from this second spiritual dimension he or she must seek to understand the nature of the church.

Models of Church Structure

Many and varied are the models by which men have endeavored to compare and structure the church. At times, the church is thought of as an institution. Men speak of the mystical, the sacramental, the kerygmatic or herald models and the diaconal or servant model. The church is spoken of as the "people of God," the "new creation," the "fellowship of the faithful," and the "body of Christ." ¹

The models after which the church is patterned are vitally important. For example, if the church is seen as purely mystical or sacramental, the significance of the outward structure of the

church and baptism as the rite of entrance into the church will be depreciated. Conversely, if the kerygmatic or herald models are overemphasized, men are likely to depreciate the sacramental aspects of baptism, thus denying that baptism can be a means of receiving the grace and power of God.

One True Model

A model is something to which the church can be compared; it is like reality being discussed. However, one model is the reality itself. While all models have some validity, the one of reality has special significance. Scripture does not say that the church is like the body of Christ, it says that it is the body of Christ.¹ Our understanding of the significance of baptism grows out of our understanding of the church which is the body of Christ.

Ecclesiology for Paul is discovered in his comparison of the church with a human body. His reference to "the body" in 1 Cor 12:14 clearly refers to a human body. In vss. 14-22, he reminds his readers that the body has many members, all of which work together for the good of the entire person. In vss. 12 and 13 he makes a spiritual application of the body by saying that Christ is that body and "by one spirit we are all baptized into one body," namely, the body of Christ. In vs. 27 Paul explicitly states that "ye are the body of Christ and members in particular."² He further establishes his ecclesiology by stating that God has appointed Him (Christ) to be head over everything for the church which is His body."³

¹1 Cor 12:27, 28; Col 1:24. ²1 Cor 12:27. ³Eph 1:22, 23 (NIV).
The Church as the Body of Christ

While the various models referred to have some application to the church, the primary nature of the church can be understood only by the view of the church as the body of Christ. Seeing the church as the body of Christ implies more for Christian baptism than is often understood.

Baptism into the Body of Christ

The concept of the church as the body of Christ teaches that the church is an organic unit divinely designed to function as a living organism. One text in scripture especially undergirds such Biblical ecclesiology and considers the nature of the church as a living organism and the relationship of each member to the others. This passage is instructive as men endeavor to understand the significance of being baptized into that body. It reads:

The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptised by one Spirit into one body whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. And if the ear should say "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

Baptism then places a person in a living body. A spiritual transplant takes place and the baptized person becomes an integral

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2 1 Cor 12:12-20 (NIV).
part of a living organism. Raoul Dederen sees the church as a living community or assembly called together by God where groups of believers constantly experience renewal and growth through their convenantal relationship with God.\(^1\) Dederen speaks of "Christ indwelling the believer, grafting him upon Him (Christ's Body) to make him a participant of all His riches."\(^2\)

Community of Worship in the Body of Christ

It is not without significance that the NT church quickly developed a form of worship and Christian community patterned after the Jewish synagogue.\(^3\) The synagogue (translated literally as the "assembly") was a focal point of Jewish life and community.\(^4\) It is instructive that the newly established church life was patterned after the synagogue rather than the temple.

This form of community in worship harmonized well with the concept of church as the body of Christ and was effective in maintaining the community life and growth of the fledgling church. F. F. Bruce points out that the Greek word *ekklesia* was one of the equivalents for the Hebrew word "synagogue" which is translated "church" in the English Bible when it refers to the Christian community.\(^5\)


\(^2\)Ibid.


Baptism then is not simply belonging to a group who subscribe to certain beliefs and hold high ethical standards. It is being an integral part of a living organism, a dynamic system that exists only by the proper function of all of the members in their relationship to each other and the Head. It is difficult to overemphasize the closeness and quality of the relationship the newly baptized members should have with the body of Christ, the church.

E. G. White, when writing about baptism and church membership, presents baptism as a means of forming a close and sacred union with the church. She writes:

Very close and sacred is the relation between Christ and His church—He is the bridegroom, and the church is the bride; He is the head, and the church is the body. Connection with Christ, then, involves connection with His church.¹

**Baptism as Union with the Church**

Baptism then is the means of entrance into the church and before a person can find a home in the church he must be baptized. Thus he passes the threshold of God's spiritual kingdom and receives the impress of the divine name, 'The Lord our righteousness'.² Great support for this position is found among almost all Christian scholars. The prominent New Testament scholar Flemington writes:

It seems most probable that from the earliest days of the church a rite of baptism with water was the recognized mode of entry into the Christian community.³

Calvin states that "Baptism is the sign of the initiation by which we are received into the society of the church."⁴

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Berkouwer, a leading conservative and contemporary theologian, develops what he considers the proper relationship between baptism and the church:

Baptism is the event in which man, having come to faith, makes a public transition from paganism and the old life of sin and death to new life in communion with Christ. It is an act of admission into the church which follows automatically upon the faithful and believing listening to the gospel. Precisely here is the concrete connection between faith and baptism which makes it utterly impossible to isolate baptism from the connection in which God has placed it.¹

Even though one's ecclesiology may differ from that of professor Berkouwer, it appears that baptism is the avenue by which men come into the church, the body of Christ. Richard Jungkuntz calls baptism the "boundary line between the old life and the new, between the world and the church."² He finds support for his point in history by showing that ancient baptistries were built at the entrance or door of the church. They were "baths dug into the ground with steps descending and ascending into the church."³

Blessings from Union with the Church

A few words about the outward nature of Christ's church are important here lest we wrongly define the body of Christ and thereby fail even yet to understand baptism. Some models of the church totally reject the church as institution and lead us to believe that the church is only a spiritual community, invisible and without

³Ibid.
structure or organization. If that be true, then the significance of baptism becomes obscure and can easily be lost. If this is the primary definition of the church, then a baptized person could easily feel little responsibility to God's visible church through which God has chosen to work.

Channel of light and life

E. G. White states clearly Christ's dependence upon the visible apostolic church during the NT period. Christ had a church as His representative on earth, and "to it belonged the work of directing the repentant sinner in the way of life."¹ From the past White moves to the present indicating that many think they are responsible to Christ alone, independent of His recognized followers on earth. However, Christ does not bypass "the means that He has ordained for the enlightenment and salvation of men; He directs sinners to the church, which He has made a channel of light to the world."²

Without the church, how would people come to know Christ? God uses the church to bring light and life to the world. While the individual receives grace and power directly from his relationship with Christ, there are additional spiritual blessings that God communicates to His children only through His body. The ministry of the word³ and the sacraments⁴ are the primary source of these blessings. Apart from the church where would one find these blessings?

²Ibid.
³Rom 10:14, 15.
Fellowship and nurture

Spiritual discipline and growth also result from fellowship and nurture within the Christian community. We learn from the concept of the church as the body of Christ and from the history of religious movements that small groups of members are a most effective means of encouraging fellowship and nurture within the church. Baptism into the body of Christ a living organism implies being a part of a small group of members who relate to each other in such a way as to provide nurture and to encourage outreach.¹

John Wesley, founder of the Methodist church, was quick to recognize this Biblical principle. When Wesley was asked to take over Whitefield's ministry to coal miners in Kingswood near Bristol (a ministry that became even more fruitful under Wesley's preaching), one of his first acts was to organize his converts into small groups of twelve, each with its own leader.² Wesley quickly discovered the powerful spiritual dynamics of a small and close Christian community. In these small groups spiritual discipline and growth were encouraged. Many churches today are awakening to the value of small-group structures for encouraging spiritual life and growth.

Development of spiritual gift

Paul not only gives the scriptural basis for such fellowship, he also points out its benefits. He points out that all members should be united in their care for each other and especially for

¹1 Cor 12:20-26; Eph 4:11-16.
those who are weak,\textsuperscript{1} or poor,\textsuperscript{2} or less respected than others.\textsuperscript{3} Thus if there is suffering among any of the members, all will suffer together; if one member rejoices, all will rejoice.\textsuperscript{4} In such an environment, a person could find his needs being met. Also in such a setting, one begins to see where and how he or she might contribute to the welfare of the group, individually and collectively. This results in the discovery of one's spiritual gifts. Herein lies the secret of the greatest meaning and purpose in belonging to the body of Christ. To have \textit{raison d'etre}, a reason to be, is to find life at its fullest.

This presents only one reason for belonging to the body of Christ. Wonderful is the realization that God has given to each person gifts that when developed and utilized will bring meaning and purpose to everyone's lives. This will also bring untold blessing to the church and to the world.

The identification, development, and utilization of the gifts God has given to each member is best realized in the church. Spiritually gifted people are placed in the church to prepare God's people for service that all might grow to the full stature of men and women in Christ.\textsuperscript{5} In Eph 4:16 it states that the gifts are placed in the church for "the building up of itself in love." It is vitally important to recognize that the health of the church, individually and collectively, depends on the contribution of each member to the other members and to the whole. It is in contributing to the welfare of the members of the church and in participating in

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1}Cor 11:22
\item \textsuperscript{2}Cor 11:24.
\item \textsuperscript{3}Cor 11:33.
\item \textsuperscript{4}Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{5}Eph 4:11-13.
\end{itemize}
the work of the church that members themselves find spiritual life and growth.

**System of doctrine**

A further function of the church is to bring meaning and purpose to its members. It does this objectively through fellowship, life, mission, and teachings or doctrines. Those doctrines provoke the spiritual framework for answering the ultimate questions people have, thus helping to bring meaning and purpose to them. Paul Tillich has noted that religion is that which concerns us ultimately.¹ Dean Kelley says that religion answers the ultimate questions men have by explaining (1) the purpose of their existence, (2) the nature of reality, (3) the fate of the world, (4) the character of the beings or forces that determine man's destiny, and (5) how men can relate to these forces.²

The church through its ministry of the word of God constructs a system of beliefs and practices that enables its members and non-members as they hear the message to find answers to the ultimate questions of life and thus meaning and purpose in their own lives.

Peter Berger says that to be effective a religion must construct a sacred cosmos in which the difficult questions of life can be answered.³ This is what makes the Seventh-day Adventist Church


so meaningful and appealing to so many. The "sacred cosmos" is seen in the concept of the Great Controversy between Christ and Satan and helps one understand why there is suffering and death in the world. It helps one understand why bad things happen to Christian people and how one can ultimately overcome. Without answers to these ultimate questions of life, the song in the heart soon grows silent, hope dies, the work of God is set aside, and the church is forgotten. However, with the help of the church men can find meaning and purpose even in the most difficult experiences of life. Belonging to the body of Christ puts men in a climate where this can happen.
CHAPTER III

BAPTISM AS ORDINATION

A comprehensive theology of baptism can enhance an understanding of the little appreciated and seldom practiced reality of the priesthood of all believers. Enoch de Oliveira, vice president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, emphatically states that the royal priesthood spoken of in 1 Pet 2:9 is a "corporate or universal priesthood"\(^1\) denoting the role of every member of the church whatever his specific function within the church or in society. While most Seventh-day Adventists would probably agree with Oliveira, they have in practice acted in a very Calvinistic manner regarding the role and function of the rank and file members of the church.

**Baptism Theologies**

Two theologies have relevance to SDAs and govern attitudes toward laity. One is Calvinistic, the other is Arminian. Church historian Williston Walker says that Arminianism was a reaction to the "rigor of Calvinism" and that "it manifested itself in an emphasis on the more practical aspects of religion."\(^2\)

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Against the Calvinist doctrine of absolute predestination, Arminianism taught a predestination based on divine foreknowledge of the use men would make of the means of grace. It also opposed the sharp distinction between clergy and laity made by Calvinism, a distinction not made by Calvin himself but reflected in the later development of Calvinism.

Although Arminianism originated in Holland, it had its greatest influence in England through the work of John Wesley. One of its practical aspects was the concept of the oneness of the ministry and laity. This Arminian theology gave rise to "lay preaching," since it made little distinction between laity and clergy and taught that all believers are to work for the salvation of man. Seventh-day Adventists, generally, have been Arminian in theology. This can probably be traced to the strong influence of Methodism in the early Seventh-day Adventist Church and its belief that Arminian theology is more in harmony with Scripture than is Calvinism.

Arminian theology is not without its opponents, however. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones debunks Arminianism as "untheological." He leans toward a reformed Calvinistic theology that rejects the "lay preaching" concept, believing that modern lay preaching originated with Arminianism. In his book *Preaching and Preachers* he states: "It was the shift in theology last century from a reformed Calvinistic attitude to an essentially Arminian one that gave rise to the increase in lay-preaching."¹ Preaching should be something done only by one who is "called by a special act of God" beyond the call

to be a follower of Christ. If a person does not receive that call, then he is to do something other than preach, but just what he should do is not defined very clearly by Lloyd-Jones.

**Clergy and Laity**

The sharp distinction between the preacher and other church members is coming under fire more and more today, and it appears that the critics of this separatist concept stand on firm theological ground. The term laity has often been used in contrast to the term clergy. Laity usually denotes the general membership of the church; clergy defines the role of those who are called to full-time ministry and are usually ordained to lead out in the service of the church. This concept inevitably leads to the idea that the primary responsibility for the work of the church rests upon the clergy.

The Biblical view of the laity is quite different. In the New Testament, the singular form of the word laos is used almost exclusively when referring to the church as God's people. This points to a very important characteristic of the Biblical view of the laity. It does not refer to a group within the church but to the entire church itself. Laos, used in the context of the church, literally means "God's own people." Nowhere is laos used in contrast to others within the church. Gottfried Oosterwal develops this point clearly, stating:

The terms laity and clergy in the Bible are used for one and the same people. These are not each other's opposites, or even distinct from one another. The laity is clergy. As God's chosen people, they are called laity.\(^2\)

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\(^1\)See Heb 4:9; 11:25; 1 Pet 2:10.

He goes on to show the proper distinction between the terms, leading us to see more clearly the intended role of the entire membership of the church:

One might also say that the term laity stresses in particular the privileges of being chosen by God from among the many others to the exalted status of God's own people, separated and different from the world; while the term clergy emphasizes in particular the function and role of the laity, namely to share their gift of grace with others. Laity stands for the status of God's people. Ministry is their function.¹

This concept that every church member is a minister seems to be the stimulus for some of the great successful movements in the history of the Christian church. The Reformation of the seventeenth century, the great awakening in John Wesley's day, as well as the work of the Millerite movement of the nineteenth century, and that of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, all reflect this emphasis.

Martin Luther wrote:

Every Christian man is a priest, and every Christian woman is a priestess, whether they be young or old, master or servant, mistress or maid, scholar or illiterate. All Christians are, properly speaking, members of the ecclesiastical order, and there is no difference between them except as they hold different offices.²

Ordination to Ministry at Baptism

Oosterwal develops the idea that at baptism every believer is ordained to ministry and receives the gift of the Holy Spirit for the purpose of ministry.³ This concept has ample Scriptural

¹Ibid.


³Oosterwal, "The Role of the Laity."
This concept of baptism as ordination finds validity in the baptism and call to ministry of the disciples of Christ, the sending out of the seventy, and, particularly, the call of the apostle Paul. The words of Christ to Peter and Andrew¹ are not only applicable to all the disciples but to the seventy as well. They also were given authority to preach, to heal, and to cast out devils.² It is generally accepted in evangelical Christianity that all baptized members have a call to gospel ministry with the same authority (except ecclesiastical) that individuals have who are ordained to full-time gospel ministry by the church.

**Baptism and Ordination of Paul**

The record of Paul's conversion reveals that his call to ministry took place at the time of his encounter with Christ on the Damascus road and his ordination took place at his subsequent baptism.³ Paul makes clear that his calling and authority came not from the church but from Christ.⁴ It was only later that the church recognized his heavenly calling and ordination. The Holy Spirit called to the attention of the disciples the need to recognize Paul's calling and to give him the approval and authority of the church by an official ordination which was validated by the laying on of hands.⁵

The fact that God chose and ordained Paul to bear His name before the "Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel" is evident in Acts 9:15-18. Verse 17 shows that he was given the Holy Spirit and vs. 18 that he was baptized at the same time. Paul's

1Mark 1:17.  
4Gal. 1:11, 12.  
authority came from God's call but was confirmed by the gift of the Holy Spirit at the time of his baptism. These verses show that ordination is by God at the time of one's baptism. Some are later called to full-time ministry which is recognized and validated by official church ordination, as was the case with the apostle Paul.

Raoul Dederen, in "A Theology of Ordination," suggests that baptism is ordination to ministry with the exact nature of that ministry being dictated by the gifts given at the time of one's call by God. However, for certain ministries, he sees the necessity of a formal ordination by the church. As a means of recognizing the unique role of those ministries within the church. He states:

God calls personally certain members of the church to take upon themselves one of the ministries that the church has recognized to be necessary to its existence and its work. This means that the call to the ministry is only partly a call from the church.

It is also, and first, an inward call, an inner assurance on the part of the individual that it is God's will that he should make himself useful in the role in which the church has summoned him. Such ministry is bestowed and sanctioned by an ordination or consecration.

Dederen shows no hesitation in pointing out that the church's ordination is simply a confirmation of the call of God and a commissioning to a specific position or function within the church where the ministry given by God can be fulfilled.

Baptism into the Priesthood of Believers

E. G. White clearly supported the view of the priesthood of all believers and baptism as a commitment to and preparation

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2 Ibid.
for ministry. Notice the clarity of her words: "By their baptismal vows they (candidates) are pledged to make earnest, self-denying efforts to promote, in the hardest parts of the field, the work of soul-saving." Thus E. G. White recognized baptism as the point at which one's calling to ministry is given. She used the phrase "sacred vows" in connection with the word "ordination" to express the view of baptism as ordination to ministry. The full context is given here to better present her view of baptism:

The Saviour's commission to the disciples included all the believers. It includes all believers in Christ to the end of time. It is a fatal mistake to suppose that the work of saving souls depends alone on the ordained minister. All to whom the heavenly inspiration has come are put in trust with the gospel. All who receive the life of Christ are ordained to work for the salvation of their fellowmen. For this work the church was established, and all who take upon themselves its sacred vows are thereby pledged to be coworkers with Christ. These concepts help us to begin to understand the breathtaking and far-reaching significance of baptism. To understand and to practice baptism as ordination is to revolutionize the life of the church. Baptism as ordination is a forceful affirmation of the ministry as comprising the whole people of God. This concept takes seriously the teaching of the priesthood of all believers and clarifies the role and function of all the people of God. Only the recovery of the full meaning of baptism can give meaning and substance to our discussion regarding the work of laity.

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2 White, Evangelism, pp. 354-355.

3 White, Desire of Ages, p. 822.
CHAPTER IV

BAPTISM AS SACRAMENT

E. G. White identifies two "monumental pillars" which are vital to the spiritual welfare of the people of God. These pillars are the "ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper."¹ If both these ordinances are essential to the spiritual health of God's people, why does corporate worship focus primarily on only one of these ordinances today? God's people are beginning to recognize that baptism is a means of grace to the individual believer; however, they have seldom if ever recognized baptism as a means of communicating that same grace to a worshipping congregation. Is it because they are reluctant to accept the sacramental aspects of both Christian ordinances?

Defining the Ordinances as Sacraments

Throughout its history, the Adventist Church has identified the word "sacrament" with the Catholic position that claims the power of automatic infusion of divine grace through the sacrament itself. However, overreaction to this concept has led Adventists to deny the proper and legitimate function of the ordinances. Correctly understood, a sacrament is a means by which a believing Christian can receive divine grace.

¹White, Evangelism, p. 273.
Webster makes a distinction between sacramental and sacramentalism. A sacramental object is an indirect means of grace, whereas sacramentalism is the belief that the sacraments are inherently efficacious.\(^1\) For the Protestant Christian the sacraments have no inherent power but serve directly as a means of fixing attention upon Christ, the source of all grace and power, and indirectly as a means of grace.

The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper

E. G. White does not appear to hesitate in using the word sacrament in conjunction with the ordinance of the Lord's supper. She speaks of the "administration of the sacrament"\(^2\) and the "partaking of the sacrament"\(^3\) as well as "sacramental service."\(^4\) She also clearly sees the sacraments as Webster defined them—an indirect means of grace. Her words are unmistakable:

Christ by the Holy Spirit is there to set the seal to His own ordinance. He is there to convict and soften the heart. Not a look, not a thought of contrition, escapes His notice. For the repentant, brokenhearted one He is waiting. All things are ready for that soul's reception. He who washed the feet of Judas longs to wash every heart from the stain of sin. . . . It is at these, His own appointments, that Christ meets His people, and energizes them by His presence. . . . All who come with their faith fixed upon Him will be greatly blessed. All who neglect these seasons of divine privilege will suffer loss. . . .\(^5\)

Several points are made in the above statement regarding the ordinance: (1) Christ uses the ordinance to convict and soften the heart, (2) He waits to bless during the ordinance, (3) He desires to

\(^1\)Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (1980), s.v. "sacramental" and "sacramentalism."

\(^2\)White, Desire of Ages, pp. 655, 659.

\(^3\)Ibid., p. 656.  \(^4\)Ibid., p. 650.  \(^5\)Ibid., p. 656.
wash the stain of sin from every heart, (4) it is at these appoint-
ments that Christ meets His people, (5) He energizes them by His
presence, (6) the blessings come by faith in Christ to whom the
ordinance points, and (7) those who neglect the ordinance suffer loss,
showing that the ordinance is a means of grace.

Baptism as a Sacrament

Even with these concepts given by Ellen White, the Adventist
church has generally failed to see the ordinances as a sacrament.
Particularly is this true of baptism. Articles dealing with
baptism in Ministry magazine from 1928 through 1980 focus almost
exclusively on baptism as an outward sign. An article entitled
"Baptism" and published in Ministry in 1962 seems to summarize the
position of the church during these years. "There is no efficacy
in the rite itself but that it is practiced as an outward sign of
an inward belief in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ for
the salvation of the believers."1

Early Seventh-day Adventist
baptism theology

It could be that two books published by the Seventh-day
Adventist Church, one by Waggoner dealing with the theology and one
by Brown dealing with the practice of baptism in history, held back
the church from developing a more balanced view of baptism.2 Both


2 The two books referred to here are J. H. Waggoner's,
Christian Baptism (Battle Creek, MI: SDA Pub. Assn., 1878), written
early in Adventist history, and Henry F. Brown's Baptism Through the
more recent publication.
books strongly identify the sacramental aspects of baptism with pagan and Roman Catholic religion. Brown's book focused on the symbolic aspects of baptism rather than its theology. Waggoner's dealt with the theology of baptism but identified the sacramental aspect of baptism with Roman Catholicism's sacramentalism so strongly that a wrong view was given of baptism.

**Current views of baptism as a sacrament**

The church's view of baptism began to change in the 1980s. Oosterwal's *Ministry* article first presented baptism as a means of grace. His message was direct and clear in its conclusions:

"Baptism which does not convey the Spirit is no true baptism." 

He went on to point out that the baptism of the Spirit is experienced in and through the baptism of water. Another article written in 1982 by George Rice took up this concept of baptism as sacrament and showed clearly that baptism is a means of receiving the grace of God. Rice presents baptism as the point in time when the Holy Spirit is given, thereby establishing a saving relationship between Christ and the believing person being baptized.

The opinion that baptism is only a symbol results in a devaluation and eventual rejection of baptism itself as necessary to salvation. G. R. Beasley-Murray points out that this is a very real danger, for when only the symbolic nature of baptism is stressed, 

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1 Oosterwal, "Every Member a Minister," p. 5.
2 Ibid., p. 6.
the tendency is to look upon baptism as a "superfluous addition which supplies nothing important."\(^1\) John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist church, clearly saw baptism as a means of grace.\(^2\) He was thus able to say that a "principle of grace is infused" in baptism and that "baptism doth now save us."\(^3\) It is clear, however, that Wesley believed this saving experience was dependent upon the faith of the baptismal candidate. E. G. White also had this view.

While it is imperative to see baptism as a means of grace for the baptismal candidate, it is also important to gain the participation of the church corporately in the sacrament of baptism. If, as E. G. White says, the church should benefit from both of the ordinances which she calls "monumental pillars," why should we not make baptism an integral part of the worship services and present it as a sacrament equal in importance to the Lord's Supper, thus enabling the people to derive a much-needed blessing from it.

**Biblical support for baptism as a sacrament**

A Biblical undergirding for baptism as a sacrament is not difficult to discover. Matthew 3 and Acts 2 are Scriptural passages that undergird the sacramental view of baptism. Christ's

\(^1\)G. R. Beasley-Murray as cited by Oosterwal, "Every Member a Minister," p. 5.


\(^3\)Howard A. Snyder, The Radical Wesley (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1980), p. 104.
baptism was not a private but a public affair. The voice and dove were as much for those gathered on the banks of Jordan as for Christ Himself. The voice and the dove strengthened Christ for His spiritual warfare in the wilderness as well as for His mission. They were also very real means of grace for the disciples, for preparing them for their own ministry and cross. The same connotation of sacrament was evident at the large baptism recorded in Acts 2. The ceremony was a means of grace to both the baptismal candidates and to the corporate church. The baptism itself was the focal point of the Day of Pentecost. It inspired, encouraged, and energized the emerging church for the greatest mission thrust ever seen. This happened only because the baptism rite was a corporate act of worship.

_Baptism a Corporate Worship_

Raymond Holmes, a Seventh-day Adventist scholar at Andrews University Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, points out how baptism is a corporate sacrament in which God mediates His saving grace not only to the candidate but also to the church.\(^1\) Holmes indicates that the significance of baptism grows out of God's acting in baptism.

The significance of baptism does not come alone from the knowledge of what it means to be dead to sin and alive to God. It comes also from the fact that God acts in baptism.\(^2\)

When Christ's baptism is related to the commission to baptize in Matt 28:19, 20, a further basis is found for baptism as a


\(^2\)Ibid., p. 67.
particular point. Its meaning and significance reach far beyond that. Its benefit to the total church can be far more comprehensive than the salvation experience of the one individual. Baptism, properly understood, encompasses the range and reach of salvation history. As such it becomes instruction for the whole people of God and, consequently, should be experienced corporately.

Baptism focuses uniquely on the gospel. It is the gospel in microcosm. It focuses on the redemptive work of God--past, present, and future. Properly understood, baptism is a memorial of creation and redemption, and consequently, the believer is waiting for the coming of the Christ who has already come. As a corporate sacrament then, baptism helps the church to focus on the redemptive work of God in all history. As the church administers baptism, this sacrament becomes a means of grace to all God's people and brings to them the wisdom and power of God. Baptism as an act of corporate worship can have a deep subduing influence upon all the candidates themselves and also the congregation, thus leading to conversion and commitment.

The sacrament of baptism can be instructive and life-changing, both to the individual and to the corporate body, in regards to the mission of the church. Baptism as a sacrament is a "cultic act which is meant as a pattern of a whole life which reproduces the pattern of Christ." Christ was the ultimate missionary. The

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1 Joint Liturgical Group, p. 12.
2 White, Evangelism, p. 314.
3 Joint Liturgical Group, p. 72.
church, which is His body to do His work, is a missionary church. When a person is baptized he becomes a witness, a minister, and baptism functions as ordination to the expectant candidate. As the church participates corporately in baptism, the service becomes a sacrament functioning to keep before the church its mission. At the same time it serves as a means of grace whereby Christ can energize the church for the accomplishment of that mission.¹

Corporate participation is not only vicariously experienced by identifying with the baptismal candidate but also through the administration of the sacrament of baptism. This is one of the purposes of the presentation as well as the public examination of the candidates before the church. Those who fail to see baptism as a sacrament depreciate the entire baptismal service, especially the participation of the whole church in the service. Few churches now examine the candidate before the church or require a public and audible confession of one’s faith before the congregation. This is a great loss to both the candidate and the church.

Even in the past, however, Adventists have seldom involved the congregation in the sacrament of baptism itself. Baptism is not only the candidate pledging himself to the church; it is the church pledging itself to the candidate. Given that understanding, why should members of the church not be asked to become involved in the baptism by committing themselves to the person being baptized? Such involvement could enrich the meaning of baptism and make it a very real means of grace to the people of God.

CHAPTER V

PREPARATION FOR BAPTISM

The word "community" often refers to a way of being together that results in a sense of belonging. The concept of community is descriptive of a fellowship in which people can express themselves as a meaningful part of a larger group. While the Christian community serves the people of God in similar ways, it also has a broader and higher motivation. As G. Campbell Morgan has expressed: "It [the church] is a community sharing the life of God, governed by the will of God and cooperation in the work of God."¹

Rationale for Preparation

The Christian community, the church, is bound together, not primarily by personal or even community concerns but by the divine call. This entity the Scripture calls the Body of Christ. It is called into existence by Christ for His own purposes.² Adding new members to the Christian community through baptism involves individual and corporate decisions, and the responsibility must be entered into with serious and thoughtful consideration.

Another aspect of baptism that undergirds the necessity of careful preparation is the Biblical concept of baptism as a marriage

²Matt 16:18.
ceremony. Paul speaks of giving up any hope that the law can save us, of dying to the law, and being "married to another even to Him who is raised from the dead."\(^1\) The concept of a wedding and marriage speaks of the intimacy and reality of the relationship that is established through baptism. It is this kind of relationship with the church that is established at baptism. The one baptized has become one with Christ and one with His Bride, the church.\(^2\) Baptism, then, can be properly compared to the marriage of informed and committed individuals.

In the past, consideration of the needed preparation for baptism has focused almost exclusively on the party involved in the baptismal experience, but there are two parties involved: The candidate, and the church. The candidate is becoming one with Christ and one with the church. However, the church is also becoming one with the candidate. The candidate certainly has large responsibilities to the church, but the church may have even larger responsibilities to the new child of God. Has not the church begotten the new child in Christ? Does not the church have even greater responsibility to love and nurture what it has created through the power of Christ? This chapter is concerned primarily with the preparation needed by the baptismal candidate, but does not ignore that needed by the church.

**Preparation of the Candidate**

If marriage demands that the individuals being married are well informed, that they have an understanding of the mutual

\(^1\)Rom 7:4. \(^2\)Eph 5:25.
responsibilities and challenges inherent in the marriage relationship as well as a commitment to them; how much more should this be true of those uniting themselves to Christ and His body?

This concept of baptism obviously demands a careful and studied preparation of the candidates who desire to be baptized. This preparation should include an intellectual and experimental knowledge of the spiritual truths of the gospel revealed in the Word of God, an acknowledgement of the claims these truths make upon the candidate and a commitment to those claims. Do the scriptures teach that such preparation is necessary? Furthermore, did the apostles prepare the people being baptized in such a manner? Also, what does E. G. White teach about the importance of a thorough preparation?

Scripture Teachings on Preparation for Baptism

In Acts 8:12, Luke writes that when the people of Samaria "believed" the "good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women." In Acts 18:8, emphasis is given to "hearing" and "believing" the message of Paul. Some texts stress "hearing" and others "believing," while some place them together.¹ Both hearing and believing are clearly indicated as being part of the necessary preparation for baptism. In Acts 2:41, the same idea is expressed, "They that gladly received His word were baptized."

Those who are tempted to think that the gospel preached by the apostles was simply an intellectual assent to faith in Jesus

Christ as the Saviour of the world, might ponder the summary of Peter's speeches in the book of Acts as noted by C. H. Dodd.\textsuperscript{1} He says that Peter covered several points; they are (1) The age of fulfillment, the 'latter days' foretold by the prophets, had dawned (Acts 2:16; 3:18, 24); (2) this fulfillment had taken place through the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (many Scripture passages are cited to show that the prophets foretold these events); (3) by virtue of the resurrection, Jesus had been exalted at the right hand of God as Messianic head of the new Israel (Acts 2:33-36; 3:13; 4:11; 5:31); (4) the Holy Spirit in the Church is the sign of Christ's present power and glory (Acts 2:17-21, 33; 5:32); (5) the Messianic age will shortly reach its consummation in the return of Christ (Acts 3:20; 10:42); and (6) the Kerygma closes with an appeal for repentance, the offer of forgiveness and of the Holy Spirit, and the promise of salvation—the life of the age to come (Acts 2:38f.; 3:19, 25f.; 4:12; 5:31; 10:43).\textsuperscript{2}

This sounds a great deal like the Three Angels' messages of Rev 14:6-12. It is quite clear that the Gospel the people heard and believed in Peter's day was a complete presentation of truth that dealt comprehensively with the spiritual truths inherent within the Bible. It adequately prepared a person to unite with Christ and His church. Also, the candidates were asked to do more than give mere mental assent to these truths. According to Alan Richardson, New Testament "faith is closely associated with hearing and, in


\textsuperscript{2}Ibid.
biblical language hearing is almost synonymous with obeying.\textsuperscript{1} This would also be in harmony with Jesus' Commission (Matt 28:19). The literal translation of this text is "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations." Making disciples, not baptism, is the focus of Christ's words. Baptism then would follow.

**E. G. White Counsel on Preparation for Baptism**

E. G. White also refers to a careful preparation of baptismal candidates and the commitment they should make at their baptism.

At the time of this conversion and baptism, the Colossian believers pledged themselves to put away beliefs and practices that had hitherto been a part of their lives, and to be true to their allegiance to Christ.\textsuperscript{2}

She declares further:

There is need of a more thorough preparation on the part of candidates for baptism. They are in need of more faithful instruction than has usually been given them. The principles of the Christian life should be made plain to those who have newly come to the truth.\textsuperscript{3}

White wrote this in 1900. What would she say today? One wonders if ministers were more conservative and careful in the preparation of baptismal candidates in 1900 than today.

White is emphatic regarding the presentation of the body of doctrinal truth held by Seventh-day Adventists. Naturally these doctrines must be Christocentric. She emphasizes the need


in a forthright manner: "The new converts to the truth should be faithfully instructed in the plain 'Thus saith the Lord'. The word of the Lord is to be read and explained to them point by point."\(^1\) She indicates that the testing truths themselves lead a person to and prepare them for union with the Remnant church. "The present truth is to be our burden. The third angel's message must do its work of separating from the churches a people who will take their stand on the platform of eternal truth."\(^2\)

However, Mrs. White emphasizes not only the body of doctrinal truth as being important but also mentions in detail things that are sometimes neglected.

Ministers frequently neglect these important branches of the work—health reform, spiritual gifts, systematic benevolence, and the great branches of missionary work. Under their labors large numbers may embrace the theory of the truth, but in time it is found that there are many who will not bear the proving of God.\(^3\)

She also mentions the subject of dress as being one of the topics to be understood by the baptismal candidate. "One of the points upon which those newly come to faith will need instruction is the subject of dress."\(^4\)

Importance of Adequate Preparation

Sometimes we are told that a strong emphasis on the doctrines, the standards, and of the responsibilities of church

\(^1\)White, Evangelism, p. 308.  
\(^2\)Ibid., p. 229.  
\(^3\)Ibid., p. 343.  
\(^4\)Ibid., p. 312.
membership before baptism tends to make legalists of new members or to discourage them completely. However, the evidence seems to support just the opposite view. Dean Kelly develops a very good argument in favor of high standards. According to Kelly, the business of the church is to bring meaning and purpose to the lives of its members, and meaning is tied directly to the value a person places on something. Kelly develops the idea that unless a principle is worth staking one's life on, unless it costs one something, it has little meaning.¹

The teaching and standards of the church, then, hold meaning only as they are perceived as having great value. Our salvation cost the life of God's Son, thus it must be of great value. The teachings of the church, being of great importance, consequently cost the prospective members a great deal in the way of commitment, sacrifice, and change in life-style. In this way they bring additional meaning and purpose to their lives. In view of what Kelly says, the standards or requirements of the church should not be lowered in order to get more members. To do so is to take away much meaning and purpose in belonging to the church. Kelly outlines those characteristics that enhance the meaning and purpose of religion. In summary they are

(1) commitment to the group's goals, (2) discipline—willingness to obey, (3) missionary zeal, (4) absolutism—belief that we have the truth and all others are in error, (5) conformity—intolerance of deviance or dissent, and (6) fanaticism—far more likely to preach its message to the world than to listen to what others have to say.¹

While this position may seem out of step with contemporary Adventist thought, it does sound as though the zeal of our pioneers led them to sacrifice all for the "truth" they believed to be absolute. What of Wesley, whose uncompromising position estranged him from the Anglican church and led him to start a renewal movement within the Anglican church called the Methodists? What of Luther's most famous speech in which he said, "My conscience is bound by the word of God. Here I stand; I can do no other?" This speech reveals his commitment to absolutes and clearly supports Kelly's thesis. The apostle Paul's unyielding commitment to what he saw as truth is expressed and demonstrated throughout the New Testament.

How do we view the high standards of the Central Figure of history to whom every Christian owes his understanding of the way of life? His emphasis was upon both principle and practice. He died rather than compromise in either area. To fail to lead others the same way is to deny Christ and to create a brand of Christianity that is not Christian at all.

After identifying the characteristics that make a church grow, Kelly makes suggestions as to how to present the teachings and requirements of church membership so as to have the greatest value to prospective members. To summarize again; they are

1. Do not confuse it with other beliefs/loyalties/practices, or mingle them together indiscriminately, or pretend they are alike, of equal merit, or mutually compatible if they are not.

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1Ibid.

2. Make high demands of those admitted to the organization that bears the faith, and do not include or allow to continue within it those who are not fully committed to it.
3. Do not consent to, encourage or indulge any violations of its standards of belief or behavior by its professed adherents.
4. Do not keep silent about it, apologize for it, or let it be treated as though it made no difference or should make no difference in their behaviour or in their relationships with others.¹

In the light of these mandates the importance of properly preparing a person for baptism can be recognized. After candidates have been adequately instructed and led into a full surrender to the will of God, they should be examined regarding their acceptance of and commitment to those things they have been taught. This will help the candidate realize more fully the value of church membership. Also, there is greater assurance that God has accepted that person, and that access to God's keeping grace is opened to the convert. In addition to the things already mentioned, attention must be given to preparation of the candidates for baptism as ordination to ministry. While a definitive explanation of this may not be done in the baptismal class itself, we must share enough information in this important area to ensure that the candidates understand and commit themselves to the development and use of their spiritual gifts at baptism.

Timing of Baptism

In view of the importance of careful preparation for baptism, the question arises: When should a person be baptized? Should there be a long period of preparation? Or can a person, quickly

¹Kelly, p. 121.
within a few weeks, understand and grasp the distinctive message of Seventh-day Adventists and be ready for baptism? The answer grows out of our theology of baptism. If baptism is one of the "requisite steps in conversion," the time when a person is accepted fully by the three great Powers of Heaven and his/her name written in the Lamb's book of life, then certainly the baptism should not be delayed indefinitely after accepting Christ.

The question is one of commitment on the part of the baptismal candidate. Baptism is a commitment service as is marriage. God commits Himself to the person being baptized and the candidates commit themselves to God and the church. It follows then that what is necessary is an understanding and acceptance of the responsibilities in being baptized. The question is not one of time, but of commitment. If a person is not informed regarding the responsibilities and privileges of the Christian's relationship with Christ and His church, how can he/she make an intelligent commitment? Therefore, time is important only as it allows opportunity to instruct the candidates as to the claims of God upon them and to repent and bring their lives into harmony with God's will. Naturally this could take longer for some than others.

It seems clear that a person should be baptized as soon as the above demands can be met. This must be the reason why E. G. White never makes time a significant factor in baptism. She only says, "When they give evidence that they fully understand their position, they are to be baptized."  

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1 White, Evangelism, p. 306.  
2 Ibid., p. 308.
Preparation of the Church

Now what about the preparation of the church for its relationship to the baptismal candidate? Classes or orientation periods should be held with the leaders of the church to accomplish this needed preparation. Instruction should include a study on the nature of the body of Christ, particularly as it functions as a living organism. Only as the church understands this will it relate to and properly care for new members. The church must take the responsibility at baptism for helping the new members to establish a living connection with the church and to begin to function as an integral part of that living organism. The church must be aware of the purpose and function of spiritual gifts in the life of the church and how the gifts of new members can and must be utilized within the body.

Preparation of the church should include studies regarding the spiritual growth of new members and the responsibility of the church to provide the patience, understanding, and help required for the new convert to grow to Christian maturity. Since baptism is a function of the church, instruction to the church should include a call for commitment to accept and carry the responsibilities the church has in adding new members to the body of Christ.

If proper preparation of the candidates is made, there can be greater assurance that the individuals being baptized make a full commitment to Christ and to His church. If proper preparation of the church is accomplished, there can also be more confidence that a "cohesion" between the church and the new members will be
realized. Working together as one body, the members of that body
will grow up to the full stature of men and women in Christ.
PART II

EMPIRICAL DATA ON THE PREPARATION AND
PRACTICE OF BAPTISM
INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this section of the project has been to gather, organize, and interpret research data relating to the theology and practice of baptism within the North American Division. The research identifies relationships and trends within the church that correlate with the theology and the practice of baptism.

Five hundred surveys (see appendix A) were sent out to a random selection of names in North America and 366 completed forms were returned. This represents a 73 percent response rate which is excellent for a mail survey. The data files have been analyzed by several statistical programs. Three groups of responses are used in the studies: (1) profiles of the total group (see appendix B), and similar subgroup profiles; (2) chi-square tables (see appendix C); and (3) written comments in answer to question 32. Seven sets of chi-square tables were developed. A title was supplied for each set and underneath the title is indicated the question and the response. Each set has 24 tables which show the relationship between answers to each of the 24 questions and one of the demographic variables. One sample table appears in appendix C. This same type of analysis was done with all seven subgroups represented by questions 25-31. Those subgroups identify (1) age, (2) education, (3) years as a Seventh-day Adventist, (4) religious faith before becoming a Seventh-day Adventist, (5) ethnic background, (6) marital status, and (7) gender.
The methodology uses two broad categories of analysis: (1) descriptive and (2) inferential. Both methods of analysis are used because the information lends itself to both approaches. Most of the data in this research are expressed in frequencies or categories such as yes or no. The research question is whether the frequencies observed in the subgroup profiles differ significantly from the profiles of all respondents. Chi-square values were accepted as valid only for those differences of responses that had a level of probability greater than .05. In other words, there are fewer than five chances in 100 that a difference as large as was observed in this study would occur by chance. Therefore, any differences above .05 percent in the study were rejected.

Since the purpose of chi-square is to compare observed frequencies with expected frequencies, it is reasonable that the more closely the observed and expected agree, the smaller the value of the chi-square. Conversely, the greater the difference between the observed and the expected responses, the greater the value of the chi-square and the greater the probability of a significant difference.

Results from the study are displayed in two ways. In the first, the percentage of responses and in the second, the mean or arithmetic average is given. The written suggestions from question 32 have been categorized, evaluated, and interpreted. Those findings are presented also. All of the relevant findings have been organized and are presented in the following pages.
CHAPTER VI

ATTITUDES OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS
TOWARD THE THEOLOGY OF BAPTISM

This chapter describes the attitudes of Seventh-day Adventists in the North American Division relating to the theology of baptism. First, the descriptive profiles are presented and briefly discussed, then the analyses of the twenty-four variables with the profiles of the total group and subgroups are explained and interpreted.

Of the total group surveyed, approximately 90 percent tended to be middle aged or older with the largest group of respondents (35 percent) being 65 or older; 80 percent had college training or better, and fewer than one-half were raised as Seventh-day Adventists. The respondents were largely Caucasian (90 percent), with the second largest ethnic group being Black. Most were married (85 percent), but an even balance between male and female is evident.

Attitudes of All Respondents

Questions 5 to 12 and 14 focus on the attitudes of respondents toward the theology of baptism. Each of these items was presented as a question to which the respondents could answer "yes," "no," or "not sure." The first results are the percentages from those answering "yes" or "no." Those who answered "not sure" are omitted and account for the extent to which the first two percentages on the
accompanying tables fail to total 100 percent.

The second way of displaying the results is to give the mean or arithmetic average. Here the values 1 to 3 have been assigned to the answers. The answer "yes" is assigned a value of 3, "not sure" is 2, and "no" is 1. If everyone had answered "yes," the mean would be 3. If everyone had answered "no," the mean would be 1. The higher the score the more likely the respondents were to answer "yes" to the question. Questions 5 to 12 and 14 are displayed on table 1.

**TABLE 1**

RESPONSES TO THEOLOGY OF BAPTISM QUESTIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes (Responses Given in Percentages)</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5. Baptism a sacrament</td>
<td>90 4</td>
<td>2.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Baptism only a symbol</td>
<td>16 79</td>
<td>1.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Regeneration in baptism</td>
<td>83 5</td>
<td>2.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Baptism as forgiveness</td>
<td>55 42</td>
<td>2.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Holy Spirit at baptism</td>
<td>72 18</td>
<td>2.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Book of Life at baptism</td>
<td>63 25</td>
<td>2.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Baptism like wedding</td>
<td>82 11</td>
<td>2.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Necessary for salvation</td>
<td>83 11</td>
<td>2.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Rite of entrance to church</td>
<td>91 8</td>
<td>2.83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A careful study of table 1 indicates that most members seem to feel very positive about baptism as a means of receiving God's grace. Seventy-nine percent of the respondents see baptism as far
more than a symbol. Only 16 percent see it as a symbol and nothing more. A surprising 90 percent of the respondents see baptism as a sacrament. This response was the second highest in percentage, but it received the highest mean score. This high response does not appear to result from a lack of understanding of the meaning of sacrament because 83 percent of all respondents believe that a person can experience regeneration at the time of their baptism.

While a lower percentage of respondents believe that baptism brings forgiveness (55 percent), many respondents noted in writing that forgiveness is given only to those who are sincerely repentant. This seems to indicate that a larger percentage believe that forgiveness is given but only if the candidate is sincerely repentant. The fact that 72 percent believed that the Holy Spirit is given in baptism may confirm this judgment.

A strong majority believe that baptism is necessary for salvation (83 percent), with 63 percent believing that "our names are written in the Lamb's book of life at our baptism." Eighty-one percent are willing to compare baptism to a marriage ceremony which seems to reveal an understanding of baptism as establishing a relationship with Christ and probably with the church as well. The fact that 91 percent of the respondents view baptism as the rite of entrance into the Seventh-day Adventist church and that the mean response to that question was 2.83 appears to confirm this conclusion.

Throughout most of its history, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has viewed baptism as only a symbol, an outward expression of an inward experience. In light of the past, the sound theological attitudes expressed in this survey are quite significant. This
seems to reveal the effectiveness of the theological training being given to our pastors and evangelists and the effectiveness of recent Seventh-day Adventist literature and publications.

Responses of the Subgroups

For the Chi-square analyses of the subgroups, only those for age and for education were significant. In table 2 the abbreviated title and the variable that corresponds to the question is identified as well as the title and variable that corresponds to the subgroup being discussed. The percentages in table 2 indicate the percentage of respondents affirming the statement in each variable.

TABLE 2
PERCENTAGE OF MEMBERS HOLDING ATTITUDES CONCERNING THE THEOLOGY OF BAPTISM BY AGE GROUPS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitude</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Under 35 Percentage</th>
<th>36-50 Percentage</th>
<th>51-65 Percentage</th>
<th>Over 65 Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An Ordinance (question 4)</td>
<td></td>
<td>89</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brings Forgiveness (question 8)</td>
<td></td>
<td>45</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name in Book of Life (question 10)</td>
<td></td>
<td>38</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage-type Commitment (question 11)</td>
<td></td>
<td>74</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Necessary for Salvation (question 12)</td>
<td></td>
<td>68</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rite of Entrance (question 14)</td>
<td></td>
<td>77</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The two age groups below 35 years of age were combined due to small number of teenage respondents.

Each of the age groups reveals somewhat different attitudes toward the theology of baptism with those aged 35 and younger showing the greatest variation. It was noted earlier that 55 percent of all respondents indicate their belief that baptism brings forgiveness of sin. However, of those 35 years and under, only 45 percent appear to hold this view. The responses of the age groups to question 10 show an even greater difference from that of the profile of all respondents. Sixty-three percent of all respondents indicate they believe that names are written in the book of life at baptism, but only 38 percent of those age 35 and under hold this position. Further evidence of a quite different view of baptism is seen in the answers to question 12. Eighty-three percent of all respondents affirm that baptism is necessary for salvation, yet only 68 percent of those 35 years of age or younger hold that position. Question 14, regarding recognition of baptism as the rite of entrance into the church shows a similar difference between this subgroup and the sample as a whole. Only 77 percent of this subgroup affirm that baptism is the rite of entrance into church membership, while 91 percent of all respondents affirm this.

Apparent theological trends in attitudes toward baptism can be observed by studying these age group profiles in chronological order (starting with the youngest). The groupings appear to show a progressive change in attitude from the youngest to the oldest respondents. The data seem to lead to the conclusion that the older the members are the more likely they are to hold established
views of baptism which contend that baptism does bring forgiveness, regeneration, and is necessary for salvation. Conversely, the younger the respondents, the less likely they are to view baptism as a means of forgiveness, regeneration, or of receiving the Holy Spirit. Neither do the younger respondents feel as strongly that baptism is necessary for salvation. The causes for this obvious trend go beyond this study; however, we can see that a change may be taking place with the younger members of our churches.

The chi-square profiles relating to education shows only three comparisons that have a significant level of variation from those of the general membership. College graduates without further graduate studies (88 percent), are less likely to view baptism as the rite of entrance into church membership than the general Adventist membership (91 percent). The chi-square table dealing with question 9 indicates that only 45 percent of the same college group feel that baptism brings forgiveness of sins, while 55 percent of all respondents hold that view.

There is little evidence that the other subgroups identified within the Seventh-day Adventist Church have any significant difference in the way they view the theology of baptism. This says something significant about the theological homogeneity of Adventism. The chi-square tables are in appendix C.
CHAPTER VII

PERCEPTIONS REGARDING PREPARATION FOR BAPTISM

The questions (13 and 15 to 19) that deal with the perceptions of Seventh-day Adventists regarding preparation for baptism are considered in this chapter. Attitudes found here are not as positive as those regarding the theology of baptism. A fairly close consensus is seen in the responses to question 13 dealing with the need to give evidence of conversion before baptism. A slightly larger number of the ethnic minority group (92 percent) feel strongly about this, with 89 percent of all respondents having the same conviction.

The answers of all respondents to questions 15 to 19 are displayed in table 3. Again two methods are used to display the results. One gives the percentage of response and the other shows the mean. It is interesting to note that 44 percent or almost half of all respondents feel that prospective members are usually or always pressured to make decisions for baptism. Only 15 percent said that candidates were almost never pressured. There is little difference in the responses of the subgroups. This is very likely a serious problem in building support for an aggressive evangelistic program in North America.
TABLE 3
RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS REGARDING PREPARATION FOR BAPTISM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Almost Always (Responses Given in Percentages)</th>
<th>Usually</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15. Are candidates pressured</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Baptismal classes for candidates</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Candidate well prepared for baptism</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Victory over tobacco before baptism</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Sabbath work problems resolved before baptism</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Baptismal Classes

The responses to question 16 indicate only 52 percent of all respondents perceive that a baptismal class is almost always conducted for the baptismal candidates; 13 percent said seldom or never. The subgroups show no significant variations in attitude. Responses to question 17 appear to show dissatisfaction with the preparation of baptismal candidates. Only 22 percent of all respondents reported that candidates were almost always well prepared for baptism; 16 percent said they were seldom or never well prepared. There is no significant probability found in the chi-square tables that would indicate any important differences in the responses of the subgroups.
This may indicate a relatively high level of dissatisfaction with the preparation of baptismal candidates prior to baptism.

Evidence of Conversion

Questions 13, 18, and 19 all have to do with evidence of conversion as demonstrated in breaking with old habits and past life-styles before baptism. Eighty-nine percent of all respondents indicated that a person should give evidence of conversion before baptism. The ethnic subgroups show no significant variation. However, a significant difference occurs in those of different religious backgrounds. Ninety-four percent of those with no Seventh-day Adventist background indicated that there should be evidence of conversion before baptism. However, only 84 percent of those with a mainline Protestant background held that attitude, and only 60 percent of those with Pentecostal background revealed the same attitude. Regarding the giving up of tobacco and Sabbath work before baptism, only 51 percent of the respondents felt that candidates always give up tobacco prior to baptism. The fact that the mean score on this question is the highest demonstrates that many members believe that this issue is usually resolved. The chi-square tables (appendix C) reveal that approximately 37 percent of the minority ethnic subgroups believe those problems are resolved prior to baptism.

Written Responses, Question 32A

Question 32A asked for suggestions as to how the church could improve its preparation of candidates for baptism. There were 109 respondents who made actual suggestions. Those responses divided
easily into six categories of responses. They are listed in table 4 with the number of respondents in each category and in the order of the total response.

**TABLE 4**

**WRITTEN RESPONSES REGARDING PREPARATION FOR BAPTISM**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time spent preparing candidate</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public evangelism's relationship to preparing candidate</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical evidence of conversion</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive attitudes regarding preparing candidates</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting decisions for baptism</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conducting baptismal class</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first category spoke specifically about the thoroughness of preparation in the context of the time spent in study with the candidates. Forty-three of the 109 responses (39 percent) suggested that spending more time preparing the candidates for baptism could greatly improve the church's practice of baptism. (The second category is presented last in this section.)

Eighteen of the written responses (17 percent) suggested that the church could improve its preparation of baptismal candidates by asking candidates to demonstrate their commitment prior to baptism. Specific examples of suggestions as to how to demonstrate one's faith included attending church and returning tithe.
When considered by itself this may not be significant; however, when seen in the light of the total responses it may be more important.

While only eleven people (10 percent) wrote responses related to the decisions of candidates to be baptized, every comment implied that excessive pressure is placed on the candidate for a decision. This may of itself not appear to be a significant finding; however, the fact that all the responses were the same is significant. In the general survey questions, 44 percent of all respondents felt that candidates are pressured to make decisions before they are ready. If even 50 percent of the members perceive that candidates are pressured to make decisions for baptism, those same people will likely be slow to support an aggressive soul-winning program. It is somewhat encouraging to note that not all the responses were negative. Twelve respondents (11 percent) indicated that they felt the church was doing a good job in preparing people for baptism.

The last response on table 4 addressed the topic of classes for the baptismal candidates. Conducting a class probably is not the issue. The issue seems to be one of adequate preparation. Of the 109 respondents 97 of them (88 percent) felt that the preparation of candidates for baptism could be improved. If 88 percent of the members are dissatisfied with the way pastors and church leaders conduct such an important part of the work of the church, the ability of leadership to lead in those areas surely will be compromised. This could be one of the primary reasons for the low growth rate and the negative attitudes toward soul-winning in the North American Division.

The last response to question 32A has to do with attitudes...
toward public evangelism. Even though the survey asks for no information about evangelism, 23 of the 109 written suggestions (21 percent) dealt with evangelistic meetings. The following suggestions were made:

More preparation of candidates from evangelistic meetings after the meetings are over and before the baptism.

More study with people with evangelistic meetings. In three weeks too many people drop out.

Three to four weeks of evangelistic meetings is just a drop in the bucket. More home studies.

People attending a crusade should not be baptized for several weeks after the meetings are over.

I feel there is pressure on some to be baptized with an evangelistic meeting. Leave the evangelist in the area for six months or more.

Do not baptize people after a three-week evangelistic series.

Do not let evangelists baptize. Let the pastors in the local church ground (sic) and prepare and baptize these people from the crusade.

By and large pastors do a good job in preparing people for baptism, evangelists usually are good but too much in a hurry.

Nurture through fellowship with the membership in religious services and socially before rushing them into baptism immediately following evangelistic meetings.

I feel during a full scale evangelistic meeting is too much pressure put on candidates for the sake of numbers (sic).

Too many fast decisions after evangelistic series. Too many people don't understand, pressured early.

The idea of baptizing a person just to have a baptism during evangelistic meetings is no reason for baptizing anyone. More time is needed.

Don't pressure people who attend evangelistic meetings to be baptized before they have a complete knowledge of the truth.

I personally feel that people are pressured to make hasty decisions at the close of evangelistic meetings. Fifteen to twenty meetings are not enough.
You can't hold a series of meetings and baptize people in the second week of the series and have them stay in the church.

I think that most baptisms during evangelistic meetings is (sic) a mistake. They are not prepared for baptism.

Evangelists who come in to conduct a series are the worst offenders in trying to baptize the unprepared and reluctant.

A period of time between evangelistic series and baptism should be required.

I have seen many persons baptized from large evangelistic campaigns without proper preparation. Not enough time.

After evangelistic efforts more education for baptismal candidates.

Standardize the instruction process particularly during evangelistic crusades.

More probationary time needed during a series of meetings.

Evangelistic series are too short. Candidates should not be pressured.

Generally, the respondents do not appear to have a negative attitude toward public evangelistic meetings. In fact, broad support for public meetings is evident in the responses. The perception is that there is not enough time during public meetings to adequately prepare people for baptism. The result, as perceived by the respondents, is pressure on the candidates to make decisions too soon and a lack of thorough preparation for baptism. The fact that the second largest group of written suggestions had to do with public evangelism indicates dissatisfaction, not with public evangelism per se but with the way it is conducted.
CHAPTER VIII

PERCEPTIONS REGARDING THE PRACTICE OF BAPTISM

This chapter reports the findings about Seventh-day Adventist perceptions regarding the practice of baptism in three categories: (1) attitudes of all respondents, (2) attitudes of the subgroups, and (3) attitudes found in the written responses to question 328 (concerning the practice of baptism). The variables relating to this section are questions 1 to 3 and 20 to 24. Because of the small number of variables, the responses are displayed only in percentages.

Frequency of Baptisms and Sermons about Baptism

Attitudes of All Respondents

Variable 1 and 2 are unique in the required responses, therefore, these findings are reported first. (See appendix A.) The first question asks for the frequency of baptisms conducted in the church. The largest number of respondents (46 percent) report a frequency of four times per year; 27 percent report yearly baptisms, and 13 percent monthly. There appears to be little difference in the responses of the various subgroups. One would conclude that those ethnic subgroups who are growing faster would conduct baptisms more often; however, no such evidence in this survey supports that view.
The second question reveals more and shows a significant difference in the subgroup profiles—which may be a prime cause for growth in certain ethnic groups within the church. The frequency of "baptism" as the topic of the Sabbath morning service is the focus of this question. Of all the respondents, 19 percent said often, 41 percent reported seldom, and 41 percent indicated almost never. It seems significant that 82 percent of all respondents reported seldom or never. This could be a major factor in the low baptismal rate in the North American Division.

Subgroup Findings

The chi-square tables show significant findings in the emphasis on baptism in the preaching service (see table 5). Approximately 15 percent of the white members reported baptism as a frequent topic of the Sabbath worship service, but approximately 61 percent of the blacks reported they often heard a Sabbath sermon on baptism. Hispanic responses show that 25 percent of their members report frequent Sabbath sermons on baptism. Asians recorded a zero in this area. While 15 percent of whites indicate they often hear baptism discussed in the Sabbath sermon, a very significant 84 percent say they seldom or never hear such a sermon. Only 39 percent of the blacks show a negative response.

If preaching God's word is truly the transforming power we claim it is, then the fact that the blacks preach about baptism approximately four times as often as whites surely is a positive factor in the growth of their churches and a negative factor in the lack of growth among Caucasian churches. I will not attempt to
interpret the Hispanic or Asian responses because a different set of dynamics seems to be at work in their growth.

**TABLE 5**

**ETHNIC GROUPS AND REPORTED FREQUENCY OF BAPTISM AS SABBATH SERMON TOPIC**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Groups</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Seldom/ Never</th>
<th>Total Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>8 (100%)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>14 (61%)</td>
<td>9 (39%)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>2 (25%)</td>
<td>6 (75%)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>47 (15%)</td>
<td>249 (84%)</td>
<td>296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1 (25%)</td>
<td>3 (75%)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Perceptions Regarding the Practice of Baptism**

Question 3 solicited "yes," "no," or "not sure" answers to whether or not the baptism was a significant and integral part of the main service. Here a consensus in both the general membership and the subgroups is noted. A 75 percent positive response to question 3 appears to indicate that the baptismal service is an important part of the regular worship services in a majority of churches throughout North America. Seventeen percent, however, state that is not a vital part of worship. There are no significant differences among the subgroups.

Perceptions of the respondents regarding the involvement of the church prior to baptism come from questions 20 to 22. The
responses in this area indicate a wide gap between the policies of the church regarding the involvement of the church in the baptismal service and the actual practice. Forty-six percent of the respondents indicated that the church board almost always reviews the names of candidates before baptism, while 28 percent said the board seldom or almost never did. A similar pattern of practice is seen in the responses relating to the public examination of the candidates by the church before the baptism—51 percent said almost always and 27 percent said seldom or almost never. In regards to the candidates being voted into church membership prior to baptism, we find a little better picture. Sixty-one percent said this is done almost always and 17 percent said seldom or almost never.

The subgroup profiles show some significant variation from the general respondents. The church boards have much less involvement in the black churches than other groups. Only 25 percent of the black respondents indicated that the board almost always reviewed the candidates before baptism; 58 percent said it seldom or almost never does. Interestingly, the Hispanic respondents show more involvement of the board than even white churches. Only 14 percent said the board was seldom or never involved; 57 percent saying the board was always involved.

When it comes to examining candidates before the congregation, black churches (83 percent) are almost twice as likely to do so as white churches (48 percent). Hispanics indicated that 61 percent believed this is almost always done. There is no significant variance in the way ethnic groups responded to the question regarding voting the members into church fellowship subject to baptism.
The survey seems to indicate (in the response to question 23) that most members believe those who are baptized are aware they are joining the Seventh-day Adventist church by being baptized. Eighty-three percent of all respondents agree that the candidates almost always knew they were joining the church and only 1 percent indicate they seldom knew. The subgroups show little significant variations.

The timing of the baptismal service (question 24) does not appear to be a significant factor affecting attitudes toward baptism. The response of all groups and subgroups is almost the same. A large majority of all of the baptisms are conducted during the regular worship service (76 percent). Whether this means anytime during the morning worship or specifically during the worship hour is not specified by the survey. Sabbath afternoon is the time when most other baptisms are conducted (16 percent). Only 1 percent are conducted at an evening meeting.

**Written Responses**

A total of sixty-seven written suggestions were given regarding the baptismal service. The suggestions fall into six categories (see table 6).

The encouraging aspect of these written suggestions is that a large number of respondents (34 percent) have positive attitudes toward the way the baptismal services are presently conducted. The fact that all the respondents to question 32B either were happy with the baptismal services or wanted to see them improved is an encouraging discovery. The suggestion to make the baptismal service more professional (19 percent) suggests a desire for better
TABLE 6
CATEGORIES OF WRITTEN SUGGESTIONS REGARDING BAPTISMAL SERVICE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggestion</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondents satisfied</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire greater meaning</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More professional</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During worship</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More candidate information</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Want vows read</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

organization and execution of the service. Suggestions for a more meaningful service is similar to the previous response but focusing more on the purpose and significance of baptism. This response also suggests problems in planning and conducting baptismal services.

Four respondents (5 percent) wanted to hear more about the candidate during the service and showed a desire to know the candidate better. The small number that suggested that vows be a part of the service (3 or 4 percent) indicates an indifferent attitude toward the reading and affirming of the vows in the baptismal service. Obviously a better understanding of baptism as initiation is needed. This appears to be confirmed by the fact that only 51 percent of all respondents reported examinations of candidates before the church at the time of their baptism.

Overall, the responses in the written suggestions lead to the conclusion that the members in the North American Division support
the church's practice of baptisms and desire to see the service become more professional and meaningful.
CHAPTER IX

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THE
PRACTICE OF BAPTISM

It was a high day in a small-town church in central Georgia. A baptism was being conducted. The baptistry was awkwardly located underneath the pulpit. The pulpit had been placed to one side and the covering boards removed to get to the baptistry. Sheets were hung over wires to form dressing rooms on each side of the baptismal tank. The husband had already been baptized and was in one of the makeshift dressing rooms removing the wet robe when his overweight wife started down the rickety stairs into the water. The last step cracked and then collapsed. The woman lunged forward in the water staggering past the pastor, her arms reaching wildly for something to stop her plunge across the baptistry. Her hands caught the dressing room sheet on the other side of the tank. Down came the sheet, exposing her shocked husband to the entire congregation. He stood there for a moment without his robe. Summing up the situation, he made a quick and stunning decision. Diving headfirst into the baptistry, he disappeared for safe hiding!¹ It should not surprise us that the thoughts of that congregation during that service were never focused on the meaning and purpose of baptism!

This story may be a bit of hyperbole; however, it does graphically illustrate the deplorable practice of baptism in many Seventh-day Adventist churches. Many baptisms appear to be conducted with little thought or planning. They are often sandwiched between Sabbath School and church, painfully disorganized, and seemingly designed to take as little time and effort as possible. Little thought is given to the meaning and purpose of baptism.

Function of Baptism as Initiation

While the sacramental aspects of the baptismal service provide a means of grace to both the person being baptized and the congregation, its function is initiation. The apostle Paul uses familiar, yet powerful analogies to show that we are baptized into Christ and into His Body—the church. He writes: "All of you who were baptized into Christ have been clothed with Christ."\(^1\) He also states: "We were all baptized by one spirit into one body."\(^2\) Then he says in this same chapter that the church is "the body of Christ."\(^3\)

Christian baptism, then, serves to initiate people into the Christian life and into a genuine Christian community or church.\(^4\) Christian initiation, to be effective, must do these two things for those being baptized. Unless these two things happen to those baptized, they may have been baptized, but true initiation has not taken place. Using the word initiation can help us bring the whole experience and practice of baptism more clearly into focus and to see its meaning and purpose.

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\(^1\)Gal 3:27 NIV. \(^2\)1 Cor 12:13 NIV. \(^3\)1 Cor 12:27. 

Initiation functions like a wedding ceremony that brings mutual commitment to the parties being united in marriage. Steve Clark uses another analogy of baptism as initiation—that of a lock and a canal. A ship sails into a lock at a low level; it is then enclosed in the lock and carefully raised to a higher level where it can move on to reach its destination. An initiation service functions in a similar way. It lifts people to a higher, more meaningful way of life where God's purpose for them can be fulfilled. But what is required for this to happen? First, baptismal initiation can be effective only if the person being baptized desires a new way of life. Second, there must be a genuine Christian community into which the baptismal candidate is initiated.

The Church as a Christian Community

A truly Christian community is the key to successful initiation. There must be a proper "fit" between the new member and the congregation. The church must encourage and uphold that higher level of spiritual and moral life into which the new member is being initiated. There can be no effective initiation apart from a genuine Christian community within the church. The church is the body of Christ and must be healthy and functioning well if new members are to remain in the church and grow to Christian maturity. Herein lies a large part of our problem with so-called unsuccessful evangelism and church growth.

Most churches do not fulfill the basic precondition for successful initiation. The present level of community life within

\[^{1}\text{Ibid., p. 27.}\quad ^{2}\text{Ibid., p. 28.}\]
many churches cannot support a new believer in his new level of spiritual life. The new believer's life is very often higher than that of the church. The Christian's way of life is radically different from the culture of the world and without a Christian counter-culture to support the newfound faith of the convert, all will be lost. Unfortunately, the community life of the churches, as most Christians know it today, does not provide the level of commitment or spiritual life necessary. After three or four months, if the new convert's expectations have not been met, he becomes discouraged and often drops out.

There must be a fundamental change in the life of most congregations and the church at large if the present attitude toward evangelism and baptism is to be changed and baptismal initiation is to be enduring. It is a seriously defective evangelism that does not pay attention both to the individuals we seek to win to Christ and the church into which we bring them. Renewal and evangelism must go hand in hand.

The Baptismal Service as an Initiation

Now we direct our attention to the baptismal service since that is the focus of this chapter. What can we do to ensure that initiation will take place in the baptismal service, and that an enduring relationship will be established between the newly baptized individuals and the congregation? Before we come to the initiation service itself let us look briefly at the basic preparation of the candidate and the church.
Preparation of the Candidate

Discerning pastors and evangelists will not only work to gain true conversion from the candidates for baptism but will also sift out those who are not genuine and hold back others who may need more time to properly prepare for baptism. Adequate preparation of the candidate is the key to an effective initiation service. Specific preparation for the service of initiation is crucial as well. Careful orientation of the candidate to the entire service with special attention being given to the baptism itself is essential. Baptismal certificates should be prepared and signed. Proper clothing (especially underclothing) should be recommended to the candidate. Extra towels and handkerchiefs should be available and protection for the ladies' hair during baptism should be discussed and prepared for. Surprises in the baptistry can destroy the meaning and purpose of baptism.

Preparation of the Congregation

The church should be made aware of the fact that baptism is the rite of entrance into church membership. In fact, a careful study with the church on the theology and practice of baptism could greatly enhance the possibility of true initiation taking place during the service. The acquaintance of the church with the candidate prior to baptism is essential if relationships are to be established at the time of baptism. Visitation in the home of the candidate could help to meet this need. A presentation of the candidates to the church board and a subsequent recommendation to the church at large would also help to bring some sense of familiarity and acquaintance of the candidates to the church.
Careful orientation of the church to the service of initiation and a rehearsal of the program could be a hedge against most blunders that might undermine the sacredness and significance of the service. Careful preparation brings a sense of importance to the service. The value the church places on baptism will be commensurate with the time spent in preparation.

Preparation of the Baptismal Facilities

None of the physical aspects of the baptismal service should escape the scrutiny of church leadership. The condition of the baptistry and the level and temperature of the water (nothing distracts from the sacredness of the service more than a muffled "gasp" when the candidate steps into cold water) will all be carefully and adequately prepared before the service. Proper baptismal gowns, preferably robes, should be a regular part of any responsible baptism.

One wonders why so often baptismal robes are black. Should the focus be only on the burial part of baptism? Why not use red, a symbol of the power of Christ's shed blood; or white, a symbol of cleansing; this would bring additional color and meaning to the service. Adequate dressing facilities, flowers for the church and for each candidate, light blankets to cover the candidates as they leave the baptistry—all should have proper attention.

The Baptismal Program

Probably the most important area in which the church must prepare is the program itself. Every aspect of the service must be planned so that it focuses on the objective of the baptismal
service, which is initiation. While Christ must be pre-eminent in the service, the baptismal candidate is the living, dynamic proof of Christ's power to save. The candidate's initiation into a new level of life and into a new community is the objective. This is a powerful argument in favor of making baptism the central focus of the entire service. If the baptism is assigned an insignificant place in the worship service, such as the announcement period, the candidate is led to believe that church membership is not really important. The congregation is taught that soul-winning and evangelism is of little significance.

Could our improper practice of baptism and initiation be one of the primary causes for the present cynicism of the church toward evangelism and its converts? Funerals and weddings are perceived as important enough to stand alone as complete services. Baptism, which is the central focus of the missionary life of the church, certainly merits a full worship service as well.

The service should be well planned far in advance of the baptism itself. God is a God of organization and order. He cannot bless disorganization and chaos. We are asking God to energize and make effective the service by His presence. He can comply only if proper preparation is done. The entire service must impress powerfully upon all participants the importance and reality of initiation. Music has always played a large part in the worship of the true God. Its role in the initiation service should not be underestimated. The ministry of the word must have adequate time during the service. Its purpose is to build a Biblical undergirding for the service of initiation. Its application and appeal will be to both the candidate and the congregation.
Involvement in the Baptismal Program

The key to genuine initiation and an enduring commitment of both parties is their involvement in the service of initiation. Why do we have the wedding processional, the giving away of the bride, the repeating of vows, the lighting of a unity candle, and the wedding kiss in the marriage service? Is it just pomp and ceremony? No, it is involving the nuptial couple in such a way as to gain an enduring commitment to each other.

The same strategy is applicable to the baptismal service, which Scripture compares to a marriage ceremony (Rom 7:4). Given the proper atmosphere and involvement, an enduring relationship can be established by the service of initiation. A program with adequate liturgy and symbols can be used by the Holy Spirit to achieve this goal.

Evangelicals and especially Seventh-day Adventists have largely lost the sense of value in the acts of rituals of worship. This comes with our evangelical heritage that tends to focus on the preacher's enthusiasm and his ability to titillate the emotions and to intrigue the intellect.¹

While our central emphasis on a verbal presentation is not without its positive benefits, we should also recognize the value of the outward forms or liturgy of worship. Worship is more than simply imparting some new information or knowledge about God or Christian experience. The church's memory of God's saving acts in the past are vitally important—in fact they are basic to worship.

James F. White says that the Christian's faith today is dependent on his memory of God's acts in the past. He writes: "The Christian believes that God is working in the present largely because of the community's memories of His past activity. It is for this reason that a major portion of almost any service of Christian worship is a rehearsal of the community of faith's corporate memories of God's acts as narrated in scripture."\(^1\)

This rehearsal of God's past acts takes the form of liturgy in worship which symbolize the ultimate realities of Christian truth and life. Particularly is this true of Christian initiation. Its decisive character is marked more by actions than by words. These actions become a kind of "multi-media worship."\(^2\) These liturgical acts then become meaningful and powerful in communicating God's truth to His people in ownership. We tend to forget the value of our actions, not only in worship but in our daily witness as well.

Not only did Christ come to teach us the objective truth of salvation but to act them out before the universe. His words would be of little value without the acts of His life which gives character and validity to His words. We must not then neglect the outward and visible in our efforts to express the inward and spiritual. The two must be kept in dynamic union. Outward acts of worship are a means of expressing inward spiritual realities. When Christianity's salvation events, past and present, are incorporated in sign-activities of worship, they express and communicate meaning and purpose for the people of God. This is the purpose of liturgy.

\(^{1}\text{Ibid., p. 41.}\) \(^{2}\text{Ibid., p. 149.}\)
Dr. Raymond Holmes undergirds this concept of worship by his definition of liturgy. He writes:

The term liturgy and/or liturgical, which is a legitimate biblical term found frequently in the book of Hebrews in reference to our Lord's High Priestly ministry, is used in reference to the action of a congregation engaged in worship. This action includes elements such as corporate prayer, singing, preaching, and special events such as baptism, communion, dedication, ordination. It is synonymous with order of service but embodies more than the listing of events in chronological sequence in a bulletin. It includes the living action of the people as the gospel narrative is dramatized in Word and Sacrament. Thus the liturgy, or way in which a congregation worships, serves as a vehicle of proclamation as it illustrates what the congregation believes.\(^1\)

The following suggested liturgy seeks to express the spiritual realities of baptism in such a way as to make the baptismal experience meaningful and real, to both candidate and the congregation, but also to achieve genuine initiation of the candidate into the church.

**LITURGY FOR SERVICE OF BAPTISM**

**PRELUDE**

**INTROIT** (Congregation stands)

**CALL TO WORSHIP--PSALMS 126**

**RESPONSE**

"Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow"

**PRAYER OF INVITATION**

Eternal Father, whose blessed Son was anointed by the Holy Spirit to be the Savior and servant of all, we pray you to consecrate

this service that those who are baptized may share in the royal priesthood of Jesus Christ who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. Amen.

HYMN OF CELEBRATION

"Baptize Us Anew"

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

All praise and thanks to you, most merciful Father, for adopting us as your own children, for incorporating us into your holy Church, and for making us worthy to share in the inheritance of the saints; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, from whom every family in heaven and earth is named. Grant us to be strengthened with might by his Holy Spirit, that, Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith, we may be filled with all the fullness of God. Amen.

GIFTS OF THANKS GIVEN

RESPONSIVE READING

The people standing, the PASTOR says:

PASTOR: Blessed by God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
PEOPLE: And blessed be his kingdom, now and for ever. Amen.

PASTOR: Alleluia, Christ is risen.
PEOPLE: The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia.

PASTOR: Bless the Lord who forgives all our sins.
PEOPLE: His mercy endures for ever.

The PASTOR then continues:

PASTOR: There is one Body and one Spirit;
PEOPLE: There is one hope in God's call to us;
PASTOR: One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism;
PEOPLE: One God and Father of all.

PASTOR: The Lord be with you.
PEOPLE: And also with you.
PASTOR: Let us pray.
PEOPLE: Amen.

SCRIPTURE LESSON

A reading from Romans 6:1-6.
SPECIAL MUSIC

A special musical number by choir or other musicians, expressing the experience of salvation.

THE SERMON

Dealing with some aspect of Baptism.

PRESENTATION AND EXAMINATION OF THE DANDIDATES

The PASTOR says:

The candidate(s) for Holy Baptism will now be presented.

(A sponsor for each candidate is chosen prior to the service who is to present the candidate for baptism and to nurture the person after baptism.)

The candidates are presented individually by their Sponsors, as follows:

SPONSOR: I present ____________________ to receive the Sacra­ment of Baptism.

The PASTOR asks each candidate when presented:

Do you desire to be baptized?

CANDIDATE: I do.

CHARGE TO SPONSORS

When all have been presented the PASTOR asks the Sponsor:

Will you be responsible for seeing that the candidate you present is nurtured in the Christian faith and life?

SPONSOR: I will, with God's help.

PASTOR: Will you by your prayers and witness help this person to grow into the full stature of Christ?

SPONSOR: I will, with God's help.

Then the PASTOR asks the following questions of the candidate:

Do you believe in God the Father, in His Son Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Spirit?
CANDIDATE: Yes, I believe in God the Father, in His Son Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Spirit.

PASTOR: Do you accept the death of Jesus Christ on Calvary as an atoning sacrifice for your sins, and believe that through faith in His shed blood men are saved from sin and its penalty?

CANDIDATE: Yes, I believe Jesus is my personal Saviour.

PASTOR: Do you identify with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection and do you desire to be raised from spiritual death to newness of spiritual life?

CANDIDATE: Yes, I do.

PASTOR: Do you believe that the Bible is God's inspired Word, and that it constitutes the only rule of faith and practice for the Christian?

CANDIDATE: Yes, I believe man should live by every word of God.

PASTOR: Do you love the Lord with all your heart and is it your purpose by the power of the indwelling Christ, to keep God's law of Ten Commandments which requires the observance of the Seventh day of the week as the Sabbath of the Lord.

CANDIDATE: Yes, I do.

PASTOR: Do you believe your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and that you are to honor God by caring for your body in abstaining from such things as alcoholic beverages, tobacco in all its forms, and from unclean foods?

CANDIDATE: Yes, I give my body as the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit.

PASTOR: Do you accept the doctrine of spiritual gifts, and believe that the Spirit of Prophecy is one of the identifying marks of the remnant church?

CANDIDATE: Yes, I believe in the doctrine of spiritual gifts.

PASTOR: Do you believe in the soon coming of Jesus as the blessed hope, and is it your settled determination to prepare to meet Him in peace, as well as to help others to get ready for His glorious appearing?

CANDIDATE: Yes, I do.

PASTOR: Do you believe in church organization, and is it your purpose to support the church by your tithes and offerings, and by your personal effort and influence?
CANDIDATE: Yes, I will faithfully support God's church.

PASTOR: Do you accept the New Testament teaching of baptism by immersion, and desire to be so baptized as a public expression of your faith in Christ and in His forgiveness of your sins?

CANDIDATE: Yes, I desire to be baptized.

PASTOR: Do you believe that baptism is ordination to service and are you committing your gifts to the service of God?

CANDIDATE: Yes, I am committing my gifts to God's service.

PASTOR: Do you believe that the Seventh-day Adventist church is the remnant church of Bible prophecy, into which people of every nation, race, class, and language are invited and accepted, and do you desire membership in its fellowship?

CANDIDATE: Yes, I do!

CONGREGATIONAL VOWS

After all have been presented, the PASTOR addresses the congregation, saying:

Will you who witness these vows do all in your power to support these persons in their life in Christ?

PEOPLE: We will.

The PASTOR then says these or similar words:

Let us join with those who are committing themselves to Christ and renew our own baptismal covenant.

PASTOR: Do you believe in God the Father, God, the Son and God the Holy Spirit?

PEOPLE: We do.

PASTOR: Will you continue in the teaching of scripture and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?

PEOPLE: We will, with God's help.

PASTOR: Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?

PEOPLE: We will, with God's help.
PASTOR: Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?

PEOPLE: We will, with God's help.

PASTOR: Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?

PEOPLE: We will, with God's help.

VOTE OF CHURCH TO ACCEPT CANDIDATE

MINISTER: Based upon your response, I will now entertain a motion to accept the candidates into church membership subject to baptism. A motion and vote follows.

PRAYERS FOR THE CANDIDATES

The PASTOR then says to the congregation:

Let us now pray for these persons who are to receive the Sacrament of new birth (and for those--this person) who have renewed their commitment to Christ.

An appointed person leads the following petitions:

LEADER: Deliver them, O Lord, from the way of sin and death. Open their hearts to your grace and truth. Fill them with your holy and life-giving Spirit. Keep them in the faith and communion of your holy Church. Teach them to love others in the power of the Spirit. Send them into the world in witness to your love. Bring them to the fullness of your peace and glory. Grant, O Lord, that all who are baptized into the death of Jesus Christ your Son may live in the power of His resurrection and look for him to come again in glory; who lives and reigns now and forever. Amen.

BAPTISM OF CANDIDATES

Each candidate is presented by name to the PASTOR who then, before immersing the candidate, says:

I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

While the newly baptized are getting dressed music of meditation ministers to the waiting congregation.

When the baptism of all candidates has been completed the PASTOR, at a place in full sight of the congregation, prays for them, saying:

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Heavenly Father, we thank you that by water and the Holy Spirit you have bestowed upon these your servants the forgiveness of sin, and have raised them from spiritual death to the new life of grace. Sustain them, O Lord, in your Holy Spirit. Give them an inquiring and discerning heart, the courage to will and to persevere, a spirit to know and to love you, and the gift of joy and wonder in all your works. Amen.

WELCOME

When all newly baptized have gathered in front of the church, the PASTOR says:

Let us welcome the newly baptized.

PASTOR and PEOPLE say:

We receive you into the Seventh-day adventist church, the household of God. We confess the faith of Christ crucified, proclaim his resurrection, and invite you to share with us in his eternal priesthood.

Elders extend hand of fellowship and give baptismal certificate.

A congregational hymn is sung.

BENEDICTION

Defend, O Lord, these newly baptized with your heavenly grace, that they may continue yours for ever, and daily increase in your Holy Spirit more and more, until they come to your everlasting kingdom. Amen.

DISMISSAL

As the members move out of the church to go home, the new members should stand at the door so that members of the congregation, as they leave the sanctuary, can welcome new members into membership with warm hand shakes and embraces.

This direct contact between the new members and the congregation effectively facilitates genuine involvement. These acts of involvement in the context of a well-planned and executed worship
service cannot help bringing a positive attitude toward the mission of the church and enduring relationships between the new member and the congregation.
CHAPTER X

SUMMARY

This study has attempted to discover the attitudes of church members in the North American Division regarding the theology and practice of baptism. The findings focused first on the response of all respondents and then attempted to find if various subgroups held significantly different views that would be instructive for the church in its work of baptizing people into the church and establishing them in the life and ministry of the church.

In addition to the profile studies of all respondents, chi-square analyses were performed between the various survey items and the attitudes of several subgroups. Not only were the simple variations identified but other more sophisticated methods were used to determine attitudes. Those findings have been displayed in simple percentages and in tables. The implications, which have been briefly discussed, are as follows.

1. A strong majority of members hold theological views consistent with the Biblical data elucidated in part one of this study. This reveals quite a cohesive mindset in the North American Division regarding baptism and says something positive about the homogeneity of Adventism. Obviously, there are powerful dynamic forces at work in the church that bring a significant unity of thought regarding the theology of baptism.
2. In addition to those positive findings, several not so positive theological attitudes appear that should be of concern to the church and its leaders. One serious concern is the more liberal theological attitudes observed in younger members. Table 2 shows that the younger the members the more likely they are to say that baptism is not essential to salvation nor is it necessary to identify baptism with church membership. Further studies should be done to clarify these concerns and plans should be developed to address these problems lest the theology and practice of baptism be further compromised in the future.

3. Much dissatisfaction is expressed concerning the way candidates are prepared for baptism. While 62 percent of the respondents believed that candidates are usually well prepared for baptism, only 22 percent of all respondents indicated they felt that candidates were always well prepared. The facts that 44 percent of all respondents perceive that candidates are usually or always pressured to be baptized and that 38 percent of the written responses suggest taking more time and being more thorough in this area, could reveal a serious problem.

The picture emerges that a large proportion of the members in the North American Division are saying, "I believe in our emphasis on baptism; however, if you want my full cooperation, significant change must take place in the way the church conducts its work."

Criticism of many direct soul-winning methods is strong and growing in certain quarters of the church. Leadership can effect change in this area, thus building greater confidence and trust in the first and most important work of the church. More thorough preparation of
candidates for baptism should help not only to overcome much of the existing dissatisfaction but also to improve the image of evangelism in general. This would result in greater respect and better support for the evangelistic emphasis of the church.

4. The research indicates a perception among church members that many candidates are still using tobacco and working on the Sabbath at the time of baptism. Only 51 percent of all respondents said victory over tobacco was almost always realized before baptism and only 45 percent said Sabbath work problems were almost always resolved before baptism. This is most certainly a cause of spiritual problems within the church as well as a serious problem in gaining credibility for direct evangelistic programs. Church leaders may find the training of both pastors and lay people in the importance of proper preparation for baptism to be one of the wisest investments they can make.

5. A positive finding is that 83 percent of the members report that candidates almost always know they are joining the Seventh-day Adventist church at the time of their baptism. Only one percent said the candidates never knew. This helps to offset the work of destructive critics who seek to undermine the credibility of evangelists and hinder the work of public evangelism.

6. The findings regarding the practice of baptism reveals that relatively few church members understand baptism as initiation. Not even one-half of those members (49 percent) with a white ethnic background reported that the candidates are always examined before the church. Thirty percent said they were seldom or never examined at their baptism. Minority groups do considerably better in this
important part of the baptism service with 63 percent reporting examination of candidates before the church.

The research reveals that only 61 percent of the churches always present the candidates to the church before baptism (the survey viewed this as different from an examination). This obviously means that among a large number of candidates the vows are not repeated nor is the church even given an opportunity to indicate their desire to accept and support those becoming a part of their congregation by baptism. This is a serious breach of church polity and undermines the function of the baptism service to serve as initiation. It works to undercut the opportunity of the service itself to build relationships between the person baptized and the congregation into which they are baptized.

It follows as well that a service that omits the presentation of the candidate to the church would not help the baptism to be a vital and significant part of the worship service. It is known that many churches sandwich baptism in between Sabbath school and church. The only involvement of the congregation becomes a glance at the candidate as the curtains are briefly opened for the candidate to be immersed, after which the curtains are promptly closed.

Such a service cannot function to bring mutual commitment between the new members and the congregation. The baptism may connect the candidates with a new life; however, this sort of service has little chance of connecting them with a new community. It is essential that this practice be changed if the rite of baptism is to serve the work that God intended and result in true initiation. Changing attitudes in this area must be a major concern of the church and of all its support systems.
7. These findings say something as well about the understanding of the church toward baptism as a sacrament. How can the Holy Spirit use baptism as a means of grace to the people of God if it is given such an insignificant part in the worship service? If approximately one-half of the churches make baptism an appendage to the morning worship service, that means that one-half of our total membership in North America, or approximately 350,000 people, are deprived of much of the sacramental grace God wants to impart to His people through the sacrament of baptism. Work to improve this area of worship could prove to be very important and an additional source of spiritual energy and life to the people.

8. Another significant implication drawn from the findings is the power of preaching to communicate a sense of urgency regarding the gospel commission to go and baptize and to move people to commitment and service. The findings show that 61 percent of the black Adventists often hear a Sabbath sermon about baptism. The statistics for white Adventists show a sharp difference with only 15 percent affirming Sabbath sermons about baptism. While the growth rate of black churches in the North American Division is not quite four times that of white churches, the substantial difference is enough to cause serious reflection on the frequency of sermons dealing with baptism in the black churches. The findings cannot be easily discounted as one of the reasons for the growth of black Adventists.

If the experience of other pastors is anything like the author's then one solution is to teach white ministerial students the theology of baptism in both their college and seminary training. The author never had a class while in college that dealt with the
theology of baptism nor can he remember hearing a sermon that developed a biblical theology of baptism. A few evangelistic sermons on the mode and necessity of baptism had been heard but never one that presented baptism as a means of receiving God's grace. Consequently, even though he was an evangelist, he seldom preached on baptism even in his evangelistic work.

It was not until he attended the seminary ten years after graduating from college that he was exposed to the theology of baptism. After learning a little about baptism as a means of receiving God's grace and power, he began to preach this beautiful message. As a result his ministry became many times more fruitful and rewarding. Workshops dealing with the theology and practice of baptism could also provide the theological understanding and the practical know-how needed by pastors to preach this important doctrine more effectively.

9. The final conclusion has to do with a topic that was not a central focus of this project, yet is directly related to the theology and practice of baptism. The second largest number of suggestions (21 percent) had to do with public meetings. We must remember that the survey did not ask for suggestions regarding public evangelism. The responses grew solely out of the respondents' consciousness of needed changes in public evangelism meetings. With that awareness, the suggestions become much more significant.

While the suggestions themselves were not necessarily negative toward public evangelism or toward public evangelists as such, all of the comments focused on what the respondents perceived as negative characteristics of public meetings.
This study generates several recommendations regarding public meetings:

a. A longer time frame for public meetings.

b. Less pressure for decisions on those attending the meetings.

c. More time for preparing the candidate for baptism.

d. A more thorough study of the teachings of the church prior to baptism.

e. Some demonstration of true conversion (including lifestyle changes) on the part of the candidates.

f. The baptism conducted by the local pastor.

This unexpected feedback from members should be welcomed by all leaders who want to win greater respect of and support for the work of public evangelism. The fact that there were no comments indicating complete satisfaction with public evangelism underscores the problem. A sample response helps to illustrate this point: "By and large pastors do a good job in preparing people for baptism; evangelists usually are good but too much in a hurry." These suggestions are saying, "We want public evangelism but only under certain conditions." Those conditions are spelled out quite clearly in the suggestions. The fact that the respondents took time to give suggestions regarding public evangelism shows the seriousness of members' attitudes toward this approach to soul winning.

Greater support for public evangelism can be gained; however, it will not be won simply by listening to the laity but by demonstrating to them that what is being done is different from their perception or by improving performance in this area of ministry.
This study shows that we cannot divorce the theology and practice of baptism from the evangelistic activities of the church. As we seek to improve the practice of baptism throughout the church we must not forget the influence of public evangelism in that endeavor.

At the beginning of the project it was stated that baptism is not an isolated topic or a single subject. It touches the most central point of the many and varied topics of Bible truth that undergird and give substance to the life and ministry of the church. Baptism is fundamental. Unless the church finds in this sacrament meaning and purpose, spirit and power, the work of the church will be seriously flawed. However, if the church sees baptism as central to its life and work and gives its support and energy to the challenge of Christ to go and baptize, the church will become the community of the redeemed and the pilgrim church will become the triumphant church.
APPENDIX A

SURVEY INSTRUMENT
ATTITUDES TOWARD BAPTISM
A Survey of Seventh-day Adventist Church Members

Your response will help Adventist leadership in understanding this important subject. Please answer every question. Circle the number of the answer that most nearly represents your thinking.

1. How often is a baptismal service usually conducted in your local church? ALMOST NEVER
   WEEKLY/MONTHLY/QUARTERLY/YEARLY/NEVER
   1  2  3  4  5

2. How often is baptism the topic of the Sabbath morning sermon? ALMOST NEVER
   OFTEN  Seldom  ALMOST NEVER
   1  2  3

3. In your church is the baptismal service usually a significant and integral part of the main Sabbath worship service? YES
   NO  NOT SURE
   1  2  3

4. Is it your understanding that baptism and the Lord's supper are the two ordinances established by Christ? YES
   NO  NOT SURE
   1  2  3

5. In your opinion is baptism a sacrament? By a sacrament we mean that the Holy Spirit is present to impart spiritual life to those being baptized. YES
   NO  NOT SURE
   1  2  3

6. In your opinion is baptism a symbol and nothing more? YES
   NO  NOT SURE
   1  2  3

7. Do you think a believing person can experience regeneration at the time of his/her baptism? YES
   NO  NOT SURE
   1  2  3

8. In your opinion does baptism bring forgiveness of sins to the sincere candidate being baptized? YES
   NO  NOT SURE
   1  2  3

9. Do you believe God gives a sincere believer the Holy Spirit at his/her baptism? YES
   NO  NOT SURE
   1  2  3

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10. Do you believe our names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life at our baptism?  
   YES  NO  NOT SURE  
   1  2  3

11. Do you understand the baptismal ceremony to be comparable to the marriage ceremony at which time the believing candidate and Christ are united to each other?  
   YES  NO  NOT SURE  
   1  2  3

12. Do you believe that baptism is necessary for salvation when a person knows about baptism and has the opportunity to be baptized?  
   YES  NO  NOT SURE  
   1  2  3

13. Do you believe a person should give evidence of conversion before being baptized? (By evidence we mean, keeping Sabbath, stop smoking, return tithe, etc.)  
   YES  NO  NOT SURE  
   1  2  3

14. Do you understand baptism to be the rite of entrance into the Seventh-day Adventist church and that a person becomes a member of the church by baptism?  
   YES  NO  NOT SURE  
   1  2  3

15. Do you feel that perspective members are pressured to make decisions that they are not ready to make?  
   ALMOST  ALMOST  ALWAYS/USUALLY/SELDOM/NEVER  
   1  2  3  4

16. Does your church conduct a special baptismal class for baptismal candidates before they are baptized?  
   ALMOST  ALMOST  ALWAYS/USUALLY/SELDOM/NEVER  
   1  2  3  4

17. Do you feel that the people who are baptized are well prepared and ready for baptism?  
   ALMOST  ALMOST  ALWAYS/USUALLY/SELDOM/NEVER  
   1  2  3  4

18. Are the baptismal candidates helped to gain victory over tobacco habits before being baptized?  
   ALMOST  ALMOST  ALWAYS/USUALLY/SELDOM/NEVER  
   1  2  3  4

19. Are the problems of Sabbath work resolved before the candidates are baptized?  
   ALMOST  ALMOST  ALWAYS/USUALLY/SELDOM/NEVER  
   1  2  3  4
20. Does the church board review the names of baptismal candidates prior to baptism?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ALMOST</th>
<th>ALMOST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALWAYS/USUALLY/SELDOM/NEVER</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

21. Are the candidates examined before the church before being baptized?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ALMOST</th>
<th>ALMOST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALWAYS/USUALLY/SELDOM/NEVER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

22. Are the candidates presented to the church and voted into membership subject to baptism before being baptized?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ALMOST</th>
<th>ALMOST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALWAYS/USUALLY/SELDOM/NEVER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

23. Do the people know they are joining the Seventh-day Adventist church at the time of their baptism?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ALMOST</th>
<th>ALMOST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALWAYS/USUALLY/SELDOM/NEVER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

24. When does your church usually baptize people?

1. DURING THE WORSHIP SERVICE
2. DURING THE PERSONAL MINISTRIES PERIOD
3. AT AN EVENING MEETING
4. SABBATH AFTERNOON
5. OTHER

25. Circle the number of the age group you are in.

1. 19 YEARS OR UNDER
2. 20-35 YEARS
3. 36-50 YEARS
4. 51-65 YEARS
5. OVER 65 YEARS

26. What is the highest level of education you have completed? Circle the right number.

1. EIGHTH GRADE OR LESS
2. SOME HIGH SCHOOL OR ACADEMY
3. HIGH SCHOOL/ACADEMY GRADUATION
4. SOME COLLEGE OR TRADE SCHOOL
5. COLLEGE GRADUATION
6. GRADUATE STUDY

27. Circle the number showing how long you have been a baptized Adventist.

1. LESS THAN 1 YEAR
2. 1-5 YEARS
3. 6-10 YEARS
4. 11-20 YEARS
5. OVER 20 YEARS
28. Circle the number that best indicates your religious faith before becoming an SDA?

1. GREW UP IN ADVENTIST HOME
2. ROMAN CATHOLIC
3. MORMON
4. PENTECOSTAL
5. EVANGELICAL
6. MAINLINE PROTESTANT
7. OTHER
8. NO RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND

29. What is your ethnic background? Circle the right number.

1. ASIAN
2. BLACK
3. HISPANIC
4. WHITE
5. OTHER

30. What is your marital status?

1. MARRIED
2. DIVORCED
3. WIDOWED
4. NEVER MARRIED

31. What is your gender?

1. MALE
2. FEMALE

32. What suggestions would you make as to how the church could improve:

A. THE PREPARATION OF THE CANDIDATE FOR BAPTISM.

__________________________________________

__________________________________________

__________________________________________

B. THE PRACTICE OF BAPTISM ITSELF.

__________________________________________

__________________________________________

__________________________________________
APPENDIX B

RESPONSES BY PERCENTAGE
### ATTITUDES TOWARD BAPTISM

Institute of Church Ministry
Theological Seminary, Andrews University
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Church #
ALL RESPONDENTS

Number of surveys for this report: 366

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Weekly</th>
<th>Monthly</th>
<th>Quarterly</th>
<th>Yearly</th>
<th>Almost Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How often is a baptismal service usually conducted in your local church?</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How often is baptism the topic of the Sabbath morning sermon?</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>seldom</td>
<td>Almost never</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Is your church a baptismal service usually a significant and integral part of the main Sabbath worship service?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Is it your understanding that baptism and the Lord's Supper are the two ordinances established by Christ?</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. In your opinion is baptism a sacrament?</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In your opinion is baptism a symbol and nothing more?</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Do you think a believing person can experience regeneration at the time of immersion baptism?</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. In your opinion does baptism bring forgiveness of sins to the sincere candidate being baptized?</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Do you believe God gives a sincere believer the Holy Spirit at baptism?</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Do you believe the name of the Lamb's Book of Life at ear baptism?</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Do you understand the baptismal ceremony to be comparable to the marriage ceremony at which time the believing candidate and Christ are united to each other?</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
12. Do you believe that baptism is necessary for salvation when a person knows about baptism and has the opportunity to be baptized?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13. Do you believe a person should give evidence of conversion before being baptized? (Keep Sabbath, stop smoking, etc.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

14. Do you understand baptism to be the rite of entrance into the Seventh-Day Adventist church and that a person becomes a member of the church by baptism?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>91%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

15. Do you feel that perspective members are pressured to make decisions that they are not ready to make?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Almost Always</th>
<th>Usually</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Almost Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16. Does your church conduct a special baptismal class for baptismal candidates before they are baptized?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>52%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

17. Do you feel that the people who are baptized are well prepared and ready for baptism?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>62%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

18. Are the baptismal candidates helped to gain victory over tobacco habit before being baptized?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

19. Are the members of Sabbath school involved before the candidates are baptized?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>45%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

20. Does the church board review the names of baptismal candidates prior to the baptism?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>66%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

21. Are the candidates examined before the church before being baptized?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>51%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

22. Are the candidates presented to the church and voted into membership subject to baptism before being baptized?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>61%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
21. Do the people know they are joining the Seventh-Day Adventist church at the time of their baptism?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Almost</th>
<th>Usually</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

24. When does your church usually baptize people?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time frame</th>
<th>71%</th>
<th>6%</th>
<th>19 years or under</th>
<th>20-15</th>
<th>16-50</th>
<th>51-65</th>
<th>65+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>During worship</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>service</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During personal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ministries period</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At evening</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meeting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sabbath</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>afternoon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

25. Age group?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>19 years or under</th>
<th>20-15</th>
<th>16-50</th>
<th>51-65</th>
<th>65+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

26. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Eighth grade</th>
<th>Some high school/ academy</th>
<th>H.S./ academy</th>
<th>Some college or college graduation</th>
<th>Graduate study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

27. How long have you been a baptized Adventist?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time period</th>
<th>1-5 years</th>
<th>5-10 years</th>
<th>11-20 years</th>
<th>Over 20 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

28. Religious faith before becoming an SDA?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faith Type</th>
<th>Grew up in Adventist home</th>
<th>Roman Catholic</th>
<th>Mormon</th>
<th>Pentecostal</th>
<th>Evangelical</th>
<th>Mainline Protestant</th>
<th>Other religious background</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

29. Ethnic background?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Group</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

30. Marital status?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Married</th>
<th>Divorced</th>
<th>Widowed</th>
<th>Never married</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

31. Gender?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX C

CHI-SQUARE ANALYSES
**Table No. 21**

**Age (VAR 25) vs Examine (VAR 21)**

**Cell Frequency Counts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Counted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teen</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mature</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elderly</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Examine (VAR 21)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FC/FC</th>
<th>1.00</th>
<th>2.00</th>
<th>3.00</th>
<th>4.00</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Counted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teen</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mature</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elderly</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**Minimum Asymptotic Value is** 0.284

--- All statistics are computed using the original cell frequencies excluding rows and/or columns which are zero.

**Statistic** | **Value** | **D.F.** | **P-Value** | **Statistic** | **Value** | **D.P.**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>32.219</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY
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Books


The Doctrines and Disciplines of the Methodist Church. Cincinnati: Swormstedt and Poe, 1857.


Magazines


"Every Member a Minister." Ministry, February 1980, p. 5.


Unpublished Works