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ABSTRACT

ENRICHING THE UNDERSTANDING AND EXPERIENCE
OF BAPTISM IN KENYA

by

Samson Nyang'au Mwebi

Adviser: Nancy J. Vyhmeister

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: ENRICHING THE UNDERSTANDING AND EXPERIENCE OF BAPTISM
IN KENYA

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Date completed: June 2000

The Problem and Method Used

Baptism is a church activity conducted every three months in most Seventh-day Adventist churches in Kenya. While it brings joy to see new members join the church, the significance of baptism is not fully reflected in the life of individual believers or of the church. This problem may largely stem from inadequate understanding of the significance and meaning of baptism and its celebration.

This study sought to develop ways of improving the practice of baptism in the areas of preparation of candidates for baptism, celebration of baptismal ceremonies, reception of new converts into church membership, and postbaptismal nurturing in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Kenya.

To achieve this, this study looked at the biblical meaning and significance of baptism and how it is practiced in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Information on how baptism is viewed and practiced was obtained by three questionnaires that were sent to Kenyan pastors and church members.

Conclusions

Baptism is an essential ordinance of the church for which careful preparation should be made. The biblical meaning of baptism, death to the old life and resurrection to a new life, should be clearly explained before baptism is administered to anyone. Candidates should understand baptism as a rite of passage into Christ and into the church. More than anything else, the readiness of candidates for baptism is determined by evidence of true conversion.

In the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Kenya, pastors need help in preparing candidates for baptism. Church elders and lay persons who can help church pastors in preparing new converts for baptism need training in how to give baptismal instruction. Baptismal instructors should be able to teach candidates to understand the import of baptism as traditional rites of passage are understood in many Kenyan communities.

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

ENRICHING THE UNDERSTANDING AND EXPERIENCE
OF BAPTISM IN KENYA

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

by
Samson Nyang'au Mwebi

August 2000

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

My personal experience in the ministry has motivated me to research the theology and practice of baptism. Among the major pastoral challenges I faced during my eleven years of ministry in Kenya was that posed by church members who were deserting the faith. These were people whose lives were contrary to biblical principles and were uncommitted Christians. Many of these individuals had been baptized without adequate preparation. Although there were baptisms at least once every three months, there were also regular church board meetings to consider the names of members who had irregular church services attendance or had violated certain Christian moral standards.

I observed also that baptism did not have the same effect on many Christians as traditional rituals did. Many Christians adhered more to ritual rules than to biblical principles. For example, in my own *Abagusii* tribe in Southwestern Kenya, a circumcised girl knows and understands that under no circumstances can she sleep in the same house with her father. To do so is a disgrace in the community. Tradition allows only uncircumcised children to sleep in the same house with their parents. Regardless of age, a circumcised girl knows that she has passed from childhood to womanhood. She is now considered a woman who shows respect to her father by not sleeping in his house.

Although the younger generation of Kenyans today may not fully comprehend the significance of some rituals that were and still may be practiced in their communities, the majority take rituals seriously. For example, in many communities in Kenya, as in many countries in Africa, circumcision for boys and girls is still regarded as one of the main initiation

rites into manhood and womanhood.¹ Circumcision is a public recognition that the individual has passed from childhood to adulthood. The permanent marks are scars of identity² that remind the initiated that the door of childhood is forever shut and is never to be reopened. In other words, the life of childhood with all its behaviors and practices will never be repeated.

In the communities where male, or both male and female, circumcision is practiced, everybody obeys rules and regulations involved in the ritual. One rarely hears of people who have violated ritual rules. They understand that the major rituals of the life cycle signify permanent change in a person's behavior. For example, circumcision, as a rite of passage, marks a radical change from one type of lifestyle to another style. A person acts and behaves as an adult, dresses according to the norms of the community, and is heard by adults. Socially, these people identify with an age group (other young people who have received the rite of initiation at the same time) and are bound to their community and its rights.

¹Irving Kaplan and others, Area Handbook for Kenya (Washington, D.C.: Foreign Area Studies, American University, 1976), 108-109.

²John S. Mbiti, Introduction to African Religion (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1975), 96.

Rites of passage, according to anthropological study, “are the ways in which human beings indicate transformation from one social status to the next, or the passage of calendrical time.”¹ Arnold van Gennep has observed that rites of passage are of three major kinds: (1) separation, such as in funeral ceremonies; (2) transitional state, such as betrothal, pregnancy, or initiation; and (3) incorporation, such as circumcision that incorporates boys and girls into the society of adults.² Van Gennep also points out that rites of passage require certain conditions that must be fulfilled by the person involved.³

Just as those who undergo traditional rites of passage understand the ceremony and are faithful to the rules imposed on them by the ritual, so also those who are baptized need to understand what the rite of baptism stands for and how they must live because they have accepted baptism. In fact, baptismal candidates should demonstrate before baptism that they understand the significance of baptism.

That church members may understand and regard traditional rituals better than they do their Christian baptism poses a problem for Seventh-day Adventists⁴ church leaders in Kenya. Not only is there concern that new converts should understand baptism and accept it as a rite of passage, there is also concern regarding participation of

¹Charles Lindholm, “Rites of Passage,” Dictionary of Anthropology (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), 409.

²Arnold van Gennep, The Rites of Passage (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 11.

³Ibid., 1.

⁴While the full name is Seventh-day Adventist, in this paper I will also use Adventist or the abbreviation SDA.

Christians in traditional rites such as circumcision. This paper deals only with making Christian baptism an unforgettable ceremony. The issue of dual allegiance deserves to be studied, but must be undertaken and resolved by the churches in Kenya.

Against this background, this study focuses on the following concerns: (1) How baptism can be made fundamentally significant to church members and candidates for baptism; (2) how baptismal instructors can be made aware of the need for thorough preparation of candidates for baptism; and (3) how baptism can be a significant occasion that is remembered as are traditional rituals. It is hoped that once baptism is thus understood and administered, Christians will daily renew their baptismal vows in their life experiences and their commitment to Christ and to His service.

Statement of the Problem

Baptism is a church activity usually conducted every three months in most SDA churches in Kenya. It does not require much persuasion to convince people to be baptized. Many people come for baptism by their own choice; they want a name that has a Christian meaning or wish to attend a church near their home. Others come for baptism through the influence of Christian friends or family. Yet others make decisions for baptism by listening to sermons in the church or through an appeal at an evangelistic crusade.

While it brings joy to see new members join churches through baptism, the significance of baptism is not fully reflected in the life of individual believers and in the life of the church as a whole. Some Christians do not attend church services regularly and

others are torn by an unresolved double allegiance, to the traditional rites and to the church. They claim that they are loyal to Christ yet at the same time follow traditions that are contrary to biblical principles. This problem seems to have two sources: (1) an inadequate understanding of the significance and meaning of baptism and (2) a baptismal celebration that appears dull and uninteresting.

The Purpose

The purpose of this study is to assist church workers and lay leaders to make the rite of baptism not only attractive and impressive, but more meaningful and significant to both church members and candidates for baptism. In order to achieve this, it is necessary to investigate the biblical meaning of baptism as well as the Adventist understanding of the rite. On the basis of this information, and in harmony with the Kenyan understanding, this study attempted to develop ways of improving the practice of baptism as regards: the preparation of candidates for baptism, baptismal ceremonies, the reception of new converts into church membership, and the postbaptismal nurture of new members in the SDA Church in Kenya. To reach this purpose, "Baptismal Guidelines for Elders" were prepared.

Justification of this Study

Many people in Kenya make quick decisions for baptism, but within a short time some of them become uncommitted Christians and live as people who are not baptized. This suggests that there is need to develop new ways of teaching and preparing individuals for baptism.

Parts of the baptismal ceremony may not be appropriate for the culture. One of these is the contemporary practice of asking candidates to affirm their decisions for baptism and their acceptance of the SDA doctrinal beliefs in front of large congregation on the day of baptism. Candidates respond by either verbal assent or by raising the right hand. This practice sometimes embarrasses baptismal candidates and may cause unbaptized viewers to reject or delay their decisions for baptism. This part of the ceremony needs to be improved so that it is not intimidating but becomes part of a highly significant experience in the lives of candidates and witnesses.

Baptismal ceremonies as now conducted in Kenya do not clearly reflect what baptism really stands for. Baptism should reflect a transition, a person's change of status and allegiance. Every effort should be made to make it a high event in the lives of candidates and witnesses.

Since many people in Kenya accept invitations to ceremony-oriented events, baptism is to be seen as one of the evangelistic strategies. If well planned and conducted, baptisms can be used to reach the unchurched.

Overview of the Dissertation

After the introduction in chapter 1, chapter 2 lays a biblical basis for baptism and its theological significance and meaning. Based on examples of baptism in the New Testament, this chapter explores the biblical method of baptism, the baptismal formula, the age of candidates for baptism, and repentance and faith as prerequisites to baptism. It discusses also the meaning of a second baptism mentioned in Acts 19.

Chapter 3 discusses baptism as understood and practiced by the SDA Church. It focuses on the preparation of candidates for baptism, the meaning of baptism, immersion as the only mode of baptism, and the concept of believers' baptism.

Chapter 4 focuses on SDA baptism in Kenya. This chapter is based on two questionnaires sent to SDA ministers and church members in Kenya. Ministers were asked how they prepare candidates for baptism, celebrate baptism, and administer postbaptismal nurture. Lay persons were asked to respond to similar questions from their point of view. A third questionnaire was filled out by pastors studying at Andrews University. They were asked about their perception of the practice and meaning of baptism in Kenya. The surveys were intended to gather information to confirm or disprove my own impressions regarding SDA baptism in Kenya.

Finally, chapter 5 summarizes the study and draws conclusions. The surveys appear in Appendix A. Appendix B contains a brief document, "Guidelines for Baptism," intended to help church elders provide better leadership in activities related to baptism.

CHAPTER 2

THE BIBLICAL MEANING OF BAPTISM

The Background of Baptism

Various views and theories have been suggested regarding the origin, practice, and significance of Christian baptism. Some writers see it as originating in the Old Testament ceremonies. Cottrell says that Old Testament ceremonies and the imagery of divine-spiritual cleansing must have influenced Christian baptism.¹ Others suggest that the early Church must have copied proselyte baptism. For example, Hartman notes that "Jewish proselyte baptism has been proposed as the usage the early church took over and christianized. The practice did exist in the first century C.E. and therefore early enough to be adopted by the Christians."² However, looking at some of the Jewish practices of baptism and Christian baptism we discover that although there were similarities, the requirements and significance of the two are not precisely the same.

¹Jack Cottrell, Baptism: A Biblical Study (Joplin, Missouri: College Publishing, 1989), 57.

²Lars Hartman, "Baptism," Anchor Bible Dictionary (1992), 1:585.

Proselyte Baptism

The baptism of proselytes was one of the religious ablutions practiced in Judaism. According to the Anchor Bible Dictionary, the term "proselyte" in the New Testament refers to gentiles who were converted to Judaism.¹ In order for these gentiles to be admitted into the community and faith of the Jews, they were required to sacrifice a burnt offering, observe all the precepts that bound the Jews, terminate all former family ties, and go through the ritual of baptism. A proselyte who followed all the laws of conversion into the Jewish community was considered a newly born child.²

Being particular in their ritual cleansing, the Jews examined and taught those who desired to join their community before accepting them. Motives for desiring a change of status were inquired into, new obligations were explained, the law rehearsed, the dangers and hardships involved were discussed, and the full implications of the baptismal steps were expounded.³ The Talmud prescribes:

If at the present time a man desires to become a proselyte, he is to be addressed as follows: What reason have you for desiring to become a proselyte; do you not know that Israel at the present time are persecuted and oppressed, despised, harassed and overcome by afflictions? If he replies, I know and yet am unworthy, he is accepted forthwith.⁴

The same Talmud further reads:

¹Paul F. Stuehrenberg, "Proselyte," Anchor Bible Dictionary (1992), 5:505.

²Cecil Roth, "Proselyte," Encyclopaedia Judaica (1971), 13:1183.

³R. E. O. White, Biblical Doctrine of Initiation (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1960), 70.

⁴Yebamoth 47a.

[The proselyte] is given instruction in some of the minor and some of the major commandments. He is informed of the sin (of the neglect of the commandments) of Gleanings, the Forgotten Sheaf, the Corner and the poor Man's Tithe. He is also told of the punishment for the transgression of the commandments. Furthermore, he is addressed thus: be it known to you that before you come to this condition, if you had profaned the Sabbath you would not have been punishable with stoning; but now were you to eat suet you would be punished with stoning. And as he is informed of the punishment for the transgression of the commandments, so is he informed of the reward granted for their fulfillment. He is told, be it known to you that the world to come was made only for the righteous, and that Israel at the present time are unable to bear either too much prosperity or too much suffering.¹

By receiving baptism, the proselyte had to abandon his or her old way of life and practices and adopt the customs of the Jews. In other words, leaving the former life demanded the fullest rites of purification before a person was qualified to mingle with the true Israelites. On this, White says:

His [the proselyte's] sincere renunciation of heathen ways, his adoption of the divine law as the rule of his life, all expressed at and by means of his baptism, the rite was believed to admit the proselyte to the fellowship of the chosen people, and their God . . . to usher him into a new life of faith and obedience under the protection of Israel's God.²

This is to say that Jewish customs were to be adopted, including male circumcision as the ultimate sign of Jewish identity.³

Some evidence suggests that the mode of proselyte baptism was self-immersion.

Flemington contends that a number of rabbinic references make clear that there must be no

¹Ibid.

²R. E. O. White, 72.

³Stuehrenberg, 504.

separation between the body of the candidate and the water.¹ The Hebrew word, *tebilah*, which generally signifies total immersion was used to describe how a person received baptism. Flemington goes on to say: "If such a requirement were specified for a ritual *tebilah* to be carried out by an Israelite, it must also have been demanded in the *tebilah* of a proselyte."² Israel Abrahams affirms that "there is no adequate ground for doubting that Jewish baptism in the first century [A.D.] was by total immersion."³

Immersion is evidenced by the amount of water that was required for the ablutions.

The Talmud reads:

As it was taught: Then he shall bathe all his flesh in water (this intimates) that nothing must interpose between his flesh and the water; in water (means) in the water of a mikweh; all his flesh (implies sufficient) water for his whole body to be covered therein. And how much is that? A square cubit by three cubits depth, and the sages estimated the standard of the water . . . at forty se'ahs.⁴

In response to the proposal that proselyte baptism might have given rise to Christian baptism, Hartman suggests three reasons why the rite of Christian baptism may not have originated with that of proselytes: (1) Proselyte baptism was not associated with the remission of sins; it was an act of ritual cleansing for heathen men and women who had been converted to the God of Israel; (2) proselyte baptism did not convey any eschatological meaning; (3) proselyte baptism was not done passively; a person immersed

¹W. F. Flemington, New Testament Doctrine of Baptism (London: S. P. C. K., 1964), 8.

²Ibid.

³Israel Abrahams, "How Did the Jewish Baptize?" Journal of Theological Studies 12 (1911): 612.

⁴Pesahim 109a-b.

himself or herself in the presence of those who were conversant with the law.¹

This idea closely matches Schneider's thinking. He points out that early Christian baptism was not influenced by proselyte baptism because the purpose of the two baptisms was different. Proselyte baptism served as an entry into the Jewish worship practices, while the early Christian baptism essentially pointed to the redemptive acts of the death and resurrection of Christ.²

Qumran Baptisms

Rites of immersion were also practiced by the Qumran community before New Testament baptism. This community was composed of Jews who voluntarily separated themselves from their contemporaries in order to live an austere and ascetic life. Ablutions and lustrations, or what some scholars call baptisms, were among their religious practices. According to their religious beliefs, they were preparing themselves for the last days through moral, ritual washings.³

Water cleansing and moral purification were two major requirements for membership and continuity in the Qumran society. The Qumranians believed that sin had two locations in a person: sin committed in the flesh and in the soul, or outward and inward sin. The understanding of the Qumranians on the locations of sin is best shown by

¹Hartman, 585.

²Johannes Schneider, Baptism and Church in the New Testament (London: Carey Kingsgate Press, 1957), 23.

³Leonard F. Badia, "The Qumran Baptism," Indian Journal of Theology 33 (1984) :10-23.

what Jesus says: "You have heard that it was said to those of old, you shall not commit adultery. But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matt 5: 27-28).¹ This was known as inward sin. According to the understanding of the Qumran people, outward sin was cleansed by water and inward sin by the Spirit.²

Because of this understanding, Qumran had two separate rites of initiation: water washing and Spirit cleansing. The first stage of membership in the group started with water washing, when only the flesh was purified. Perhaps their knowledge of using water for cleansing was based on Scripture such as Isa 1:16 and Ezek 36:25. These passages mention water as a symbol of cleansing from iniquity. At the stage of flesh purification, a person vowed to abide by all the laws of the community and was examined on his or her knowledge of the *Torah*. The outward lustration was followed by the cleansing of the Holy Spirit.³

Badia summarizes the moral washings at Qumran and says that they were lustrations or ablutions with or without repentance, daily baths of purification.⁴ Ringgren has the same view. He says: "It is fairly clear that in Qumran the washing was not an unrepeatable occurrence, which marked admission into the fellowship, but was a daily

¹All Bible texts are from the New King James Version, unless otherwise noted.

²B. E. Thiering, "Qumran Initiation and New Testament Baptism," New Testament Studies 27 (1981): 615.

³Ibid.

⁴Badia, 18.

routine.”¹

Cleansing Ceremonies

Water washings for cleansing were common in the Levitical system of worship. Cleansing was required for maintaining vertical and horizontal relationships. Whenever there was need for a closer interaction with God, washing with water was required. For example, Aaron and his sons were required to wash their hands and feet before performing their sanctuary duties (Exod 30:19-21). In preparing the congregation to meet God at Mount Sinai, Moses, by the command of the Lord, asked all the people to wash their clothes before they approached God (Exod 19:10-22). Washing with water symbolized the removal of uncleanness that resulted from sin.²

In Num 5, ceremonially unclean persons were separated from their families and society. Lepers and men or women who had a fluid discharge were pronounced unclean (Lev 15:2, 25). Physical contact with a corpse also produced uncleanness (Num 5:2). Those who were unclean became clean after washing themselves with water: "He who is to be cleansed shall wash his clothes, shave off all his hair, and wash himself in water, that he may be clean. After that he shall come into the camp, and shall stay outside his tent seven days" (Lev 14:8-9).

The process of ritual purity was not completed in the Jewish community without

¹Helmer Ringgren, The Faith of Qumran: Theology of the Dead Sea Scrolls (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1995), 245.

²Frank E. Gaebelin, ed. "Exodus," Expositor's Bible Commentary, 12 vols. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990), 2: 469, 470.

washing and dipping in water. Cleansing baths played a major role in dealing with moral impurities.¹ Even Naaman the leper was cleansed from his disease by washing seven times in the river Jordan (2 Kgs 5:1-14).

Acts of cleansing were also used for personal religious life in the Old Testament. In sorrow for his sin, David repented and prayed for purity of heart: "Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow" (Ps 51:2, 7). Isaiah the prophet used the metaphor of washing in asking people to repent of their sins: "Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean" (Isa 1:16). Jeremiah urged: "O Jerusalem, wash your heart from wickedness, that you may be saved. How long shall your evil thoughts lodge within you?" (Jer 4:14). Ezekiel spoke of a lustration of the people of Israel when the Lord would bring them from captivity to their homeland: "Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh" (Ezek 36:25).

New Testament Baptism

Examples of Baptism

The New Testament gives examples of baptisms. A study of these events helps to clarify the meaning and form of Christian baptism. For this study, the baptism of John and the baptism of Jesus, along with baptisms recorded in Acts--the Ethiopian, Cornelius, and

¹Schneider, 14.

the Philippian jailer--are investigated.

John's Baptism

Some scholars have connected the baptism of John to the Levitical ablutions, indicating that since he came from a priestly family he would have been familiar with the lustrations.¹ However, John pointed out that his baptism was authorized of God: "He who sent me to baptize with water"(John 1:33). A later discussion between Jesus and the high priests indicates that the Lord confirmed the origin of John's baptism. Jesus asked: "The baptism of John--where was it from? From heaven or from men? (Matt 21:25). Evidently, Jesus intended to convey that it came from God.

The preaching of John the Baptist is categorized as a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins that prepares people for the coming of the Lord. Luke writes: "And he went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sin" (Luke 3:3). People were asked to turn from sin to God and live an obedient life before Him. The baptism they came for demanded a repentant life manifested in righteous living.² In other words, repentance for sins and submission to God were to mark their lifestyle, words, and deeds.

Bearing fruits worthy of repentance was John's challenge to the crowds that came to him for baptism (Matt 3:7-8). It was even more challenging to the Pharisees and Sadducees, who because of their heritage, professed to be more righteous than other

¹G. R. Beasley-Murray, Baptism in the New Testament (London: Macmillan, 1962), 43.

²Ibid., 34.

people. Unfortunately, ethnic heritage apart from righteousness, the Baptist warned, offers no assurance of salvation.¹ Although they were descendants of Abraham, they were to confess their sins and receive water baptism as symbol of their inner cleansing of sin.

Repentance and confession of sins were the means of preparing for the Messianic Kingdom they were anticipating. Knight points out that preparation for the Messianic Kingdom does not depend on anyone's descent or denominational affiliation.² It was through baptism that a transition from the condition and destiny of the unrighteous to those of the righteous was to be demonstrated. Baptism, as it were, was to seal the repentant sinners as members of the covenant people ready for the appearing of the Messiah.

As John's baptism was an outward symbol of converted believers who were waiting for the coming Messiah, Christian baptism has become a symbol of an inward repentance of the people who are preparing themselves for the second coming of Christ.³ This being the case, those who have been baptized and those who desire baptism must bear fruits worthy of their repentance (Luke 3:8).

The ministry of John the Baptist demonstrates that anyone who desires to become a subject of Christ's Kingdom must show the evidence of faith and repentance. In discussing John's baptism, Ellen G. White pointed out the same: "Kindness, honesty, and

¹Leander E. Keck, "Luke" The New Interpreter's Bible, 12 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), 9:84.

²George R. Knight, Matthew, Abundant Life Bible Amplifier (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1994), 62.

³Ibid., 101.

fidelity would be seen" in the lives of Christ's subjects. "They would minister to the needy, and bring their offerings to God. In the daily life, justice, mercy, and the love of God will be seen."¹

In his call to his people, John affirmed that the fate of his hearers depended on their individual spiritual condition rather than on their racial status.² Admission into the future kingdom of God does not depend on anyone's ethnic identity or religious status; each individual person must be convicted and realize his or her spiritual needs and ask God for forgiveness.

The Baptism of Jesus

All four Gospels record the baptism of Jesus (Matt 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22; and John 1:32-34). The place of baptism was the river Jordan. In John 1:28 the baptismal place is identified as "Bethabara." According to the Complete Bible Library, this name means "house of crossing" and is proposed to be the spot where the children of Israel crossed into the land of promise.³

Matthew's gospel records a rather detailed dialog between Jesus and John over His request for baptism. John at first declined to baptize Him (Matt 3:13-14), for he could not see how a baptism that called for repentance for the remission of sins would apply to

¹Ellen G. White, Desire of Ages (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1940), 107.

²Herbert George Marsh, The Origin and Significance of the New Testament Baptism (Manchester, England: Manchester University Press, 1941), 39.

³Ralph Harris, "Matthew," The Complete Bible Library, Study Bible, 16 vols. (Springfield, Missouri: N.p., 1989), 2:57.

Jesus who knew no sin (2 Cor 5:21; Heb 4:15). Furthermore, John's baptism was for preparing people for the One who was coming after him and was stronger than he, who was to baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire (Matt 3:11; Luke 3:16).

Jesus' request for baptism, which perhaps John did not comprehend, was not show repentance. White says: "Jesus did not receive baptism as a confession of guilt on His own account. He identified Himself with sinners, taking the steps that we are to take, and doing the work that we must do."¹ In His response to John, Christ said: "Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he allowed Him" (Matt 3: 15).

The pronoun "us" and the term "righteousness" are the key to an understanding of Jesus' baptism and its significance to Christian baptism. Both John and Jesus were to fulfill righteousness. Christ's baptism indicates that Jesus connected baptism to doing righteousness. The phrase, "to fulfill all righteousness," has been understood and interpreted in various ways. This phrase may refer to the fulfillment of the prophecy of Jesus' birth by a virgin, His place of birth, and His ministry (Matt 1:22; 2:15, 23; 4:14; 5:17; 8:17; Ps 2:7; Isa 42:1). Others suggest that Jesus' baptism confirmed a baptism that demanded righteousness of John's converts.² It is also said that believers fulfill all righteousness by accepting baptism as one of the divine ordinances that must be performed

¹E. G. White, Desire of Ages, 111.

²W. D. Davies, Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew, 3 vols., International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1988), 1:325-327.

by those who accept Christ.¹

Other scholars contend that "to fulfill all righteousness" reflects the incarnation of Jesus. He was to be like the people He came to save.² The author of Hebrews writes: "Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people" (Heb 2:17). Therefore, through baptism, it behooved Jesus to do all that is right and to fulfill all divine requirements. He took upon Himself the role of a servant in order to identify Himself with the people He came to save. Furthermore, His baptism pointed to His death, by which He made righteousness possible for all.³

Still other sources say that in submitting Himself to water baptism, Jesus fulfilled all justice.⁴ According to this understanding, Jesus came to fulfill all that His Father had ordained for Him in the activity of redeeming the sinful human race. "But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law" (Gal 4:4-5).

Jesus did the will of God through humility and obedience, not only at baptism but in all situations in His ministry. When He was tempted in the wilderness, at the Garden of Gethsemane, and on the cross, He yielded to God's will (Matt 4:1-11; 26: 39; 27:38-50). On one occasion He said, "As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do

¹Ibid.

²Harris, 57.

³Gaebelein, 8:108.

⁴Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Bible (1963), s.v. "Baptism."

not seek my own will but the will of the Father who sent Me" (John 5:30).

Of His free choice to do the will of God, Jesus went under the waters of baptism to be a model for Christian baptism. On this point, Davies says: "Jesus is giving an example to Christians who are involved in the 'us': the followers of Jesus should follow in their Master's footsteps and fulfill all righteousness by accepting Christian baptism."¹ If this statement is true, those who have opportunity to receive water baptism should be baptized. If they are unwilling to receive this rite, they are not fulfilling the righteousness spoken of in Matt 3:15.

This idea of fulfilling all righteousness can be observed in the discussion between Jesus and Nicodemus. Although baptism is not explicitly mentioned, the instructions Jesus gave seem to imply that Nicodemus needed to fulfill all righteousness through baptism. This conversation gives a picture of Christian baptism (John 3:1-21). The phrases, "reborn," "reborn of water and Spirit," "born anew or from above" (vss. 3, 5) are associated with baptism and are listed as conditions for entering the kingdom of God.² "Born again" has the idea of personal regeneration. Cottrell writes that the concept of regeneration in the Greek language means a change that takes place in the sinner's inner nature at conversion.³ The Bible calls the experience of regeneration in the life of a sinner

¹Davies, 326.

²Hartman, 1:592.

³Cottrell, 39.

a new creation (2 Cor 5:17), inward renewal (Titus 3:5), and resurrection from death to life (Eph 2:5-6; Col 1:13).

The Baptism of the Ethiopian Eunuch

The Ethiopian eunuch received the rite of baptism by Philip on his way from Jerusalem back to his country (Acts 8:26-39). Although not a Jew, he might have been a God-fearing Gentile who went to Jerusalem to worship God in the way of the Jews (v. 27).¹ His request for baptism indicates that somehow he had some information on the baptism expected of the Gentile who wanted to join the religion of Israel.²

Philip initiated the conversation with the eunuch by asking a question on the very text this Gentile was reading (Acts 8:30; Isa 53:7-8). Using the passage and beginning at his level of understanding Scripture, Philip preached Christ to him (Acts 8:35). At the end of the conversation, the eunuch believed that Christ was the Son of God and requested baptism when he saw water (vs. 36).

Being assured that the Ethiopian believed with all his heart (vs. 37), both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water for his baptism (vs. 38). This suggests immersion baptism. According to the Expositor's Bible Commentary, Wadi el-hesi, that runs northeast of Gaza, has been traditionally identified as the place where the eunuch was baptized.³

¹Edward E. Hindson and Woodrow Michael Kroll, KJV Parallel Bible Commentary (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1994), 2147.

²Gaebelein, 9:365.

³Ibid.

After his baptism, the eunuch went home rejoicing (vs. 39), a sign that he had found the true object of his search. We can therefore conclude that the earnest seeker after God will eventually be guided into the truth concerning Him. God says through Jeremiah: "And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart" (Jer 29:13).

Like the Ethiopian eunuch, there are people who are searching for the truth but need someone who can guide them into a better understanding of it. Ellen White makes a point that many people are on the verge of the kingdom waiting to be gathered in by their fellow men and women.¹ She further says that: "The unselfish labor of Christians in the past should be to us an object lesson and an inspiration."²

The Baptism of Cornelius

Cornelius, a gentile by birth and a soldier by profession (Acts 10:1), was a devout seeker of the true God (vs. 2), who through association with the Jews had become a believer.³ In response to his worship, God instructed him to bring Peter to his house (vss. 3-9). The story continues with an angel telling Peter to go to this gentile home (vss. 9-20), with Peter responding to the call of God and Cornelius' messengers (vss. 21-23). Upon arrival he found that Cornelius had brought together his relatives and friends to hear the word of God (vs. 24). Peter preached to this group concerning the life and ministry

¹Ellen G. White, The Acts of the Apostles (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1911), 109.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., 132.

of Christ (Acts 10:34-42). He ended his speech with the promise that “whoever believes in Christ will receive the remission of sins” (vs. 43).

At this point of the presentation, the Holy Spirit fell on the gentile listeners (Acts 10:44), causing astonishment among those who had accompanied Peter (vs. 45). Had God not prepared Peter for his situation, he also would have been overwhelmed. Since it was unlawful for Jews to interact socially with the Gentiles, God taught Peter through a vision that he should overcome any racial prejudices (vss. 12-14). This vision marked Peter's conversion to a new perspective of gentile cleanness.¹ Through this experience, Peter realized that God does not show racial favoritism (vs. 34). God's plan of salvation is extended to all humankind without partiality (John 3:16).

The exclamation, "Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy spirit just as we have?" (vs. 47), suggests that after people have accepted the gospel message, there is no reason why they should not be baptized and join other members in a local church. Before baptism, Peter taught his audience about the ministry, death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, and that through Him, people are forgiven their sins (vss. 37-43).² That his listeners accepted his teaching was a sign of their readiness for baptism.

The experience of Peter and Cornelius teaches also that through the preaching of the gospel, all barriers of national and racial particularism and separatism should be

¹Watson E. Mills and Richard F. Wilson, Mercer Commentary on the Bible (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1995), 1100.

²C. K. Barrett, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1994), 1:528-529.

overcome. On this basis, Polhill says that after his discourse Peter stayed and shared meals with the newly converted Gentiles, possibly at Cornelius' home (vs. 48).¹

The Baptism of the Philippian Jailer

The apostles' singing, the miracle of earthquake, and the confirmation that no prisoner had escaped were some of the events that led to the baptism of the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:25-34). Both the prisoners and the jailer heard the testimonies of the apostles in prison. Instead of hearing voices of moaning, cursing, and swearing from the people who had been tortured and were now hungry and in a cold gloomy cell, they heard voices of singing and rejoicing.²

In the midst of this joy, the earthquake shook the prison. Finding out that the earthquake had opened prison doors and prisoners' chains were loose, the prison keeper feared that the inmates under his guard had escaped. Fearing the punishment required by Romans law, he decided to kill himself (vs. 27).³ This fear of earthly consequences opened up the way for a fear of God.

After the jailer discovered that the prison gates were open, and everybody in custody was present, he made a decision to believe in the God Paul and Silas were preaching. He asked: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (vs. 30). Circumstances did not

¹John B. Polhill, Acts, New American Commentary, vol. 26 (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1992), 264.

²E. White, Acts of the Apostles, 214.

³David J. Williams, Acts, New Testament International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1990), 290.

permit elaborate theological discussions on salvation. But given the situation and his urgent spiritual need, Paul told him that salvation comes by personal belief in the Lord Jesus Christ (vs. 31). He believed and was baptized, together with his household, in the name of Jesus Christ (vs. 33)¹

The jailer demonstrated his new faith by what can be called fruits of repentance. Before his conversion, he had participated in fastening the apostles' feet in the stocks, but after his conversion, he extended his hospitality to the apostle. He took them into his house, washed their wounds and set food before them (vss. 33-34).²

The conversion and baptism of this jailer indicates that time is not always a requirement for preparing a person for baptism. All that matters is a true realization of one's spiritual needs and God's power to save. Those who have been truly converted become friendly to all people, including those who seem to mistreat them (Col 3:12-17).

Teaching on Baptism

Nowhere in the New Testament is there a treatise on baptism. However, Scripture is not silent on how baptism should take place and when it should be performed.

¹"Acts," SDA Bible Commentary, ed. F. D. Nichol (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1953-57), 6:333.

²E. G. White, Acts of the Apostles, 215, 217.

How Baptism Should Take Place

Immersion

Although there are forms of baptism other than immersion, immersion continued to be the most accepted form from the dawn of Christianity until about the fourteenth century.¹ Not only was immersion practiced in New Testament times, the Greek words used for baptism confirm that mode. The Church Fathers also indicate that baptism was by immersion.

New Testament evidence. Immersion was the form of baptism practiced in New Testament times. For example, John the Baptist went to where there was “much water” to baptize his candidates (John 3:23). Immersion was the form of baptism Jesus received at the hands of John. Immediately after baptism, Jesus “went up out of” the water (Matt 3:16).

In the time of the apostles, immersion baptism was administered. Luke says: “And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him” (Acts 8:38-39). Paul’s figurative language suggests that he spoke of baptism by immersion. For example, in Rom 6:4 and Col 2:12 he says that Christians were buried through baptism and raised unto new life. This figurative language points to the time when a person was lowered into water until the whole body was submerged and was then raised out of water.

¹Henry F. Brown, Baptism through the Centuries (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Association, 1965), 36.

Baptizō and baptō. The lexicon definitions of the Greek words *baptizō* and *baptō* gives us a picture of the form of Christian baptism in the New Testament. *Baptizō* is defined as to dip or to immerse.¹ The word *baptizō* is not limited to the Christian usage. In non-Christian usage, it means to plunge, sink, drench, overwhelm.² The word refers to the ordinance of Christian baptism in Matt 28:19; Mark 16:16; Luke 3:16; John 3:23; Acts 2:38; 9:18; 10:48; 16:14-15.³ The use of this term indicates that candidates for baptism were immersed, dipped in water.

Baptō means to dip or to dye.⁴ This is the word used for dipping a finger in water (Luke 16: 24), dipping a morsel (John 13:26), or dipping a garment in blood (Rev 19:13). While this word belongs to the same family as *baptizō*, it is never used to refer to baptism.

Church Fathers' evidence. Some valuable testimonies of Church Fathers and other ecclesiastical writers have contributed to understanding the mode of baptism in the New Testament era. Baptism by immersion was the only mode known by Church Fathers: "They invariably designate baptism as the act of dipping, bathing, or washing, and following the language of the Apostle Paul, who calls baptism the washing of regeneration

¹Walter Bauer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (BAGD) (1979), s.v. "*Baptizō*."

²Ibid.

³The New Analytical Greek Lexicon (1990), s.v. "*Baptizō*."

⁴BAGD, s.v. "*Baptō*."

(Titus iii. 5)."¹

For example, Tertullian said that baptism was done in the name of the three Persons of the Godhead. The converts affirmed before the bishop that they renounced the devil and his angels and then were immersed three times.² Origen also understood baptism to be an act of washing in water and that through it a person was buried with Christ in regeneration.³ Justin Martyr said that candidates were led to a place where there was much water and were regenerated and washed in the name of God the Father, of Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit.⁴ In his sermon, De Baptismo, Basil said:

How can we be placed in a condition of likeness to His death? By being buried with Him in baptism. How can we go down with Him into the grave? By imitating the burial of Christ in baptism; for the bodies of the baptized are in a sense buried in water. For this reason, the Apostle speaks figuratively of baptism, as a laying aside the works of the flesh; ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands.⁵

Although this was the initial understanding of the mode of baptism, other forms of baptism, such as sprinkling and effusion, were adopted to meet certain situations. These forms were first used in baptizing sick people and infants, and only later for everybody.⁶

¹Wolfrd Nelson Cote, Archaeology of Baptism (London: Yates and Alexander, 1876), 16.

²Tertullian De corona 3 (ANF 3:94).

³Cote, 20-21.

⁴James Chrystal, A History of the Modes of Christian Baptism (Philadelphia: Lindsay and Blakiston, 1861), 59-60.

⁵Basil De Baptismo, quoted in Cote, 23.

⁶Chrystal, 163.

Nevertheless, the meaning of *baptizō* clearly indicates that the element required for baptism is water and the method to be employed is immersion.

The baptismal formula

The Matthean formula for baptism--in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit--is used only in Matt 28:19. Elsewhere the formula the apostles used for baptism was "in the name of Jesus" or "in the name of the Lord" (Acts 2:38; 10:48; 19:5).

According to the Scriptures, the Godhead is involved in the plan of salvation. In John 3:16 God the Father and Jesus the Son are portrayed as active in saving humankind. Before returning to heaven, Jesus informed His disciples of the role of the Holy Spirit in the plan of salvation. In his benediction, the apostle Paul says that God the Father, the Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit are partners in the redemptive process of humankind (2 Cor 13:14).

Therefore, to be baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is to acknowledge that salvation depends on the function and co-existence of the Godhead. Duck's understanding of the Matthean formula is rightly applied here. She says that by the use of the trinitarian formula in baptism Christians affirm that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are coequal, distinct, and interrelated persons of one God. She further points out that this formula indicates in whose authority and power the act of baptism takes place.¹

The baptismal formula directs people's minds to the person of Jesus Christ. As Kistemaker says, the term "name" includes the full revelation about Jesus and it refers to

¹Ruth C. Duck, Gender and the Name of God: The Trinitarian Baptismal Formula (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1991), 150.

His person, work, and the subjects of His ministry.¹ This is to say that Jesus is the center of baptism for the remission of sins. Those who have been forgiven and baptized pledge themselves to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Hartman suggests that the meaning of the phrase "in the name" in the book of Acts means that the rite of baptism is based on the preaching about Jesus and His mission on earth.²

Perhaps the Greek construction of this formula can give further understanding of the meaning of the baptismal formula. The Greek phrase, *eis to onoma*, "into the name," was a common phrase used even in banking transactions. In commercial terms, it referred to the account into which money was deposited.³ If this rendering can be applied to baptism, one can say that a person baptized into the name of Jesus is added to the account of God. It is like saying that, at baptism, a believer is deposited into the account of God and becomes a property of the Lord, subject to His protection and care.

Whether one should be baptized "in" or "into" the name of the Lord has been of concern to some. Baptism "in the name of" can be misunderstood to mean that a candidate is baptized at the command or by the authority of the Lord. Interpreted this way, the formula "in the name of" could deprive human beings freedom of choice. For this reason, some scholars prefer "baptism into the name of" rather than "in the name of."⁴

105. ¹Simon J. Kistemaker, Acts (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1990),

²Hartman, 590.

³Ibid., 586.

⁴William Hendriksen, Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1973), 1000-1001.

Others do not see this formula creating any problem in the understanding of Christian baptism. For example, Schlink explains that it is not at all easy to place the Greek preposition in the baptism formula in the right place or to give it the right meaning. He goes on to say that the phrase "in the name of" need not mean "by command of" or "by authority of" Jesus Christ. It may also be rendered "through the name and on the basis of the name."¹

When Baptism Should Take Place

The age of candidates for baptism

There is no consensus in Christendom on the proper age of candidates for baptism. Some say that since there is no biblical mandate for infant baptism, and since baptism requires a personal confession of faith, children should not be baptized.² Others, especially those who interpret baptism as a sacrament, contend that age should not bar anyone from being included in a covenant relationship with God through baptism.³ Still there are those who maintain that infant baptism is valid because there are some Scriptural hints on the baptism of children in the New Testament. Thus a brief survey of the passages said to be scriptural evidences for the baptism of children is necessary.

Scriptures do not specify the appropriate age for the acceptance of Jesus Christ.

¹Edmund Schlink, The Doctrine of Baptism, trans. Herbert J. A. Bouman (London: Concordia Publishing House, 1972), 42.

²Warren Carr, Baptism: Conscience and Clue for the Church (New York: Warren Carr, 1964), 57.

³Laurence Hull Stookey, Baptism; Christ's Act in the Church (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1982), 73.

What is required of those who come for baptism is faith, repentance, and confession of sin (Matt 3:1, 8; Luke 3:3, 8; Mark 16:16; Acts 3:38; 8:37). The instructions on baptism suggest that those who are baptized should be mature enough to know what repentance and confession of sins mean.

Nevertheless, some passages in the New Testament are sometimes referred to as justifying the baptism of children. These include Matt 19:13-15; Mark 10:13-16; Luke 18:15-17. The key statement in these passages is "Jesus' welcome of children." Jesus said: "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 19:13-14). Brown agrees that Jesus embraced and blessed little children, but there is no hint in Scripture that He baptized them or asked His disciples or anyone else to administer baptism to them.¹

Another set of passages frequently quoted as evidence for the baptism of children or infants appears in the books of Acts and 1 Corinthians. Cornelius and his household were baptized and were saved (Acts 11:14); Lydia was baptized with all her household (Acts 16:15); the Philippian jailer was baptized with all his family (Acts 16:33); Crispus the ruler of the synagogue believed in the Lord and he, with all his household, was baptized (Acts 18:8); and Paul baptized the household of Stephanas (1 Cor 1:16).

The debatable key word in these passages used to validate or reject infant or children baptism is "household." This word, translated from the Greek term, *oikos*, can mean place of abode, household, family, or lineage.² In view of this definition, scholars

¹Brown, 24.

²New Analytical Greek Lexicon (1990), s.v. "*oikos*."

have different opinions whether all members in the household were baptized, including infants and little children.¹ Carson is right to say that baptism is for those who have believed. People first believe the gospel and in the rite of baptism consider themselves as dying and rising with Christ in the newness of life. He concludes that infants are incapable of exercising faith in the death and resurrection of Christ (1 Cor 15:29).²

Some of the instances of the conversion of a whole house to the Christian faith in the New Testament may be better understood in the light of the role of the head of the house in ancient society. All important decisions were made by the head of the family on behalf of the members. This applied to religious matters as well. If the head of the household decided to change allegiance from one religion to another, the rest of the members followed suit.³ In addition, Aland says that there is no convincing evidence that there were little children or infants in each *oikos* that was baptized.⁴

Therefore, there is little weight to the argument that the household may have been composed of adults, children, and or infants. There is no specific example of an infant being baptized in the households mentioned in the books of Acts and 1 Corinthians.

¹Arthur S. Yates, Why Baptize Infants? A Study of the Biblical, Traditional and Theological Evidence (Norwich, Norfolk: Canterbury Press, 1993), 1.

²Alexander Carson, Baptism in Its Mode and Subjects (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1860), 212.

³Beasley-Murray, 313.

⁴Kurt Aland, Did the Early Church Baptize Infants? (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963), 88.

Neither is there any direct evidence in the New Testament for the baptism of infants.¹

Instruction before baptism

Most examples of baptism in the New Testament indicate that candidates for baptism received instruction on repentance and faith in Jesus Christ before they were baptized. Christ-centered teaching was given to individuals, to crowds, or to small groups, such as household members (Acts 10:36-43). To those who believed and confessed Jesus as their Lord and Savior, baptism was administered as a sign of their new life (Acts 16:31).

The New Testament presents repentance and faith as prerequisites to baptism. Candidates for baptism, in the examples of baptism given above, were required to repent and exercise faith in Christ before they were baptized. John the Baptist asked his baptismal candidates to repent and bear fruits worthy of their repentance (Matt 3:2, 8). The apostles asked those who desired salvation to repent of their sins and be baptized (Acts 2:38; 16:31). Repentance involves a complete reformation, a complete a turnabout, of life. The Greek word for repentance, *metanoia*, means to make a change of principle and practice, to reform.² Once the effects of repentance have been realized and recognized, there is no reason for denying or delaying the rite of baptism (Acts 10:47).

By true repentance a person receives the gracious forgiveness that God continually

¹Flemington, 131.

²New Analytical Greek Lexicon, s.v. "*metanoia*."

offers all humankind in Christ Jesus (Luke 24:47).¹ This repentance comes by the conviction of the Holy Spirit through the preaching of Christ, His ministry, suffering, death, crucifixion, and resurrection. Luke states that this repentance is a gift of divine grace which is given by means of the preaching of the gospel of Christ (Acts 5:31; 11:18).²

Repentance was a major motif in the discourse of the apostles (Acts 2:22-24, 31-36; 8:12, 25, 35; 10:36-43; 11:20, 21). The appeal was made to consider the redemptive acts of Christ. Ellen White concurs, saying that when a sinner beholds the love of Christ, "the heart is softened, impressed, and inspired." She further says: "It is when we most fully comprehend the love of God that we best realize the sinfulness of sin."³

The apostle Paul teaches that individuals become God's children through faith in Christ Jesus, and at baptism they are washed, justified, and sanctified (2 Cor 6:11; Rom 1:16-17; 5:1-2). Like repentance, this faith is elicited by the preaching of the gospel of Christ. Paul writes: "So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ" (Rom 10:17 RSV). People who have been instructed thus, who have believed in Christ and are baptized (Mark 16:16), will be saved (John 3:16).

Although faith may have shades of meaning, the faith that saves means absolute trust in Christ as Savior, calling for absolute obedience to Him as sovereign Lord over

¹A. Boyd Luter, Jr., "Repentance (New Testament)," Anchor Bible Dictionary (1992), 5:674.

²Jerry Allen Moon, "Preparation for Baptism and Membership in the Seventh-day Adventist Church: A Theological Perspective" (M.Div. thesis, Andrews University, 1974), 64.

³E. G. White, Steps to Christ (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1956), 27, 36.

every detail of life. This kind of faith is an attitude of submission to Christ, a personal acceptance of His atonement for one's sins, and a radical commitment of the will to do His will.¹ A person who has demonstrated such a level of spiritual commitment is ready to receive the rite of baptism (Col 1:7, 13-14; 2:6-7).

Meaning of Baptism

Baptism as a ritual has no virtue in itself. The virtue is in what it stands for. To Abraham, circumcision was a sign of a relationship he had with God by faith. To him it functioned as a seal of righteousness he had already received from God (Rom 4:11). As circumcision was a seal and a sign of the union between God and His people in the Old Testament, baptism has become a seal and a sign of union between Christ and His people in the New Testament.

Paul contrasts circumcision made with hands and circumcision done without hands. Abrahamic and Mosaic circumcision was performed by hands (Gen 17:10-11; Rom 4:11; Col 2:11), but believers' circumcision of the heart is without hands. "In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism" (Col 2:11-12). According to Hendriksen, baptism is "a sign and seal of union with Christ, of entrance into his covenant, of incorporation into Christ's body, the church (1 Cor 12:13)."²

¹Moon, 65.

²William Hendriksen, Exposition of Colossians, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1996), 116.

Ellen White notes that baptism is an outward sign showing that believers are children of God who live for Christ.¹ Furthermore she says that: “Christ has made baptism the sign of entrance to His spiritual kingdom. He has made this a positive condition with which all must comply who wish to be acknowledged as under the authority of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”²

Schneider points out that the rite of baptism is a natural sign powerful in its symbolism because God is the agent in the act. Commenting on Eph 5:26, he says: “Baptism is set in relation to the redemptive work of Christ, in the sense that it is Christ Himself who in baptism realises the results of that premeditive [*sic*, redemptive] work for the believer.”³ This means that there is no sacramental power in the act of baptism itself. Schneider further comments that cleansing from sin is accomplished by Christ who in baptism promises forgiveness to the believer.⁴ Murray says: “The grace offered in baptism . . . is no impersonal influence, injected through material substances, but the gracious action of God Himself.”⁵

For the believer, baptism, as Murray comments, is “a representation of the redemptive act of God in Christ, whereby life from the dead became possible for men

¹E. G. White, Child Guidance (Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1954), 499.

²E. G. White, Evangelism (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1946), 307.

³Schneider, 28.

⁴*Ibid.*, 29.

⁵Beasley-Murray, 265.

[and women], and the means of participation in that act and life through participation in the Christ.”¹

The New Testament writers link baptism with Christ’s sacrifice and the believer’s faith. For example, in Acts 3:38, baptism is connected with repentance. In Acts 22:16 it is linked with cleansing from sin; in Rom 6:1-11, baptism is attached to union with Christ, His death, burial, and resurrection. And in 1 Pet 3:21, baptism saves through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Both faith in Christ and baptism are essential for the salvation of humankind. Jesus said: “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved” (Mark 16:15-16).

Rite of Passage into Union with Christ

The apostles, especially Paul, present baptism as a symbol of Christ’s death, burial and resurrection into new life altogether. One of the New Testament passages that best describes the significance of baptism is Rom 6:1-11 (RSV). The apostle Paul says:

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into his death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the sinful body might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For he who has died is freed from sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. For we know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

¹Ibid., 171.

Baptism gets its meaning from the redemptive work of God in Christ Jesus. It points to the historical Christ on behalf of all who will identify themselves with His death, burial, and resurrection (vss. 3-4). In Rom 6 Paul compares baptism with death. As death affects a person, so does baptism, which functions as a symbol of death. Death with Christ clears believers from all claims of sin. "For he who has died has been freed from sin" (vs. 7). The transition from old life to new takes place when believers accept Christ as their personal Savior, believe in Him, and confess Him publicly at baptism.

Baptism is a ritual performed when a person, after being prompted by the Holy Spirit, decides to change moral and spiritual status. The former lifestyle and behavior are expected to be changed completely. The former lifestyle or old self (Rom 6:5, NRSV) is described as: "adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries" (Gal 5:19-21).

In Rom 6 Paul contends that those who have been baptized should know their new status in Christ signified by baptism. Believers in Christ should be identified by their new behavior such as: "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control" (Gal 5:22). In their new status in Christ, believers consider themselves as dead to sin and alive to God (vs. 11). They now live lives of obedience to God and, by His grace, do what is right and please Him and humanity (vss. 17-19).

Paul asserts that those who have believed in Christ and have been baptized should not continue to commit sin because of their new status in Christ (Rom 6:1-4). This is

what the Greek preposition, *eis*, into Christ, in vs. 3 suggests.¹ Through baptism, Christians are united to Christ and to His death. On this basis the old life of sin has passed a way and all things have become new (2 Cor 5:17).

The reason for baptism, Paul says, is to establish a relationship with Christ that starts at one point in the past, is publicly confessed at baptism, and continues the rest of a Christian's life (Rom 6:3-4). In Galatians, this relationship is referred to as putting on Christ as a person strips off old clothes and puts on new ones: "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal 3:27). Meyer affirms: "Whosoever is in Christ has put on Christ through baptism."²

The apostle Paul describes this relationship with Christ by using the aorist tense. This tense shows that the goal of baptism has already been realized in Christ. In Rom 6 Paul says that believers were baptized into Christ's death (vs. 3), buried with Christ through baptism (vs. 4), and united together in the likeness of Christ's death (vs. 5). The old man was crucified with Christ (vs. 6), he who has died has been freed from sin (vs. 7), and we died with Christ (vs. 8). Paul also says: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of your works, lest any man should boast" (Eph 2:8).

In these passages the passive voice is used. This construction suggests that the change is something done for the Christian, beginning with the notion of death.³ Death

¹W. Robertson Nicoll, The Expositor's Greek Testament (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1956), 2:632.

²Heinrich August William Meyer, Critical and Exegetical Hand-Book to the Epistle to the Galatians (New York: Fank and Wagnalls, 1884), 157.

³Beasley-Murray, 133.

brings a permanent change of a person's status. It annuls all previous obligations of life. All ties with the living are cut off at the moment of death. The Bible says that the dead know nothing, have no memory of anything, have no more interactions with family members or anybody, and know nothing done under the sun (Eccl 9:5-6; Job 14:21). To a believer, baptism becomes a sign and pledge that the benefits of Christ's death for all people apply to him or her.¹

At baptism, the believer experiences death and resurrection as Christ did, because he or she has been incorporated into Him. As Murray puts it, Christ experiences the death of sinners and the believer experiences death to sin. He says: "In baptism the believer suffers a death and resurrection like Christ's; he [or she] experiences a death to sin and resurrection to righteousness at the time of his [or her] baptism."² This is to say, when believers emerge from the waters of baptism, they experience a resurrection to righteousness. Believers who have taken this step live lives of constant struggle over choosing right from wrong. In Galatians we read, "For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish" (5:17). This is because the old man (Rom 6: 6) with all his desires is given a goodbye and a new man begins to live. This struggle seems to suggest that when Christians have no struggle between right and wrong, they have not experienced a resurrection into new life. If this can be accepted, Murray is right in saying that "to be

¹C. E. B. Cranfield, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1975), 303.

²Beasley-Murray, 131.

united with Christ in His redemptive acts, and therefore to enter into His death and resurrection, cannot but have catastrophic consequences for the believer.”¹

Paul teaches that when people are baptized after believing in Jesus, their former existence ends and a new life begins. This new life is not based on an improved old life, but a new existence altogether: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Cor 5:17). Referring to this new life, Bruce notes that when believers are dipped in the baptismal water, they confess that their old life of sin has died. Emerging from the water shows that they have received a new life which is under the guidance and protection of the risen Christ.²

Rite of Passage into the Body of Christ

Probably one of the clearest scriptural references to baptism as a rite of passage into the body of Christ and the functions of believers of that one body is in 1 Cor 12.

For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free--and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many. . . .

But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. . . . But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

¹Ibid., 138.

²F. F. Bruce, The Letter of Paul to the Romans: An Introduction and Commentary (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1985), 129.

Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. (1 Cor 12: 12-14, 20, 24-27)

This passage shows how a person becomes a member of the visible church of Christ and enters into relationships with other members. Membership in the church is obtained through water baptism preceded by the conviction of the Holy Spirit. Paul says: "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free--and have all been made to drink into one Spirit" (vs. 13). Beasley-Murray suggests that only by the Spirit can people be in the *koinonia*, fellowship, of Christ. Therefore it is not wrong to associate the Spirit with baptism in relation to Christ. This point is evidenced by Rom 8:9, which says: "Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His."¹

The body into which all believers are baptized by the one Spirit is the body of Christ. In Scripture the terms "body of Christ" (1 Cor 12:12) and "church" can be used interchangeably in some contexts. The converts who responded to the apostles' discourse at Pentecost were added into the church (Acts 2:47). Believers in Ephesus were called the church of God (Acts 20:17). In Eph 2:22-23; Col 1:18, 24, the church is called the body of Christ. And in 1 Cor 12: 27, Christians are called the body of Christ. The Greek word, *ekklēsia*, translated church, refers to the Christian body of believers, a Christian congregation (Rom 16:1; 1 Cor 12:28; 14:4; Col 1:18).² In the church those who believe in Christ are baptized to form one body together with those who preceded them in

¹Beasley-Murray, 169-170.

²New Analytical Greek Lexicon (1990), s.v. "*ekklēsia*."

baptism. As the text says, “We were all baptized into one body” (1 Cor 12:13). All believers are baptized with the purpose of becoming members of congregations in different geographical locations (Acts 11:22; 13:1; 14:23; 18:22; 20:17; Rom 16:1; 1 Cor 1: 2; 11:18; Rev 1:11). Cottrell is right to state that there is a connection between baptism and church membership. According to Cottrell, baptism qualifies believers for Church membership.¹ He further comments that “if we have been baptized into Christ, it makes sense that we have been baptized into His body.”² Through the act of baptism, believers become a part of the visible congregation.

In the analogy of the human body, we find Christian identity, growth, ministry to each other, and support (1 Cor 12:24-27). Christians share a common transforming experience and have a unity resulting from a common loyalty to the Lord (1 Cor 6:19-20). All who have shared in the death to self, symbolized by baptism, form part of one whole and are bound together by a common allegiance and a mutual love.³

In the same analogy of the human body there is unity and diversity (vs. 13). The body has many parts, but all organs are mutually dependent upon each other (vss. 14-15). Just as the body has many parts that cannot function independently, the church body needs all its members.⁴ Each member should have concern for the others. The suffering or joy

¹Cottrell, 97.

²Ibid.

³Alan Cole, The Body of Christ (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964), 27.

⁴W. Larry Richards, 1 Corinthians, Abundant Life Bible Amplifier (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1997), 216.

of one member is to be felt by all (1 Cor 12:25-26).

The analogy of the human body teaches that race, social distinctions, gender, or worship preferences should not cause any schism among believers. Once a person has been baptized and has received the Holy Spirit, any behavior that tends to bring misunderstanding among the members of the same body should be avoided: "For in Christ there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Syctian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all" (Col 3:11).

We can therefore conclude that in Christ racial barriers are broken down, social barriers are superseded, and religion is for all nationalities, because each convert was made to drink of one Spirit at the time of his or her conversion.¹ And through baptism all were incorporated into the body of Christ, the church (1 Cor 12:13).

Results of Baptism

Reception of the Holy Spirit

The disciples asked their listeners to be baptized in order to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Peter said: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2: 38). This proclamation suggests that baptism usually precedes the gift of the Holy Spirit. However, other passages in Acts indicate that the Spirit can be given to a believer before or after baptism. For instance, in the experience of Cornelius and his household, Cornelius received the Holy Spirit before his baptism. Peter then asked: "Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have

¹Fred Fisher, Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1975), 201.

received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" (Acts 10:47).

On the issue of baptism and the Holy Spirit in the book of Acts, Kistemaker says that the noun "gift" in Acts 2:38 is in the singular form, suggesting that the gift is needed and received by each believer. In other words, it refers to the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit in every convert.¹ This gift, however, is different from the gifts of the Holy Spirit given to believers, as recorded in 1 Cor 12:8-11, 28-31; 14:1-2. The Corinthian believers had different gifts, but all of them were administered by one, the Holy Spirit, promised to all believers. Kistemaker points out that the phrase "be baptized and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38) are really two separate statements. Kistemaker further says that the gift of the Holy Spirit is not conditional upon baptism.² This line of reasoning fits well with the experience of Cornelius and of the Samaritans who received the Spirit before their baptism (10:47; 8:17).

In 1 Cor 1:21-22 and Eph 1:13, the aorist tense is used in the verbs referring to the bestowal of the Spirit upon converts. These verbs, "anointed," "sealed," and "gave," suggest a definite point of time in the past, presumably the time when a person began the Christian life, either before or after baptism. Thus, according to Scripture, one who repents and confesses his or her sins and accepts water baptism has either received, or will receive, the Holy Spirit.

Whether the Spirit is received before or after baptism, the role of this gift is needed in the life of every believer. The function of the Spirit in the lives of believers includes

¹Kistemaker, 106.

²Ibid.

regenerating and indwelling. The apostle Paul says: "But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His" (Rom 8:9). In addition, the Spirit convicts of sin, (John 16:8), leads people to be children of God, (Rom 8:14-17), intercedes for believers, (Rom 8:26-27), leads in the ministry of the church, (1 Cor 12:4-11; 2 Tim 1:7), guarantees a believer salvation (Eph 1:13-14; 4:30), and much more.

Forgiveness and Cleansing

After Pentecost the hearers were urged to repent and be baptized for forgiveness of their sins Acts 2:38. In this verse the Greek preposition, *eis*, "for," conveys the reason for baptism. This preposition *eis* can be translated as "for, unto, into, in order to, in order to have, so that, with view to, or in relation to." In the context of this passage, *eis* indicates the reason for baptism--the forgiveness of sins.¹

The same preposition *eis* is employed in Matthew to show why Christ shed His blood on the cross: "For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt 26:28). The same construction is used in Mark 1:4 and Luke 3:3 to denote the reason for John the Baptist's baptism. He preached a baptism of repentance for (*eis*) the forgiveness of sins. This is true also in the baptism of Paul. After his conversion, Paul was urged to be baptized to wash away his sins (Acts 22:16).²

Both Old and New Testaments use the language of washing by water in reference

¹BAGD, s.v. "*eis*."

²I. Howard Marshall, *Acts*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980), 357.

to the cleansing of sin. As noted earlier, David prays: "Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin" (Ps 51:2). God says to Israel: "I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols" (Ezek 36:25). In Titus 3:5 Paul speaks of the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.

Through this process of washing away sins, baptism functions as a symbol for cleansing. In his letter, Peter points to a resemblance between the waters of the flood and baptism (1 Pet 3:20-21). Hendriksen comments that as flood waters cleansed the earth of Noah's day, so the water of baptism indicates cleansing of sin from sinners. As the flood separated Noah and his family from the wicked world, so baptism separates believers from the evil world.¹ This separation, according to Peter, suggests that believers are saved through the experience of baptism.²

¹William Hendriksen, Exposition of 1 Peter, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1996), 147.

²Bible translators have attempted to translate 1 Pet 3:21 in various ways to explain how baptism saves. In part their views stem from the translation of the Greek term, *eperōtēma*, a noun which appears only once in the New Testament and to which lexicons give various meanings. Bauer defines it as "question," "request, appeal," but also "pledge." (BAGD, s.v. "*Eperōtēma*"). In different versions, for example, the King James and New King James Version, the phrase is translated as "the answer of a good conscience toward God." The Revised Standard Version and the New American Standard Bible translate it as "an appeal to God for a clear conscience." In the New International Version the same phrase is translated as "the pledge of a good conscience toward God." Two views are preferred by translators. The first one reads: "Baptism . . . now saves you, . . . as an appeal to God for a clear conscience (NASB, RSV, NEB). The second reads: "And this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also, . . . the pledge of a good conscience toward God" (NIV). Cotrell, 156-157.

The advocates of the first view, "an appeal to God for a clear conscience," see baptism as signifying a believer's response to God. That is to say, a person responds to God's call to obey and serve Him. Hendriksen points out that when we ask God to help us, we see the importance of

Hillyer says it well:

Just as Noah was saved from the hostility of the godless, and water was involved in his deliverance, so Christians believers should appreciate that they too are saved from evil through water-the water of baptism. Their new status as forgiven servants of the living God should make them confident to stand before godless opponents without fear. That confidence is based not on some outward ritual washing, which could at best only remove dirt from the skin, but on a good conscience toward God. . . . The pledge made by believers in their baptism to serve God and so maintain that good conscience is their expression of faith that through accepting the work of Jesus on the cross they have been forgiven and made right with God; they have a clear conscience before him. . . . Peter makes it clear that the effective power of Christian baptism is due not to any ceremony but on the resurrection of Jesus Christ.¹

Rebaptism

The only biblical passage that could serve as a basis for the teaching and practice of rebaptism is Acts 19:1-7. The apostle Paul asked: "Did you [the Ephesian disciples] receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? And they said to Him, 'we have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit'" (vss. 2-3). These people were baptized again in

baptism objectively. "Without God's aid we are unable to make a pledge to serve Him." (Hendriksen, 148). Believers appeal to God for a clear conscience; converts depend on God in the whole process of their salvation.

On the other hand, Grudem says that a subjective translation of this phrase, "pledge to God," creates a theological problem by suggesting that a person depends on his or her own effort to live an obedient life to God, while salvation has been earned for humankind by Christ. All that baptism represents comes not from any merits of human response, but through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Wayne A. Grudem, The First Epistle of Peter: An Introduction and Commentary (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. Eerdmans Publishing, 1988), 164. "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God --not because of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph 2:8-9 RSV).

¹Norman Hillyer, 1 and 2 Peter, Jude, New International Bible Commentary (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrikson Publishers, 1992), 116.

the name of the Lord, after which they received the Spirit (vss. 5-6).¹

Different positions have been taken on the rebaptism of the Ephesian disciples. Kaiser sees two major reasons for their rebaptism: (1) the absence of the name of Jesus in their first baptism, and (2) the lack of the manifestation of the Holy Spirit in their lives and ministry. He further states that they were to believe in the promised Messiah to whom John directed his disciples for Spirit baptism.² Other writers suggest that the twelve disciples did not express faith in the coming Messiah, which was one of the elements in John's baptism. Perhaps they had received baptism only as a proselyte lustration. Therefore, Paul gave them instructions and baptized them in the name of the Lord Jesus as an expression of their faith in Him.³ Others see it differently. For example, according to the Expositor's Bible Commentary, the Ephesus disciples did not understand the significance of John's baptism. John's baptism pointed people to Christ who was coming after him.⁴ Furthermore, John's baptism involved repentance and confession of sins (Matt 3:6). Its mode, immersion, signified death to sin, burial and rising to a new life. The new life of believers was to reflect the fruits of repentance John expected to see in the lives of

¹On the other hand, Apollos, who knew only the baptism of John (Acts 18:25), did not receive a second baptism. If Apollos was not asked to be re-baptized, as were the men of Ephesus, it suggests that there was nothing wrong with John's baptism. See Ellen G. White, Evangelism (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1974), 307.

²Christopher B. Kaiser, "The Rebaptism of the Ephesian Twelve: Exegetical Study on Acts 19:1-7," Reformed Review 31 (1977): 60.

³J. K. Parratt, "Rebaptism of the Ephesian Disciples," The Expository Times 79 (1968): 183.

his converts (Matt 3:8).¹

Considering the different reasons given for the second baptism of the twelve men of Ephesus, it can be concluded that they were rebaptized after receiving further knowledge about Jesus Christ as the sin-bearer. Ellen White says:

When they received baptism at the hand of John, they did not fully comprehend the mission of Jesus as the sin-bearer. They were holding serious errors. But with clearer light, they gladly accepted Christ as their Redeemer, and with this step of advance came a change in their obligations. As they received a purer faith, there was a corresponding change in their life. In token of this change, and as an acknowledgment of their faith in Christ, they were rebaptized in the name of Jesus.²

The implications of this text (Acts 19:1-7) for SDA practice are discussed in chapter 3.

¹Ralph W. Harris, "*Baptizō*," Complete Biblical Library, New Testament Greek-English Dictionary: Alpha-Gamma (1990), 2:526.

²E. G. White, Acts of the Apostles, 285.

CHAPTER 3

A SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST UNDERSTANDING
OF BAPTISM

The Meaning of Baptism

From the inception of the Adventist Church, baptism has been viewed as a gospel requirement, a prerequisite to church membership, and the sign of entrance to Christ's spiritual kingdom (Matt 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38).¹ Christ gave the Church a commission to baptize people who believed in Him:

Christ made it clear that He required baptism of those who wished to become a part of His spiritual kingdom. As, through the disciples's ministry, the Holy Spirit brought people to repent and to accept Jesus as their Saviour they were to be baptized in the name of the triune God. Their baptism would demonstrate that they had entered into a personal relationship with Christ and were committed to living in harmony with the principles of His kingdom of grace.²

In the act of baptism, believers demonstrate that they have died to sin and alive to God. The death and resurrection of Christ enable believers to walk in newness of life:

We testify that the only hope of victorious over the old nature is in the grace of a risen Lord who has provided a new spiritual life through the energizing power of the

¹General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists, Church Manual (Hagerstown, Maryland: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1995), 27-28.

²General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Seventh-day Adventists Believe: A Biblical Exposition of Fundamental Doctrines (Hagerstown, Maryland: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1988), 182.

Holy Spirit. This new life lifts us to a higher plateau of human experience, giving us new values, aspirations, and desires that focus on a commitment to Jesus Christ. We are new disciples of our Saviour, and baptism is the sign of our discipleship.¹

To believers, baptism is a sign of saving relationship with Jesus. Christ has made baptism a positive condition for everyone who wishes to be acknowledged as under the authority of the Godhead.²

J. N. Andrews, one of the Adventist pioneers, deemed baptism to be one of the most important rites of the church. He wrote: “The New Testament represents baptism as an ordinance which the disciples of Christ must not neglect. It is the first duty incumbent upon men [and women] after they repent.”³ He further affirmed that baptism is the visible dividing line between the past life dominated by sin and the new life of obedience to Christ.⁴ By the act of baptism, believers in Christ publicly declare their new status in Christ and their incorporation into church membership.

The Rite of Passage to New Life in Christ

Baptism, according to the SDA Encyclopedia, is an outward act signifying that “the sinner has died with Christ, i.e., has been united with Him in His atoning death; he or she dies to the transgression of the law and thus is forgiven of past sins; he or she rises to

¹Ibid., 185.

²E. G. White, Testimonies for the Church, 9 vols. (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948), 91.

³J. N. Andrews, “The Importance of Baptism,” Review and Herald, 15 January 1880, 41.

⁴Ibid.

a new life of obedience to God's will, a life of consecration."¹

Ellen White sees baptism as a most solemn renunciation of the sinful practices of the world. She says that when people are buried with Christ in baptism, they are raised from the water of baptism to live new lives of loyalty to God.² She further portrays baptism as the believer's oath of allegiance to Christ. She says: "As Christians submit to the solemn rite of baptism, He [Christ] registers the vow that they make to be true to Him. This vow is their oath of allegiance. . . . They pledge themselves to renounce the world and to observe the laws of the kingdom of God. Henceforth they are to walk in newness of life."³ This means that the act of baptism indicates that believers have already renounced their former way of life and have started walking in newness of life.⁴

Speaking of the new experience of believers, Ellen White writes: "The things they once hated they now love, and the things they once loved they hate."⁵ With this in mind, we can say as does Johnsson: "Baptism signifies a radical change in living. And it brings with it corporate benefits and obligations."⁶

Holmes states: "Just as in physical death life ceases, so baptism signifies that the

¹SDA Encyclopedia, 1996 ed., s.v. "Baptism."

²"E. G. White Comments on Romans," SDA Bible Commentary, ed. F. D. Nichol (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1953-57), 6:1075.

³E. G. White, Evangelism, 307.

⁴SDA Believe, 185.

⁵E. G. White, Steps to Christ, 58.

⁶William G. Johnsson, The Meaning of Christian Baptism: Clean (Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1980), 73.

old life of willful sin comes to an end, . . . in physical death all that meant life comes to an end. In Christian baptism all that was a part of the life of sin comes to an end. The old passes away so that all can become new (2 Cor 5:17).”¹ As Christ rose from the grave, Christians rise from the waters of baptism into a new status of life. Holmes further remarks that “baptism is the first step in the new life of faith and obedience, and as such signifies discipleship. A disciple is one who lives a disciplined life, has put himself under subjection and under the discipline of the Holy Spirit.”² Rice captures a similar idea when he says that “baptism signifies a new orientation in a person’s life. With baptism, we are no longer in bondage to sin; we have the freedom of life in the Spirit.”³ To a repentant person, baptism indicates a turning away from a sinful lifestyle and pattern of behavior.

Baptism functions as a sign of a saving relationship with Christ. It is a symbol that points to the vicarious sacrifice of Christ. Stevens stated it thus: “From the beginning Seventh-day Adventists, in common with their Protestant heritage, have rejected any view of baptism as an *opus operatum*, that is, as an act that, in and of itself, imparts grace and effects salvation.”⁴ It is not a saving ordinance; by itself it cannot impart regeneration.⁵

¹C. Raymond Holmes, Sing a New Song (Berrien Springs, Michigan: Andrews University Press, 1984), 63.

²Ibid., 66.

³Richard Rice, The Reign of God (Berrien Springs, Michigan: Andrews University Press, 1985), 300.

⁴SDA Encyclopedia, 1996 ed., s.v. “Baptism, significance of.”

⁵J. C. Stevens, Does Baptism Save? (Angwin, California: Pacific Union College Press, 1944), 63.

Rite of Passage into the Church

The new believers who receive baptism as a sign of their loyalty to Christ join a spiritual family to fellowship with those who have already received the same sign (1 Cor 1:9; 10:16). Through baptism, the Lord adds the new disciples to the body of believers-- His body, the church (Acts 2:41, 47; 1 Cor 12:13).¹ By baptism the believers enter into all the privileges and promises of the New Covenant in which they become children of God and receive all His gifts. Baptism “demonstrates a person’s desire to become a member of God’s family. It shows a willingness to receive the Holy Spirit and to use His gifts in a ministry to others.”²

In the body, believers find their identity, growth, and service for each other and for those who have not joined their spiritual community (1 Cor 12:24-27). After baptism, believers take part in corporate worship and carry out responsibilities in church services. Moon is right in saying that: “The union of the believers in corporate worship was the center of the church’s life, the occasion for the teaching, the most visible expression of the *koinonia* [fellowship] and the immediate culmination of the apostles’ evangelism.”³

Individual believers are endowed with spiritual gift(s) for the accomplishment of the ministry of the church (1 Cor 12:4-11). These gifts are to be used unselfishly. After members identify their gifts, they should minister to each other and to those who have not

¹Seventh-day Adventists Believe, 187.

²General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, SDA Elder’s Handbook (Silver Spring, Maryland: The Ministerial Association, 1994), 159.

³Moon, 116.

joined the church by baptism. Each believer, according to his or her spiritual gift, is to teach and make others disciples of Christ.¹

The Mode of Baptism

There is no general agreement among Christian communities on how the rite of baptism should be performed. Methods such as immersion, sprinkling, affusion, or pouring and aspersion are employed by different Christians. For Seventh-day Adventists, immersion is practiced as the only biblical mode of baptism.² This understanding is based on the Greek word *baptizō*, the New Testament practice of baptism, and theological evidence. The general lexicographical meaning of *baptizō*, as given in chapter 2, is to dip, immerse, plunge, sink, drench, overwhelm.³ When this meaning is applied to Christian baptism, it clearly suggests baptism by immersion.

For the apostle Paul, baptism represents the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Rom 6:3-5). As an Adventist, Rice corroborates this.⁴ As Christ died for sin and was buried, so believers symbolically die to sin and are buried in the waters of baptism. And as Christ was raised from the grave, believers are raised to the newness of spiritual life.⁵ Paul's thought is echoed by Ellen White who says: "The waters cover the candidate."

¹Johnsson, 70.

²SDA Encyclopedia, "Baptism"; Church Manual (1995), 28.

³A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (1958), s.v. "Baptizō."

⁴R. Rice, 299.

⁵SDA Bible Dictionary (1979), s.v. "Baptism."

life.¹ Paul's thought is echoed by Ellen White who says: "The waters cover the candidate. . . . Man is laid in his watery grave, buried with Christ in baptism, and raised from the water to live the new life of loyalty to God."²

Immersion is the only method that fits the significance of baptism: death, burial, and resurrection (Rom 6:3-4). Holmes supports this view by saying: "If we believe that baptism signifies death and burial, then immersion is the only adequate liturgical illustration of that belief. What the church believes about baptism will be dramatized in what it does when it baptizes."³

Preparation for Baptism

Many people freely accept the rite of Christian baptism and become church members, but not all of them remain faithful to their baptismal vows. Some apostatize and forsake their membership or become uncommitted church members. While many factors may contribute to this, the way they were prepared for church membership may be one of the factors.

This study makes a brief survey on how candidates for baptism should be prepared according to current Adventist teaching and the thought of Ellen White.

¹SDA Bible Dictionary (1979), s.v. "Baptism."

²"E. G. White Comments on Romans," 6:1074.

³Holmes, 63.

Current Church Teaching on Preparation for Baptism

Preparing individuals who desire baptism is biblical and essential. Candidates for baptism need to be well instructed and be presented for baptism only after they have shown evidence of their conversion. This work points out what is currently considered by Adventists as good preparation for baptism.

Seventh-day Adventists believe that people should receive the rite of baptism after they have expressed faith in Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. The Scriptures teach that faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God is among the prerequisites to baptism (Mark 16:16; Acts 8:12, 36, 37; 18:8).¹ This means that baptismal candidates should be thoroughly instructed in the Christian faith before they publicly go under the waters of baptism.

The major source of instruction is the Word of God. If the Bible is well explained, point by point, the Holy Spirit will convict people to believe, repent, and confess their sins. Adventists recognize that “since faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God (Rom 10:17, KJV), instruction is an essential part of baptismal preparation.”²

After appropriate preparation, those who demonstrate fruits worthy of repentance are considered ready for baptism (Matt 3:8).³ The Church Manual makes a similar statement:

¹SDA Bible Dictionary, s.v. “Baptism.”

²Seventh-day Adventists Believe, 187.

³Ibid., 188.

Only those giving evidence of having experienced the new birth, and who are enjoying a spiritual experience in the Lord Jesus, are prepared for acceptance into church membership. Thorough instruction in the fundamental teaching and related practices of the church should be given to every candidate for church membership before being baptized and received into church fellowship.¹

Most writers emphasize that it will do no good to individuals to be baptized without evidence of their conversion. For example, Holmes says: “Without evidence of conversion and transformation, baptism should not be administered at any age. The fundamental question posed to every candidate is not, ‘do you understand and accept the teaching of the gospel?’ but ‘have you died to sin and do you now live for Christ.’”² This is in harmony with the statement of Ellen White: “All who accept the truth should bring forth fruits to the glory of God. . . . Self-sacrifice must be practiced every day.”³

The new life of a candidate ready for baptism is evidenced by the fruit born. As Bresee says, some fruit must be visible before baptism. This fruit should include Sabbath observance, regular church attendance, and refraining from the use of harmful substances.⁴

Ellen White on Preparation for Baptism

Ellen White repeatedly speaks of the need for thorough preparation of baptismal candidates. She says: “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

¹Ibid.; Church Manual (1995), 27.

²Holmes, 68.

³E. G. White, Testimonies for the Church, 4:317.

⁴Floyd Bresee, “How to Keep What You Reap-1,” Ministry, June 1990, 25.

given them.”¹ She states: “Baptism is a most sacred and important ordinance, and there should be a thorough understanding as to its meaning. . . . There should be no undue haste to receive the ordinance.”² She emphasizes that candidates for baptism should be thoroughly instructed about true conversion and its effects on their daily living.³

Ellen White suggests that people should not be baptized and received into church membership before they understand what true conversion means. As far as she is concerned, true conversion is “a change of heart, of thoughts and purposes. Evil habits are to be given up. The sin of evil-speaking, of jealousy, of disobedience, are to be put away. A warfare must be waged against every evil trait of character.”⁴ One has to pledge himself or herself to die to the sinful desires of the flesh and live in obedience to Christ. A person makes a decision for a changed life after he or she has been introduced to Jesus Christ and has accepted Him as the sinner’s sinbearer. When Christ is presented in the context of salvation history, the soul will melt and be subdued.⁵ Ministers and gospel workers are to teach and explain to baptismal candidates the plan of redemption. Step by step they must acquaint them with the plan of salvation, and tell them how God’s promises of salvation have been fulfilled through the first advent of Christ.⁶

¹E. G. White, Testimonies for the Church, 6:91.

²Ibid., 93.

³E. G. White, “Preparation for Baptism,” Manuscript Releases (Silver Spring, Maryland: E. G. White Estate, 1990), 6:157.

⁴E. G. White, Testimonies for the Church, 6:95.

⁵E. G. White, Evangelism, 264.

⁶Ibid., 141.

Gospel ministers should lead young disciples wisely and judiciously until every essential point of salvation is understood.¹ They should do so by talking and praying with candidates on a regular basis.² The principles of the Christian life are to be made plain to the converts by gospel workers.³ Both personal and public instructions are necessary in preparing people for baptism. Ellen White states: “Personal effort is needed for souls to have a true knowledge of what constitutes repentance, faith, and remission of sins.”⁴

Before going through the rite of baptism, candidates should be made aware that God requires them to cut off ties with sin and surrender fully to Him. Surrender involves counting the cost of becoming disciples of Christ. Ellen White says:

All who enter upon the new life should understand, prior to their baptism, that the Lord requires the undivided affections. . . . The practicing of the truth is essential. The bearing of fruit testifies to the character of the tree. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit. The line of demarcation will be plain and distinct between those who love God and keep His commandments and those who love Him not and disregard His precepts. There is need of a thorough conversion to the truth.⁵

She goes on to counsel those who prepare others for baptism to recognize the fruits of the life of the candidates, to see if they are ready for the ordinance. She says:

Not one should be buried with Christ by baptism unless they are critically

¹E. G. White, Gospel Workers (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1915), 367.

²*Ibid.*, 369.

³E. G. White, Testimonies for the Church, 6:91.

⁴Ellen G. White, “The Relation of Christ to the Law Is Not Understood,” Review and Herald, February 4, 1890, 364.

⁵*Ibid.*, 308.

examined whether they have ceased to sin, whether they have fixed moral principles, whether they know what sin is, whether they have moral defilement, which God abhors. Find out by close questioning if these persons are really ceasing to sin, if with David they can say, I hate sin with a perfect hatred.¹

She further says: "No one is to take part in the solemn ordinance of baptism without giving the subject careful, prayerful thought. The candidates, and especially the youth, are to be carefully instructed in regard to the obligations they assume in taking this step."² She notes that many people are baptized and received into churches who have not realized the sinfulness of sin.³ She states: "Many are received into the church who are not converted. Men, women, and children are allowed to take part in the solemn rite of baptism without being fully instructed in regard to the meaning of this ordinance."⁴

For these reasons, there should be no haste to baptize people who are not well prepared. Ellen White makes a strong statement on this:

Too much hasty work is done in adding names to the church roll. Serious defects are seen in the characters of some who join the church. Those who admit them say, we will first get them into the church, and then reform them. But this is a mistake. The very first work to be done is the work of reform. Pray with them, talk with them, but do not allow them to unite with God's people in church relationship until they give decided evidence that the Spirit of God is working on their hearts.⁵

However, about examining candidates she cautions:

¹E. G. White, "Preparation for Baptism," 6:165.

²Ibid., 6:166.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., 167.

⁵E. G. White, "The Need of a Spiritual Awakening," Review and Herald, 21 May 1901, 301.

There is one thing that we have no right to do, and that is to judge another man's heart or impugn his motives. But when a person presents himself as a candidate for church membership, we are to examine the fruits of his life, and leave the responsibility of his motive with himself. But great care should be exercised in accepting members into the church.¹

Other concerns in regard to the preparation of candidates for baptism involve the application of the truth in candidates' lives. The truth learned and accepted will affect all the dimensions of a person's life. A person will be selective of what he or she wears, choose the right kind of amusements to attend, and partake of proper food or drink.

Speaking on dress and the new converts, Ellen White recommends that Scriptural passages in regard to dress should be considered. She makes references to the words of the apostles Paul and Peter on the subject of dress. She says that the Holy Spirit through these apostles teaches that Christians are not to decorate themselves with costly array of expensive ornaments. Luxurious things or outward adornment reveals a lack of spirituality.² Ellen White further recommends that dresses should be of good material, durable, modest, and appropriate for the age.³ She expected the new converts to be instructed on the influence of dress. On this she says:

One of the points upon which those newly come to the faith will need instruction is the subject of dress. . . . Are they vain in dress? Do they cherish pride of heart? The idolatry of dress is a moral disease.

There should be no carelessness in dress. . . . Our appearance in every respect should be characterized by neatness, modesty, and purity.⁴

¹E. G. White, Evangelism, 313.

²E. G. White, "Preparation for Baptism," 6:159.

³Ibid., 273.

⁴E. G. White, Testimonies, 6:96.

Baptismal candidates need also to be instructed regarding the influence that worldly amusements have on their minds. Satan uses worldly entertainments to tempt converts and turn them away from the Lord. Ellen White makes a point that “Satan’s ruling passion is to pervert the intellect and cause men to long for shows and theatrical performances.”¹ Those who request baptism are to be made aware that some entertainments are detrimental to their faith. As Ellen White remarks: “There are shows, lectures, and an endless variety of entertainments that are calculated to lead to a love of the world; and through this union with the world faith is weakened.”² Attending such places, believers will jeopardize their spiritual growth. For this reason, these entertainments should be shunned.³

The phrase, “endless variety of entertainments,”⁴ may refer to other entertainments Ellen White did not mention. Modern entertainments such as television, movies, and computer games at social gatherings, theaters, or homes can be included in the phrase, “endless variety of entertainments.” Ellen White warns: “Those who would not fall a prey to Satan’s devices must guard well the avenues of the soul; they must avoid reading, seeing, or hearing that which will suggest impure thoughts. The mind must not be left to

¹E. G. White, Evangelism, 266.

²E. G. White, Messages to Young People (Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1930), 373.

³Ibid., 376.

⁴Ibid., 373.

dwell at random upon every subject that the enemy of souls may suggest.”¹

Before persons are baptized, they should be taught that the Holy Spirit works better for their spiritual growth when their minds are sober at all times. Paul says that believers’ bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit. Therefore all eating or drinking should be done to the glory of God (1 Cor 6:19; 10:31).

People who still have habits that are antagonistic to the principles of the Bible need more time to be prepared for church membership. Ellen White states: “The victims of strong drink and tobacco are corrupted, body, soul, and spirit. Such ones should not be received into the church until they give evidence that they are truly converted. . . . He who is thoroughly converted will abandon every defiling habit and appetite.”²

Unnatural appetite for food and unhealthful drinks are opposed to the laws of life and good health.

The indulgence of unnatural appetite, whether for tea, coffee, tobacco, or liquor, is intemperance. . . . By using these forbidden articles a condition of things is created in the system which the Creator never designed. The eating of food that does not make good blood is working against the laws of our physical organism, and is a violation of the law of God.³

Another subject that should not be left out in preparing new converts regards tithes and offerings. It is the responsibility of any gospel worker to teach God’s requirements on tithes and offerings to those who are brought into the truth. Ellen White writes: “It is part

¹E. G. White, Adventist Home (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1952), 403.

²E. G. White, Evangelism, 264.

³Ibid., 266.

of the minister's work to teach those who accept the truth through his efforts, to bring the tithe to the storehouse, as an acknowledgment of their dependence upon God. The new converts should be fully enlightened as to their duty to return to the Lord His own."¹

New converts need instruction on taking part in the missionary activities of the church. Every church member should be willing to take part in the active soul-winning service for God.² Those who want to join others in the church should be made aware that every branch of the work of God should be supported not only with offerings, but with personal involvement also.³

The ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary on behalf of His believers is one of the lessons candidates for baptism need to receive. It is the responsibility of all gospel workers to see that all converts have received some instruction on the subject of the sanctuary and the investigative judgment. Ellen White says that the foundation of our faith is rooted in the correct understanding of Christ's ministration in the heavenly sanctuary.⁴

She points out that:

The sanctuary in heaven is the very center of Christ's work in behalf of men. It concerns every soul living upon the earth. It opens to view the plan of redemption, bringing us down to the very close of time, and revealing the triumphant issue of the contest between righteousness and sin. It is of the

¹E. G. White, Gospel Workers, 370.

²Church Manual, 1995 ed., 87.

³E. G. White, "Address and Appeal Setting Forth the Importance of Missionary Work," Review and Herald, December 12, 1878, 202.

⁴*Ibid.*, 221.

utmost importance that all should thoroughly investigate these subjects.¹

Age of Candidates for Baptism

Seventh-day Adventists do not teach or practice the baptism of infants or little children for several reasons.² The Bible provides no warrant for infant baptism; furthermore, Adventists understand that infants are not able to exercise personal faith in Christ to qualify them for baptism.³ In the gospel commission, baptism is for those who have heard and learned the gospel, repented, believed, and by their personal choice desired the rite of baptism publicly (Matt 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16).⁴ Adventists, therefore, teach that infants are too young to believe the gospel, that they cannot understand the teachings on repentance for the remission of sin, understand the meaning of baptism, or comprehend the significance of being baptized into the body of Christ.⁵

There is no fixed minimum age for baptism. The age of baptism is determined by the four points of spiritual accountability as outlined in the book, Seventh-day Adventists Believe: A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines. These points can be summarized as follows: (1) Baptismal candidates must be of an age to understand the significance of baptism; (2) they must give sufficient evidence of their conversion; (3) they

¹E. G. White, Great Controversy (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1911), 488.

²SDA Encyclopedia (1996), s.v. "Infant Baptism."

³Ibid.

⁴Holmes, 62.

⁵SDAs Believe, 189.

must understand the fundamental principles of Christian life and their requirements; (4) they must understand the significance of church membership; and (5) they must be able to understand their obligations as members of the church.¹

Ellen White says that a person must understand the meaning of baptism before he or she can be baptized. Candidates for baptism must understand that baptism means repentance for sin and the entrance into new life in Christ.² This statement implies that one who cannot understand yet the meaning of baptism cannot be baptized.

Speaking of children's baptism, she makes a clear statement that baptism does not make children Christians or convert them. It is an outward sign that they are the children of God by believing in Jesus.³ Concerning the readiness of children for baptism, she refers to their parents as the custodians of their children's faith. To parents she says: "If you are satisfied that your children understand the meaning of conversion and baptism and are truly converted, let them be baptized."⁴ She reminds parents whose children are baptized that they have the great responsibility of keeping their children in the faith, that they are responsible if their children backslide. In consenting to the baptism of their children, they are pledging to be faithful stewards of their children, to guide them in their character building.⁵

¹Ibid.

²E. G. White, Evangelism, 309.

³E. G. White, Child Guidance, 499.

⁴Ibid., 500.

⁵E. G. White, Testimonies for the Church, 6:93.

Although Ellen White does not specify the age at which one should be baptized, she does say that children of the Adventist believers can make a decision for Christ while they are still young. She mentions that children of eight, ten, or twelve years are old enough to be taught about personal religion. If they are properly instructed, they will make a decision for Christ.¹

Based on human development, the Minister's Manual proposes that the best age for baptism is about twelve:

Twelve years was the age when a child began to participate as adult in worship services during the Old Testament times. It was the age when Jesus made His first pilgrimage to Jerusalem. From a psychological standpoint as well, 12 is a significant transitional age. There are some advantages in making this public commitment just before entering the difficult teen years. Many pastors begin prebaptismal instruction with children at ages 11 or 12.²

Adventists practice believer's baptism. A person who has personally believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and has shown fruits of repentance is the one who qualifies for baptism.³ At baptism, believers pledge to commit themselves to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and to support the mission and ministry of His Church. Infants or little children are incapable of making any such commitments to Christ and to His Church.

¹Ibid., 1:400.

²General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Minister's Manual (Silver Spring, Maryland: Ministerial Association, General Conference of SDA, 1992), 127-128.

³SDAs Believe, 187.

Rebaptism

As a general practice, Seventh-day Adventists accept rebaptism on the grounds of apostasy, because an unbiblical mode of baptism has been used, and on the request of individuals who are not satisfied with their former baptism.¹ Rebaptism is recommended for former Seventh-day Adventists who have apostatized: “When members have fallen away in apostasy and have lived in such a manner that the faith and principles of the church have been publicly violated, they should, in case of reconversion, . . . enter the church as in the beginning, by baptism.”²

As noted above, Seventh-day Adventists accept people from other religious communions who have been baptized by immersion into church membership. Rebaptism can be a condition of becoming members if their Christianity is questionable or if they themselves desire to be rebaptized.³ Those who have been baptized by modes other than immersion and seek membership in the Seventh-day Adventist Church will be received upon baptism.

Although some Adventist writers do not see a need for members to be rebaptized, they do recognize that, for personal convictions, those who desire a second baptism can receive it. Faced with an individual’s desire for rebaptism, Edwards says: “If rebaptism would express and reinforce a significant milestone in the soul’s journey, who am I as a

¹Church Manual, 1995, 39.

²Ibid.

³SDA Encyclopedia, 1996 ed., s.v. “Baptism.”

helper of souls to deny such a benefit?"¹ For Edwards, however, the foot-washing experience preceding the Lord's supper is preferable to rebaptism, for it provides an occasion for baptized members to renew their baptismal vows.² Along this line of reasoning, Reid concludes: "Wholehearted repentance, confession, and recommitment to the claims of Christ are His means of restoring those who have drifted away (1 John 2:1, 2; Matt 18:15-18)."³

The current position on rebaptism is based on history, especially on an 1886 declaration. Thus a study of the history of Adventist thinking on rebaptism is in order.

The Early Pioneers and Rebaptism

The subject of rebaptism became prominent in the SDA Church mainly in the mid-nineteenth century, when believers from other religious communions sought membership in the church.⁴ Thus questions were asked about the need or desirability of a second baptism. The pioneers' great concern was what could be derived from Scripture regarding rebaptism.⁵ In this section the matter of rebaptism from an Adventist perspective is studied, first among the pioneers and then in current understanding and practice.

James White gave three main reasons for rebaptism. First, rebaptism could be

¹Rex D. Edwards, "Baptism: Pastoral Perplexities," Ministry, December 1987, 8.

²Ibid., 9.

³George W. Reid, "Is Rebaptism Biblical?" Adventist Review, 28 June 1984, 8.

⁴SDA Encyclopedia, s.v. "Baptism."

⁵James White, "Re-baptism," Review and Herald, 6 August 1867, 114.

necessary when a person turns away in apostasy. According to the interpretation of the early pioneers, and in the context of rebaptism, apostasy meant going back to committing sin, a falling away, after a person has known the truth.¹ With this interpretation, apostasy placed a person in a state where his or her repentance, faith, and baptism were questioned.

James White wrote:

But it may be said that if baptism should follow faith and repentance twice, it may ten times. Why not? But should we be baptized as often as we sin? If we sin to that degree that we lose our faith, which apostasy calls for a thorough repentance and a complete resurrection of faith, then we need a baptism, if it be ten times. A sinner is a sinner, though he may a hundred times during his probation, if such a thing be possible, come into favor with God, and then lose that favor. And if a sinner needs faith, repentance, and baptism, at one time, he needs them at another.²

James White reasoned that if unbelievers come to Christ by repenting, believing, and baptism, they can return to Him after apostasy in the same way. He said:

Again, some who now stand firm in the truth, have, since they were baptized, gone back and sinned worse than before, and have been—no, have not been baptized. They go back beyond their apostasy, for baptism, and patch it on to repentance and faith under the third message. Did they repent when they first yielded to the claims of the gospel? Then when they heard the third message their cup of repentance was a hundred fold more bitter. Did they back there exercise faith in the Saviour? When the faith and hope of a coming Redeemer to restore all things burst in upon them, and they saw by the light of the heavenly sanctuary and the third message the great work of preparation for the event, their faith grasped tangible things with a clearness and strength a hundred fold more than their former faith. And now what shall be done? Tell them they must stop at faith? At their first conversion, the order of events was repent, believe, and be baptized. At their second conversion the order is repentance, faith, and—[sic]³

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

Although James White advocated rebaptism, he did not contend that believers should be rebaptized for every sin they committed or for every clear understanding of additional certain truth they received. Personal prayer and confession of sin could be as good as another baptism for some people. On this he said:

“But,” says one “would you have us baptized every time we sin?” There are degrees of sin. No man living is so free from what may be regarded as sin, but he may with propriety every night pray, “Forgive me, Lord, for the sins I have this day committed.” Yet by no means should he have a daily immersion.¹

Rebaptism could also be required when the first baptism was falsely administered. False administration of baptism, according to James White, included the baptism of: (1) those who were unprepared or who did not show fruits of repentance before or after baptism; (2) people who were baptized by unholy hands, i.e., those baptized by unauthorized ministers; (3) persons who were baptized without understanding the significance of baptism; (4) people whose baptism was administered by men of intemperance and lust, since baptismal ministers should be like John the Baptist who was a temperate, pure, and chaste man of God; and (5) men and women who were baptized by administrators who were not in harmony with the central teachings of the church.²

The mode of baptism is not included in the list of possible reasons for rebaptism. This is because the early Seventh-day Adventist Church knew immersion to be the only biblical form of baptism. Those baptized by methods other than immersion were considered as not baptized. In defining rebaptism, James White said: “I do not refer to

¹Ibid., 115.

²Ibid.

those persons who have been sprinkled or had water poured upon them; for such have never been baptized.”¹

A second baptism could also be desired if a person had received greater light that required a change in one’s life. James White made a reference to those who were baptized in the time of John the Baptist. Some were rebaptized after receiving more understanding about Jesus Christ. He said:

Mark this. Those stood in clear light at the time of both immersions. They only advanced from light to still greater light. In our case most of us were in darkness, wrapped about with Babylonish garments, or those still more filthy. We were pursuing in a wrong direction. The truth stopped us, turned us about, stripped us, and cleansed us. If two baptisms, while walking on the plane of truth, were required eighteen centuries ago, how much more requisite in the cases describe above!²

Other pioneers, such as Uriah Smith and J. H. Waggoner, emphasized the significance of baptism in the process of salvation and deemed it necessary for all believers. In case a person had been baptized without understanding the meaning of baptism, had received an unbiblical mode of baptism, or had backslidden, a second baptism was to be administered. Like James White, they reasoned: “Since the baptism of repentance is required at one’s first conversion, if he wholly backslides, and is converted again, is it not just as necessary at this second conversion? Ans.- It seems reasonable that it would be; for he needs to repent, turn from dead works, and obtain pardon, just the same as before.”³

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³[Uriah Smith], “Rebaptism,” Review and Herald, 7 April 1891, 219.

In his response to a question regarding baptism and rebaptism in Acts 19, J. H. Waggoner affirmed that baptism must be done according to the biblical plan. He considered baptism to be biblical if it was performed by immersion, administered by ministers who were sincere and faithful to the word of God, and administered to candidates who had a full knowledge of the Law of God.¹ According to Waggoner, rebaptism was necessary if the first baptism did not meet these requirements. He said: "It is evidently duty for a person to be baptized in the order and for the purpose specified in the gospel plan, though he may have been baptized twenty times out of that order, and for other purposes."²

While the pioneers advocated rebaptism, they did not see it proper to urge or press it upon believers from other faiths who had come to join the Seventh-day Adventist community. They realized that to force people to be rebaptized could cause confusion among believers and even cause the mission of the church to be misunderstood.

While it is generally held among our people that rebaptism is proper under certain circumstances, as in the case of first conversion the full understanding and intent of the law of God, or of restoration from a state and period of complete apostasy from the truth, it is also held and taught that this matter should be left to the individual conscience of every one, to act as he or she may feel that duty demands, and that no pressure should be brought to bear upon any to lead them to act contrary to, or even in advance of, their own convictions in the matter. Yet it often occurs that persons, under the influence of a powerful religious experience, by which they are conscious of being newly converted, feel that it would be a privilege to be rebaptized, and desire to do so, but yet hardly know on what ground the step could be justified.³

¹J. H. Waggoner, "Baptism," 2 April 1857, 173.

²Ibid.

³[Smith], "Rebaptism," 424.

The question of rebaptism continued to be an issue until the church as an organization, for the first time, took a position. At the 1886 General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists held at Battle Creek in Michigan, the following statement was voted:

Whereas, we learn with regret that in some places certain persons have urged the subject of rebaptism as necessary to salvation; and—Whereas, This has caused trouble and division in some churches, and the mind of this body upon that question is asked; therefore—

1. Resolved, That upon the subject of rebaptism of those who have been properly baptized before embracing the message, it is the teaching and practice of our people, founded upon the Bible, as we believe, that they be received into our churches without rebaptism if they themselves are satisfied with their former baptism, though it is the privilege of such to be rebaptized whenever they shall desire it, as most of our people do sooner or later; but that it should not be urged upon any one as necessary to salvation.¹

Ellen G. White on Rebaptism

Ellen White's concept of rebaptism can best be understood in her counsels concerning the rebaptism of two categories of formerly baptized members. She wrote about those who came from other Christian churches to join the Adventists and Adventists whose way of life was not in harmony with the teachings of the word of God or who had been baptized by unauthorized ministers.

Those who were baptized in other churches but did not keep God's commandments, including the fourth commandment, were expected to repent and be

¹Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook (Battle Creek, Michigan: Review and Herald Publishing House, 1887), 45.

rebaptized.¹ One of Ellen White's early statements on rebaptism reads:

Then I saw [that] those whose hands are now engaged in making up the breach and are standing in the gaps, but that have formally since '44 broken the commandments of God and have so far followed the pope as to keeping the first day instead of the seventh would have to go down into the water and be baptized in the faith . . . of Jesus [who is] coming to sit on the throne of His Father David, and to redeem Israel. . . . I also saw [that] those who have been baptized as a door into the professed churches will have to be baptized out of that door again, and into the faith mentioned above; and all who have not been baptized since '44 will have to be baptized before Jesus comes and some will not gain progress now until that duty is done and then they must live anew unto God and serve him faithfully.²

These were the people, she said, who were violating God's commandments unawares and whose former baptism did not satisfy. As in the case of the Jews in Acts 19:1-7, they were to be rebaptized after receiving clearer light on the truth unknown to them before. She stated:

There are many at the present day who have unwittingly violated one of the precepts of God's law. When the understanding is enlightened, and the claims of the fourth commandment are urged upon the conscience, they see themselves sinners in the sight of God. 'Sin is the transgression of the law,' and 'he that shall offend on one point is guilty of all.'

And he repents of his transgression. . . . His former baptism does not satisfy him now. He has seen himself a sinner, condemned by the law of God. He has experienced anew a death to sin, and he desires again to be buried with Christ by baptism that he may rise to walk in newness of life.³

Although there is not much information on Ellen White's second baptism, what is said is helpful. She tells of receiving her first baptism by immersion into the Methodist

¹SDA Encyclopedia, s.v. "Baptism."

²E. G. White, "A Vision Given in Oswego, New York," Manuscript Releases, vol. 18 (Silver Spring, Maryland: E. G. White Estate, 1993), 12.

³E. G. White, Sketches from the Life of Paul (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1974), 133.

Church as a young girl.¹ Of her second baptism, A. L. White wrote: "Soon after accepting the Sabbath truth, Ellen White requested rebaptism--undoubtedly into the third angel's message."² James White, who administered her baptism, says: "On receiving baptism at my hands, at an early period of her experience, as I raised her up out of the water, immediately she was in vision."³

While Ellen White did not resent a rebaptism of those who accepted the Sabbath truth, she did not accept the manner in which some Seventh-day Adventist ministers were urging and pressing rebaptism on people who had recently accepted the Sabbath but had not been baptized immediately. Ellen White counseled them thus:

Those who place the subject of rebaptism in the front, making it of as much importance as the Sabbath question, are not leaving the right impression upon the minds and correctly representing the subject. . . . This subject should be carefully presented in the spirit of tenderness and love. Then the duty of urging belongs to no one but God; give God a chance to work with His Holy Spirit upon the minds, so that the individual will be perfectly convinced and satisfied in regard to this advanced step.⁴

She further emphasized:

Let none of our zealous brethren overdo this matter. They will be in danger of getting before the Lord and making tests for others which the Lord has not bidden them to make. It is not the work of any of our teachers to urge rebaptism upon anyone. It is their business to lay down the great principles of Bible truths, especially is this the

¹E. G. White, Life Sketches of Ellen G. White (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1915), 25.

²Arthur L. White, Ellen G. White, vol. 1, The Early Years (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1985), 121.

³James White, Life Incidents, vol. 1 (Battle Creek, Michigan: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1868), 273.

⁴E. G. White, Evangelism, 373.

case in regard to rebaptism.¹

Ellen White talks of a second baptism for church members in the context of a local situation which may not apply generally. The reconversion addressed here seems to refer to a situation of an open apostasy which called for a renewal of the covenant with God. She talks of members who habitually and constantly showed an unchristlike character.² She said: "For years a wrong spirit has been cherished, a spirit of pride, a desire for prominence. In this Satan is served, and God is dishonored. The Lord calls for decided reformation. And when a soul is truly reconverted, let him be rebaptized. Let him renew his covenant with God."³ Moon notes that this statement was a typical call to greater consecration and reformation of church members; it was addressed to a situation of definite heresy, apostasy, and schism which had threatened the unity of the church.⁴

Another call for rebaptism of Seventh-day Adventist members is found in the sermon Ellen White preached to the Oakland, California, Church, 20 October, 1906. In it she rebuked some church members who had the weakness of judging one another's behavior and criticizing the work of ministers.⁵ She proclaimed: "Oh, that these words might sink deep into the heart of every one of you who think you are doing God's service

¹Ibid., 374.

²E. G. White, Letter 63, "To Our Brethren at the Medical Missionary Council," 1903, E. G. White Research Center, Andrews University.

³Ibid.

⁴Moon, 140-141.

⁵Ellen. G. White, Sermons and Talks, vol.1 (Silver Spring, Maryland: E. G. Estate, 1990), 360.

while finding fault with others. This is weakness, the besetting sin of many in this congregation.”¹

Rebaptism seemed to be the solution for the spiritual problems of the congregation Ellen White was addressing. Her appeal was: “If you have lost your Christlikeness, my brethren and sisters, you can never come into communion with God again until you are reconverted and rebaptized. You want to repent and to be rebaptized, and to come into the love and communion and harmony of Christ.”² She warned the Oakland congregation that unless they repented of finding fault with God’s servants they would at last find themselves outside the city of God.³

There were self-sent people among the Adventists who went out to teach and baptize people without being authorized by the church leadership.⁴ When their converts later found out that these were not true messengers, they could request to be baptized again.

Honest souls put confidence in them, thinking that they are moving in the counsel of God and that they are in union with the church, and therefore suffer them to administer the ordinances, and, as duty is made plain that they must do their first works, allow themselves to be baptized by them. But when light comes, as it surely will, and they are aware that these men are not what they understood them to be, God’s called and chosen messengers, they are thrown into trial and doubt as to the truth they have received and feel that they must learn it all over again; they are troubled and perplexed by the enemy about all

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴E. G. White, Early Writings (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1945), 98-99.

their experience, whether God has led them or not, and are not satisfied until they are again baptized and begin anew.¹

The above incidences of rebaptism teach us that Ellen White recommended a second baptism for people who had lived in open transgression of the commandments of God. Those who had been baptized by sprinkling or pouring needed to receive baptism by immersion, a mode practiced in the New Testament. The rebaptism of Adventists was recommended because of a local specific situation where there was a spirit of backbiting, faultfinding, and evil-speaking among church members.² Their ungodly behavior demonstrated that they needed reconversion and rebaptism.

Summary

Adventists view baptism as an event at which believers, after being instructed God's claims upon them, publicly declare their loyalty to Christ and entrance into His body, the Church. To a believing person, baptism signifies death, burial and resurrection into new life in Christ. Members who fall a way into sin are rebaptized after renewing their relationship with Christ.

¹Ibid., 99.

²E. G. White, Sermons and Talks, 1:360.

CHAPTER 4

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST

BAPTISM IN KENYA

Against the background of a statistical description of the SDA Church in Kenya, this chapter describes the practice and understanding of baptism as reported by Kenyan pastors and lay persons.

The Adventist Church in Kenya, 1993-1998

In 1998 the SDA Church in Kenya had 2,106 churches with 473,298 members.¹ The statistical report of 1998 shows 355 ordained and licensed pastors in Kenya for 482,779 members. In the same year there were 50,249 baptisms.² Pastors in Kenya carry heavy loads of church responsibilities. As shown in table 1, the average load a pastor carries is 8.4 congregations and 1,928 members. In Kenya Lake Field, each church pastor has 11 churches and 3,082 members. With an exception of one field in which each pastor has 6 churches and 581 members, for other fields and conferences one pastor has 8 or 9 churches.

¹General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook (Silver Spring, Maryland: General Conference of SDA, 1999), 66.

²General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 136th Annual Statistical Report (Silver Spring, Maryland: Office of Archives and Statistics, 1998), 35.

The number of members per pastor in these fields or conferences ranges from 781 to 3,173. The load of each pastor is more than what is shown in table 1, because these calculations of pastors include office workers who are not assigned churches. It becomes, therefore, practically impossible for one pastor to efficiently meet the spiritual needs of all church members and thoroughly prepare candidates for baptism.

Before comparing 1993 data with 1998 information, it is necessary to point out certain organizational changes in the fields. The South Kenya Conference was divided in 1995 into two; the new conference is called Nyamira. To reflect these changes, tables 2 and 3 reflect the territory included in the 1993 statistics. The name South Kenya/Nyamira Conference has been used. What was called North Nyanza Field in 1993, in the 1998 statistical report was called Central Nyanza Field, a name in use to the present. In tables 2 and 3 the name Central/North Nyanza Field has been used.

Table 2 shows a comparison of pastoral loads and the difference in ratio between 1993 and 1998. The increase of congregations and members over five years was larger than the increase of pastors in each field or conference.

Table 3 shows a comparison of per capita tithe in 1993 and 1998. Overall, tithe has increased by an average of \$US 7.27. Even so, the per capita tithe is low, with as little as US\$ 2.25 per member in one field. These figures, however, can be misleading. During this same period the rate of exchange between the dollar and the schilling has more than doubled, decreasing the number of dollars. Furthermore, these data do not provide any information on the reasons for the figures. Members may not have been taught faithfulness in tithe returning, working members are few (many members may be young

and unemployed), and the economy of the country is in serious recession. Whatever the reason, statistics show a poor financial base for church operation.

To summarize, the Adventist church in Kenya is a growing church. It is also a church in which pastors carry a heavy load in terms of congregations and church members per pastor. Furthermore, it is a church that lacks a strong financial base. Comments made in the next section must be considered in light of the numbers just presented.

Baptism as Seen by Kenyan Pastors and Lay Persons

Information presented in this section was gathered by means of three different questionnaires. Two were sent to Kenya, one for pastors and the other for lay persons. The third was administered to Kenyan pastors who are currently studying at Andrews University. The questionnaires appear in Appendix A.

Questionnaires were sent to the University of Eastern Africa, Baraton, in Western Kenya; to the Central Kenya Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists, in central Kenya; and to the East African Union of the Seventh-day Adventist Church headquarters, located in Nairobi. The areas to which the questionnaires were sent were selected for two reasons. First, many church members have come to these areas from different parts of Kenya; they provide variety to the study. Second, since the survey was written in English, areas where most members and pastors are able to communicate in English were chosen.

These surveys do not pretend to be exhaustive. Because the questions were open ended, in an attempt to obtain more candid response, the results are not quantifiable. They are merely indications of the feelings of a limited group of members and pastors. The purpose of these surveys was to corroborate personal observations and concerns.

TABLE 1

PASTORS, CONGREGATIONS, AND MEMBERS IN KENYA, 1998

Fields	Ordained and Licensed Pastors	Number of Congregations	Ratio of Congregations To Pastors	Number of Members	Ratio of Members to Pastors
Central Kenya Conference	52	400	8	40,637	781
Central Nyanza Field	14	114	8	22,150	1,582
Kenya Coast Field	11	72	6	6,388	581
Kenya Lake Field	29	317	11	89,366	3,082
Nyamira Conference	29	266	9	76,122	2,625
Raneni Field	37	323	8	89,254	2,412
South Kenya Conference	34	277	8	107,880	3,173
Western Kenya Field	43	366	9	50,982	1,186
Total	355	2,135	8.4	482,779	1,928

Source: 136th Annual Statistical Report (Silver Spring, Maryland: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1998), 10, 35.

TABLE 2

CHANGE OF RATIO, PASTORS TO CONGREGATIONS AND MEMBERS
1993-1998

Field/ Conference	1993 Ratios		1998 Ratios		Change of Ratio	
	Congregations to Pastors	Members to Pastors	Congregations to Pastors	Members to Pastors	Congregations to Pastors	Members to Pastors
Central Kenya Conference	5	626	8	781	+3	+155
Kenya Coast Field	4	405	6	581	+2	+176
Kenya Lake Field	8	2,092	11	3,082	+3	+990
Central/ North Nyanza Field	7	1,541	8	1,582	+1	+14
Raneni Field	9	2,498	8	2,412	-1	-86
South Kenya Nyamira Conference	7	2,239	8.6	2,921	-1	+682
Western Kenya Field	8	1,270	9	1,186	+1	-84
Total Ratios	7	1,638	8.4	1,928	+1.4	+290

Source: 131st and 136th Annual Statistical Reports (Silver Spring, Maryland: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1993, 1998), 8, 10.

TABLE 3

PER CAPITA TITHE: 1993, 1998 (in U.S. Dollars)

Field/Conference	Per capita tithe 1993	Per capita tithe 1998	Change
Central Kenya Conference	15.39	36.51	+21.12
Central/North Nyanza Field	4.04	5.63	+1.59
Kenya Coast Field	17.04	30.90	+13.86
Kenya Lake Field	2.05	2.25	+0.20
Reneni Field	1.70	3.55	+1.85
South Kenya/ Nyamira Conference	2.04	10.32	+8.28
Western Kenya Field	4.67	8.65	+3.98
Average	6.70	13.97	+7.27

Source: 131st and 136th Annual Statistical Reports (Silver Spring, Maryland: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1993, 8; 1998, 11).

Of the 35 pastors who received the questionnaire, 20 responded. Of the 45 questionnaires given to church members, 25 were returned. Eight of 10 pastors from Kenya studying at the Theological Seminary at Andrews University returned the survey. The information presented in this chapter was obtained from these 53 questionnaires.

The responses of each group are analyzed by topic. A synthesis of findings appears at the end of the chapter.

Church Pastors' Response

Pastors were asked to respond to questions about how they prepare candidates for baptism. They were also queried about the baptismal ceremony and post-baptismal nurture.

Preparation for Baptism

In responding to the question on baptismal instructors, 17 of the 20 pastors, responded that the work of preparing candidates for baptism is the responsibility of church elders. Church elders give far more instructions than pastors. The survey shows that in Kenya, instead of elders helping pastors prepare people for baptism, pastors are the ones who assist church elders. Two pastors indicated that in their churches they are not directly involved in teaching baptismal class; all the teaching is done by church elders.

The time pastors reported spending weekly in giving instruction to candidates for baptism confirms that church elders are the chief instructors of individuals who join the church. Eleven of 20 pastors said that they spend one hour or less a week instructing candidates; 6 said that they spend between two and four hours; one said he spent six

hours; and 2 said they occasionally give instructions.

When asked on what day baptismal instruction took place, most of the pastors said that baptismal class members meet on Sabbath days. Only four said that they meet on Sunday as well.

Style of preparation

Many candidates are prepared for baptism in a class setting. Some pastors reported that all candidates are taught together in one class, while others said they divide the candidates into two classes. Some ministers reported that, in order for candidates to receive lessons according to the time they joined baptismal class and their level of understanding, they were divided into more than one class.

A question was asked on how candidates of different ages and gender were instructed. More than half of the respondents (12 out of 20) said that all are taught in one class. This means that children, youth, adults, and old people, with their different levels of education (including illiterates), are given the same lessons together with the same method of teaching. The other ministers reported that candidates are grouped according to their ages and the number of lessons they have received.

Materials for instructions

The survey reveals that baptismal instructors use various materials for teaching baptismal candidates. Of the 20 pastors, 10 said they use the Bible, Church Manual,¹ and

¹Church Manual (1995)

the Baptismal Manual.¹ Eight said they use the Baptismal Manual only, and 2 pastors reported using Seventh-day Adventists Believe: A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines.

Length of preparation

The length of instruction for baptism varies from church to church and from pastor to pastor. Of the 20 pastors who returned the survey 10 said preparation lasted three months; 4 said they took six months. Two pastors reported taking one year to prepare candidates, while 4 reported studying as long as needed. Of these, 1 said that candidates should complete study of the twenty-seven fundamental beliefs before baptism.

At the end of the instruction period, candidates are tested, either orally or by oral and written examination. Candidates are tested on the biblical knowledge they have received and on how they have started to apply that knowledge practically. Their lifestyle tells something about their conversion. All 20 pastors reported that they expect that true conversion will be demonstrated in behavior, such as what a person wears, eats, and drinks; the kind of entertainment and recreation enjoyed; and his or her relation to other people.

Candidates are also tested in relation to the church and its mission. Of 20 pastors, 3 reported inquiring from church treasurers if candidates returned tithes for the support of the gospel ministry and if they give their offerings for other church expenses.

¹The Baptismal Manual that pastors reported using is a manual that was prepared many years ago and is no longer published. It was a compilation of lessons extracted from different sources.

Regardless of who prepares candidates for baptism, the survey indicates that baptisms are conducted often. Of 20 pastors, 15 said that they hold baptisms every three months; 2 said they conduct a baptism every six months. One pastor reported baptizing every month, and another said that he has a baptism any time candidates are ready.

Ideal preparation for baptism

All the respondents suggested that the present way of preparing candidates for baptism needs to be improved. Many of them were concerned with the style, length of preparation, and lessons taught. On the style, some pastors suggested that in addition to teaching candidates in groups, individual preparation should be considered. Of 20 pastors, 5 recommended that the instructors find time to visit individual candidates at their homes to give further instructions. They noted that this method would not only assist the learner to know more about the church and its beliefs, but would also create a bridge of relationship between the candidate and the church.

The practice of instructing candidates for baptism for a short time was discouraged. Anything less than two months was considered too short. Of 20 pastors, 13 considered six to twelve months as a reasonable length of time for preparing candidates for baptism. Baptisms immediately after crusades were discouraged because candidates do not get enough time for instruction before baptism.

What candidates need to know before baptism was of greater concern than the length of preparation for more than half of the responding pastors. It was emphasized that any lesson given should be centered on the plan of salvation. Of 20 pastors, 5 said that the

Seventh-day Adventists Believe: A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines

should be used to make biblical truth better understood.

Another aspect of preparing candidates for baptism is to teach to them to study truth by themselves. Those who come for baptism are to be instructed on the importance of possessing spiritual tools for personal study. One of the pastors said that no one should be baptized without possessing a Bible and being instructed on how to use it. In addition, baptismal candidates should be advised to own church hymnals and other study materials, such as baptismal guide books and other spiritual literature.

The Baptismal Service

Baptisms are either conducted inside a building or outside in running water, if such a site is available. Of the 20 pastors who returned their responses to the questionnaire, 17 administer baptisms outside in running water or lakes and 3 baptize indoors, in baptistries or swimming pools.

It has been a tradition to conduct baptism on Saturdays. The main reason for this seems to revolve around the understanding that the Sabbath, Saturday, is holy. Baptism is also seen as a holy activity. With this understanding, therefore, 17 of 20 pastors said that many people believe that the blessings of baptism will be greater if it is held on a holy day, Sabbath. Another reason for having baptism on the Sabbath day is the work schedules of people on week days.

Activities on baptismal day

Although there are some variants in the order, the activities on the baptismal day for most pastors are similar. From the survey, the following list of events was compiled for a Sabbath morning baptism:

1. Assembling of candidates for briefing of baptismal procedure (during Sabbath school)
2. Announcements
3. Special music
4. Vows in front of the congregation
5. Sermon
6. Procession to the baptism site
7. Baptism
8. Reception of the baptized into church membership
9. Issuance of baptismal certificates
10. Partaking of a meal by the newly baptized members with some old members
11. Dismissal.

Vows

As shown by the program of activities on the baptismal day, baptismal vows are administered in public. All pastors examine candidates on the day of baptism by asking them to affirm their willingness to accept Seventh-day Adventist doctrinal beliefs.

Candidates respond to each doctrine addressed to them by raising the right hand or by

raising the hand and saying, "I do."

Attire

Of 20 pastors, 12 recommended that candidates who have been accepted by the church for baptism wear a special dress be fitting the occasion. White, blue, or dark attire was suggested. Four of the 20 pastors said that believers prefer white attire for symbolic reasons. White is associated with goodness, holiness, and righteousness. In the minds of some people in Kenya (especially for non-religious people), white signifies good fortune or good luck.

Participation in the baptism ceremony

Pastors reported that the baptismal ceremony is an event attended by church members, invited guests, families of candidates, and some self-invited visitors. Twelve said that all church members are encouraged to attend the baptism ceremony and visitors are invited by candidates and church members, and through church announcements. Eight pastors reported that in their churches the work of inviting guests is the responsibility of the people who are to be baptized.

Baptism is seen by many people as a ceremonial event attracting many spectators. Asked how many of these attending could see the actual baptism, 14 said that from 80 to 100 percent of the witnesses see the actual baptism, 3 said from 60 to 75 percent, and 1 pastor said that only 25 percent of the witnesses see the baptism. Two pastors did not respond to the question.

While guests come to witness the baptism, church members take part in the

program ceremony. Twelve pastors reported that choir members and the congregation sing at baptisms, and church elders, deacons, and deaconesses do the following: assist candidates in entering into baptismal water, wipe their faces as each comes up out of water, and direct them to where to change wet clothes after baptism. After baptism, other church officers and members set and serve foods that church members have prepared for the ceremony.

Ideal ceremony for baptism

To make the baptismal ceremony more appealing and meaningful, Kenyan pastors suggested that time, place, and the activities involved be considered. Eight ministers considered the best time for the ceremony to be Sabbath morning after a short and relevant sermon for the occasion.

Because many people come on foot to see a baptism, 4 of 20 pastors pointed out that baptism should be conducted at a short walking distance from the church and in an open place. Having the baptism outside in an open place was considered by 16 pastors as the best site for many viewers.

Of the pastors who responded, 15 said that a baptismal ceremony should be an occasion for social interaction. Meals should be served, songs sung, and people should give personal Christian testimonies. Four pastors proposed partaking of the Holy Communion to culminate the ceremony.

Postbaptismal nurture

All of the pastors, except one, said that they have a program of continuing instruction for newly baptized members. In this class members review some of the lessons that were taught before baptism and others that were not covered.

As the survey reveals, pastors do not have a standard specified term for post-baptismal teaching. When to stop instruction is left to the discretion of each pastor. Four pastors said that instruction continues for one year; 3 indicated two or three months; and 6 said classes continued until all lessons planned for the new members were completed. Seven pastors did not respond to the question on the length of postbaptismal instruction.

Lay Persons' Responses

Church members responded to questions about the way they were prepared for baptism, the effect of the baptismal ceremony on their lives, instruction after baptism, and their participation in church offices.

Decisions for Baptism

Many people make decisions for baptism by personal reading of the Bible, attending church services, and listening to sermons in church or at crusades. Some decide to be baptized after attending church through the influence of Christian friends or families.

In the survey, 10 Adventists reported responding to a call after sermon at the church; 7 came to decision by personal Bible reading; 2 were encouraged by Christian friends; and 1 decided at an evangelistic crusade. One admitted making the decision for fear of last-day events. Four respondents did not say how they decided for baptism.

Length and Frequency of Preparation

A majority of the respondents reported spending less than one year in baptismal preparation; 2 gave the time at less than three months, 4 at three months, 1 at four months, 5 at six months, and 1 at nine months. Seven said they had preparation for one year, and 4 reported two years of preparation. One could not remember the length of prebaptismal preparation.

For the majority, the preparation was done once a week. Each instruction period took between thirty and sixty minutes. Ten of the respondents said that they were instructed once in two weeks, 6 reported twice a week, and 6 could not remember. In preparing for baptism these members received different numbers of lessons. Two said they had fewer than ten lessons; 11 reported between ten and twenty-eight; 3 had over thirty lessons. Nine could not remember the number of lessons they received.

Most of the lessons were given by church elders. In answering the question regarding their baptismal instructors, 17 members said they were instructed by church elders, 6 said they were instructed by the church pastor, and 2 noted that they were instructed by both pastor and church elder.

Christian Principles Remembered and Practiced

All 25 respondents said they remembered some of the teachings they were taught in baptismal class. Although in different order, the respondents generally speak of the same teachings. These teachings can be organized into topics such as the doctrine of God, the doctrine of salvation, the doctrine of the church, the doctrine of the Christian life, and

the doctrine of last events.

These church members spoke of the Trinity: God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. By their power the earth and all creation came into existence. The salvation of humans comes by believing in God who is the creator of the universe.

They also reported believing and accepting the church as a divinely ordained institution and its mission. They affirmed belief in the teachings of the church on baptism by immersion, the celebration of Holy Communion, and the church's mandate to proclaim the coming kingdom.

Of all the teachings remembered, the doctrine of the Christian life was the most emphasized by respondents. Of the 25 respondents, 17 said that they were taught how to prepare for and observe the Sabbath day, return tithe, and give generous offerings. Ten said that they were instructed that their bodies are the Temple of the Holy Spirit to be kept in good health by not eating certain foods, drinking unhealthful drinks, using tobacco in any form, or drugs other than those prescribed by physicians. The Christian lifestyle emphasized includes love for all people without discrimination. It also includes the outward appearance of believers, who wear the kind of dress appropriate for Christians and acceptable in their society.

All 25 members said that they believe that Christ is coming again to this earth to receive those who have believed in Him and are obedient to Him. Though dead, those who have believed in Christ will be resurrected by Christ when He comes again.

Ideal Preparation

All of the respondents said that there is need for thorough preparation of baptismal candidates. They expressed concern about the qualifications of baptismal instructors, materials used in teaching, the length of preparation, and postbaptismal instruction.

Although church members did not say who should train elders or how they should be trained, 15 recommended that before church elders instruct people for baptism, they need themselves to be instructed on how to instruct others. They need to know which lessons baptismal class students need to learn and how to present those lessons.

Seven church members noted that lessons for new converts should be centered on the plan of salvation and practical Christianity. They suggested that the Bible should be the major source of teaching materials. Other sources such as baptismal manuals and the 27 Fundamental Beliefs are to be used to explain biblical passages.

A similar concern was expressed regarding the length of preparation. More than half of the respondents said that the present routine period of three months is not long enough to prepare candidates for baptism. Ten members suggested four to twelve months as enough time for preparation. In addition to this period, they pointed out that instruction should be continued for some time after baptism.

Baptismal Ceremony

Baptism is a ceremony hardly forgotten by those baptized. All 25 members who responded to the survey remember the day and date of their baptism and the color of the

attire they put on: 17 wore white, 4 members had church robes (they did not specify color), and only 4 had their casual clothes.

Those who still remember their baptismal day were baptized between November 13, 1958, and December 1996. Only 2 of the 25 did not remember the minister who baptized them, but they did remember the day they were baptized.

Baptismal vows

Respondents reported that baptismal candidates respond to the vows by raising their right hands or by saying, "I do." The survey results show that 11 candidates signified acceptance by raising their right hands, and 14 raised their right hands and said, "I do."

In response to the question on how candidates felt about the baptismal vow ceremony, 13 said the ceremony was good; 5 said it was spiritual; 2 said it was emotional, and 5 did not respond.

Attendance of family and friends

According to the survey, baptismal attendance depends on various factors. Some of these reasons include the publicity and the location of the event. Eight members reported that immediate family members attended their baptismal ceremony; 10 said family members and friends attended, while 2 said that only friends attended.

Only 5 said that apart from the church family, no family member or friend attended their baptism. Of these 2 said they had been baptized far from their homes. Three gave no reason why no family member or friend attended their baptism.

Meal at baptism

Although in most, if not, all traditional rites of passage in Kenya a meal is served, this is not always the case with the rite of baptism. Although a meal is listed on the program of the day of baptism, as pastors indicated on their response above, 21 of the 25 church members surveyed said no meal was served at the time of their baptism.

Those who said that the church ate together testify that they still remember the occasion and that they enjoyed sharing a meal together with church members and their friends. Two of them remarked that they were so happy and felt a sense of belonging to the church family. One said that it was a special moment of being honored and uplifted, and another said that it was a special occasion that will not be forgotten.

Reception into Church Membership

Of the 25 members who responded, 22 said that they were received into church membership at the church in the presence of members. Two said that they were received into membership on the Sabbath day when the church had Holy Communion, and 1 reported that the ceremony was on the Sabbath day at sunset.

Personal Reaction to Baptism

All respondents mentioned something of significance about baptism and how baptism affects their Christian experience. Many members remember the act of baptism itself, immersion, as the most significance aspect of their baptism. Of the 25, 11 said that the act of immersion was a special experience to them. After being raised out of water, they felt as if they had been born again. Two reported that the reception into church

membership was a thrilling experience. Another 7 made a general statement that the whole event meant a change in their lifestyle.

Many said that the experience of baptism affected their Christian experience in other ways. For example, 17 members said that the biblical knowledge they received helped them to have a different view of life. The knowledge about the resurrection of true believers in Christ brings joy in their lives and helps them to remain faithful amid unpleasant circumstances. Through the same knowledge, they changed their lifestyle. They started to do things based on the biblical knowledge they had received and continued to receive.

After baptism, 20 members discovered that they were accepted and wanted by the church family. This discovery made them separate themselves from the practices of their former non-Christian friends and unite with Christian friends. They entered into a new relationship with church members and other people.

Through baptism they were introduced into church service and ministry. Five of these members said that from the time they were baptized, they were committed to attending church services and always had a sense of responsibility and accountability.

Postbaptismal Nurture and Church Responsibility

According to the survey, many churches do not have a postbaptismal nurture program for the newly baptized members. Of the 25 members, 15 said that they did not continue to get doctrinal lessons after their baptism. Another 9 said that they continued with lessons after baptism. One member did not respond to that question.

The length of postbaptismal instruction is not the same for all churches that give lessons to their newly baptized members. Of the 9 members who received teaching after baptism, 3 said they were instructed for three months, 2 said six months, 1 said four months. Only 1 gave the length as one year, while another reported two years of postbaptismal instruction. One did not specify the length of instruction. All 9 members said that they were instructed by a church elder once a week for thirty to sixty minutes.

Of those who responded to the survey, 22 have held church office. One admitted not having any church office and 2 did not answer the question. It took different lengths of time after baptism for these new members to be chosen for church office. The delay reported went from three months (2 persons), to thirteen years (1 person). In between, the following periods were reported by three persons each: six months, one year, three years, and five years. Seven did not give the length of time from their baptism to when they first held church office.

Response of Kenyan Pastors Currently Studying at Andrews University

Ten Kenyan pastors who are currently studying at the Theological Seminary at Andrews University were asked to respond to questions on baptism; 8 responded. The following topics were explored: the understanding of baptism, how the baptismal ceremony is perceived by candidates and church members, the believers' understanding of baptismal attire, the custom of giving a name at or before baptism, ways baptism can be made more meaningful in Kenya, and rebaptism.

Adults' Understanding of Baptism

Of the 8 respondents said that literate adult church members see baptism as a sign or symbol of entering new life. Two pastors said that this group of members understands baptism as a spiritual cleansing.

For the illiterate adult church members, baptism is, in the opinion of 6 pastors, a rite of passage into new life. Two pastors said that the illiterate men and women understand baptism to mean cleansing from sin and joining the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Young People's Understanding of Baptism

Young people regard baptism as a requirement for church membership and/or a symbol of new life. Of 8 pastors, 2 said that for young people baptism is a sign of beginning a new life; 2 pastors said that the young people see it as a step taken when a person wants to join the church. Four pastors said that young people understand baptism in different ways: as a symbol of relationship with Christ; as death, burial, and resurrection; or as God's requirement for His people.

Perception of Baptismal Ceremony and Attire

Student pastors at Andrews University reported differing perceptions of the baptismal ceremony. Five pastors said that church members perceive the ceremony as a solemn occasion for both candidates and church members. One pastor said that it is a celebration of the new life of newly baptized members. Another said that it is a memorable occasion for the candidates, while another affirmed that the ceremony is

understood to be an initiation into the church.

Concerning baptismal attire, all 8 pastors said that church members consider white to be the right attire for baptism. White robes are believed by members to symbolize purity of life. With this kind of understanding, baptismal candidates expect to put on white garments at their baptism.

The Baptismal Name

Usually every person baptized in Kenya is given or has a name known as a “Christian name.” Four pastors said that candidates are given a name at or before baptism. Three said that candidates receive names before baptism, most likely from their parents. Only one pastor said that names are given or chosen by candidates after a person has been baptized.

The names given to or chosen by candidates are important. Four pastors said that many candidates are given or choose names of Bible characters. These names are chosen on the basis of the behavior or experience of the Bible character. Three pastors said that names are not necessarily chosen because there is biblical meaning attached to them, but rather to mark the beginning of the new life of the one baptized. One pastor did not respond to the question.

Ways of Making Baptism More Meaningful in Kenya

All 8 respondents made suggestions for making baptism more meaningful in Kenya. Their suggestions are summarized under two headings: (1) preparation for baptism and (2) baptismal ceremony.

Adults and children should be instructed in different groups or classes, thus, the lessons will be taught according to the level of their understanding and make more sense to each group. Some adults do not see the seriousness of the baptismal class when they are taught together with children. Along with this plan, it was suggested that all instructions to all candidates be Christ centered. Another suggestion concerned the future spiritual growth of candidates. Before candidates are baptized, they should be taught how to continue studying the Bible on their own beyond baptism.

It was agreed that the baptismal ceremony needs improving. This ceremony should involve all church members in providing all that is needed to make it more appealing and meaningful. It should be arranged and organized by the church pastor and all church members at least at the level of a wedding ceremony. The pastors recommended that at this spiritual feast healthful foods should be served and personal testimonies be given.

The pastors pointed out that the use of places where witnesses cannot see the actual immersion should be discouraged. Open places where many, if not all, viewers can see the baptism of each candidate are preferred.

Finally, it was suggested that there is no need to change traditional names of candidates to biblical names. One of the pastors said that, if explained and defined, Kenyan cultural names have meaning to Kenyan people as biblical names did to the people of their culture. Baptism, as a whole, needs to be done in such a way that it can relate to the cultural understanding of the Kenyan people.

Rebaptism

All 8 pastors presented similar reasons for rebaptism. These reasons can be put together as follows: Four pastors said that violating any of the commandments is a reason for a second baptism. Two said that those who live together as husband and wife without being united by a church minister, polygamists, or those who divorce their spouses are to be rebaptized. Two pastors said that believers from other religious communions wishing to join the SDA Church are expected to be rebaptized, regardless of the mode in which they were baptized previously.

The decision for and need of a second baptism is made either by the individual who desires it or by the initiative of the church or pastor. The survey showed that 5 of the 8 pastors said that the church pastor or church board should ask the individual to be rebaptized; 2 pastors affirmed that either the pastor or the individual could make the request, while 1 pastor allowed that only the pastor asks the person to be rebaptized.

How church members regard rebaptism

According to the survey, church members have different views on rebaptism. Of the 8 pastors, 3 said that church members see a second baptism as necessary for the erring member who wants to take full participation in church services. Three pastors said that some church members do not see it as necessary, for they claim that there is no biblical basis for another baptism. One pastor said that members say that not all cases may require rebaptism, and another said that church members feel that the decision for rebaptism should be left to the individual concerned. There was no unanimity.

Suggestions for rebaptism in Kenya

Although most of the suggestions given by the 8 pastors were the same, others are somewhat different. Five said that rebaptism should not be denied to one who had apostatized and now desired to rejoin the church. However, there should be evidence of fruits for rebaptism. Two pastors said that each case of rebaptism should be considered on its own merits and the person involved should be approached with a loving spirit. One of the 8 pastors said that the issue of rebaptism has not been settled by the church and needs further study.

Seven of the 8 pastors suggested that people should not be forced into a second baptism. They pointed out that reasons for another baptism must be well considered, otherwise the significance of the rite of baptism will lose its meaning. In addition, these reasons should be studied and recommended to all churches in Kenya. This would avoid discrepancies between churches in regard to rebaptism.

Summary

The report of pastors and members in Kenya and Kenyan pastors at Andrews University shows some of the difficulties involved in the preparation of baptismal candidates. All agree that better preparation is needed, yet members clearly remember basic baptismal teachings, of which the new life in Christ was of great importance. The understanding of baptism as a rite of passage into a new life is clear; thus there is general agreement on the need to make the baptismal ceremony a special occasion.

Responses to the question on rebaptism, asked only of the Kenyan pastors at

Andrews University, suggest differences of opinion. It is evident that the understanding and practice of rebaptism is not uniform.

The three questionnaires indicated three things that were common in regard to baptism: (1) The respondents expressed a need for improving the preparation of candidates for baptism; (2) baptismal ceremony to be made a memorable event; and (3) church elders who are the chief instructors of baptismal classes, to be trained on how to teach candidates for baptism.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

In an attempt to enrich the understanding of baptism in Kenya, this study has first explored the background of Christian baptism and the practice and meaning of baptism in the New Testament. The recorded practice of baptism in the New Testament begins with John the Baptist. Unlike ablutions and lustrations of Jewish religious practices, John's baptism called for repentance and pointed all people to the coming Messiah. John's baptism climaxed with the baptism of Jesus (Matt 3:13-15). Later in His ministry, Jesus commissioned His disciples to include baptism in their mission task (Matt 28:19; Mark 16:15-16). The book of Acts gives examples of people who received baptism as a declaration of their faith (Acts 8:26-39; 10:47-48; 16:31-33). These individuals were baptized after receiving and accepting instructions on the ministry, death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

Those who believe must be baptized by immersion, as shown throughout the New Testament. The meaning of the Greek word, *baptizō*, indicates baptism by immersion. Paul's use of the figure of death, burial and resurrection can only be represented by immersion.

Through baptism, Christians are buried and raised into new life (Rom 6:3-5). The

apostle Paul points out that baptism commemorates the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (Col 2:12). Thus, the cross is at the center of the meaning of baptism. Baptism is a symbol of the believer's death to sin and resurrection to new life with God. This is to say, the sinful lifestyle and practices are given up. To believers, baptism is a rite of passage into Christ.

Furthermore, for believers, baptism is a symbol of entrance into the church. Baptized believers become members of the body of Christ, His church. The analogy of the human body gives a clear picture of mutual relationships among believers and their mission (1 Cor 12:12-14, 20, 24-27). Believers join a visible spiritual community of God with a mission of serving each other's physical and spiritual needs and of those yet to join them (Acts 2:41, 47).

Seventh-day Adventists teach and practice believers' baptism. Before baptism is administered to anyone, that person must personally hear the preaching of the gospel, believe, and repent of his or her sins. Although baptism in itself does not save, for Adventists, baptism is an outward act that signifies that a sinner has died to sin and has become a new creature in Christ (2 Cor 5:17).

For Adventists, baptism requires thorough preparation. Ellen G. White recommends that baptism should not be administered to a person who has not been well prepared. A person must understand that true conversion involves a radical change of thoughts and behavior.

The only biblical reference to a second baptism is found in Acts 19. There, certain persons were rebaptized because they had not received enough light before their first

baptism. In the Seventh-day Adventist teachings, rebaptism takes place when a person returns from apostasy. Pastors expressed differing opinions about rebaptism. However, they did agree that former Adventist members who wished to be rebaptized should be thoroughly examined by church pastors and elders. The pastors surveyed agreed that this topic deserves further study.

A survey of pastors and lay persons throws light on the understanding and practice of Adventist baptism in Kenya. The preparation of candidates for baptism is largely the work of church elders. Church pastors have very little time to prepare new converts for baptism. This mandates the training of elders to prepare candidates for baptism. Candidates who are well prepared become committed church members and continue to grow spiritually. Those who lack preparation may easily fall away.

According to the survey, the baptismal ceremony is not memorable. Baptisms are often conducted as a part of the Sabbath service. There is little attention to detail. There is usually no formal church plan for inviting guests to the ceremony, unless the candidates invite them. Meals are rarely served. Most churches have no arrangements for giving newly baptized members further instruction. The baptismal ceremony is thus robbed of the ceremony that would make it a transcendental occasion.

In the Kenyan SDA Church, pastors minister to several churches and large congregations. Thus, local elders are usually in charge of the preparation of candidates for baptism. They also plan and prepare the baptismal ceremony. Because of their key position in the church, elders are the ones needing training to prepare the candidates, design a memorable baptismal ceremony, and carry out the postbaptismal nurture of

candidates.

Conclusions

Baptism is an essential ordinance of the church for which careful preparation should be made. Once appeals for baptism have been made and individuals have responded, baptismal instructors need to present thorough teaching of church doctrines, with a Christ centered focus. The biblical meaning of baptism as a rite of passage should be clearly explained and its symbolism well understood before baptism is administered to anyone. More than anything else, the readiness of candidates for baptism is determined by their evidence of true conversion. To assist in the preparation, older Christians should be designated as counselors and mentors of the new members.

Baptisms in Kenya can be rendered memorable by having an all-day celebration focused on baptism and its meaning. The examination of candidates should be taken care of in a church meeting prior to the day of the baptism. Invitations should be sent out by the candidates and by the church. The preaching should focus on the importance and meaning of baptism. Special music should enhance the services. If at all possible, the baptism should take place in running water, in a place where all can observe the ceremony. After the ceremony, new members should be welcomed into the church and all should celebrate a meal together. If the Lord's Supper is not celebrated the day of the baptism, it should be celebrated the following Sabbath, as part of the welcoming ceremony.

In the SDA Church in Kenya, pastors need help in preparing candidates for baptism. Church elders and lay persons who can help church pastors in preparing new

converts for baptism need training in how to give baptismal instruction. To this end, “Baptismal Guidelines for Church Elders” have been prepared and are presented in Appendix B. Baptismal instructors should be able to teach candidates to understand the import of baptism as traditional rites of passage are understood in many Kenyan communities.

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CHURCH MEMBERS IN KENYA

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PASTORS IN KENYA

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR KENYAN PASTORS STUDYING AT

ANDREWS UNIVERSITY

To those requested to make the survey, the following instructions were given:

1. The name of the interviewee is not required.
2. Let each interview be personal and private as much as possible.
3. This survey is needed no later than October, 1998.
4. All writing to be in upper case only.
5. Mail all correspondence to:

SAMSON N. MWEBI
5694 LONG LAKE RD.
BERRIEN SPRINGS
MICHIGAN 49103

6. Thank you for your willingness to assist in this survey. Get as much information as you can and mail it to the above address.

I. Current Adventist Church Members**A. Preparation**

1. How did you make a decision for baptism?

Make a brief statement on your baptism.

2. Preparations for baptism:

(a) For how long were you prepared for

baptism? _____

How often were the studies? _____

Approximately, how many studies did you

receive? _____

(b) Who was your baptismal instructor?

(c) What are some of the Christian principles you still remember from your preparation for baptism? _____

3. Make any suggestions on how preparation for baptism should be done today?

B. Baptismal Ceremony

1. What was the date of your baptism? _____

2. On what day of the week were you baptized? _____

3. How did you dress for baptism?

4. What was the name of the minister who baptized you?

5. Who of your family members and friends attended your baptismal ceremony?

6. Did you respond publicly to baptismal vows? _____

In what way did you respond?

How did you feel about this part of the ceremony?

7. Was a meal served by the church on your baptismal day? _____

If yes, how did you feel about this meal celebration?

8. How were you received into church into church membership?

9. What was the most significant aspect of your baptismal ceremony?

How did your baptism affect your Christian
experience? _____

C. Post-Baptism Nurturing

1. Did you continue with doctrinal lessons after your baptism?

If yes, for how long, how often, and who was your instructor?

2. Have you served in any church office? _____ If yes, how long after your
baptismal day were you first given church responsibility? _____

II. Questions for Pastors

A. PREPARING CANDIDATES FOR BAPTISM1. What kind of preparation is given for baptismal candidates in your church(s)? Individual or class?

2. How long is the preparation? How often are lessons/studies given? What is the total number of lessons given?

3. What materials are used for preparing baptismal candidates?

4. In your church, who prepares candidates for baptismal?

(a) Pastor? (b) Elders? (c) Lay persons?

(d) Of the instructors above, who gives more lessons to candidates?

5. How much of your time do you spend weekly in the preparation of baptismal candidates? _____

6. When you have candidates at different levels of preparation, how do you plan your lessons to meet their understanding?

7. How do you teach baptismal candidates of different ages and gender? _____

8. At what point in time do you know that people are ready for baptism?

9. How do you test people for baptism? _____

10. How do you administer baptismal vows? _____

11. Do you recommend a certain baptismal attire? If yes, which one?

12. How do you invite family members and friends of baptismal candidates to attend their baptismal ceremony?

13. How do you involve the church in the baptismal ceremony and celebration?

14. How often do you conduct baptisms? _____

15. What do you consider to be the best preparation for baptism?

16. What do you consider to be the best ceremony, time, place, celebration etc) for baptism? _____

B. BAPTISMAL CEREMONY

1. Where do you have church baptisms, in baptisteries or outside?

2. About what percentage of the people who come to witness baptism are able to see the actual baptism (a person being immersed)?

3. Which day(s) of the week do you conduct baptisms? _____

4. List all the activities or events of the baptismal day, including before the baptism and after, until the congregation is dismissed, (meetings, ceremonies, welcoming of the baptized candidates, etc).

C. POST-BAPTISM NURTURE

1. Do you continue to give biblical instructions to the candidates after the day of their baptism? _____

If yes, in what manner, and what determines when to stop?

BAPTISM IN KENYA

For the Kenyan Pastors
at Andrews University, 1999.

As a part of my research for my dissertation, I need information from you. Please respond to these questions and return the results to me in two weeks time. Thank you for your assistance. Samson Mwebi.

1. The Theological meaning of baptism.

What do you think baptism mean to the following groups of believers?

A. Literate adults

i. Men

ii. Women

iii. Young people

B. Illiterate adults

i. Men

ii. Women

Young people in general

2. How do baptismal candidates and church members perceive the SDA baptismal ceremony?

3. What understanding do believers have of baptismal attire?

4. (a) Do all candidates receive a name at or before baptism?

(b) What does a name given at or before baptism mean to the candidates?

5. In what ways could baptism be made more meaningful in Kenya?

Rebaptism

1. List as many reasons as you can for rebaptism in the SDA Church in Kenya.

2. Depending on any of the reasons for rebaptism, who decides for a second baptism?

3. How do Church members regard rebaptism?

4. What suggestions can you give on how rebaptism should be practiced in the SDA Church in Kenya?

APPENDIX B

BAPTISMAL GUIDELINES FOR CHURCH ELDERS

IN KENYA

BAPTISMAL GUIDELINES FOR CHURCH ELDERS

Church pastors in Kenya are very busy with an average of 8 churches and 1,928 members to care for. They are generally too busy to adequately prepare baptismal candidates. The work of preparing candidates for baptism is assigned to church elders who are not trained on how to give biblical teachings. Thus, many new members may come to baptism without full understanding of the meaning of the step they are taking.

These guidelines have been written for the church elder who usually has to assume major responsibility for preparing baptismal candidates. These guidelines deal with the elder's preparation, the candidate's preparation, and the baptismal ceremony.

The Elder's Preparation

In Acts 20:28, the apostle Paul warns elders of two things: (1) they must take care of their own faith and (2) care for the faith of believers. Knowing what one believes gives a person confidence and authority in teaching or guiding others. Elders are expected to be able to teach and to give sound doctrine to those who do not understand them (1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:9).

Teaching biblical truth to people who come for baptism begins with the instructor's understanding of the gospel of salvation. Since the preaching of the gospel precedes the act of baptism (Mark 16:15-16), personal understanding of the gospel is imperative. It is by knowing the gospel that instructors will fulfill the counsel of Ellen White that says:

Faithful Christian men and women should have an intense interest to bring the convicted soul to a correct knowledge of righteousness in Christ Jesus. If any have allowed the desire for selfish indulgence to become supreme in their life, the faithful believers should watch for these souls as they that must give an account. They must not neglect the faithful, tender, loving instruction so essential to the young converts that there may be no halfhearted work (Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, 6:92).

Personal preparation of baptismal instructors begins with regular personal devotion and Bible study. Each elder must possess a version of the Bible, preferably with study notes, that can be understood easily. Let the themes of the plan of salvation be studied in the Scriptures. Other religious literature that has been translated into the languages that are understandable should be read from time to time. These can clarify the meaning of difficult passages in Scripture.

This kind of self-preparation requires one to know the secret of time management. Since the work of lay persons is voluntary and without pay, lay workers should be time-conscious. Getting time for church activities needs careful time planning, self-discipline, and dedication. A person should know what is to be done and for how long to be done. Ellen White says: "By tact and method, some will accomplish as much in five hours as others do in ten" (Ellen G. White, Christ's Object Lessons, 344). God's people should spend time wisely (Eph 5:16).

Jesus gave an example of time management. He said: "I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work" (John 9:4).

Near the close of His ministry, He spoke of completing His work (John 17:4). Jesus managed His time until He pronounced: “It is finished” (John 19:30). He completed the task He came to do. The task of teaching the truth to others needs to be completed by those who have been assigned it at the time expected.

The Bible is the required source of personal study, but other valuable spiritual study materials should be studied. Without any order of importance, the following sources are profitable for elders: Ellen G. White books, especially, Steps to Christ, Desire of Ages, The Acts of the Apostles, The Story of Redemption, and Evangelism. Other books that can increase the understanding of doctrinal lessons include, Seventh-day Adventists Believe. . . A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines and the Church Manual (1995), especially “Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists” (chapter 2).

Elders should receive instruction on how to teach the baptismal class. Discuss with your church pastor the possibility of having regular seminars in each district or church to help elders improve teaching skills. Such seminars should be taught by the best possible persons, those who are skilled, experienced, and spiritual. These seminars should deal with the content of baptismal courses and also with teaching techniques and methods.

The Meaning of Baptism

The meaning of baptism, both theological and practical needs to be made clear to potential church members. Baptism is a rite of passage that marks a person’s transition: a transition from ancestor worship, idol worship, consulting witches for healing, fear of what most Kenyans know as unnatural death caused by witchcraft, and superstition, to the worship of the true God who is known by His acts in the Bible. Christian baptism means accepting and obeying another Master, Jesus Christ. New members become members of Christ and of the Church.

Rite of Passage into Christ

As death brings about a complete change of status, so does baptism. Baptism is a symbol of dying to sin (Rom 6:3-11; Col 2:12-13; 3:9; Eph 4:22) and birth into newness of moral life (John 3:3,5; Rom 6:4-5, 11; 2 Cor 5:17; Col 3:10). Those who have accepted Christ as their personal Savior and have accepted water baptism should consider themselves as dead indeed to sin (Rom 6:11). Baptism is a public confirmation of the transition from old life of sin to new life of righteousness. At baptism believers proclaim their incorporation into Christ.

Believers who have been justified by faith and have received the rite of baptism should understand that they should not continue in sin (Rom 6:1-3). Baptism is a token that they have received a new life under the guidance and protection of God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Claiming daily these divine powers, believers will be victorious over temptations. Mrs. White says: “Not one that in penitence and faith has claimed His protection will Christ permit to pass under the enemy’s power. The Saviour is by the side of His tempted and tried ones” (Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, 490).

Rite of Passage into the Christian Community

The rite of baptism with water was used in the early church as a symbol of entry into the Christian community. In the Pauline epistles, baptism is presented as the means of incorporation into the body of Christ, His Church (1 Cor 12:12-13; Gal 3:26-29). In 1 Cor 12, Paul shows how a believer becomes a member of a visible, geographical body of believers where he or she enters into relationship with other believers.

At baptism believers confess that any racial, social, or gender differences have been overcome. The apostle Paul says: "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Cor 12:13). Because Christians share a common transforming experience, they should have a unity resulting from a common loyalty to the Lord who is the head of the church. They should be bound together by a common allegiance and a mutual love. The unity of the human body is similar to the situation of the church. In the community of believers each member should have concern for the other. The joy or suffering of one member is to be felt by all members (1 Cor 12:25-26).

In Scripture the words "body" and "church" are used interchangeably in some contexts. For example, in Eph 2:22-23; Col 1:18, 24, the church is called the body of Christ. And in 1 Cor 12:27, Christians are called the body of Christ. The Greek word, *ekklesia*, in the New Testament translated church refers to the Christian body of believers, a Christian congregation (Rom 16:1; 1 Cor 12:28; 14:4; Col 1:18). In this body of believers, new believers become members through baptism.

Sign and Seal

Baptism has no virtue in itself. It has no sacramental power in itself. It is not a saving ordinance; by itself it cannot impart regeneration. The virtue is in what it symbolizes. Baptism symbolizes union between Christ and His believers. This union begins at the moment a sinner realizes his or her sins, repents, and confesses them to Christ. As circumcision was a sign of the relationship between God and Abraham, baptism is a seal and a sign of relationship between Christ and His people. Ellen White says that baptism is an outward sign showing that believers are children of God who live for Christ (Ellen G. White, Child Guidance, 499).

Preparation for Baptism

In order for believers to remain in the church and continue growing spiritually, they should receive proper instructions from the very beginning of their spiritual journey. All lessons should be centered on the love of God for the world and how He has provided means of victory to all who come to Him. It is written: "But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God" (John 1:12, RSV).

Baptismal Lessons

The purpose and aim of teaching new converts the faith should be more than preparing them for the day of their baptism. Candidates for baptism seem to be more cooperative and desirous of obeying God than they are after baptism. From my pastoral

experience, many candidates for baptism were regular and punctual in class lessons and attended church services regularly, but soon after they were received into church membership, some became irregular in church attendance, and others quit coming to church. For these reasons, the emphasis of the lessons should direct candidates to the understanding of God's claim on them rather than only making them ready for the baptismal ceremony. Let the meaning of each lesson be understood instead of memorizing some passages of Scripture given in the lessons.

The number of lessons and how many were covered by the candidates should not be the criterion for baptism. It is not the amount of biblical knowledge that saves. People are saved by responding to God's love by faith and making a pledge of full surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. All lessons designed for preparing individuals for baptism need to be studied and summarized in the light of the plan God has already worked out to save all humanity. Candidates for baptism should be thoroughly instructed on the word of God before they are recommended for baptism.

Baptismal teachings should be based on the Seventh-day Adventists beliefs. A summary of these beliefs is given in the Church Manual (1995), 198-193.

Style of preparation

Candidates for baptism will learn their lessons better if they can be grouped into four classes: (1) adults; (2) youth; (3) adults and youth who have covered most baptismal lessons; and (4) personal instruction class.

This means that each church should appoint and assign baptismal instructors to teach each group and work out their schedule to accommodate them. In my *Kisii* community, as in other Kenyan communities, adults do not take teaching seriously when taught together with young people and children. Adults have their own world view. Traditional worship and transition of life circles such as maturity, marriage, and economic status tend to make them think and behave differently from young people.

Baptismal instructors will find it easier to instruct youth than to teach adults. Young people do not have a struggle of choosing between traditional worship and Christianity. Therefore, teaching methods and approaches should be different to deal with the different groups. Baptism is to be presented as a rite of passage. In many communities in Kenya, different traditional rites of passage are familiar to many people, especially to those who were born before 1980.

Rites of passage are understood as the transition of individuals from one circle of life to another circle and from one social status to another. Each circle has its own rules and regulations that govern life. It is a social disgrace to violate any of these traditional rules. In the light of traditional rituals, those who come for baptism can easily relate to the demands baptism places on those who are baptized.

Some people may relate better to baptismal lessons if they are taught individually. Some may not need all baptismal lessons as outlined for baptismal candidates because of previous religious knowledge. Others may not feel comfortable learning in a group, or schedules may not allow them to meet with others for lessons. Such people should be identified and instructed individually, yet be considered as belonging to one of the regular

baptismal classes.

Length of Preparation, Timing, and Testing for Baptism

The length of preparation should not be based on making many baptisms. Often people are rushed into baptism to meet report requirements. The length of preparation should be determined by the understanding candidates have of baptism and all that it involves.

There is no clear biblical mandate on how long a person should stay in a baptismal class before receiving baptism. The examples of baptism in the Bible do not specify the length of preparation. Those who confessed their faith in the crucified and risen Christ were baptized without delay (Acts 2:41; 8:26-39; 16:25-34). This does not mean, however, that they were prepared in one day and were ready for baptism. Many of them were Jews who had a knowledge of God but had misconceptions of the Messiah. They were baptized after receiving instruction about Christ and His mission and accepting Him as their Savior. Others who were baptized were Gentiles who had a knowledge of God through the influence of the Jews. For example, the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:34-38), often referred to as taking the shortest time to be prepared for baptism, had some knowledge of Scripture before joining Philip's baptismal class. The Bible says that the eunuch had gone to Jerusalem to worship and he was reading the Bible (vss. 27, 30-33).

A candidate who has some understanding of Scripture should be instructed in the areas that need explanation and clarification. Once a person has understood what it means to be baptized and has accepted to live as a Christian, baptism should not be delayed. Ellen White says: "When they [people who desire baptism] give evidence that they fully understand their position, they are to be baptized" (Ellen G. White, Evangelism, 308).

Ellen White does not say anything about the length of preparation. She does emphasize thorough preparation: "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 (Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, 6:91).

How long does it take a person to be thoroughly instructed? For some people it may take a short time while others may take longer. The question of time will depend on the religious background of each candidate, capability of making sound judgments, and the candidate's personal commitment to Christ. Commitment to Christ should determine the readiness of individuals for baptism. The results of this commitment must be evident in the lives of candidates. There should be evidence of conversion.

While baptismal instructors have no way of knowing and judging the motives of candidates' good deeds, they should recommend only those who demonstrate some fruits for baptism. Jesus said: "Therefore by their fruits you will know them" (Matt 7:20). Candidates who have started applying to their everyday lives the light of the Scriptures they have learned, should not be denied the rite of baptism. The opposite is true; the amount of Biblical knowledge individuals may have acquired may not be evidence of true conversion that would qualify them for baptism.

After candidates have shown evidence of true conversion, they can be examined for baptism. The counsel of Ellen G. White can be applied at this time: "Not one should be

buried with Christ by baptism unless they are critically examined, . . . whether they have fixed moral principles, . . . whether they know what sin is, whether they have moral defilement, which God abhors" (Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, February 1890, 308).

Testing candidates for baptism should not be academic testing, with scores calculated by percentages. Let baptismal examination be done by way of dialogue between candidate and instructor. The purpose of evaluating candidates for baptism is to discuss the evidence of the candidate's commitment to Christ. Instructors should be able to know who are ready to be recommended to the church for baptism, even without giving any test.

Baptismal Ceremony

The baptismal ceremony should be made as attractive and memorable as possible. The baptismal ceremony should be prepared and arranged as is a church wedding ceremony. As the church family contributes funds for a wedding to be more appealing and honorable, so the church should generate funds for making a baptism appealing and honorable. It should be known that at baptism, candidates proclaim publicly their marriage to Christ. As the bride is easily noticed by her outward appearance and by her maids, so should the candidates on the day of their baptism. This means the church should provide gowns of the same color for baptismal candidates. Although there is no merit in what baptismal candidates wear, baptismal gowns--especially white ones--do make the ceremony more impressive.

The areas that need careful considerations are the baptismal vows, invitation of guests, events on the baptismal day, and reception of new members into church membership.

Public Baptismal Vows

After candidates have been evaluated for baptism, the minister or, in his absence, the church elder, should address the candidates with baptismal vows in the presence of church members on a day prior to baptism. The Seventh-day Adventist Church recommends that the thirteen questions of commitment in Church Manual (1995), chapter 5, be included in the vows.

The church needs to know those who are seeking membership. There are three reasons for having a prebaptism ceremony: first, at the prebaptismal ceremony, candidates will further feel a sense of belonging to the church body and church members will acquaint themselves with prospective new members. In the church setting, witnesses will be fewer than on the day of baptism and the event will not be squeezed among many activities.

Second, time can be spent on vows without rush. There will be enough time to reflect on the meaning of baptismal vows.

Third, this is an occasion for the official introduction of spiritual advisers. Instead of having the baptismal instructor as the sole teacher and adviser of candidates, each church, through its board, should assign members in good and regular standing to be spiritual counselors to the individuals who request baptism. The role of the counselor before baptism is to encourage and assist the candidate in the preparation process. At

baptism, this person is to stand beside each candidate in identification and support and see that their belongings are safe. After baptism, the counselor should continue to give the new member spiritual encouragement, serve the new member at Holy Communion, visit, and to pray for him or her.

In other words, the spiritual counselors should form a permanent spiritual relationship with new members. As new members grow to spiritual maturity, they will become counselors of other new members. This plan will result in having many church members become spiritual counselors to each other and to those who will be joining them. Thus the church will function as one body, working together, caring for each other, the strong in faith bearing with the weak (1 Cor 12:20-26; Rom 15:1-2).

Invitation of Guests

Each church should prepare two types of baptismal invitation cards. One should be signed by the baptismal candidate and the other by the church. These cards should be sent to candidates' non-church family members, friends, and neighbors. Candidates can be asked to give names of individuals to be invited to their ceremony. The church board should appoint a special committee to find out the guests the candidates want invited and the ones the church wants to invite, and send them cards.

Here are samples of both types of invitation card.

Welcome to my Baptismal Day

Dear-----

(Title and name of guest)

I, -----, and my family are delighted to invite you to my baptismal
(Name of candidate)

ceremony on ----- at----- to be held at-----

(Day and date)

(Time)

(Name of venue)

and thereafter to a free social meal reception.

The personal invitation cards fulfill two major functions: (1) They make the ceremony more important and honorable. In the minds of many people, a ceremony is esteemed special and important when invitation cards are sent to them. Guests who receive invitation cards but cannot attend the ceremony will send their apology before or after the ceremony. (2) Cards sent to friends, even if they do not attend the ceremony, will inform them of the transition a person has made. This announcement may influence some people, more so peers, to make a decision for baptism.

Welcome to the Church's Baptism Day

----- cordially invites the presence of -----
 (Name of the church) (Title and name of guest)
 to the baptismal ceremony of our new believers on ----- to be held at
 (Day and date)
 ----- at ----- and to a communal meal immediately after baptism.
 (Venue) (Time)

The purpose of the church cards is to make the surrounding community know that there are people in the community making decisions for baptism. This strategy of sending baptismal invitation cards to community members can be one of the church's preparations for outreach missions in its territory.

Activities on the Baptism Day

The day of baptism should not be clouded with many announcements and other activities that are not related to the baptism. The entire worship program should be prepared for the event of baptism only. The focus of everything--hymns, music, prayer, sermon,-- should be centered on the baptismal ceremony.

On this day let the elders, deacons, deaconesses, and spiritual counselors put on clothes appropriate for the occasion. Their function is to direct candidates for baptism to take their positions in the congregation, encourage them, carrying their belongings, and helping them at baptism.

Any ritual, as Kenyans know, requires thorough preparation and dedication. Therefore, in order to involve members in the preparation, they need to be informed in good time regarding the date and time of the baptism, the names of candidates, and reminded of their specific roles in the occasion.

The environment surrounding an event has an effect on the minds of the participants and witnesses. The riverside, or lake where most baptisms are conducted, should be prepared beforehand for the event. Let the elders, deacons, and deaconesses prepare the place of baptism to look attractive. Flowers or certain colorful materials should be put in place at the baptism site.

Baptismal Meal and Reception into Church Membership

In many societies sharing a meal is a sign of care and belonging. Among the early Christians in the New Testament, meals played an important role. In the book of Acts, those who joined the community of faith shared meals together (Acts 2:44-46). When Lydia and the jailer were baptized, they shared meals with the disciples (Acts 16:15; 33-34). A meal commemorates an event with joy and imprints it in long-term memories.

One of the ways church members can best involve themselves in the baptism is to prepare and take food to the designated place to eat together after the baptism. Let the tables be set as they are set at wedding receptions. To serve the believers who have just

been baptized together with their families and friends will show honor and respect.

During the meal time, songs of praises, special music, testimonies, and spiritual congratulations to the baptized members should be offered. Baptismal certificates, together with simple gifts or tokens, can be given to the newly baptized members at this time.

After the general meal, new members should be received into church membership. If there is not enough time for this ceremony on the day of the baptism, time for it should be arranged on the following Sabbath. This ceremony should culminate with the Holy Communion. At the time of a general meal, guests present should be informed and invited as observers to this final part of the ceremony.

Postbaptismal Nurture

Each church should form a class newly baptized members to be instructed. This class should be named, "Open-Bible Discussion Class." Newly baptized members should be encouraged to attend this class, whenever possible with their spiritual counselors, for at least three months.

Baptismal instructors should be aware that after baptism the newly baptized members do not immediately grow into spiritual maturity. They still need support and encouragement. This class offers opportunity to study lessons that were not covered before baptism.

By the end of three months, new members should be involved in various church programs such as Sabbath School and reading Scriptural passages during the worship service. Later they can become church officers.

After the postbaptismal class is over, the work of spiritual counselors should continue. They should visit new members in their homes, pray with them, invite them to their homes, share meals, and recognize their presence at church meetings.

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