THE OPTIMUM AGE AND READINESS FOR BAPTISM OF ADOLESCENTS

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ABSTRACT

THE OPTIMUM AGE AND READINESS FOR BAPTISM OF ADOLESCENTS

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NOT FOR CIRCULATION

Eleven baptismal candidates from twelve to fifteen years were studied corporately and individually over seven months in their normal church activities and baptismal class. During this process sociograms were drawn of baptismal classes and questionnaires were developed and administered. Evaluation of candidates was extrapolated from this objective and subjective data.

Results

The strong spiritual, social, and biological pressures which stimulate an adolescent to explore meaning and identity normally peak from ten until thirteen to fifteen years of age.

Candidates studied in this project averaged thirteen years of age and reinforced traditional Adventist norms. It is possible that these norms discourage adolescents of ten or eleven years applying for baptism.

Conclusions

A knowledge of the developmental process of adolescents is a valuable tool for the pastor. He can use it to identify the state of readiness for instruction and baptism. It can also be used by the pastor to facilitate an understanding of Jesus Christ, His church, and stimulate future growth into further stages of development.

Andrews University

School of Graduate Studies

Avondale Campus

THE OPTIMUM AGE AND READINESS FOR BAPTISM OF ADOLESCENTS

A Project Report

Presented in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Religion

by

Adrian John Flemming

November 1983

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The initial impetus for this project occurred in 1973 during the writer's first year in the ministry. He was conducting a baptismal class and, amongst others, two brothers applied for baptism. When the church board discussed their proposed baptism they questioned the wisdom of baptizing such young candidates.[1] This and similiar experiences have stimulated a desire in the writer to research the question: When is the optimum age and readiness for baptism of adolescents?[2]

The writer's interest in the subject increased when he heard a paper presented on the stages of moral development at a youth leaders' seminar in 1975. Subsequently he asked, if moral development occurs throughout life in progressive and yet more complex stages, could it be possible that other aspects of adolescent development progress through similiar stages? The social sciences may therefore assist in understanding when an adolescent is capable of intellectually, morally, and spiritually making the significant decision of baptism.

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[1]The oldest brother was twelve and the youngest had just turned eleven years of age at the time of baptism.

[2]Adolescence in this project refers to males and females from ten years through to eighteen years of age.

Another stimulus increasing the writer's desire to understand the optimum age for baptism arose from an apparent inconsistency in the evangelistic approach of the Seventh-day Adventist church. The church accepts the divine commission to "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them"[1] and develops skills and resources to accomplish this task in the community outside the church. However the adolescent community inside the church often languishes because pastors, teachers, and parents lack quality skills and resources essential in stimulating and recognizing an adolescent's state of readiness for baptism. Our children are not 'natural increase'. They have very real baptismal needs which must be clearly defined and fulfilled within the context of an educated, caring, church community. When this is accomplished they will desire baptism, have a genuine sense of belonging, and be prepared to carry the gospel to the community outside the church.

To understand and recognize the signs of readiness for baptism is fundamental to a pastor's ministry. He can easily turn away a young candidate by the comment, "You are too young." But he may not be correct. It is not the writer's desire to baptize 'children,' because early baptism may commit the adolescent to an unexamined belief system which may later be rejected. However, the writer wishes to clarify the signs of readiness so the young adolescent can be guided into baptism at the optimum age.

There is an equally dangerous practice of expecting too

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[1]Matt 28:19. All Scripture references, unless otherwise indicated, are from the Revised Standard Version.

much too soon. Some candidates present with little vigour in their spiritual life. They have not developed the intellectual capacity to remember or appreciate their church's doctrinal uniqueness nor learned other social and spiritual skills. These candidates are not capable of decisions at the same level of maturity as their adult counterparts. If, however, candidates are mature at their stage of development and are taking responsibility for their own decisions with all the resources available to them, they should not be rejected as too young. The following paper pursues the validity of this assumption.

Purpose of this Project

This project is an attempt to understand the developmental process which prepares adolescents spiritually, socially, culturally to accept Jesus Christ as Saviour and to declare this in baptism.

Implementation of this project took place over a seven month period with eleven baptismal candidates who had applied for baptism. Assessment related to the candidates' readiness for the rite of baptism after an indoctrination process and not to readiness for the process of indoctrination.

CHAPTER II

BIBLICAL EVIDENCE FOR A TRANSITION FROM CHILDHOOD TO SPIRITUAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explore Scripture for evidence which indicates an optimum age for the transition from childhood to spiritual accountability. Old Testament material will be examined under the heading of "Spiritual Nurture and Accountability" while New Testament material will be examined under the heading of "Spiritual Affirmation and Baptism."

Spiritual Nurture and Accountability

Resource areas for Old Testament evidence are:

1. God's covenant with Israel
2. Religious education of children in ancient Israel
3. Religious status of children
4. Proselyte baptism

Pertinent evidence will be extrapolated from each area by asking the following questions:

1. What are the principles of personalized religion?
2. Are these principles present in affirmations made by children and/or youth in Israel?
3. Does their age at the time of affirmation or the context of their affirmations indicate an optimum age for transition from childhood to spiritual accountability?

God's Covenant with Israel

God created man a rational, responsible being, accountable for his own destiny.[1] Thus, when he instituted his covenant with Israel, he provided for a voluntary and conscious acceptance of its terms.[2] The corollary of acceptance was internalization which sprang from experiential knowledge and resulted in ratification of the covenant agreement.[3]

This internalization is illustrated in the Passover ritual. During Passover it was intended that parents remember and personally identify with God's saving action in the Exodus, and communicate it to each generation of children.[4]

Circumcision, the initiation rite (Gen 17:9-11) of the covenant--not the means of ratification[5]--incorporates two

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[1] See Gen 3:1-7, and Deut 30:15-20.

[2] The covenant was offered but never imposed; see Gen 15:1-6, and Exod 19:5-9.

[3] By internalization the writer means a rational and subjective adoption of the covenant terms which produce positive life responses. See God's provision for this process: "I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts." Jer 31:33 (Emphasis supplied).

[4] Exod 12:26; 13:8-10, "It is because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt" (Emphasis supplied).

[5] "Circumcision was not introduced until a later stage in Abraham's life (Gn. xvii. 10 ff.)--at least fourteen years later, . . . When at last Abraham was circumcised, his circumcision was but the external seal of that righteous status which God had bestowed upon him long before, by virtue of his faith. Quite plainly it was faith, not circumcision, that God required of him." F. F. Bruce, The Epistle of Paul to the Romans, Tyndale New Testament Commentary (London: Tyndale Press, 1963), p. 112.

significant concepts: 1) "corporate personality";[1] and 2) a growing individual responsibility. Of "corporate personality" E. G. Robinson said, "circumcision was a national, a theocratic, and not a personal, religious rite."[2] Wheeler Robinson enclarges on this:

> Primitive religion was essentially a group concern; the religious unit was the family, the clan, the tribe and later in Israel the nation. This social structure of primitive religion is not surprising: it is sufficiently explained by the economic solidarity of the family, the political solidarity of the tribe, the unchallenged supremacy of tribal custom and sanction, and the now familiar concept of "corporate personality" in primitive psychology.[3]

Cicumcision in Israelite culture, then, is an initiation into the group's total life structure; a rite performed on the child by the group, making him part of the "corporate personality." He would later respond with the group and be held responsible for his behaviour by the group.[4]

In Israel "corporate personality" did not destroy individuality. A child was given opportunity to express his own free will. The group may have made the initial decision but he was expected to internalize the covenant for himself at a later stage of development. This is expressed in the freedom an Israelite had to reject what had been decided for him at birth. R. E. O. White suggests that:

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[1] H. Wheeler Robinson, Revelation and Redemption, p. 149, cited by R. E. O. White, The Biblical Doctrine of Initiation (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1960), p. 20.

[2] E. G. Robinson, cited by A. H. Strong, Systematic Theology (Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: Judson Press, 1907), p. 955.

[3] H. W. Robinson, p. 149, cited by White, p. 20.

[4] Exod 19:7-8; 24:3,7-9; Jer 31:32.

> This conception of the relation of a God to his people, as a voluntary, freely entered into, able to be repudiated (though repudiation involves guilt), and able to be restored upon definite conditions, is wholly different from that which is familiar in all other primitive religion. So early in biblical thought is the pattern of man's relationship with God set once and for all, as free human response to a divine initiative of grace in history, upon terms which are in no sense agreed between God and man, but presented by God for man's unforced acceptance or rejection, for his weal or woe (Emphasis in original).[1]

In summary: It seems that God's covenant with Israel was to be personalized as well as internalized, and that circumcision, symbolic of "corporate personality," allows for individual responsibility when the individual is able to accept or reject the covenant.

Religious Education of Children in Ancient Israel

To ensure the perpetuity of the covenant parents were specifically admonished to cultivate an atmosphere of spiritual nurture[2] in their homes and to foster holiness[3] in their children. To accomplish these goals, God supplied two essential tools: divine history[4] and revealed law.[5] In the Jewish educational

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[1]White, p. 17. Note also Israel's vacillation between acceptance and rejection in Ps 105, 106.

[2]This was laid down in the law (Gen 18:19; Exod 12:26-27; 13:8-10; Deut 4:6; 6:7; 11:19; 31:10-13; 32:46). It is also stipulated in the books of wisdom (Ps 44:1; 78:3-6; Prov 1:8; 2:1; 15:20; 22:6; 23:22-25; 29:17).

[3]"Jewish education . . . was not education in any kind of academic or technical knowledge, but education in holiness." G. H. Blackburn, "The Aims of Education in Ancient Israel," Journal of Christian Education 9 (January 1966):56. See also Deut 7:6-9.

[4]Exod 12:24-27; 13:8,14; Deut 4:9; 6:20; Ps 78:2-8. See also George Farmer, "Boyhood," A Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1906), 1:223.

[5]The children's education was "Torah-centric" (Blackburn,

system these tools related more to the child's whole life development than merely to a formal education. Farmer suggests that this life education was;

> Not by catechisms, reading lessons, tasks learned, or dry instruction in a school, but by sharing in the ritual worship, with interest aroused for the coming explanations offered, which were based on the history, were the children taught. . . . The feasts observed at home and in the synagogue, and the pilgrimages to Jerusalem also afforded opportunities for oral and interesting instruction on the part of the parents. . . . teaching through the eye in a way well adapted to the capacities of children.[1]

Children were a prized possession in Israel and were encouraged to perform according to their capabilities and ask questions at any stage. A child's covenant affirmation was therefore progressive and always a spontaneous result of the total atmosphere in which he grew. Consequently any formal affirmation was unnecessary because he had made repeated affirmations as he grew.

In summary: Children lived in an atmosphere of spiritual nurture which constantly stimulated growth. No overt pressure was placed upon them to affirm the covenant; it was to be spontaneous response. Formal affirmations at a specific age were unnecessary because children were to respond to the covenant at various stages of growth according to their understanding. No time or place was set aside for affirmations.

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p. 54). "There was only one subject for study at all levels of education and that was Torah or Law, . . . only one text book at all levels, namely the scriptures, the most important part of which was the Pentateuch, the remainder being commentary on it." Ibid., p. 53.

[1]Farmer, p. 223.

Religious Status of Children in Ancient Israel

The following evidence from Old Testament and Jewish tradition relates to the age at which an adolescent began to make decisions for himself.

Joseph was at least seventeen years old when sold as a slave.[1] His subsequent decision in refusing to dishonour God was made when he was around eighteen years old.

Moses had reached an accepted transitional age when he was taken from his mother. Elen G. White says, Jochebed "was obliged to give him up when he was about twelve years old."[2] There is, however, no substantial degree of certainty as to when he left home, or when he rebelled against his adopted environment.

Isaac was twenty years old when he consented to be bound and sacrificed.[3] This suggests his personal faith in God's sovereignty.

Samuel was most probably twelve when God called him in the temple.[4]

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[1] See Gen 37:2,28.

[2] Ellen G. White, The Story of the Patriarchs and Prophets (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press, 1958), p. 244. F. B. Meyer suggests the age of three years for the departure of Moses to the palace, Devotional Commentary on Exodus (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregal Publications, 1978), p. 27. If Moses was only three when he arrived at the court, it would have been unlikely for him to have made such singular decisions of loyalty to Yahweh.

[3] "Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born" (Gen 21:5). When he received the command to sacrifice his son Isaac, "Abraham had reached the age of one hundred and twenty years" E. G. White, p. 147.

[4] "When Samuel was twelve years old, he began to prophesy." Josephus, Antiquities, V, x, 3-4. Scripture would seem to support this tradition (1 Sam 1:24; 2:21; 2:29; 3:14-15).

Josiah, at eight years, was thrust on the throne (2 Kgs 22:1). When sixteen "he began to see the God of David his father" (2 Chr 34:3). Thus, Josiah was a passive participant at eight, but spiritually aware and responsible at sixteen.

Solomon, according to tradition, was judging at twelve years.[1] This seems hypothetical and could be a reading back of later Rabbinical laws.

Jeremiah was most likely a late teenager when called to prophetic office.[2]

Daniel could well have been only sixteen years old when brought to the Babylonian court.[3]

The above evidence does not explicitly relate to personal affirmations of the covenant, although it could be implied in the decisions of Samuel, Isaac, Josiah, and Jeremiah. Because of the patriarchal home of Isaac and the priestly homes of Josiah and Jeremiah it is possible, but unlikely, that these were the first significant spiritual decisions they had made. For Samuel it probably was his initial major affirmation of covenant faith.

Broadly, these case studies indicate that, starting with

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[1]F. W. Farrar, The Gospel According to St. Luke (Cambridge: University Press, 1880), p. 76.

[2]Jeremiah's response to God's call was "I am only a youth" (Jer 1:6). Youth is the Hebrew na'ar, 'young man.' Relate this to the length of Jeremiah's ministry, and he must have been a late teenager.

[3]Only a sixteen to eighteen year old youth would pass the prerequisites necessary for court service. See Desmond Ford, Daniel, (Nashville, Tennessee: Southern Publishing, 1978), p. 80 and George McCready Price, The Greatest of the Prophets: A New Commentary on the Book of Daniel (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press, 1955), p. 55.

the age of twelve and continuing through the teen years was a period of time when significant decisions were made. With Moses, Samuel, and Josiah, it could have been as early as twelve that they made the transition from childhood to spiritual responsibility.

Proselyte Baptism

Judaism adopted proselyte baptism from Babylonian and ancient Semitic practices[1] in the pre-Christian period.[2]

Proselyte baptism appeared to be a ritual that followed a well-defined order. Depending upon the time period, the order could be indoctrination,[3] confession,[4] circumcision, exhortation and examination,[5] baptism, and finally sacrifice.[6] The uniqueness of this process in Old Testament initiation is 1) the candidate's mental and spiritual maturity, and 2) his personal request for baptism.[7]

The first historical reference to the baptism of children is made in relation to proselyte baptism.

> The corporate nature of the family demanded that when a Gentile accepted baptism and became a Jew, all his family accepted baptism and became Jews also. There were, however, two

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[1] J. K. Howard, New Testament Baptism (London: Pickering and Inglis, 1970), p. 12.

[2] G. R. Beasley-Murray, Baptism in the New Testament (Exeter, Devon: Paternoster Press, 1962), p. 18. See also R. E. O. White, p. 319, and Joachim Jeremias, Infant Baptism in the First Four Centuries, trans. David Cairns (London: SCM Press, 1960), p. 28.

[3] Beasley-Murray, p. 30 and R. E. O. White, p. 59.

[4] Ibid., p. 62.

[5] B. Talmud, Yebamoth 47a, b.

[6] Alfred Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, 2 vols., 7th ed. (London: Longman, Green, 1892), 2:745.

[7] R. E. O. White, p. 64.

important qualifications:

(i) children born subsequently were not baptized at all.

(ii) children baptized as members of a proselyte family, and not of their own volition, retained the right to renounce the engagement entered into on their behalf as soon as they reached the years of maturity, and such a child was not regarded as properly an Israelite until he had attained his majority.[1]

In proselyte baptism children were not considered fully incorporated into the covenant until they had attained spiritual majority, because only then were they capable of making a personal commitment.[2]

The Qumran community initiated their children by baptism after a ten-year indoctrination process. Regarding this, Beasley-Murray comments;

> We ought not to dismiss from the mind the fact that John's nearest neighbours, the Covenanters of Qumran, did not admit children to the lustrations. From the Two-column fragment we learn that children began to receive instruction in the teaching of the group when they became ten years of age, and they continued in it until they reached the age of twenty.[3]

From this evidence it is possible to assume that a twenty-year old could become a member of the community by baptism. We would also assume that a ten-year old in the community had the mental, emotional, and social maturity to begin the indoctrination process. However, the ten-year old child was not mature enough to be "admitted to the covenant of the community for ever"[4] until he had completed his instruction over a ten year period.

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[1] A. Gilmore, ed., Christian Baptism: A Fresh Attempt to Understand the Rite in Terms of Scripture, History, and Theology (London: Lutterworth Press, 1959), p. 68. See also Edersheim, p. 746; Beasley-Murray, p. 333; and Jeremias, p. 39.

[2] Beasley-Murray, p. 333. [3] Ibid., p. 332.

[4] Manual of Discipline, iii, 12, cited by G. R. Beasley-Murray, Baptism Today and Tomorrow (London: Macmillan, 1966), p. 60.

Proselyte baptism therefore was a serious attempt to incorporate mature Gentiles into Israel. It followed a well-defined order which suggested the candidate was intellectually and spiritually mature. Even though it emphasized parental conversion, children were baptized with parents as part of the family unit. Subsequently, the children were held accountable for their religious status as soon as they reached the years of maturity. A child as early as ten years was capable of receiving baptismal instruction.

From the above section on spiritual nurture and accountability, we can assume that because the covenant with Israel was to be personalized and internalized by the individual, its validity depended upon his maturity to accept or reject its principles.

Children were brought up in an atmosphere that led them to accept covenant principles when they had reached the appropriate stages of maturity.

From the case studies presented above, it could be assumed that the age of twelve was a significant transitional age for spiritual maturity. However, the age of ten may have been a desirable time for the commencement of formal indoctrination.

Spiritual Affirmation and Baptism

Evidence relating to the optimum age for an affirmation of faith is found in the New Testament doctrines of baptism and salvation. This evidence will be considered under 1) theological; and 2) chronological issues.

Theological Issues

Prior to discussion on the optimum age for baptism, theological prerequisites to baptism should be considered. These are centred in soteriology and are faith in Christ, repentance from sin, identification with Christ, and confession of sin.

Faith as a Prerequisite

What does faith mean for a candidate coming to baptism? For the Christian, 'saving faith' is not a personal acquisition, nor a psychological development, but is a personal relationship. "Paul put the concept of πίστις at the very centre of theology."[1] This relationship is expressed in the formal phrase: "faith in Christ Jesus."[2]

The genesis of the 'saving faith,' however, is not experiential but historical. Salvation history surrounding the person of Jesus Christ is acknowledged and then accepted as having taken place for the candidate himself. The experiential relationship is simultaneous with, or closely follows, this knowledge. Saving faith, then, is never held as an abstract theory; it has substance. Firstly, (as Bultmann says) it is "history enacted in

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[1]Rudolf Bultmann, "πίστις," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1964-1976), 6:217 (Hereafter abbreviated to TDNT). See also John Murray, The Epistle to the Romans: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes, New International Commentary on the New Testament, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1965), 2:368 and William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1902), p. 33.

[2]Bultmann, TDNT 6:210.

His [Christ's] life, death and resurrection."[1] Secondly, it is the experiential relationship formed and maintained by the Holy Spirit.[2]

In New Testament theology and especially with Paul, baptism and faith are inseparable corollaries.[3] Baptism, therefore, is not the whole of which faith is a part, but faith in Christ is the nucleus of the whole which includes baptism.[4] Baptism to faith is the outward expression of an inward experience. In Beasley-Murray's words, "It would seem that baptism and faith turning to the Lord are the exterior and interior of one reality,"[5] a spiritual transaction between the individual and Jesus Christ.[6]

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[1]Bultmann, TDNT 6:211. See Acts 2:22-24; 3:13-15; 10:37-41; 13:26-37; Rom 10:9; Phil 2:6-11.

[2]See 1 Cor 2:10-14; 12:3.

[3]Paul's baptismal passages are cast in terms of faith, Rom 6:1-11, Col 2:12. Barth comments: "The event of salvation history is actualised for the individual, not in pious experience, but in his baptism (Gl. 3:27-29). Faith makes it his." Cited by Bultmann, TDNT 6:217.

[4]Some would suggest baptism is opus operatum, a cause of grace. Obviously this is unacceptable because baptism would then destroy the very argument Paul endeavours to build in Romans 3-5 of faith-righteousness in Jesus Christ. His locus classicus on baptism--Romans 6--illustrates that sin is unacceptable not because a person has been baptized, but because of what happened historically on the cross. Baptism looks back to that event and does not stand as another event of God's efficacious grace. See also G. C. Berkouwer, The Sacraments (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eedrmans, 1969), p. 116.

[5]G. R. Beasley-Murray, "The Authority and Justification for Believers' Baptism," Review and Expositor 77 (1980):66.

[6]See appendix 1. "Saving faith is a transaction, by which those who receive Christ join themselves to a covenant relation with God," E. G. White, "The Touch of Faith," Signs of the Times, 1 June 1904, p. 338.

Repentance as a Prerequisite

Baptismal repentance is introduced by John the Baptist[1] who advances it as "the ancient prophetic summons for conversion."[2] Through the New Testament these two concepts of conversion and repentance become synonomous in many respects.[3]

Repentance embodies a concept which begins with simple regret and continues until it involves a total change of motivation and action. J. Behm says;

> It demands radical conversion, a transformation of nature, a definitive turning from evil, a resolute turning to God in total obedience. . . . It affects the whole man, first and basically the centre of personal life, then logically his conduct at all times and in all situations, his thoughts, words and acts (Mt. 12:33ff. par.; 23:26; Mk. 7:15 par.).[4]

This repentance-conversion experience is a gift of God;[5] facilitated by the Holy Spirit;[6] and the task of man.[7] Behm puts these three parties together as a whole when he says, "It is God's gift, and yet does not cease to be a binding requirement. It is both these at one and the same time."[8]

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[1]See Matt 3:2; Mark 1:4; Acts 2:38; 13:24; 19:4.

[2]J. Behm, "μετανοέω," TDNT 4:1000.

[3]Behm uses μετανοέω when speaking of conversion, TDNT 4:1001.

[4]Ibid., 4:1002.

[5]Acts 5:31; cf. 3:26; 11:18; Rev 2:21.

[6]Cf. Acts 11:15,18 and 10:45.

[7]Acts 2:38; 3:19; 8:22; 26:20. Schlatter's model is that conversion "is worked by God and willed by man" (emphasis in original), quoted in Beasley-Murray, "The Authority and Justification," p. 66.

[8]Behm, TDNT 4:1003.

Repentance is the result of the experience of faith in Christ Jesus. It is the result of a candidate accepting the gospel and it awakens joyous obedience in his life.

Identification with Christ as a Prerequisite

A candidate's identification with Christ slowly matures through the faith-repentance experience, then is sealed in baptism. It is a bonding process during which a candidate relates closely to Christ and desires to be identified with him. During this process of identification, a candidate will listen to instruction regarding Christ;[1] will call himself a Christian;[2] will seek Christian fellowship; will perceive that baptism is a confession of union with Christ;[3] and will be prepared to be baptized in the name of Christ.[4]

A candidate will identify with Christ totally--his actions, his person, and his historical death, burial and resurrection. This identification will climax in the role-play of baptism.[5]

Confession as a Prerequisite

Open confession was accepted as normal in the New

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[1]Christ is the content of instruction. See Acts 2:36; 8:5,37(KJV); 10:34; 11:19-20; 19:4.

[2]Symbol of the character and power of Christ, Acts 9:21; 11:26; 26:28.

[3]In Rom 6:5 Paul uses the compound word sumphutoi from sun meaning 'with,' or 'together with' and phuo, 'to generate or produce.' The compound word has a sense of 'grafting' and the thought of 'growing together.' Paul emphasizes baptism as the ultimate act of identification with Christ.

[4]Matt 28:19; Acts 2:38; 8:12,16; 10:48; 19:5.

[5]Role-playing by the initiate was a practice of the Greek mystery religions to signify a mystical union with a god. See A. Nygren, Commentary on Romans (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1949), p. 236.

Testament.[1] It was a public repudiation of the past and/or a conscious decision to bind oneself to Jesus Christ. The occasion for such a confession was usually baptism.[2]

The first confessional liturgy of the primitive church was the confession of Jesus as Christ and Lord.[3] A candidate who confessed this would have a deep intellectual, spiritual, and moral conviction about the person of Jesus. His confession would mean deliberation of intent, because upon confession the candidate would be exposed to the full fury of Judaism and Roman oppression, with death as a possible result. A person incapable of rationally understanding these implications--such as a child--would not be encouraged to make a confession.

In summary, the theological prerequisites to baptism are:

1. A saving faith relationship with Jesus Christ
2. A conversion-repentance experience which demonstrates the awakened joy of walking with Christ
3. An eagerness to identify with Christ in instruction, fellowship, and baptism
4. A desire to openly confess Jesus Christ as Saviour before and at the time of baptism

Chronological Issues

There is no explicit evidence in the New Testament which gives the chronological age of baptismal candidates. Age, as it relates to baptism, is not a New Testament issue. Implicit

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[1] Matt 3:6; Mark 1:5; Phil 2:11; 1 Tim 6:12. See Beasley-Murray, Baptism in the N.T., p. 205.

[2] Ibid., p. 100.

[3] See Acts 8:37(KJV); 22:16; Rom 10:9,12.

evidence indicates that baptism was administered to mature, believing adults. Below are three chronological issues which need considering.

1) Did Jesus' visit to the temple at age twelve constitute an affirmation of faith? 2) What significance would be placed on the baptism of Jesus "at about thirty years of age?" 3) Is there any relationship between the arguments for infant baptism and an age for an initial affirmation of faith?

Jesus at the Temple

Traditionally, Jesus' visit to the temple at age twelve is interpreted as a transition experience--a coming of age, but is this what Luke means in his passage (Luke 2:39-52)?

"The story does not necessarily imply that this was Jesus' first visit to Jerusalem."[1] Male children were encouraged to visit the temple from infancy.[2] Jesus may, therefore, have visited the temple annually for many years. Consequently, "according to custom" must have another significance.

The simplest explanation is that "according to custom" relates to the parents' yearly pilgrimage to Jerusalem and that Jesus happened to be twelve during this particular visit.

Another possibility is that Luke reflects a later Rabbinic custom which suggests "12 years as a significant age in religious

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[1] I. Howard Marshall, The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text (Exeter, England: Paternoster Press, 1978), p. 126.

[2] Exod 23:14-17. See also Henk J. De Jonge, "Sonship, Wisdom, Infancy: Luke II. 41-51a" New Testament Studies 24 (1978): 318-19.

development."[1] Ellen G. White suggests this by clearly relating Jesus' age of twelve years to the "new impulses . . . awakening within Him," which made him accountable to his Father.[2] There are significant problems with this solution and a discussion of these will be dealt with in the later section on Judaism and the age of transition.

The least problematical solution results from contextual exegesis. Luke two is a record of Jesus' birth and development.[3] Before the temple visit, Jesus is a wise and growing child (v. 40); and after it, he is still maturing (v. 52). During his visit "the age of twelve is mentioned in order to draw a sharp contrast between the immaturity of the child, in terms of years, and the maturity of his reason,"[4] and wisdom.[5] Jesus' visit to the temple may have had significance in his religious development, but its most likely significance was to contrast his age with his wisdom. In this passage there is no indication that he made a public affirmation of faith.

Baptism of Jesus

Jesus was baptized when he "was about thirty years of age"

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[1]Marshall, p. 126. See also K. H. Rengstorf, "δώδεκα," TDNT 2:322-23.

[2]Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press, 1940), pp. 75, 78, 81. For further discussion on White's comments see appendix 2.

[3]Leon Morris, The Gospel According to St. Luke (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1974), p. 91.

[4]De Jonge, p. 323. Luke possibly uses age twelve as a round figure. See Rengstorf, TDNT 2:322-23.

[5]Greek Gospel of Thomas 2:9. See also Rengstorf, TDNT 2:322.

(Luke 3:23). Does Luke record Christ's age at baptism as an example for us to follow?

Jesus does not come to John seeking "a baptism of repentance for forgiveness of sins," because he is sinless (Matt 3:14; Mark 1:4). He seeks baptism 1) as an act of consecration; 2) to identify with mankind;[1] and 3) to effect his inauguration into public ministry. His Father uses his Son's baptism as an appropriate time to anoint Jesus as the Messiah (Matt 3:16-17; Acts 10:38).

The most probable reason why Jesus waited until he was thirty to be baptized was because he needed the authority that came with maturity for his challenging responsibilities as Messiah. It was not to give an exemplary age for baptism.

Infant Baptism and Affirmation of Faith

Family solidarity is important in the New Testament; the father's decisions usually affected the whole family.[2] This is characteristically true of baptism.

In consequence, Pedo-baptists assume that when whole households are baptized, children as well as adults are included.[3]

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[1]Christ viewed his identity with man "as a divinely imposed duty (πρέπον)." Beasley-Murray, Baptism in the N.T., p. 57. Pedo-baptists suggest Christ's baptism was a vicarious rite of substitution, not one of solidarity where "Jesus is viewed as taking a place alongside the sinner" (Emphasis in original), Ibid., p. 58. See also Gilmore, p. 95.

[2]Acts 16:30-32.

[3]Acts 7:13-15; 11:14; 1 Cor 1:16; 7:14.

According to Jeremais,[1] there is Old Testament evidence for pedobaptism and a strong case that children are especially referred to in the formula.[2]

The major οἶκος-formulas of Acts 11:14 and 1 Cor 1:16 are exegetically inconsistent. In Acts 11:14, the angel says to Cornelius of Peter, "he will declare to you a message by which you will be saved, you and all your household." Who responded to this message? "All who heard the word." Those who "hear the word" were heard "speaking in tongues and extolling God" after they received the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:44-48). Could this have referred to babies? Not likely!

Paul states, "I did baptize also the household of Stephanas" (1 Cor 1:16). Who made up this household? Paul says, they were "the first converts in Achaia, and they . . . devoted themselves to the service of the saints; I urge you to be subject to such men" (1 Cor 16:15-16). Consistent exegesis of οἶκος as a baptismal formula would mean the early church had infants devoting "themselves to the service of saints" (v. 15), and the church was to be subject to them. Obviously οἶκος cannot be applied to these passages as a baptismal formula.

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[1] Jeremias cites Stauffer's conclusion, "that the New Testament οἶκος formula was adopted from the Old Testament cultic language . . . and introduced into the formal language employed in the primitive Christian rite of baptism; it has the same form and the same meaning as the old biblical ritual formula, i.e. it includes small children." E. Stauffer, New Testament Theology, (London, 1955), p. 153, cited by Jeremias, p. 21.

[2] οἶκος is the Greek word for a household or family. Pedobaptists believe the οἶκος formula was used in the New Testament as a technical expression to indicate that the whole household (including children) was baptized.

Kurt Aland, a protagonist for infant baptism dismisses the οἶκος-formula by saying, "our investigation has shown that the relevant οἶκος-passages of the New Testament either permit no conclusion concerning the circle of persons in view, or they have in mind adults exclusively."[1] Proper exegesis inhibits the student bringing any specialized assumptions to the New Testament οἶκος-passages. They may have included children but most likely did not, because adult baptism is the New Testament model. Karl Barth says, "In the sphere of the New Testament one is not brought to baptism; one comes to baptism."[2]

Other arguments for infant baptism are not forceful on their own and have little to give to our present study.[3] They are only implicit arguments that fail when proper exegetical methods are applied. Many emminent scholars recognize the paucity of exegetical arguments for infant baptism. Barth, who is a pedo-baptist, says,

> From the standpoint of a doctrine of baptism infant-baptism can hardly be preserved without exegetical and practical artifices and sophisms--the proof to the contrary has yet to be supplied! One wants to preserve it only if one is resolved to do so on grounds which lie outside the biblical passages on

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[1]Kurt Aland, Did the Early Church Baptize Infants? (London: SCM Press, 1963), p. 93. See also G. R. Beasley-Murray, "A Baptist Interpretation of the Place of the Child in the Church," Foundations 8 (1965):148.

[2]Karl Barth, The Teaching of the Church Regarding Baptism, trans. Ernest A. Payne (London: SCM Press, 1948), p. 42.

[3]Matt 19:13-15. Children brought to Jesus for a blessing is sometimes considered as a Sitz im Leben for the question, "Should we baptize children?" Jesus' reply is taken as confirmation. The obscurity of this text and 1 Cor 7:14 gives small credence to pedo-baptists for their practice of infant baptism.

> baptism and outside the thing itself. The determination to defend it on extraneous grounds has certainly found expression from century to century.[1]

Beasley-Murray comments: "There has been a tendency to shift the apologetic for infant baptism from exegetical to theological" and ecclesiastical grounds.[2] These arguments do not, however, give validity to infant baptism. If infant baptism has no exegetical support, all else is man's fabrication.

In summary: prerequisites for baptism, faith in Christ, repentance of sin, confession of Christ, identification with Christ, require certain cognitive and spiritual skills which present themselves in a candidate who has a mature approach to life.

The New Testament assumes adult baptism as the norm because 1) only adult case studies are recorded; 2) political and social pressures restricted baptism to mature individuals who knew the consequences of a confession of Jesus as Lord; and 3) there is no mention of age in relation to any baptism except that of Jesus. Ages given for Christ's temple visit and baptism are not to be used as exemplary. Infant baptism cannot be supported exegetically.

Conclusion

Based on the above theological undergirding of the Old and New Testaments, the following principles will assist in defining an

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[1] Barth, p. 49. See also O. Cullman, "Proof on Infant Baptism is at best indirectly demonstrable from observable indicaations," Baptism in the New Testament (London: SCM Press, 1950), p. 70. Beasley-Murray, a noted authority on baptism, states, "that scholars with such strong views on the validity of infant baptism could not find compelling evidence in the New Testament for the practice," Baptism in the N.T., p. 308.

[2] G. R. Beasley-Murray, "The Case Against Infant Baptism," Christianity Today, 9 October 1964, p. 11.

optimum age for the baptism of adolescents.

1. Baptism for a child nurtured in a spiritual atmosphere may not be a dramatic decision because it is just one of many affirmations he has made for Christ at various stages of maturity.

2. A candidate must have the skills of a mature approach to life before he is capable of moving through the conversion process intelligently.

3. Children at age ten are probably ready for formal indoctrination.

4. If Jesus and Samuel made their first formal affirmation of faith at age twelve, then it could be assumed that other children are capable of similiar decisions at the same age.

CHAPTER III

AGE OF ACCOUNTABILITY AFTER THE FIRST CENTURY

Introduction

Cultural and ecclesiastical decisions regarding the teaching and practice of initiation in religious communities varies considerably. It is intended in this chapter to consider the age of initiates in the following ecclesiastical time periods.

1. Judaism and the age of transition
2. Church Fathers and the rise of Infant Baptism
3. Initiation in contemporary churches
4. Initiation in Seventh-day Adventism

Judaism and the Age of Transition

Because it was considered impious to preserve oral tradition in written form, there is a paucity of Jewish literature before the diaspora.[1] In consequence, there is a significant time lapse between the New Testament documents and the Rabbinic writings.[2]

Rabbinic laws governing the responsibilities of Jewish

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[1] C. G. Montefiore and H. Loewe, eds., A Rabbinic Anthology (New York: Schocken Press, 1974), p. 709.

[2] The Mishnah, trans. Herbert Danby (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), p. xiv. In some cases the time lapse between the New Testament and Rabbinic sources is more than a century.

children have been gradually refined. Initially, individual responsibilities were imposed according to the capacity and ability of the child.[1] Later, the law defined the time for specific social and religious responsibility as the onset of "sexual maturity."[2] Because the age of puberty varied, "no clear-cut age-limit was fixed" to distinguish between the adult and the minor.[3] However, scattered families and the failing spiritual intensity of the family created a need to define the age of transition. Accordingly, it was observed that the average age of puberty for girls was twelve years, and for boys, thirteen years. These ages were accepted in the Midrash as the legal, social and religious age at which a girl or boy was given adult responsibilities. Note the Mishnah on legal status:

> A girl eleven years old and one day--her vows must be examined; if she is twelve years old and one day her vows are valid, but they must be examined throughout the twelfth year. A boy twelve years old and one day--his vows must be examined; if he is thirteen years old and one day, his vows are valid, but they must be examined throughout the thirteenth year.[4]

Further, according to the Mishnah, a minor can be legally bound to a marriage contract but is unable to grant "a bill of divorce until he comes of age."[5] Religious law states that every male Jew is responsible "at thirteen for [the fulfilling of] the commands."[6]

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[1] S. Safrai and M. Stern, eds., The Jewish People in the First Century, 2 vols. (Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1974-76), 1:509, 771.

[2] Ibid., 1:509; see also Farmer, p. 222; A. Depke, "παῖς," TDNT 5:647; Mishnah Niddah 5:9.

[3] Safrai and Stern, 1:508.

[4] Mishnah Niddah 5:6.

[5] Ibid., 5:5.

[6] Ibid., Aboth 5:21; see also Niddah 4:11; Marshall, p. 126.

He also could be held accountable as a stubborn and rebellious son.[1] At this transition none of the privileges and responsibilities related to a declaration of faith, nor was the child formally examined. These were not an issue because a Jew was born a Jew and never needed to 'come of age' (to become a Jew). Initiation into Judaism was through circumcision and no rite or ceremony followed to confirm his Jewishness. Even the later Bar Mitzvah is only a transitional ceremony indicating completion of a stage of development.

Church Fathers and Initiation by Baptism

The church of the early centuries continued the New Testament tradition of believers' baptism. It was still an accepted rite in the fifth century and retained its adult form. Salvian (ca. A.D. 450) indicates that baptism is for "rational and intelligent people who have renounced "the devil and his pomps and spectacles and his works"[2] and has called himself a Christian by a confession of faith. During this early period adult baptism was strengthened through the development of a defined liturgy which emphasised repentance;[3] enforced fasting;[4] enlarged renunciation; and multiplied confession and baptism.[5] Later, adult baptism was augmented by infant baptism.

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[1] Mishnah Niddah 4:11.

[2] J. Stevenson, ed., Creeds, Councils and Controversies (London: S.P.C.K., 1966), p. 346.

[3] J. Stevenson, ed., A New Eusebius (London: S.P.C.K., 1968), p. 53.

[4] Ibid., p. 126.

[5] Ibid., pp. 155-56.

Joachim Jeremias, a pedo-baptist, suggests that the early Apostolic fathers and apologists made references to infant baptism.[1] Kurt Aland disagrees and suggests that before Tertullian, infant baptism was not at all universal and it is doubtful whether it existed at all.[2] When then, did infant baptism arise? Aland says;

> We know that c. AD 200 there were circles in Carthage desiring infant baptism, and about 250 it was the rule demanded by the bishops in North Africa. About 230-250 Origen in Palestine characterized it as the 'custom of the Church' (observantia ecclesiae), and about 220 the Church Order of Hippolytus in Rome included little children in the baptismal order. . . . For the time before this we do not possess a single piece of information that gives concrete testimony to the existence of infant baptism (Emphasis in original).[3]

It is most probably that, even with the introduction of infant baptism between A.D. 220-250, the ritual of adult baptism was a continuing practice at least until A.D. 450.

Tertullian (ca. A.D. 160-220 opposed the tendency to baptize infants and young children and urged that "a postponement of baptism is most advantageous." Note his words;

> The Lord indeed says: Forbid them not to come unto Me.[1] Let them come, then, while they are growing up; let them come while they are learning, while they are being taught whither to come; let them become Christians, when they have been able to know Christ. Why hurries the age of innocence to the remission of sins? (Emphasis in original)[4]

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[1]Matt 19:14.

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[1]Joachim Jeremias, The Origins of Infant Baptism, trans. Dorothea M. Barton (London: SCM Press, 1963), pp. 10-11.

[2]Aland, p. 101.

[3]Ibid., pp. 100-101.

[4]Stevenson, A New Eusebius, p. 185.

For Tertullian the essential capabilities of baptismal candidates were:

1. 'while growing up' (when they grow older)
2. 'are learning' (when they are able to learn)
3. 'are being taught' (when they can be instructed)
4. 'when they have been able to know Christ' (when they can know Christ)[1]

Tertullian expects the candidate to be a mature, intelligent individual who can make long range decisions. He with Cyprian had an optimistic view of man's nature and considered children 'innocent' or sinless from birth.[2] He however believed they would not remain in innocence for ever, but would lose it when "the puberty of the soul coincides with that of the body, and this [was] reached at about the fourteenth year of life."[3] Accordingly, Tertullian asked, "Why hurries the age of innocence to the remission of sins?"

This concept of children's innocence was challenged in the second century when many began to teach that children "participated in sin."[4] Later, Augustine (A.D. 354-450) taught "that Adam transmitted both the guilt and corruption belonging to it to his posterity."[5] As a consequence, many thought even infants and children needed the grace of God and should be baptized.

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[1]Aland, p. 61. In parentheses are Aland's variant translations.

[2]"Cyprian declares that a new born child 'has not sinned." Ibid., p. 103.

[3]Ibid., p. 67.

[4]Ibid., p. 104.

[5]R. A. Finlayson, The Story of Theology (London: Tyndale Press, 1963), p. 30.

Despite the fluctuation of theology, Tertullian's thesis that around puberty a child was able to learn, be instructed in religious matters, and had the ability to know Christ as his Saviour, could have had general acceptance. Later, with the development of sacramentalism, the emphasis was not on the ability to understand instruction and to know Jesus Christ, but the need to receive divine grace at birth in a sacramental baptism.

Initiation in Contemporary Churches

In Roman Catholicism, three of the seven sacraments

> make up the complete initiation or incorporation of man into the Mystical Body of Christ. The three sacraments [baptism, confirmation, communion] do not represent three quasi-quantitative degrees but rather three aspects of incorporation.[1]

Because Catholics believe the elements of the eucharist to be opus operatum, a non-confirmand is not allowed to participate. It is therefore generally accepted that a child is confirmed and then consummates the initiation process with the eucharist.[2] These twin services become the seal of his personal commitment.

The accepted age for confirmation varies widely according to the sacramental attitudes of the bishops. One Roman catechism issued in 1566 by the authority of the Council of Trent states:

> Although confirmation may be administered to all who have been baptised, it is less proper (minus expedire) to confer it before children have attained the age of reason; thus, if it

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[1] Matthew J. O'Connell, "The Proper Age for a Declaration of Faith," Religious Education 58 (1963):421. Hereafter cited as, "Proper Age".

[2] O'Connell says, "In the Eastern Church from the beginning and in the Western Church up to the twelth century . . ., confirmation followed immediately upon the baptism whether of a child or an adult." Ibid., p. 423.

does not seem necessary to wait until the age of twelve, it is right to delay until the child is seven years old.[1]

From this ruling, two ages have basic unanimity; 1) the age of reason--seven years of age;[2] 2) the age of twelve.[3] The latter has varied from ten to eighteen years according to "when the child is passing to conscious, more or less adult, moral life and can grasp in a form proportionate to its age and condition, the social dimension of the Christian commitment."[4]

Anglicanism

The Anglican community is liturgically based and believes that participation in the sacraments of baptism, eucharist, and confirmation are important for continuity of sacramental grace. Baptism is normally the first sacrament performed on behalf of infants just after birth. The child is then considered a member. Confirmation of one's baptismal status is officially performed as soon as a child has reached the "years of discretion."[5]

In practice the age of discretion varies from a child of ten years to a teenager of sixteen years.[6] Basically there are two views; firstly, sacramentalists, who view confirmation from "abstract theology" and emphasize the continuity of sacramental

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[1]Roman Catechism, P. II, on Confirmation # 15, cited by Albert R. Jonsen, "Proper Age," p. 436.

[2]Sister Anne Catherine, "Proper Age," p. 415.

[3]Ibid.

[4]O'Connell, "Proper Age," p. 423.

[5]Edric Weld, "Proper Age," p. 411.

[6]Ibid., p. 412-13.

grace and the "continuous reception of the Holy Communion."[1] From this perspective "the supernatural grace received in confirmation may be beyond human definition, but is to be sought as soon as the candidate desires it,"[2] normally by the time a child is twelve years of age. The second model is more pragmatic than theological. Twelve would be the minimum age for this model because a child's decisions and promises are emphasized rather than his admission to Holy Communion.[3] A child should not be confirmed until he "has felt the pull of two alternative courses. . . . or sets of standards[4] and this would most likely be between thirteen to sixteen years.

These admitted schizophrenic attitudes and practices have created confusion.[5] Yet "recognizing that no rule fits all cases, confirmation at age twelve seems to many the best compromise."[6]

Lutheranism

For Lutherans, baptism--usually administered in infancy--[7] is the only initiation rite which fully incorporates a person into Christ and the Church. Confirmation is not biblically commanded and has no sacramental value. As a consequence, "confirmation in Lutheranism today is a complex bundle of problems involving theology, psychology, and sociology with a liberal interlacing of

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[1]Ibid., p. 412. [2]Ibid., p. 413. [3]Ibid., p. 411.

[4]Ibid., p. 413. [5]Ibid., p. 414. [6]Ibid., p. 412.

[7]Lutherans would not confine baptism just to infants. In a combined Lutheran-United Methodist statement they say that "no person should be excluded from baptism for reasons of age or mental capacity." "A Lutheran-United Methodist Statement on Baptism," Quarterly Review 1 (1980):61.

local tradition."[1]

The almost universal tradition in Lutheranism is "that confirmation follows cathechetical instruction and precedes first communion . . . [and] should mark a particular level of maturity."[2] There are two basic views regarding the chronological age at which a child would reach this maturity. Firstly, the age most generally accepted is puberty--thirteen to fourteen years; secondly, an age "corresponding to graduation from high school."[3]

United Methodists

For Methodists baptism and confirmation are dual initiation rites. The Methodist view is that baptism

> usually takes place sometime during a child's first two years of life. The initiation rite itself is consummated with a ritual that is officially known as confirmation, but is most often referred to as either "the reception of new members" or "joining the church." This ritual usually involves adolescents between 10 and 13 years of age.[4]

Church membership is emphasized more fully than is the spiritual significance of baptism or confirmation. An infant after baptism is described as a "preparatory member" and later at confirmation promises to be a faithful and loyal church member. Converts to Methodism "are denied many of the rites and privileges of full membership until the legal age of eighteen."[5] At this time they

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[1] W. Kent Gilbert, "Proper Age," p. 434.

[2] Ibid., p. 435. [3] Ibid.

[4] "It seems that all youth of twelve or thirteen are expected to participate." John J. Westerhoff III, "Joining the Church or Witnessing to Faith: Initiatory Rites Within Protestant Churches," Character Potential: A Record of Research 9 (1979):25-26.

[5] Ibid., p. 25.

are baptized, and because this act is sacramentally complete, they are not required to later confirm their baptism.[1]

Baptists

Initiation into the Baptist community is only through baptism. This rite is also "a prerequisite to church membership and the privilege of partaking of the Lord's Supper."[2]

Because Baptists are not sacramentalists and emphasize the candidate's personal experience, "baptism is administered not to infants but to believers only, i.e. persons who profess repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour."[3]

Denton Coker specifies the personal and spiritual qualifications of a candidate as 1) "a degree of maturity in abstract thinking"; 2) "a sense of personal independance"; 3) "formulating a philosophy of life"; and 4) a readiness "to participate responsibly in the life of the Christian fellowship."[4]

Accordingly, Coker suggests that church children of eleven and twelve years "be enrolled in discipleship classes for two years of serious study," and at "approximately 13 years of age, they should be encouraged to make a declaration of their faith in Christ, to be baptized, and to be accepted into the membership of the church."[5]

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[1] "A Lutheran-United Methodist Statement," p. 63.

[2] Roy A. Facey, ed., International Church Index (Plymouth: P.D.S. Printer, 1981), p. 40.

[3] Ibid., p. 31.

[4] Denton Coker, "Proper Age," p. 426.

[5] Ibid., pp. 426-27.

Australian Baptists baptize teenagers at fourteen to fifteen years, sometimes later, but not normally younger.[1]

Judaism

Judah Pilch states clearly the origin of the Bar Mitzvah and the accepted age of religious maturity,

> The institution of Bar Mitzvah, as it is known today, originated in the 13th century, when the statment in Pirke Abot (5:24) (Ethics of the Fathers) to the effect that "at five a child is brought to the study of the Bible, at ten to the Mishnah, at thirteen to the Commandments: was interpreted as the age of religious maturity, when the child assumes full responsibility in religious matters. . . . is officially inducted into the Jewish fellowship.[2]

For girls age twelve, the Bat Mitzvah service was later created and was recognized as a transition to maturity.[3]

Because they are not nurtured in a spiritual atmosphere and have little religious orientation, many modern Jews are not as commited to further Torah study as in earlier centuries. Accordingly, some centers postpone the Bar Mitzvah to sixteen or eighteen years, giving more time for Torah study. Because tradition inhibited the acceptance of this postponement and the Bar Mitzvah was "deemed inadequate for the assumption of certain adult obligations . . . Many of the Reformed leaders abandoned the traditional Bar Mitzvah at 13 for confirmation exercises at the age of 15 or 16."[4]

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[1]Details taken from a personal interview with Rev. A. Rodgers, Principal of the Baptist Theological Seminary, Eastwood, Sydney.

[2]Judah Pilch, "Proper Age," p. 417. [3]Ibid., p. 419.

[4]Confirmation is a declaration of faith when a pledge of loyalty is recited to further Judaism and to practice the Torah. Ibid., p. 418.

Others retain the Bar/Bat Mitzvah at thirteen years to "signify one's readiness to become religiously orientated"[1] and have confirmation at eighteen "which would signify an intellectual maturity . . . [and] one's qualification to join the religious congregation as a full-fledged member."[2]

Initiation and Seventh-day Adventism

Baptism in Adventism signifies a believer's entrance into God's kingdom and his initiation into church membership. Baptism itself has no salvific value but it does symbolize the conversion experience which should be a reality in the believer before baptism.[3]

As prerequisites for baptism E. G. White emphasizes 1) a candidate must understand the meaning of conversion and baptism; 2) and exhibit clear signs of conversion.[4] White indicates that younger children may still need to develop in their understanding regarding their Christian duty and deportment but they can be led into genuine conversion experience.

> . . . Candidates who have grown to manhood and womanhood should understand their duty better than do the younger ones; but the pastor of the church has a duty to do for these souls. . . . It is the duty of the pastor to have special meetings with them. Give them Bible readings, converse and pray with them, and plainly show the claims of the Lord upon them. Read to them the teaching of the Bible in regard to conversion. Show what is the fruit of conversion, the evidence that they

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[1] Ibid. [2] Ibid.

[3] E. G. White, Testimonies for the Church, 9 vols. (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press, 1948), 6:91.

[4] Ibid., p. 94 and E. G. White in Child Guidance (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press, 1954), p. 490 reports on the evidence of conversion in a twelve year old girl.

> love God. Show that true conversion is a change of heart, of thoughts and purposes.[1]

Carl S. Johnston surveyed twenty-nine youth pastors in Canada and the United States on what they expected as their "basic minimal requirements for baptism. They were: commitment to Christ, knowledge of doctrines, and parental permission and co-operation."[2] The church's official prerequisite is a willingness to affirm and comply with a thirteen point baptismal vow which relates to soteriology, eschatology, ecclesiology and Christian ethics.

Maturity of the baptismal candidates is not usually a primary issue in Adventism because two aspects of pre-baptismal instruction often become a culling process. Firstly, each candidate is expected to have an intellectual understanding of, and a spiritual response to, salvation in Christ. Secondly, the method and duration of indoctrination inhibits the young from attending baptismal classes.[3]

There is no church legislation on the minimum age for baptism. There are historical events which reveal the attitudes of James and Ellen White on the baptism of young children. These incidents do not however endorse the baptism of young children but state attitudes and historical events. Ellen White states;

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[1]E. G. White, Testimonies for the Church 6:95. The conversion experience is a constant concern of White's. See "The Relation of Christ to the Law is Not Understood," Review and Herald, Feb 4, 1890, p. 67.

[2]Carl S. Johnston, "The Spiritual Nurture and Preparation for Baptism of Adventist Youth," (M.A. Project, Andrews University, 1980), pp. 47, 48.

[3]Time spent on indoctrination varies between four and twenty-four Bible studies; an average of three months preparation. For adults or non-adventist children, it is longer, Ibid.

> Children of eight, ten, or twelve years are old enough to be addressed on the subject of personal religion. Do not teach your children with reference to some future period when they shall be old enough to repent and believe the truth. If properly instructed, very young children may have correct views of their state as sinners, and of the way of salvation through Christ.[1]

She also states;

> God wants every child of tender age to be His child, to be adopted into His family. Young though they may be, the youth may be members of the household of faith, and have a most precious experience.[2]

For E. G. White, children could become Christians and be accepted as members at a very early age. James White obviously agreed when he baptized "twelve boys and girls of ages running from seven to fifteen years."[3] The ages of the children make this event significant; also the fact that White needed to convince the parents that their children's convictions were genuine.[4]

There has been continuity of practice through the decades. In 1949 the Youth Department of the General Conference said;

> According to statistics, the peak age for conversion and baptism among children reared in Seventh-day Adventist homes is twelve years. This gives evidence of the fact that the majority of children make their decisions early in life.[5]

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[1] E. G. White, Testimonies for the Church 1:400.

[2] E. G. White, Counsels to Teachers (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press, 1913), p. 169.

[3] M. Ellsworth Olsen, A History of the Origin and Progress of Seventh-day Adventists, 2d ed. (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald, 1892), p. 318.

[4] The baptism of these children was not incidental. They met as a group for approximately one year; their minister and some church members opposed their baptism; and "each one gave evidence of a clear, intelligent experience." Ibid., pp. 318-19.

[5] Rose E. Boose, Baptismal Manual (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald, 1949), p. 2.

Later, in 1963 the Youth Department produced a more definitive statement;

> According to the findings of the mid-century report on Seventh-day Adventist youth, 70 per cent of the children of Adventist parentage who ever become members of the church make their decision before they complete their fourteenth year. The peak age of baptism . . . is just slightly under twelve years.[1]

In the Johnston survey of 1980 "the most often cited 'target' age for candidates for baptism was age 12. . . . When all the ages given were considered, the average age was 11 years and 6 months."[2]

It is apparent from the above that Adventist pioneers baptized children as early as seven years. Almost a century later the generally accepted age of baptism was between eleven to twelve years. Australians, however, are more conservative and generally encourage children to wait until they are thirteen or fourteen years old.[3]

Conclusion

1) Judaism defined the age of accountability as sexual maturity which usually occurred from twelve to thirteen years; 2) in early church history adult baptism was the norm and children were accepted as mature from fourteen years; 3) diverse theologies of modern churches create wide variations in the acceptable age for baptism and/or confirmation. Catholic children are confirmed

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[1] James H. Harris, Baptism Manual: For Junior Youth (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald, 1963), p. 2.

[2] Johnston, p. 44.

[3] This has been the writer's pastoral experience over a ten-year period. See also below, p. 73.

from seven to eighteen years with a mean age in Western churches of twelve years. Anglican confirmands age from ten to sixteen years with a mean of twelve years. Lutherans confirm later at thirteen to eighteen years. Methodist confirmands are ten to thirteen with a mean age of twelve to thirteen years. Baptists delay baptism until thirteen to fifteen years. Modern Judaism recognizes two transitional stages, one at twelve or thirteen years, the other at fifteen or sixteen years. 4) American Adventists baptize their children at a mean age of eleven years six months and in Australia at thirteen to fourteen years.

These facts seem to indicate a general theological, ecclesiological and cultural acceptable age for religious maturity of ten to fifteen years with an average age of twelve years.

CHAPTER IV

THE SOCIAL SCIENCES AND ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

Research available in the social sciences may give valuable insights into the age when an adolescent is potentially ready for indoctrination and an affirmation of faith. Therefore the following areas will be considered in this chapter: cognitive, moral and faith development; development of religious thinking in children, their age and growth during pubescence.

Cognitive Development

Swiss child psychologist Jean Piaget (1932) developed a model of cognitive development which is the basis for most other developmental models and can be considered as formative in the age-stage concept of development.

Piaget's basic concern was to uncover the ontogenetic changes in cognitive functioning from birth through adolescence. After longitudinal studies of small sample sizes he hypothesized that "cognitive development is a coherent process of successive qualitative changes of cognitive structures" and "that the general course of development of intellectual structures is the same in all persons."[1]

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[1]Barry J. Wadsworth, Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development (New York: David McKay, 1971), pp. 25, 27.

As Piaget studied these structures he observed the following sequential stages of cognitive development: 1) Sensori-motor; 2) Preoperational; 3) Concrete operational; and 4) Formal operations.[1] Because these stages relate to the maturation of an adolescent and his development toward baptism, they need to be examined in more detail.

Senori-motor (birth to two years). All the roots of intellectual development begin here, from simple reflex activity to the beginning of perceptual development.

Pre-operational (two to seven years). This period is dominated by the development of language ability; "slow, concrete, and restricted thought. . . . under the control of the immediate and the perceptual."[2]

Concrete operational (seven to eleven years). The reasoning of a child in this stage is no longer perception bound but has the ability to solve "problems involving concrete (real, observable) objects and events." He is unable to solve issues that are "hypothetical or purely verbal."[3] Therefore the Christian concepts of faith, love, repentance, must be concretized for this child. Socially, the child is cooperative and nonegocentric.[4]

Formal Operations. This period begins from eleven years and above and plateaus around fifteen years.[5] At this stage the child's

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[1] Ibid., pp. 114-15.

[2] Ibid., p. 88.

[3] Ibid., p. 90.

[4] Ibid., p. 89.

[5] "Anywhere from 50-70 percent of adults, including college students, may not reach fully developed formal operations." Jack B. Arbuthnot and David Faust, Teaching Moral Reasoning: Theory and Practice (New York: Harper and Row, 1981), p. 129.

cognitive structures mature enabling abstract conceptual thinking. He is then able to utilize the world of propositions and "deal with all classes of problems, the present, past, and future, the hypothetical, and the verbal."[1] In the Christian context a child who has entered this stage has the cognitive ability for mature adult thought. He is capable of conceiving and initiating his relationships, and decisions.

Piaget does not suggest that these stages are independent but believes them to be cumulative.[2] The chronological ages of transition or of equilibrium are not fixed but normative.[3] However each child must pass through the stages in a fixed order even though his rate of passage may vary. Progress through the stages is not automatic and an individual could plateau at the concrete operational stage and never move into formal operations.[4]

Piaget's model of cognition gives a normative age of eleven to fifteen years for formal operations. An adolescent entering this stage at age eleven would have the possibility of abstract thinking in a world of propositions. He would be capable of solving all classes of problems--past, present, future, hypothetical and verbal. He is therefore capable of initiating his own relationships as in a personal response to Jesus Christ.

Moral Development

Lawrence Kohlberg applied the developmental stage theory to moral development after longtitudinal studies with seventy-five

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[1] Wadsworth, p. 102.

[2] Ibid., p. 27. [3] Ibid., p. 102. [4] Ibid., p. 28.

boys aged ten to sixteen years. He hypothesized that morality develops through six sequential stages and that the sequence is invariable.[1]

Morality for Kohlberg relates to the ability of a child to structure his responses to moral dilemas. Moral maturity, therefore, does not relate primarily to learnt values nor linguistic ability but to the structuring process of content rather than the content itself.[2] Kohlberg seemed to suggest that content could be learned and therefore follow patterns which had not been internalized. This socialization of the child did not mean he was morally mature, rather he may have been well indoctrinated.

Kohlberg's approach to the structure of content is unique. Former researchers in the field have predominantly emphasized the imposition of moral values by an authority and not the personal development of moral structures through to maturity.[3] However Kohlberg measured children's ability to reason through moral problems and noted it developed in six stages through three major levels. The stages are hierarchical, but not everyone attains the highest levels.[4]

Level 1 Premoral

Stage 1. Punishment and obedience orientation

Stage 2. Naive instrumental pedorism

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[1]Lawrence Kohlberg, "The Child as a Moral Philosopher," Psychology Today 2 (1968):25.

[2]Ibid. [3]Ibid., p. 26.

[4]Lawrence Kohlberg, "Development of Moral Character and Moral Ideology," Review of Child Development Research 1 (1964):395. Hierarchical here means everyone passes through them in sequence, but at different rates.

Level II Morality of Conventional Role-conformity

Stage 3. Good-boy morality of maintaining good relations, approval of others.

Stage 4. Authority maintaining morality

Level III Morality of Self-Accepted Moral Principles

Stage 5. Morality of contract, or individual rights, and of democratically accepted law

Stage 6. Morality of individual principles of conscience[1]

Kohlberg admits moral development has not "lent itself to age-development analysis."[2] However he believes there is strong evidence his theory is age-related because of the many developmental and chronological co-relationships.[3] He graphs the chronology of moral development and states

> It is evident that the first two types [stages] decrease with age, the next two increase until age thirteen and then stabilize, and the last two continue to increase from age thirteen to age sixteen. These age trends indicate that large groups of moral concepts and attitudes acquire meaning only in late childhood and adolescence, and require the extensive background of cognitive growth and social experience associated with the age factor.[4]

From this comment and a study of the graph, two assumptions arise. Firstly, it seems that the major and most significant moral growth occurs between ten to thirteen years, and that from thirteen to sixteen years moral growth plateaus.[5]

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[1] Ibid., p. 400.

[2] Ibid., p. 394.

[3] D. John Moir, "Moral Development: The Work of Lawrence Kohlberg," Journal of Adventist Education 43 (1980):9.

[4] Kohlberg, "Development," p. 402. See appendix 3 for a longtitudinal graph of the six stages of moral development.

[5] Ibid. Growth here includes the decline of the premoral level, stages one and two.

Arguably, if readiness for moral growth is from ten to thirteen years, the availability of a Christian world view in the form of appropriate indoctrination is vital.

Secondly, if as Kohlberg suggests, "moral stages must primarily be the products of the child's interaction with others, rather than the direct unfolding of biological or neurological structures," and if major sociological growth changes in relation to morality occur from seven to thirteen years then it could be argued that warmth of contact and meaningful relationships with the church are significant inducements to moral growth.[1] Morality built on theoretical cognition and neglecting relational structures is expecting too much of most children.

In summary: Kohlberg suggests the chronological span of ten to thirteen is the most significant in moral growth and an adolescent during this period begins to develop his permanent value system within relational structures. The church therefore has the responsibility to provide education of Christian morality in the context of a caring church community.

Faith Development

James Fowler follows in the tradition of Piaget and Kohlberg and applies the developmental model to man's quest for meaning. This quest for purpose and meaning in life Fowler calls 'faith'. To him faith is "broader and more personal than either

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[1] Ibid., p. 395.

religion or belief."[1] It is

> our way of finding coherence in and giving meaning to the multiple forces and relations that make up our lives. Faith is a person's way of seeing him--or herself in relation to others against a background of shared meaning and purpose.[2]

Faith in this broad context may have a spiritual a priori but is more generally the passionate centre of one's ultimate concern and moves in the orbit of relationships.[3]

As Piaget and Kohlberg have, Fowler concerned himself with the structuring process of faith and searched for a "development sequence of structural 'styles' of faith which would be shown to underlie person's ways of appropriating the great variety of different 'contents' of faith."[4]

Fowler outlines six stages of faith development (and a pre-stage) and claims that they are "hierarchical, sequential, and invariant."[5]

Pre-Stage. "Infancy and Undifferentiated faith." The beginnings of the faith pilgrimage where later stages are undergirded.[6]

Stage One. "Intuitive-Projective faith" (three to seven years). A person in this stage has fluid thought patterns which are predominantly imaginative and operate in a fantasy world unrestrained by logical thought.[7]

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[1] Jerome Berryman, ed., Life Maps: Conversations on the Journey of Faith (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1978), p. 18

[2] James W. Fowler, Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1981), p. 4.

[3] Berryman, p. 18.

[4] Fowler, p. 273.

[5] Berryman, p. 36.

[6] Fowler, p. 121.

[7] Ibid., p. 133.

Stage Two. "Mythic-Literal" faith (seven to eleven or twelve years. This stage is "found most often in middle to late childhood."[1] With the rise of concrete-operations at this stage, the imaginative world is ordered and composed. Life is no longer episodic but linear. Story gives "unity and value to experience" and reciprocal fairness validity to justice.[2]

Stage Three. "Synthetic-Conventional" faith (eleven or twelve to seventeen years). this stage may even extend to middle age and older adulthood.[3] Typically the commencement of this stage coincides with puberty and formal operational thinking. A person's world view is structured in interpersonal terms, which are broader and more complex than earlier family relationships. Identity is formed through relationships and conformity to the expectations and judgments of significant others. An independant perspective follows in later life--if at all. Although beliefs and values at this stage are deeply felt the individual is not aware of a clearly objectified value system.[4]

Stage Four. "Individuative-Reflective faith." This stage "most appropriately takes form in young adulthood."[5] Fowler suggests that "the transition may begin around ages seventeen to eighteen, though we rarely find well-equilibrated Stage 4 characteristics

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[1]Berryman, p. 48-49

[2]Fowler, p. 149.

[3]Berryman, p. 60.

[4]Fowler, pp. 172-73.

[5]"Let us remember that many adults do not construct it and that for a significant group it emerges only in the mid-thirties or forties." Ibid., p. 182.

before the early twenties."[1]

The basic characteristic of this stage is the emergence of self. A person no longer needs to conform to the values and judgments of significant others for "the construction and maintenance of an identity and faith."[2] He accepts responsibility for his own commitments, life style, beliefs and attitudes. To achieve this individuality a division of loyalities must be accepted e.g., "self-fulfillment or self-actualization as a primary concern versus service to and being for others." There is "capacity for critical reflection on identity (self) and outlook (ideology)."[3]

Stages three and four have been defined in more detail because they impinge on the question of age and baptism. To this the writer will return later.

Stage Five. "Paradoxical-Consolidative" faith. For this stage "thirty is a minimal age. Stage 5 most often is a midlife development if it comes at all."[4] At this stage a person is intellectually able to accept ambiguity and diversity in ideas and people. His values are not imposed on others, and his past is reworked into the present. His transformed vision and loyalities are in conflict with an untransformed world.[5]

Stage Six. "Universalizing" faith. Few people enter this stage.[6] The paradoxes, tensions, and divisions of stage five often lead into the radical actualization of stage six where those tensions

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[1] Berryman, p.70.

[2] Ibid., p. 69.

[3] Fowler, p. 182.

[4] Berryman, p. 79, 81.

[5] Fowler, p. 198.

[6] Ibid., p. 200.

are resolved. The imperatives of absolute love and justice are grasped and call forth energies from the liberated self. There is a willingness to spend and be spent for others.

Relating the Christian conversion experience to faith stages, Fowler says there can be:

1. Stage change without conversional change
2. Conversional change without faith stage change
3. Conversional change that precipitates a faith stage change
4. Faith stage change that precipitates conversional change
5. Conversional change that is correlated with, and goes hand in hand with, a structural change
6. Conversional change that blocks or helps one avoid the pain of faith stage change[1]

There is therefore no invariant relationship between conversion and faith stages except the apparent need for a person at conversion to have the ongoing community relationships which provide for affirmation, encouragement, and guidance.[2]

Because Fowler does not relate faith stages to age and baptism, the writer assumes on the basis of the scriptual and ecclesiastical undergirding of chapters two and three, that a child coming to baptism would be from twelve to fifteen years. What age within this range would Fowler's schema suggest as an optimum age for a child to be baptised? Stages two and three span ages six to seven years through to a minimum of seventeen years.[3] Stage two

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[1] Ibid., pp. 285-86.

[2] Ibid., pp. 286-87.

[3] "There are, for example, minimum chronological ages below which it would be highly unlikely for particular stage transitions to have begun." Ibid., p. 276.

is still a world of relative fantasy and "waking consciousness,"[1] where a child has no clearly defined world view. Socially, he is introverted and dependant. His religious experience is lived in the affect and imagination more than the cognitive domain. If statistics from Fowler's sample group were to be generalized, only 3.6 percent of thirteen to twenty year-olds still function exclusively at this level.[2] It, therefore, seems that stage two is not a valid faith system for mature adults.

A child entering stage three at twelve to thirteen years is developing a more effective world view. He develops an extensive circle of 'significant others' and can plan for the future. In this stage "the ideas, beliefs, and values one espouses as a result of interaction and mutual role-taking with significant individual and collective others are melded into a tacit (not critically self-aware) system."[3] He is therefore dependant on 'his' group for identity and has a powerful urge to belong which encourages him to conform to the group's value system whose authority he accepts as self evidently valid.

A church community has much to offer the stage three child as he approaches baptism. He desires to conform to social and belief structures in order to obtain identity, therefore his church community can facilitate Christian structures in answer to his needs and development. To deny baptism to a stage three child who identifies strongly with his church community and its world view

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[1] Berryman, p. 49.

[2] Fowler, p. 320.

[3] Berryman, p. 62.

would be to deny fulfillment to his basic need. It would also effectively ostracise him from Christian relationships and beliefs. It is clear that an authority who withholds baptism misunderstands that a person at stage three "as yet does not have a sure enough grasp on its [his] own identity and autonomous judgment to construct and maintain an independent perspective."[1]

The minimum age for a stage three person varies from eleven to thirteen years but Fowler states that he has not found a person moving from stage two to three before eleven or twelve years.[2]

Some suggest that baptismal decisions during stage four are internalized with less group pressure. This, however, is only made possible because the structures accepted and internalized at stage three have facilitated growth to stage four. If baptism therefore was witheld at stage three because the church believed a stage four candidate would make a more adequate decision for Christ, then the very growth structures needed to develop stage four would be denied the candidate. Stages three and four are interdependant. This interdependance means that whenever the decision for baptism comes, it is not the climax but an initiatory stage in the development of faith.

In summary: A stage three adolescent could be as young as eleven or twelve. It is most likely that he has entered puberty and is developing formal operational thinking. His world view has

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[1] Fowler, p. 173.

[2] Ibid., p. 317; see also Berryman, p. 60.

broadened beyond the family unit. He gains his values and identity from his group which means he may not be able to clearly objectify his own values. This strong identity with the group makes it essential for the church to facilitate group activities which explore beliefs and encourage the adolescent to identify with the group leader, Jesus Christ.

Development of Religious Thinking

The key question in this section is: At what stage in the development of his religious thinking is an adolescent capable of making an effective decision for baptism?

What is religious thinking? Goldman, the theorist most closely linked with religious development of children, defines it as:

> . . . no different in mode and method from non-religious thinking. Religious thinking is a shortened form of expressing the activity of thinking directed towards religion, not a term meaning separate rationality.[1]

Goldman assumed Piaget's sequential development theory, and from this base interviewed two hundred school children aged six to thirteen years. He found that children appear to pass through a sequence of stages in their religious development, but stated that, "children's experiences in the field of religion are so varied and personal, that inferences . . . must be drawn with

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[1]Ronald Goldman, Religious Thinking from Childhood to Adolescence (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964), pp. 3, 4. Goldman's premise that religious thinking is primarily in the area of cognition has been criticised; see J. E. Greer, "Stages in the Development of Religious Thinking," British Journal of Religious Education 3 (1980):28, and C. D. Batson, "Creative Religious Growth and Pre-formal Religious Education," Religious Education 69 (1974): 304-5.

caution."[1]

Recognizing this control, Goldman offers a schema of children's religious development and relates it to mental rather than chronological age:

1. Pre-operational intuitive thought: up to about seven or eight years
2. Concrete operational thought: about seven or eight to thirteen or fourteen years
3. Formal (abstract) operational thought: thirteen or fourteen onwards[2]

In general terms Goldman suggests that "the child aged nine to twelve or thirteen years of age. . . . is [in] the time between fantasy and adult logic."[3] The child in this period is capable of holding the natural world in tension with his developing religious concepts, and is able to relinguish "crude physical and materialistic considerations."[4] In consequence:

> About the age of thirteen respresents a marked watershed in religious thinking. Although fully formal operational thinking does not obviously occur until a little later most pupils have attained an intermediate stage enough to begin to think in terms of propositions and to break with concrete modes of thought.[5]

An example of this is seen in children's responses to concepts of God's justice and mercy. Up to about the age of ten to eleven years "God's love embracing all men is denied."[6] However, by the time a child reaches the early stages of secondary schooling the universalism of God's love is grasped. His punishment and love

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[1]Goldman, p. 62. [2]Ibid., p. 64. [3]Ibid., p. 234.

[4]Ibid., p. 226. [5]Ibid., p. 239. [6]Ibid., p. 152.

are seen as consistent.[1]

There are several factors which should influence conclusions on Goldman's findings. Firstly, because pupils' responses vary considerably, findings should be limited to general trends.

Secondly, because only state school pupils were interviewed, the results could be biased against an early response to religion. Private school pupils with their attendance at church and/or Sunday school, habits of prayer and Bible reading, and religious home environment, would most likely indicate earlier results.

Thirdly, to confine and test religious thinking and understanding only in the cognitive domain is limiting. This is only one part of the religious development of a child, which depends on factors other than cognition.

Roger Murphy tabulates eight theories in religious thinking.[2] Each proposal suggests a three stage development in the Piagetian tradition "and explain[s] the development of religious thinking from intuitive to concrete operational to abstract operational. . . . [they] vary somewhat in the ages at which the stages were found, but six out of eight found a boundary between Stages 2 and 3 around the age of 11-13."[3]

A significant phenomenom in most adolescents is that at the point "when real religious insights become possible," there is a

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[1] Ibid., p. 153.

[2] See appendix 4. Murphy is critical of the 'stage development' concept, however Greer refutes this criticism, pp. 24-29.

[3] Greer, p. 26.

decline in attitudes toward religion.[1] This decline increases as the level of 'abstract' Religious Thinking increases," and continues to middle adolescence.[2] When a child matures mentally and physically, he begins to seek his own identity by testing significant authorities in his life. Resolution of this identity crisis in his religious life is achieved when he is converted or abandons his childhood religion.[3]

In summary: It seems that an adolescent between eleven and thirteen has most likely entered a period of transition which makes it increasingly possible for him to relate to abstract religious concepts. Yet, frequently he shows a marked decline in positive receptivity to religious themes. Accepting the controls already mentioned the writer concludes that the adolescent who has attained the age of eleven to thirteen years would have arrived at or entered, depending upon his mental age, the optimum period in the development of his religious thinking, a period in which he is capable of understanding the concepts which relate to baptism.

Pubescent Development

The age of puberty seems to be significant because Judaic law related religious responsibility to the onset of sexual

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[1] Goldman, p. 241.

[2] John H. Peatling, "On Beyond Goldman: Religious Thinking and the 1970s," Learning for Living 16 (1977):106. See also Leslie J. Francis, "Readiness for Research in Religion," Learning for Living 16 (1977):114.

[3] Ronald Goldman, "Researches in Religious Thinking," in Psychology and Religion, ed. L. B. Brown (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1973), p. 177.

maturity, and Piaget's theory of cognitive development infers that a child's cognitive structures reach maturity during pubescence.[1] At what age, therefore, does puberty occur in western culture and is there any significant evidence suggesting specific neurological development which provides the adolescent with faculties not available before puberty?

Puberty is not an event but a syndrome which has an average sequential duration of three to six years.[2] The age of onset varies considerably:

> As judged by its external manifestations, puberty starts in contempory western youth at about age 10 or 11 among girls and 11 or 12 among boys. But given the wide variability, it is preferable to express the time of onset in terms of a range, from 8½ to 13 for girls (Reynolds and Wines 1948) and from 9½ to 15 for boys (Reynolds and Wines 1951), rather than specific ages.[3]

The sequence of puberty is generally consistent in each sex but initial signs are dissimiliar. For females it is normally their growth spurt which starts two years earlier than boys. However, "the sexes are separated only by six months in the first [sexual] changes of puberty."[4]

Pubic hair first appears in females from nine to

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[1]For discussion Judaic law see above p. 26; and Piaget's cognitive theory see above p. 42.

[2]J. M. Tanner, Foetus into Man: Physical Growth from Conception to Maturity (London: Open Books, 1978), p. 62.

[3]Herant Katchadourian, The Biology of Adolescence (San Francisco: W. H. Freeman and Company, 1977), p. 27.

[4]J. M. Tanner, "Growing Up," Scientific American 229 (1973):38. The female's first sexual sign of puberty is usually breast budding, and in males, testicular enlargement, p. 40.

eighteen months before males.[1] The mean age for this appearance is just after age eleven for females and around twelve for males.[2] Due to the 'secular trend' this is one year earlier than in Jewish children of the first century.[3]

In today's society puberty is attained when an adolescent is functionally capable of procreation. Traditionally this is "characterized by the menarche (first menstration) in the girl and by the spermarche (first ejeculation) in the boy."[4] Both these events are late in the process of puberty. Australian females on average have their first menarche at 13.26 years:[5] North American females at 12.8 years.[6] However, it may occur at ten years in some females and not until sixteen in others.[7] For Australian boys spermarche generally occurs between 13.5 and 14.5 years.[8]

Neurological changes during puberty may not be dramatic but they are significant. Basic division of brain cells is completed within the first year of life, but "axon and dendrite growth comes

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[1]Tanner, suggests a nine months gap, Foetus into Man, p. 66. Katchadourian mentions eighteen months, pp. 28-9.

[2]Tanner, Foetus into Man, p. 62.

[3]See Mishnah Terumoth 1:3 and Niddah 5:6; 6:11. The 'secular trend' is the tendency for the whole process of biological maturation to accelerate throughout childhood and lower the age for onset of puberty.

[4]John K. Collins, ed., Studies of the Australian Adolescent (Sydney: Cassell Australia, 1975), p. 1.

[5]Ibid., p. 37. [6]Katchadourian, p. 62.

[7]J. M. Tanner, Education and Physical Growth (London: University of London Press, 1961), p. 120.

[8]Collins, p. 4.

later.[1] By the age of ten "structures associated with the neural system have to gain only the final 5 percent of their adult size."[2] It is therefore the present writer's hypothesis that the remaining structures to develop are the axon and dendrite inter-connections.[3] Such interconnections need minimal space in which to form and facilitate complex abstract thinking.[4]

There are two factors of pubescence which could influence an adolescent's development toward baptism. Firstly, early developers score higher in emotional and mental ability than those less mature, but of the same chronological age.[5] Later maturers frequently had "more feelings of inadequacy and rejection, and more need for belonging and being supported."[6] Secondly, chronological age is inadequate to measure an adolescent's development.[7] Clearly developmental age is more credable.

Conclusion

A child from ten to twelve years who has commenced puberty may be capable of conceptual abstract thinking, planning

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[1] Tanner, Foetus into Man, p. 106.

[2] Katchadourian, p. 26.

[3] This seems to be Tanner's inference when he says, "dendrites, even millions of them, occupy little space, and very considerable increases in connectivity could occur within the limits of a total brain weight increase of a few percent." Foetus into Man, p. 111.

[4] Ibid., pp. 111, 115. [5] Tanner, Education, p. 44.

[6] J. M. Tanner, Growth at Adolescence (Oxford: Blackwell Scientific, 1962), p. 221.

[7] Tanner, Education, p. 52.

for the future, and initiating relationships. He has reached the stage of major moral growth when his permanent value system is being formed. The need for group conformity influences his personal identity which means he may not be able to clearly objectify his beliefs. Potentially he has the capacity for religious insights but frequently reveals a marked decline in attitude toward religion. There are marked variations in both age and progress through the above principles and stages, but it is expected on average most adolescents would have attained this level by thirteen to fifteen years.

In consequence the writer believes the adolescent has strong social, biological, and neurological pressures to explore. These normally peak from ten years until thirteen to fifteen years. His state of readiness for baptism does not develop naturally but is dependant upon his group--the church facilitating relational models which encourage biblical, cultural, and social interaction. When this is offered to the adolescent he is most likely to accept the group's belief structure, and acknowledge his Saviour and spiritual life by baptism.

CHAPTER V

PROJECT DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

Introduction

This project attempts to discover when an adolescent has reached the optimum age for baptism. The writer has already established that the biblical model expects accountability of candidates and recognises affirmations throughout life.[1] Initiation practices in religious communities and developmental theories in the social sciences indicate that an adolescent who has reached the pre-teen years of ten to twelve is most likely to be ready for indoctrination. If he has entered pubescence, he may have or could be developing his spiritual, social, moral, and intellectual resources, which enable him to affirm his faith in Jesus Christ. The writer has also discovered that the average adolescent has attained this potential by the age of thirteen to fifteen years.

To test objectively all the above findings was beyond the scope of this project, so the writer attempted the assessment of a candidate's readiness for the rite of baptism, after he has applied for baptism and is moving through the indoctrination process. The project design, therefore, was not for the assessment of an adolescent's readiness for baptismal instruction.

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[1] See above, pp. 24, 25.

Implementation

While discussing with Pastor Alwyn Salom possible subjects for an M.A. project, he offered the writer an opportunity to pursue a question he has had over the last decade, while ministering with youth.[1] At what age is an adolescent ready for baptism? Pastor Salom asked the writer to join him in preparing a baptismal class that had already been formed at a Pathfinder Day in November, 1981. This proposal was accepted and from December, 1981, the writer associated with Brightwaters Church and later became a member.

The writer began to build relationships with the proposed baptismal candidates by attending their Sabbath School, and a Pathfinder camp at Myall Lake. During this integration period permission was sought and granted by the Church Board for the writer to associate with Pastor Salom in the Junior baptismal class.

Commencement date for the baptismal class was designated as Sabbath, April 3, and was advertised in the church bulletin.[2] Eleven adolescents responded and met in the church hall.[3] Chairs were arranged in a circle to facilitate open discussion and each

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[1]Pastor A. P. Salom was church pastor of Brightwaters Seventh-day Adventist church in the North New South Wales Conference.

[2]The following notice was in the bulletin on Sabbath, March 27: "Junior Bible Class: All unbaptised High School age boys and girls are invited to join the Junior Bible Class which recommences next Sabbath afternoon, April 3 at 2.30 p.m. Bring your Bible and a pencil to the Bible Class."

[3]Of the eleven, three were age twelve: one male, two females. Five were age thirteen: three males and two females. One was age fourteen: one male. Two were age fifteen: two males.

candidate was given a 'Profiles of Faith' lesson.[1] Pastor Salom introduced the subject briefly by using key texts and concepts. He then asked individual candidates to look up specific bible texts, read them aloud, and fill in the appropriate spaces on their work sheets. The number of significant verbal responses to or from the leader, whether Bibles were brought to the class, and general attitudes and deportment of candidates was recorded during each lesson on a sociogram.[2]

The writer met with the baptismal class on ten different occasions from April 3 to September 19 as an observer. There was one basic variation in the baptismal class format during this time. After a talk and discussion on the topic for the day, candidates individually looked up the texts and filled in the blanks on their 'Profiles of Faith' lesson.

The main section of the project was implemented in October, 1982. Separate questionnaires called 'Guidance Toward Baptism' were prepared for each candidate, parents of the candidate, the candidate's church school teacher or teachers, and the candidate's pastor who would complete it in consultation with the church Junior Youth leaders.[3]

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[1] 'Profiles of Faith' are a set of study guides prepared for the Sabbath School Department of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. They were originally printed in the U.S.A. in the early 1970's and used by some pastors for baptismal indoctrination.

[2] See appendix 5 for a sample of the most significant sociograms.

[3] See appendices 6-9. Questionnaires were presented in small booklets. Their layout and type size are accurately reproduced in each appendix.

The questionnaires were administered first to the candidates. All candidates were given an invitation to attend the writer's home for tea on Monday, October 11 at 5.30 pm. Transport arrangements were made for the majority of members to ensure they attended. When the candidates had relaxed, after tea, they were introduced to the questionnaire.[1] After their questions were answered they separated to complete their questionnaire. Notation was made of any questions the candidates found difficult or ambigious. Finishing time for most candiates was ten to fifteen minutes. They then expressed their individuality during a period of spontaneous play which indicated that a significant degree of trust had developed between the candidates, their Pastor, and the writer. Following this time of fun the candidates were transported home.

The headmaster of Avondale Adventist High School, Pastor E. G. Krause was visted by the writer on Thursday, October 14. After general discussion on adolescent readiness for baptism the writer introduced the questionnaire for teachers. He asked permission to make a request of the Bible teacher and one other teacher to complete a questionnaire on each candidate in their class.[2] After permission was granted questionnaires were distributed to six teachers of five grades the following week. Each teacher was instructed not to answer statements or questions which

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[1] See appendix 6. Candidates were informed that the questionnaire was not a test paper with a pass/fail grade. It would be used as a guide in understanding how they felt and thought on certain issues. They were instructed that each statement may or may not be fact; and to write down their personal response to each one.

[2] See appendix 8.

did not relate to their classes of knowledge of the child. They were encouraged to recognise that the questionnaire was not going to be used as a test, and to make any comment they thought relevant to the candidate's readiness for baptism. Questionnaires were collected within one week.

Appointments were made with parents of each candidate during the second and third weeks of October. At each visit the writer attempted to build trust through an informal, friendly, discussion. During this discussion the writer indicated he was working on a research project which involved their child/children and the baptismal class they were attending. The writer sought the parents' co-operation by asking them to complete the parental questionnaire.[1] All parents were eager to assist and asked many questions. They were assured that the questionnaire was not to be used as a testing instrument but as a guide to the writer on how parents saw the readiness of their children for baptism. The questionnaires were left for parents to complete together and later return to the writer. These visits proved most beneficial.

Pastor Richie Way was the assistant Junior-Teen Sabbath School leader. Even though he had a daughter in the baptismal class, he was assessed as an impartial observer who could complete the Pastor and Junior Youth leaders' questionnaire.[2] He was approached and agreed to assist in the research.

During the year Pastor Salom continually communicated with, encouraged, and guided the writer with his project. He asked the

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[1] See appendix 7.

[2] See appendix 9.

writer to report on his findings in the questionnaires and spent approximately one hour considering the readiness for baptism of each candidate. Two candidates, Max and Vicky, had voluntarily decided not to be baptised at the end of the year.[1] Another candidate, Greg, was at the time of discussion still undecided. Pastor Salom made the final decision, but in our discussion together we found no reason why any of the other eight should not be baptized. A tentative date for the baptism was made for the Divine Service of December 11. Pastor Salom invited the writer to take the preaching service for that day and he would officiate at the baptism.

All candidates were baptized on the date mentioned except Max and Vicky who had in consultation with their parents voluntarily decided to wait for another occasion. This decision was taken with no suggestion or direction from either their Pastor or the writer.

Evaluation of the Candidates

Relevant data relating to each candidate's readiness for baptism was collated and recorded on an evaluation sheet.[2] The comments on each sheet came from the four questionnaires on the candidate, sociograms recorded during ten baptismal lessons, parental interviews, discussions with the Pastor and other church leaders, and the writer's personal observations. The following trends and details were extrapolated from the completed evaluation

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[1] Candidates have been given ficticious names to protect their real identities.

[2] See appendix 11.

sheets.[1]

All candidates were from Seventh-day Adventist homes and attended the Avondale Adventist High School. They generally had a positive and healthy attitude to school. Tanya was an exception: her teachers said she was rebellious and at times a discipline problem. All candidates' grades in Bible class were consistant with general academic ability.

Candidates regularly attended church with their families and consistently enjoyed most church activities except the church service. Only three agreed that this service was generally interesting. Even Craig--who was often the most alert in the group--said church was sometimes boring. Max and Greg often disengaged themselves from both Sabbath School and Church.

Three candidates; Brian, Stan, Tanya, missed four or more of the ten lessons recorded on the sociograms. There was, however, nothing consistent in their absence.

The volume of participation by each candidate in the baptismal class would seem to be consistent with their social skills and age. This meant that the older and more socially aware candidates made more significant comments. This was demonstrated by Craig who averaged six comments at each lesson. In contrast Brian, Max and Anne averaged less than one comment at each lesson. Brian at fifteen years old would normally be expected to have more social skills than the younger members. Because this was not so,

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[1]For details of the responses of the whole group, see appendix 10.

age should not be used as a standard for social maturity.

Candidates in all age groups were generally capable of religious abstract thinking. They did however have difficulty with two concepts: sin and obedience. Sin was primarily understood as action or behaviour and not a propensity in the heart of man. Only four out of eleven saw sin as part of man's nature even after forgiveness. Obedience was linked with acceptance and entrance to heaven rather than a response to God.

Candidates' biblical or doctrinal knowledge was not assessed from a formal test but from their personal responses in baptismal class and Sabbath School. Most had a reasonable to good working knowledge of their Bibles. However their personal devotional habits were not strong. Only three candidates said they enjoyed reading their Bibles but most found it easy to pray.

Spirituality was difficult to assess because of its unique expression in each candidate. If consistency of spiritual activities, such as appropriate behaviour in Sabbath School and Divine Service and bringing a Bible to baptismal class are used, then Tanya, Greg, Max, and Brian would not be spiritually-minded. If the religious belief that 'God speaks to me personally' and 'I find it easy to pray' are indications of spiritual vitality, then the four mentioned must be included. Tanya, Greg, Max, and Brian may have less spiritual intensity, but there does not seem to be any consistent chronological pattern relating this to an adolescent's readiness for baptism.

Seven of the eleven candidates could be considered to be socially well adjusted. They could maintain adequate social

relations with significant others and felt capable of initiating peer relationships. Four seemed socially immature: Brian, fifteen years; Max and Anne, thirteen years; and Tanya, twelve. Of the three who were in early adolescence, two had not entered pubescence. This may indicate that pubescence helps to facilitate social adjustment. The two males had entered pubescence but they may have been following a family model of social quiescence.

Further comment should be made regarding Greg, Max, and Vicky. Greg's case history suggested that an adolescent's attitudes and behaviour can change quickly. A few weeks prior to baptism he severed an important peer relationship which was inhibiting his spiritual growth. He immediately responded spiritually and later desired to be baptized.

Max's case could indicate that a person with an introverted world view and belief system may not have sufficient skills and resources to make the decision of baptism. Max did not present for baptism, but will most likely mature and seek baptism in later teens.

Vicky also decided to wait for baptism, even though she was consistent and participative at baptismal class. She responded warmly to spiritual values, had a good self image, and was well adjusted socially. The writer believes she was ready for baptism but was out of her peer group. She could have been uneasy about meeting in the baptismal class because she was the only candidate still in primary school and may have felt immature. The writer suggests that adolescents feel awkward when they move away from

socially accepted 'norms'. If this is so peer pressure directly influences an adolescent's readiness for baptism.

CHAPTER VI

EVALUATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

While researching the chapter on the social sciences and adolescent development, the writer accepted the limitation that a candidate's cognitive, moral, and faith development as well as his religious thinking could not be accurately assessed within the parameters of this project. The assessment methods chosen, therefore varied from objective to subjective, quantifiable data chosen from the broad spectrum of human development but not directly from the above developmental sciences.[1] In consequence no totally objective standard was defined. However the subjective evaluation of each candidate is no less valid than an objective evaluation but it is certainly more difficult to quantify.

An attempt to control this subjective evaluation of candidates was apparent in the variety and volume of responses needed in the questionnaires and in the number of significant individuals involved in each evaluation.[2]

Evaluation

First to be evaluated was the administrative process of research, design, and implementation of the project.

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[1] See appendix 9 and p. 67 in this project.

[2] Pastor, parent, teachers and Junior Youth leaders.

The perceived volume and quality of work required in this project initially frightened the writer. In consequence he lost, for a time, his individuality and followed every research area exposed. The process of writing up research, developing and implementing the project has eased the intitial reaction and broadened the writer's knowledge of what is necessary when new research is pursued.

Initially it was difficult for the writer to be an observer in the baptismal class, because he had come from an active church pastorate. However this passive role helped him to be aware of the apparent disinterest of some candidates and others who needed a direct stimulus to maintain interest. Observer documentation of each significant response on a sociogram produced an accumulated perspective of a candidate's verbal participation and social responses not normally available to a pastor. It also defined a candidate's consistency in bringing his Bible to baptismal class.

Use of 'Profiles of Faith' as the standard baptismal class lesson restricted discussion to just one area of a candidate's development--doctrinal issues. Even though this is the traditional method of baptismal preparation it fails to reach vital adolescent growth areas. Discussion should be encouraged on issues relevant to the total context of baptismal readiness.

The average age of this baptismal class was thirteen. This is the generally accepted age for baptism among Australian Adventists. This project therefore reinforces the traditional Adventist attitude towards adolescents and their age of readiness for baptism.

It must be remembered however that these candidates applied for baptism. Their age bracket was determined by the announcement in the church bulletin and the one candidate who was in a younger peer group at school could have decided against baptism because she was outside socially accepted norms.[1] It is possible that candidates in this baptismal class were predisposed to accepted chronological 'norms'. The research value of this project could have increased if candidates of ten and eleven years had been available.

Because of the original work required in the design of the questionnaires, some ambigious and general statements were found to be included. Some of these may have been resolved if the questionnaires had been administered in a pilot baptismal class.

The volume of responses available in the four questionnaires may be criticised as excessive. They are necessary, however, for cross-checking the socialization, spirituality, and attitudes in the home, school, and church. This became apparent during the evaluation of two candidates--Bruce and Tanya. Bruce exhibited an indifferent spiritual attitude in baptismal class but was spiritually responsive at home. Tanya presented as socially capable in baptismal class but the teacher's questionnaire revealed she was rebellious and had discipline problems at school. The diversity of input from the four questionnaires is one of the valuable reference points developed in this project and one which

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[1] Six high school teachers were asked what they believed was the most acceptable age for baptism. All indicated thirteen years was the ideal age.

the writer will continue to use in his ministry.

Because of academic pressures on the writer the candidates' questionnaires may have been administered too late. The candidates could have assumed the questionnaire was a test paper which could eliminate them from baptism. If so, they may have responded how they perceived they should rather than how they actually felt or believed. Earlier administration of the questionnaire would allow candidates' weaknesses to be strengthened. However it could also be argued that if it was administered just prior to baptism the candidates would have had more time for ideas and attitudes to crystalize, thus giving a more accurate record.

During the learning process of this project important issues arose which will now be evaluated.

Adults often consider baptism as the only spiritual affirmation needed in the process of life. This is expressed in the words of many who, when speaking of their own baptism say, "I was not ready to be baptized." Some may not have been ready, but it is the belief of the writer that most were ready to affirm their faith in Jesus Christ and His church. They made a total commitment with all the resources available to them at that stage in their development. As growth continued and they became an adult, new stages of development emerged granting new resources for further affirmations. However, it does not follow that the decision made in early adolescence was inadequate. It means that affirmations through each stage of development are necessary and build on the initial decision.

This project assisted the writer in understanding the developmental stages of adolescents and the importance of accepting a candidate in the stage he presents himself. This acceptance of him as a valid individual can facilitate growth into the next stage.[1] To expect a decision made on resources not yet developed could destroy an adolescent's incentive for spiritual growth and church involvement and therefore inhibit growth into further stages of development.

The writer further learnt that some adolescents do not present with signs of a vital spiritual life. They attend all church activities, including baptismal class, with little comment or response. They move with their peer group and accept its decisions because their spiritual and social individuality has not yet emerged. This nonchalance is not necessarily disinterest nor inability in spiritual matters. It may simply mean the candidate is at stage three in his faith development and forms his identity through relationships and conformity to the expectations and judgements of significant others.[2] Adolescents who respond in this manner should be accepted and encouraged. The group may dictate his values--even baptism. He may even stay at this stage of dependance throughout life and never formally move into the next stage of personalised faith. The church should not dismiss these youth as unready but accept and move with them through the years. For these adolescents baptism may even mean they have attained

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[1]For a more detailed discussion on these developmental stages see Chapter IV.

[2]See Chapter IV.

spiritually and need not develop further. The church has to take this risk because to deny baptism may mean a felt social and spiritual rejection.

Recommendations

The following refinements are necessary on this project.

1. Removal of ambiguities and generalities in all questionnaires
2. Insertion of the following statement in the candidate's questionnaire: "I am ready to be baptized"
3. The need to administer this project to candidates ten and eleven years old
4. The need to administer the candidates' questionnaires at the beginning and end of baptismal instruction to gauge growth
5. Open communication in problem areas by discussing the responses of candidates with them personally

There are four issues impinging on this project which could be further researched.

Firstly, most baptismal guides are inadequate for adolescents. There is therefore urgent need to produce lessons which relate to the broad spectrum of developing a christian life style. They should incorporate issues of young people and not relate to doctrine only.

Secondly, a testing instrument could be developed to assist the pastor in determining at what stage a candidate is in his cognitive, moral, and faith development and religious thinking. The writer recognises the enormity of this task but believes such instruments would be of assistance to the pastor. He could then be able to identify the stages of growth a candidate had passed through, and facilitate growth into further stages.

Thirdly, because some adults forget or misunderstand the intensity of their adolescent commitment to their Lord and church, a longtitudinal study of attitudes toward baptism would be valuable. This would need to consider growth and indoctrination patterns of candidates and their later incorporation and involvement in church life, and attitudes to baptismal readiness.

Fourthly, evidence suggests that a pre-adolescent from ten years may be ready for baptism. The writer therefore encourages further research into a candidate's readiness in the pre-adolescent ages of ten and eleven.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

Evidence collated in this project from theological, ecclesiastical history, and sociological sources on the optimum age and readiness for baptism of an adolescent provides valuable insights into the developmental needs of adolescents.

These insights suggest that candidates present at different stages in their development and need to be accepted by God's authority (the church) for sustained spiritual growth. Reflection is also made on the traditional methods of indoctrination which often relates only to one facet of a candidate's development. Instruction must appeal not only to the intellectual, but to social and spiritual spheres of the candidate. If this form of instruction is given, adequate growth into further stages will result.

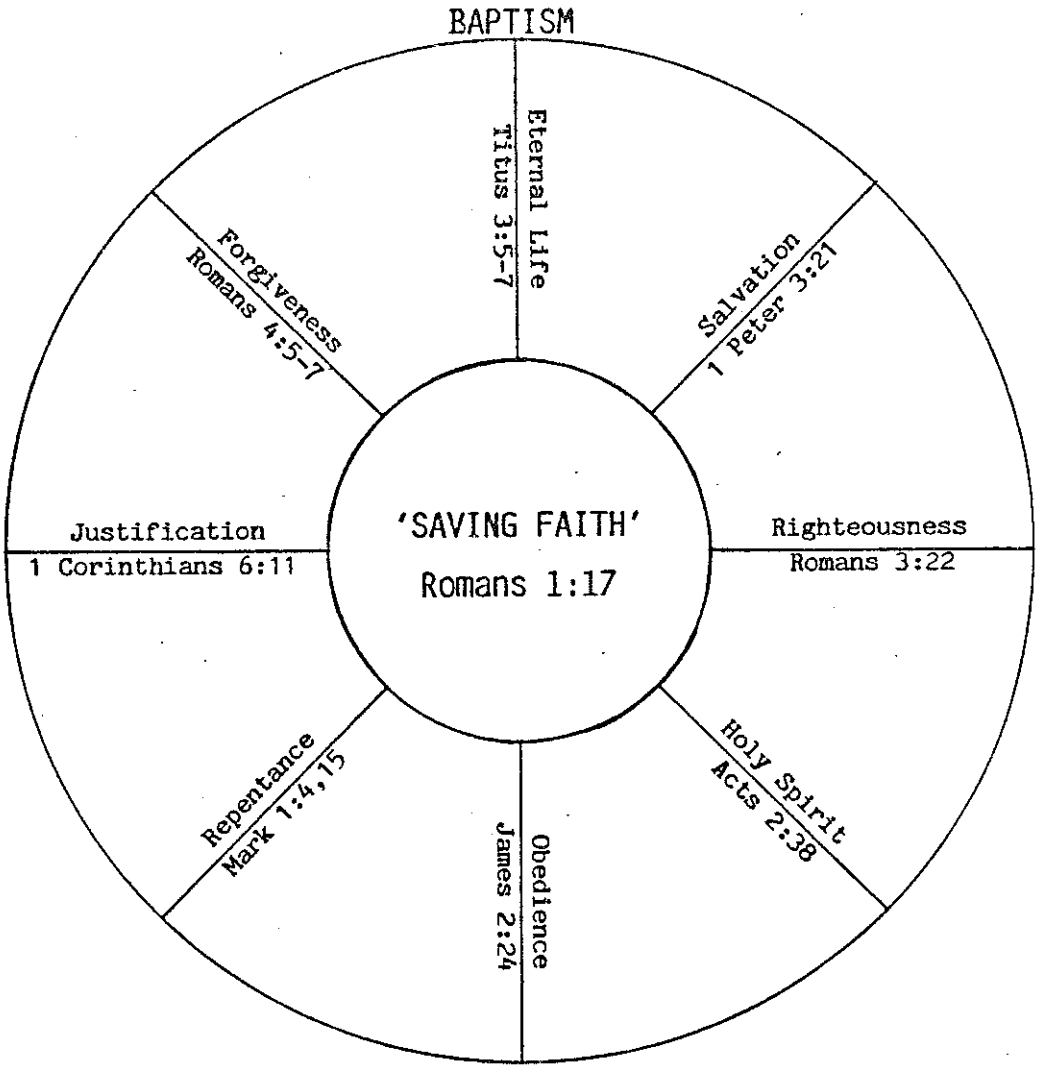
It could be that adolescents of ten or eleven are ready to affirm their Lord and continue their spiritual growth. Church leaders therefore have a responsibility to recognize the signs of readiness.

For the writer therefore, baptism is not an event but a stage in a life-long process of affirming a relationship with Jesus Christ. Because this process can continue it does not mean the initial affirmation lacked maturity. It means there is need for growth into more meaningful stages.

APPENDIX 1

SAVING FAITH AS A TRANSACTION

SAVING FAITH AS A TRANSACTION



APPENDIX 2

ELLEN G. WHITE ON JESUS AT TWELVE YEARS

ELLEN G. WHITE ON JESUS AT TWELVE

Ellen G. White states, "Among the Jews the twelfth year was the dividing line between childhood and youth. On completing this year a Hebrew boy was called a son of the law. . . . When Jesus had reached the required age, they [his parents] took Him with them" to the Passover (Emphasis supplied).[1]

Rabbinic tradition written after the first century states that "for the Jewish boy the independant keeping of all the commandments of the Torah, including the Passover commandment, begins when he is thirteen and a day."[2]

Ellen White and the record of Rabbinic tradition seem to be in conflict on the age a Jewish boy becomes a 'son of the law'. One possible solution is that under the guidance of the Holy Spirit White recorded the oral tradition of the time of the historical Jesus. Later, before the written tradition began, the required age was changed from twelve to thirteen years. Initially, however, the age when a child moved into adulthood was not measured by age but by the signs of physical adolescence.[3] Only in later written

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[1] E. G. White, The Desire of Ages (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press, 1940), p. 75.

[2] K. H. Rengstorf, "δώδεκα." TDNT 2:323. See also Mishnah Aboth 5:21, Niddah 5:5.

[3] For discussion on the age of transition from childhood to adulthood, see above, pp. 26-28.

tradition was the transition fixed to a specific age. Therefore the age when a boy became 'a son of the law' would seem to be a development later than the historical Jesus.

Documentation of this later written tradition has not always been correctly reported which has led to confusion in a number of commentaries.

> . . . Influenced by Grotius, Lightfoot (Horae hebraicae) and Wettstein, later commentators such as Zahn, Plummer and De Zwaan asserted that Jewish boys were obliged to obey the law strictly from their twelfth year.[1]

It is possible that these or other commentaries influenced Ellen White's thoughts on Luke 2:42.

Even though twelve may not be the age when a Jewish boy became 'a son of the law' it was "a significant age in religious development."[2] Provision was made for a twelve year old boy to be made familiar with his future responsibilities.[3] This prepared him to become 'a son of the law' at thirteen and a day. Jesus could have attended the Passover for this particular purpose.[4]

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[1]Henk J. De Jonge, "Sonship, Wisdom, Infancy: Luke II. 41-51a," New Testament Studies 24 (1978):317. See also Alfred Edersheim, Sketches of Jewish Social Life in the Days of Christ (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1876), pp. 119, 120.

[2]See above, pp. 19-20.

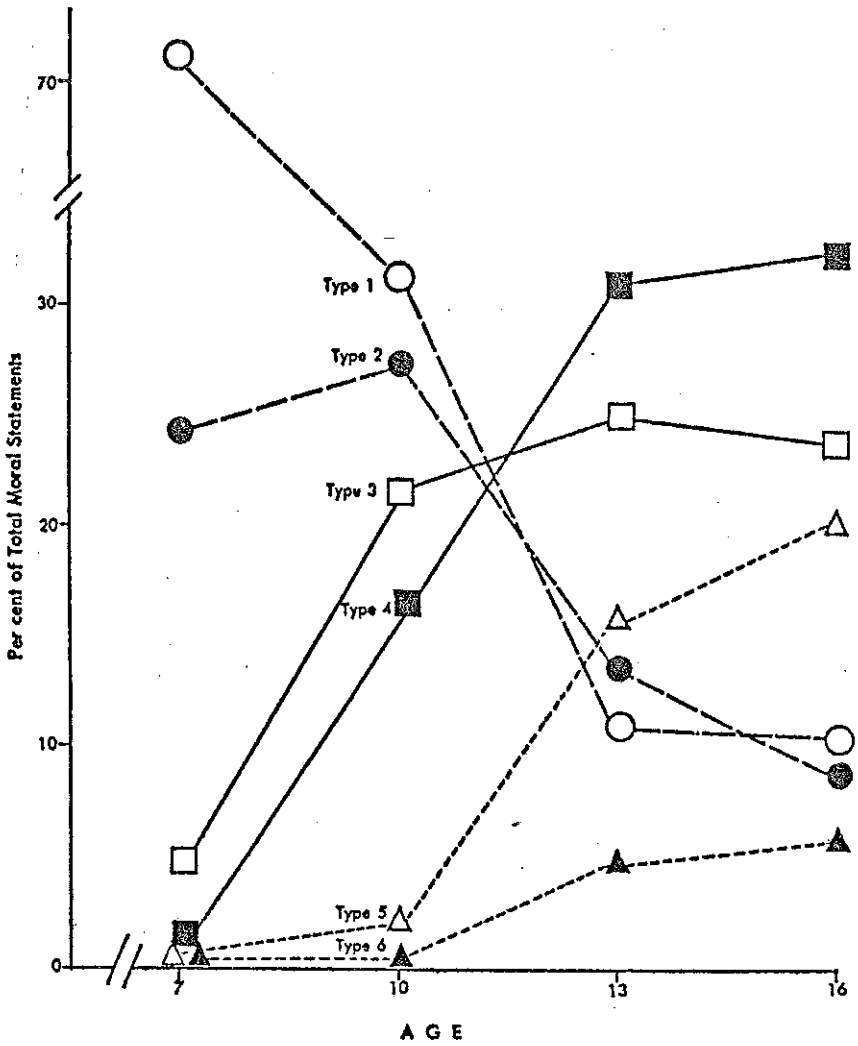
[3]Edersheim, pp. 119, 120.

[4]For discussion on the meaning of Luke 2:42, see above, pp. 19-20.

APPENDIX 3

DEVELOPMENT OF MORAL CHARACTER

DEVELOPMENT OF MORAL CHARACTER[1]



Mean Per Cent of Total Moral Statements of Each of Six Moral Judgment Types at Four Ages

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[1]Lawrence Kohlberg, "Development of Moral Character and Moral Ideology," Review of Child Development Research 1 (1964): 395.

APPENDIX 4

STAGE DEVELOPMENT THEORIES OF RELIGIOUS THINKING

STAGE DEVELOPMENT THEORIES OF RELIGIOUS THINKING[1]

Proposed 'Stage-Development' Theories of Religious Thinking

Proposed by	Stage I	Stage II	Stage III
Loomba (1942) —ideas about God	Religion of pure externals (up to age 6)	Realistic (ages 7–12)	Religion of inner life (12+)
Harms (1944) —pictures of God	Fairytale (3–6)	Realistic (7–12)	Individualistic (12+)
Elkind (1961, 62, 63) —concepts of religious denominations	Global undifferentiated concepts (5–7)	Concretely differentiated concepts (7–9)	Abstractly differentiated concepts (ages 10–12)
Long, Elkind and Spilka (1967) —concepts of prayer	Global undifferentiated concepts (5–7)	Concretely differentiated concepts (7–9)	Abstractly differentiated concepts (ages 10–12)
Goldman (1964) —understanding 3 Bible stories and projecting on 3 'religious' pictures	Pre-Religious (up to 7/8)	Sub-Religious (7/8–13/14)	Religious (above 13/14)
Deconchy (1964) —semantic test of concepts of God	Attributivity (9/10)	Personalization (9/10–12/13)	Interiorization (15/16)
Peatling (1971) —multiple choice questions on 3 Bible stories	Concrete (up to 9)	Intermediate (10–15)	Abstract (16+)
Beechick (1974) —interpreting meaning of 3 Biblical Parables	Intuitive (up to 7)	Concrete operational (8–10)	Formal operational (11+)

[1]Roger Murphy, "The Development of Religious Thinking in Children in Three Easy Stages?", Learning for Living 17 (1977):17.

APPENDIX 5

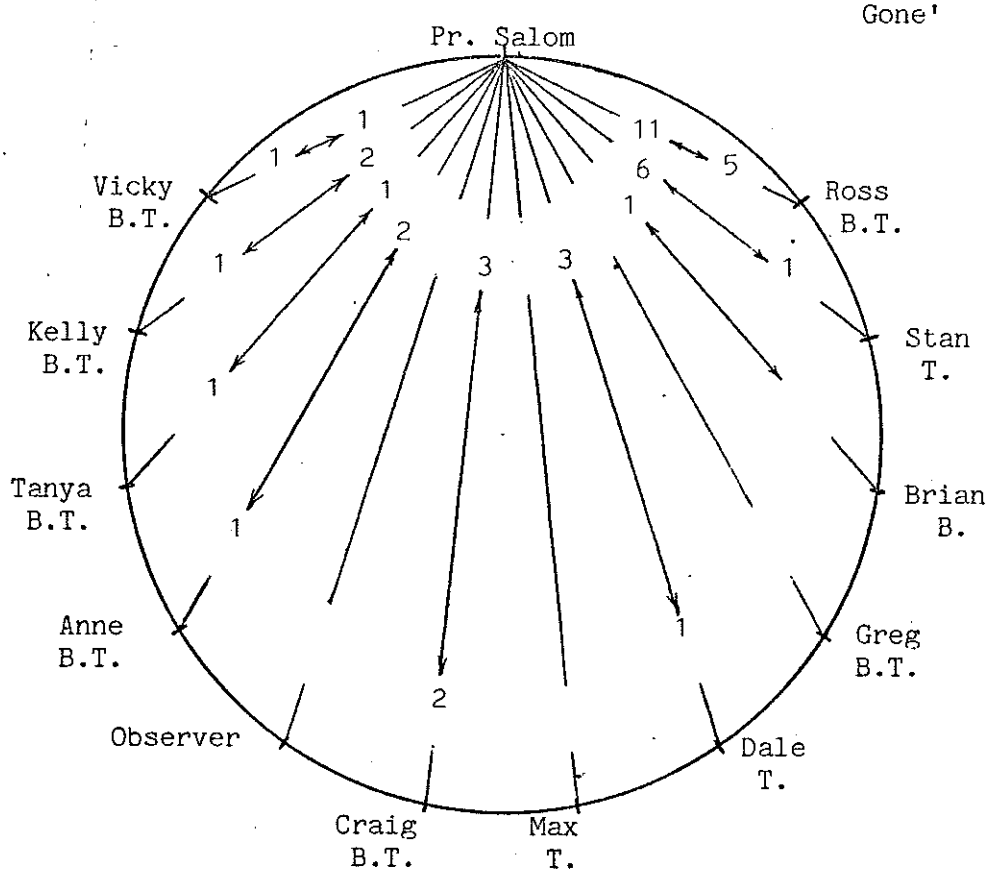
BAPTISMAL CLASS SOCIOGRAMS

JUNIOR BIBLE CLASS

Date May 21, 1982

Teacher Pr. Salom

Lesson 'When Guilt is Gone'



B--Brought Bibles

T--Looked up text

(1)--Number of significant verbal responses in that direction

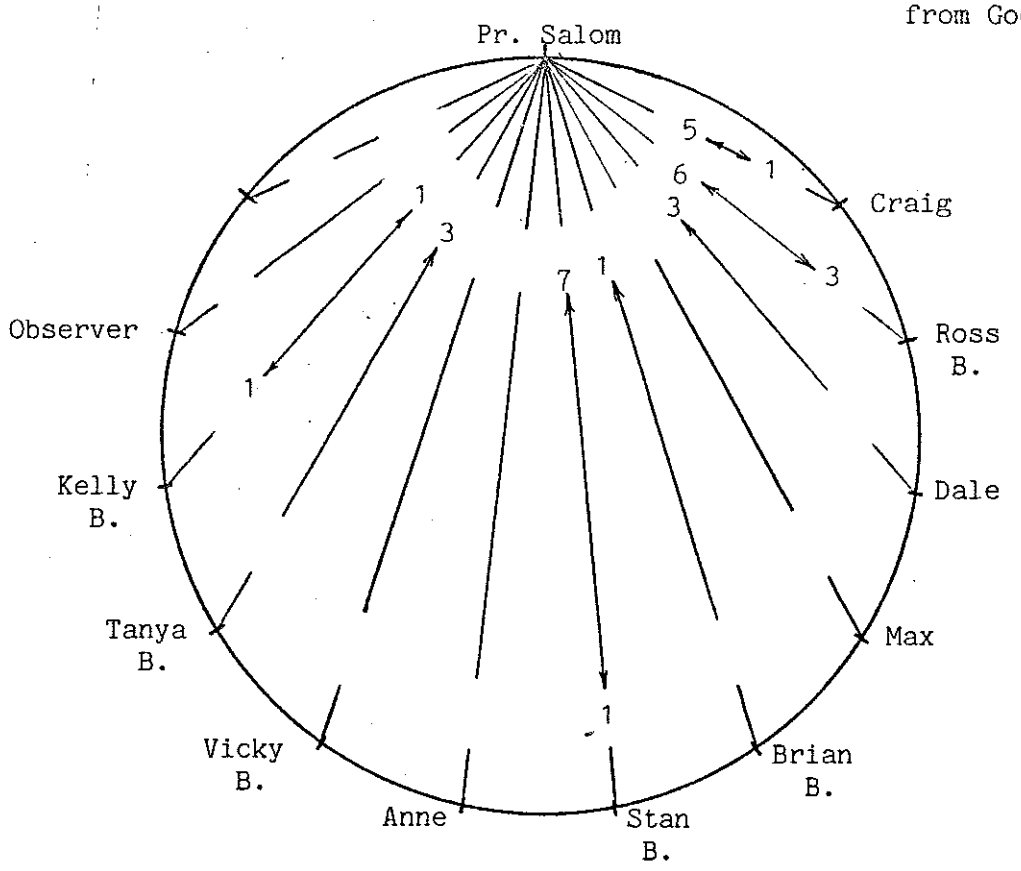
Comments: Ross enjoyed the lesson today.
Brian was more interested today than in the previous two lessons.
Stan attended for the first time.

JUNIOR BIBLE CLASS

Date June 6, 1982

Teacher Pr. Salom

Lesson 'Love Letters from God'



B--Brought Bibles

T--Looked up text

(1)--Number of significant verbal responses in that direction

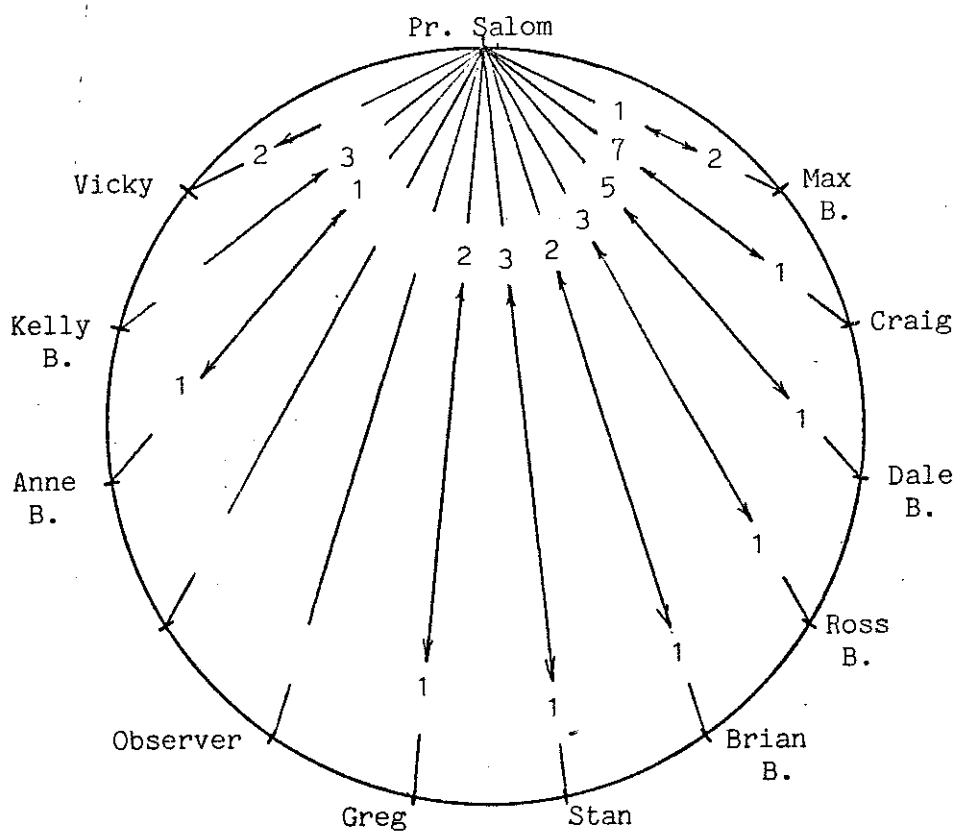
Comments: They all divided into pairs and looked up the texts together.
Ross finished first.

JUNIOR BIBLE CLASS

Date June 26, 1982

Teacher Pr. Salom

Lesson 'Heaven'



B--Brought Bibles

T--Looked up text

(1)--Number of significant verbal responses in that direction

Comments:

APPENDIX 6

GUIDANCE TOWARD BAPTISM

BY PROSPECTIVE CANDIDATE

GUIDANCE TOWARD BAPTISM

BY PROSPECTIVE CANDIDATE

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

AGE ..... DATE OF BIRTH .....

CHURCH ..... PHONE .....

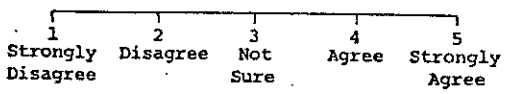
Directions

This is not a test but an answer sheet to help you prepare for baptism. Place a tick along the line closest to how you feel about the sentence. If you believe it is all correct, then tick five (5), if it is not correct, then tick one (1). For you it may be in between on numbers 2, 3, or 4.

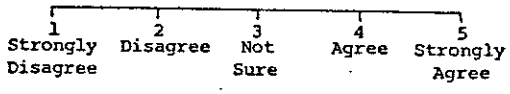
SECTION ONE

The Gospel

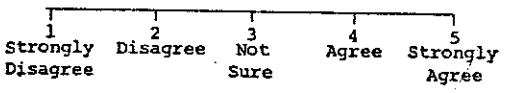
1. There is nothing we can bring to offer Jesus so that He might save us.



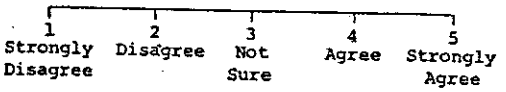
2. The gospel is God giving man more love than he deserves.



3. Jesus is our Saviour and we are saved by being obedient to Him.

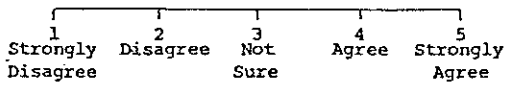


4. Jesus, God's Son, lived a righteous life and died for my sin and by believing in Him I am saved.

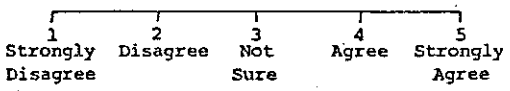


Sin

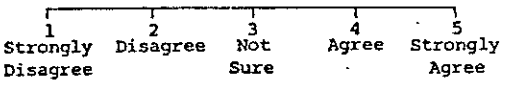
1. Sin is doing things wrong.



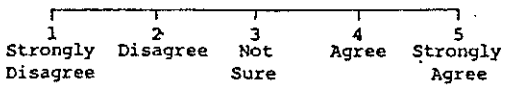
2. Sin is inside us even when Jesus has forgiven us.



3. A person at birth is neither good nor bad.

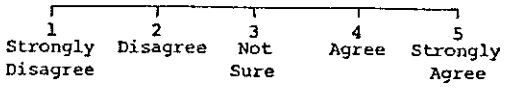


4. There are some sins so bad that God will not forgive.

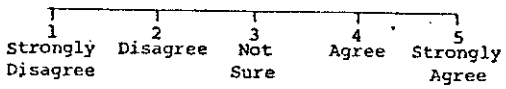


Forgiveness

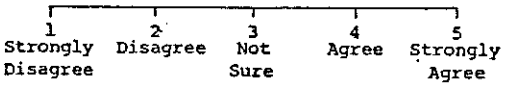
1. We are forgiven only if we don't do it again.



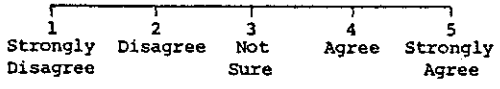
2. Forgiveness is given to all who believe Jesus died for them and accept Him as their Saviour.



3. The only sins forgiven are the ones we especially ask forgiveness for.

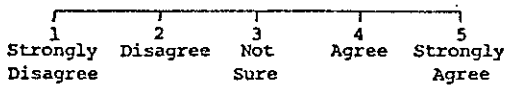


4. I believe God has forgiven my sins.

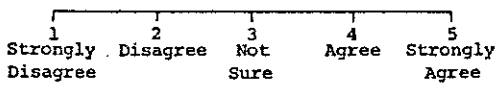


Faith

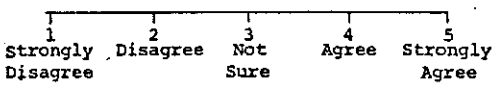
1. Faith is the key that unlocks salvation.



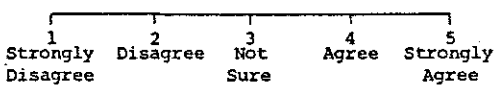
2. Faith is accepting that Jesus died for me, takes my sin, and gives me His forgiveness.



3. Faith is constantly needed by the Christian.



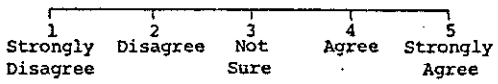
4. Faith is the gift of God but the power to exercise it is ours.



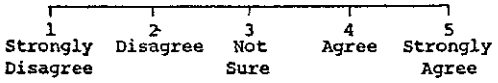
AVONDALE LIBRARY COLLEGE

Repentance

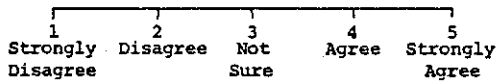
1. Repentance means being sorry for sin.



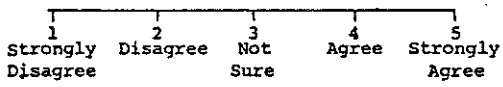
2. Repentance means turning away from evil to God.



3. Repentance does not need to change my life.

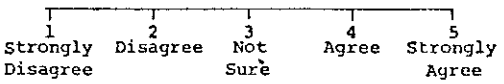


4. Repentance is an experience which happens only before baptism.

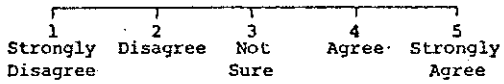


Obedience

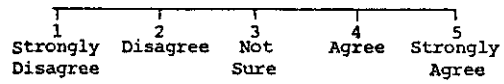
1. I must be obedient before God can save me.



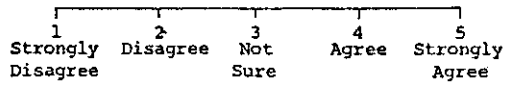
2. Obedience is not always easy but Christians love to obey God.



3. The main emphasis of the Gospel is on God's rules of conduct.

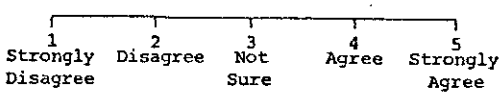


4. It does not make too much difference if Christians sin because they are forgiven by God.

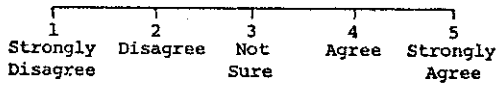


Church

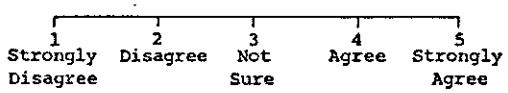
1. God saves only Seventh-day Adventist Christians.



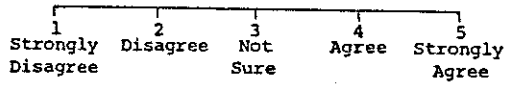
2. Christians naturally love each other.



3. The Church is only a place for Bible study, prayer, and various other meetings.



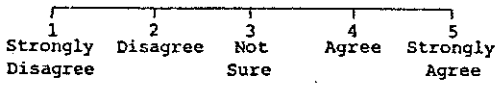
4. The Church should be a group of people who are involved in one another's lives by sharing with, caring for, encouraging and loving each ther.



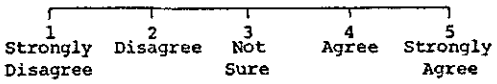
SECTION TWO

My Life with God

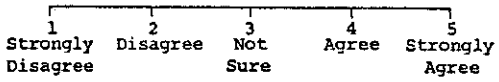
1. God speaks to me personally.



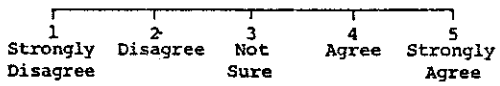
2. I believe God has an overall plan for my life.



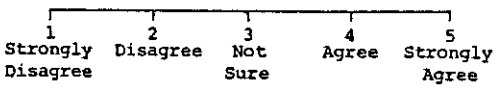
3. I enjoy reading the Bible.



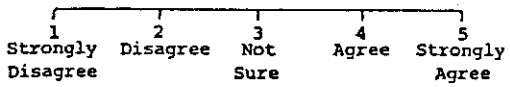
4. At the moment I am not sure I am saved.



5. I find it easy to pray.

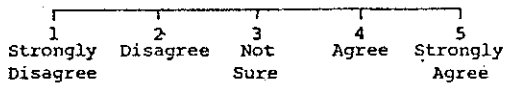


6. I believe God wants me to be baptised.

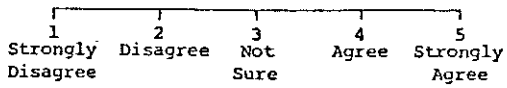


My Life with My Family

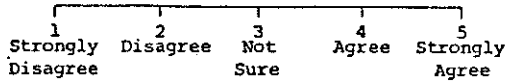
1. I feel that my parents are not as interested in me as I would like.



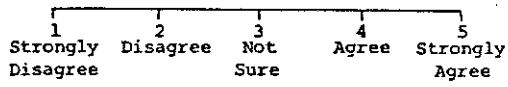
2. I feel my parents do not trust me.



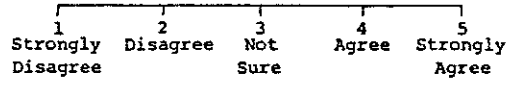
3. I feel my parents force religion on me.



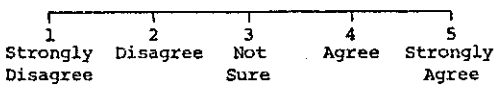
4. I cannot get along with my brothers and sisters.



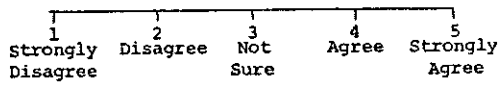
5. I am able to talk about personal matters with my parents.



6. I feel my friends are not welcome at home.

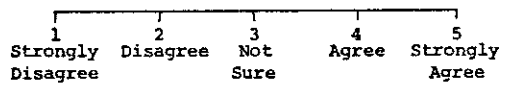


7. I feel my parents are expecting too much of me.

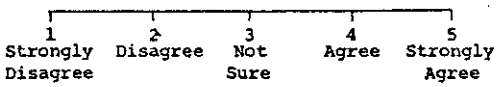


My Life and Myself

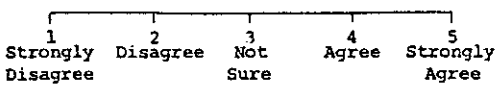
1. My parents know who my friends are.



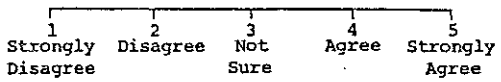
2. On the whole I am very happy.



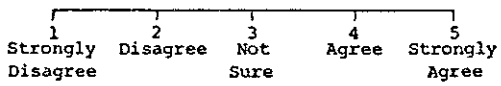
3. I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal place with others.



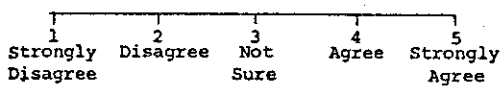
4. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.



5. I am able to do things as well as most other people.

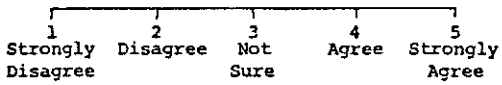


6. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.

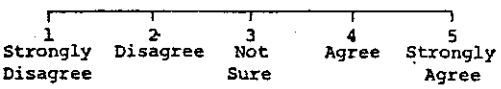


My Life and Others

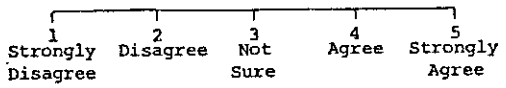
1. I have no close friends.



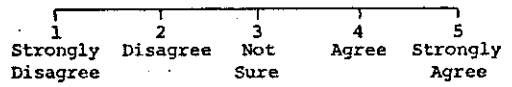
2. No one understands me.



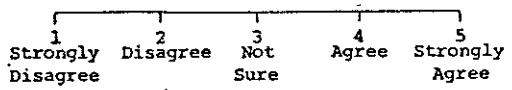
3. I frequently feel out of place because I feel awkward.



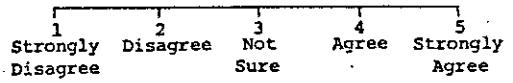
4. Others my age seem to enjoy life more than I do.



5. I am not as popular as I would like to be.

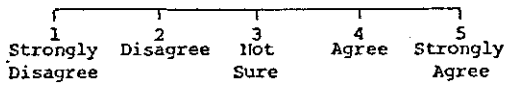


6. I am often watched by other people.

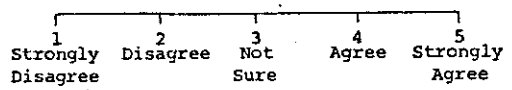


My Life and My Church

1. My church is interested in young people.

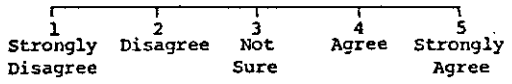


2. I generally enjoy the Sabbath day.

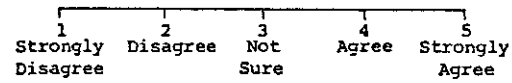


3. I feel relaxed around my minister (Pastor).

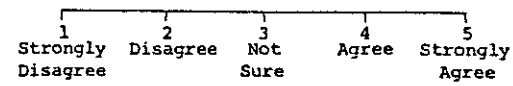
4. The Divine Service is generally very interesting.



5. I want to be baptised so I will feel I belong.



6. I feel comfortable inviting my friends to church.



SECTION THREE

Please complete the following sentences. Write what you personally would like to say, not what you think others want you to say.

1. I think church .....

.....

2. Before I am baptised I suggest .....

.....

3. I want to be a Seventh-day Adventist Christian because .....

.....

4. If Jesus came to take me to heaven it would be because .....

.....

APPENDIX 7

GUIDANCE TOWARD BAPTISM

BY PARENTS

GUIDANCE TOWARD BAPTISM

BY PARENTS

CANDIDATE'S NAME .....
PARENTS' NAMES .....
ADDRESS .....
PHONE ..... CHURCH .....

What joy there must be in your heart as your son/daughter prepares for baptism. Thank you for the honour of planning with you for this significant event.

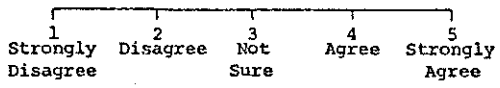
Baptism is a transitional event in the life of a child. It relates to how a child has developed and feels about himself, his home, his church, and his Saviour, Jesus Christ. The following statements will help to assess these important areas in your child's life and his readiness for baptism.

Instructions

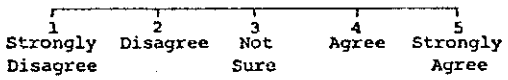
Please respond to each statement with a tick at the appropriate score. Think through each statement so that your response is more definite than just a 'yes' or 'no' answer. Tick one (1) if you strongly disagree or five (5) if you strongly agree. A score of three (3) is acceptable if you are not sure, so is a comment beside any statement. To make this check list easy to read, insert your child's name at the beginning of each statement.

Bible Knowledge

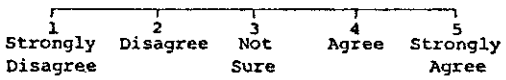
1 . . . enjoys and participates in family worship.



2 . . . has regular private devotions.

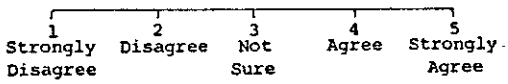


3 . . . reads Christian literature other than the Bible.

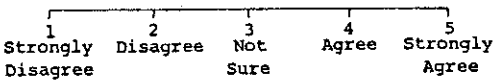


Spirituality

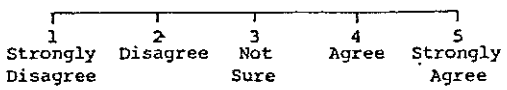
1 . . . has given indications of spiritual development.



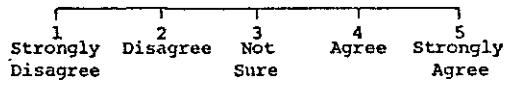
2 . . . has a warm response to spiritual values.



3 . . . often discusses spiritual concerns with you.

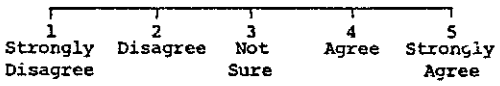


4 . . . is eager to be baptised this year.

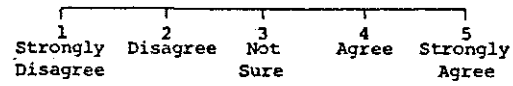


5. . . . enjoys the following spiritual activities:

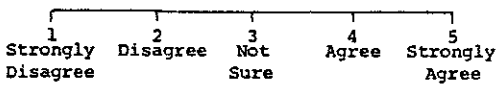
Sabbath School



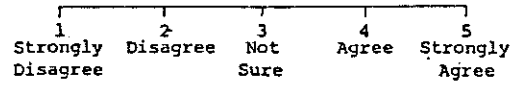
Divine Service



Pathfinders



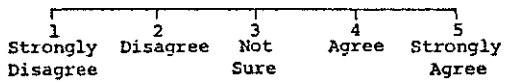
Socials



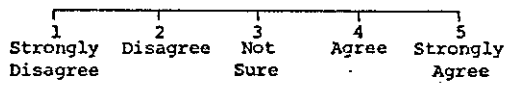
Attitudes and Relations

1 . . . has a good relationship with his/her

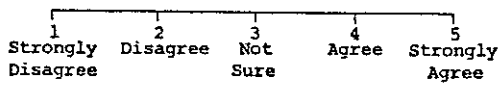
Father



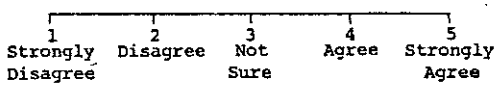
Mother



Brothers

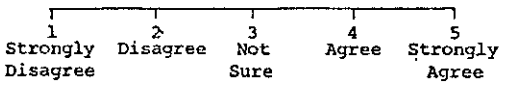


Sisters

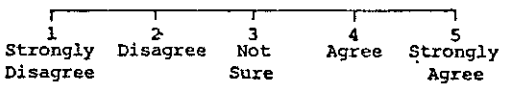


2 . . . has no difficulty in relating to

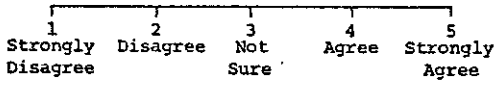
People his own age



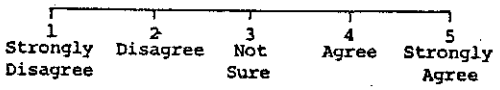
People younger than himself



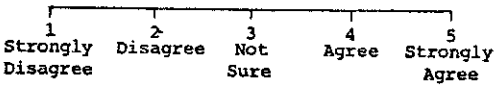
People older than himself



3 . . . enjoys school most days.

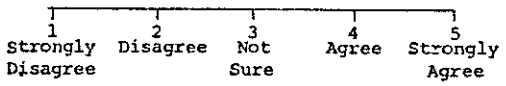


4 . . . has at least one good friend.

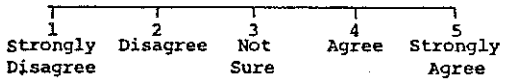


Maturation

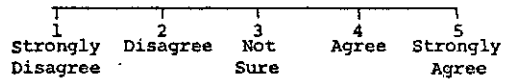
1 . . . is normally a stable person.



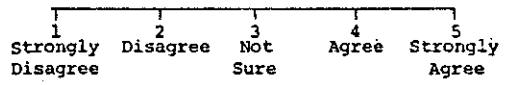
2 . . . is as mature as can be expected for his/her age.



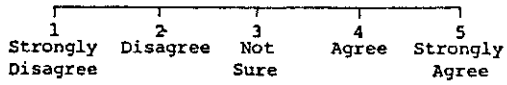
3 . . . accepts and carries out responsibilities.



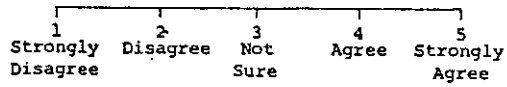
4 . . . is trustworthy and honest.



5 . . . accepts and responds to discipline when it is administered.



6 . . . has reached puberty.



Baptismal Readiness

1. My child is old enough to be baptised. Yes☐ No☐

2. My child is ready to be baptised. Yes☐ No☐
   Please comment if you disagree .....
   .....

3. Before my child is baptised I make the following suggestions:
   (a)

   (b)

   (c)

4. I believe the most acceptable age for a growing child to be baptised is .....
   I believe this because .....
   .....

APPENDIX 8

GUIDANCE TOWARD BAPTISM

BY TEACHER

GUIDANCE TOWARD BAPTISM

BY TEACHER

CANDIDATE'S NAME .....

TEACHER'S NAME .....

This check list will assist in determining the above person's readiness for baptism. Some statements may seem irrelevant but they will help to identify life patterns which indicate a readiness for baptism or areas which need further discussion or development. Your willingness to assist in this respect is appreciated.

Instructions

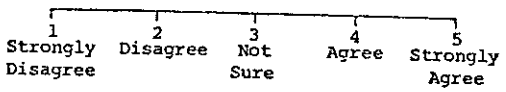
Please respond to each statement with a tick at the appropriate score. Think through each statement so that your response is more definite than just a 'yes' or 'no' answer. Tick one (1) if you strongly disagree or five (5) if you strongly agree. A score of three (3) is acceptable if you are not sure, so is a comment beside any statement.

To make each statement easy to read, insert the candidate's name at the beginning.

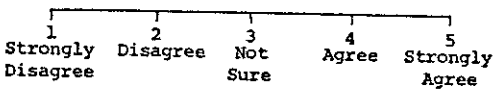
ATTITUDES AND RELATIONSHIPS

School

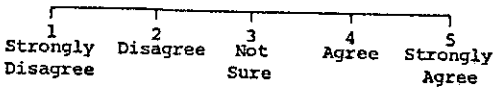
1 . . . responds positively to Bible class.



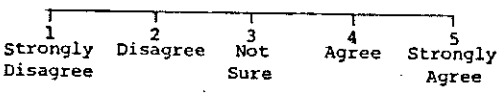
2 . . . generally enjoys school.



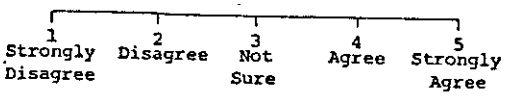
3 . . . has respect for teachers.



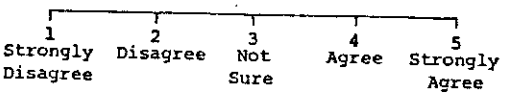
4 . . . is accepted among his/her peers.



5 . . . has a close friend.

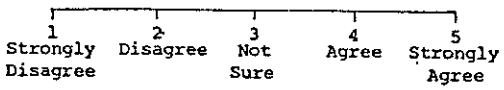


6 . . . has no specific difficulty relating to older or younger students.

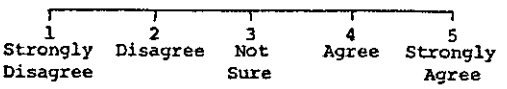


Home

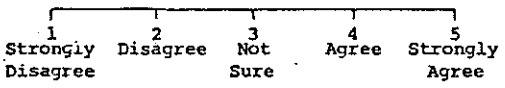
1 . . . parents are interested in his/her progress.



2 . . . has good relationships with his/her parents.

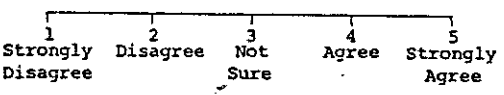


3 . . . is spiritually encouraged by his/her parents.

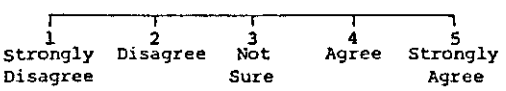


Church

1 . . . has a positive attitude toward Church.

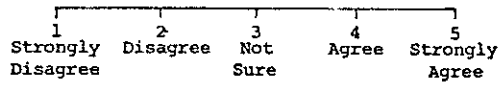


2 . . . feels Church life is boring.

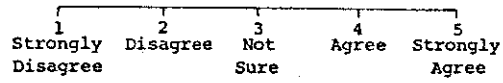


ABILITIES

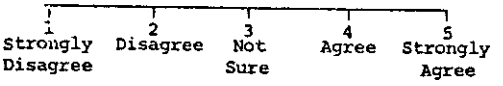
1 . . . enjoys studying the Bible.



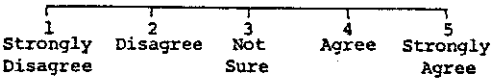
2 . . . has, in Bible class, showed academic ability in keeping with general academic abilities.



3 . . . has a warm response to spiritual values.

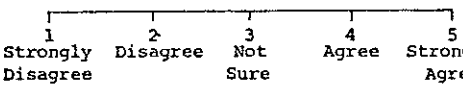


4 . . . has given indications of spiritual development.

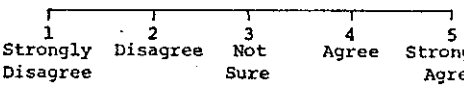


MATURITY

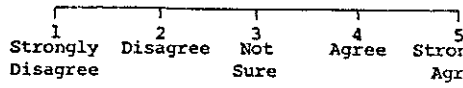
1 . . . is normally a stable person.



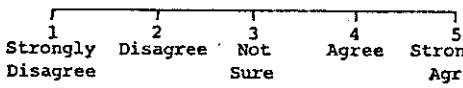
2 . . . is as mature as can be expected for his/her age.



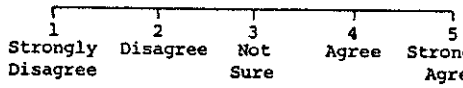
3 . . . is trustworthy and honest.



4 . . . accepts and carries out responsibilities.



5 . . . accepts and responds to discipline when it is administered.



BAPTISMAL READINESS

1. I believe he/she is ready for baptism. Yes No
   Please comment if answer is 'no' .....
   .....

2. Before he/she is baptised I have the following suggestions to make.
   (a)

   (b)

   (c)

3. I believe that the most acceptable age for a growing child to be baptised is .....
   I believe this because .....
   .....

Teacher's Signature ..... Date .....

APPENDIX 9

GUIDANCE TOWARD BAPTISM

BY PASTOR AND JUNIOR YOUTH LEADERS

GUIDANCE TOWARD BAPTISM

BY PASTOR AND JUNIOR YOUTH LEADERS

CANDIDATE'S NAME .....

This check list will assist in determining the above person's readiness for baptism. Some statements may seem irrelevant but they will help to identify life patterns which indicate a readiness for baptism or areas which need further discussion or development. Your willingness to assist in this respect is appreciated.

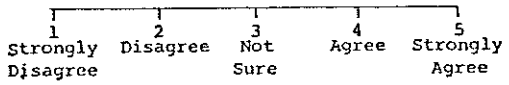
Instructions

Please respond to each statement with a tick at the appropriate score. Think through each statement so that your response is more definite than just a 'yes' or 'no' answer. Tick one (1) if you strongly disagree or five (5) if you strongly agree. A score of three (3) is acceptable if you are not sure, so is a comment beside any statement. To make this check list easy to

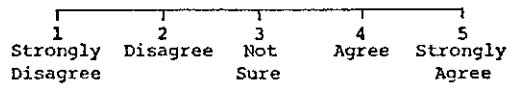
To make each statement easy to read, insert the candidate's name at the beginning.

Spirituality and Bible Study

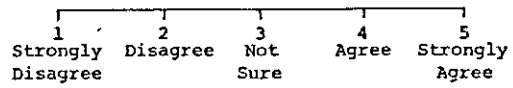
1 . . . has a warm response to spiritual values.



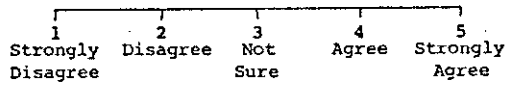
2 . . . has given indications of spiritual development.



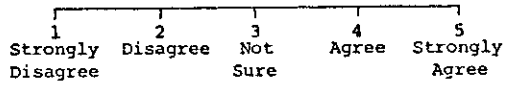
3 . . . normally studies Sabbath School lesson.



4 . . . enjoys and participates in Bible discussion.

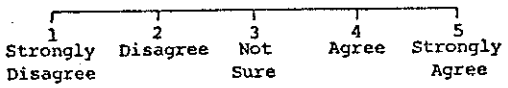


5 . . . enjoys studying the Bible.

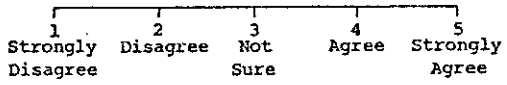


Church

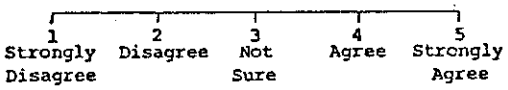
1 . . . generally enjoys church life.



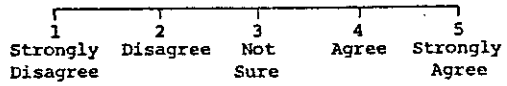
2 . . . respects church leaders.



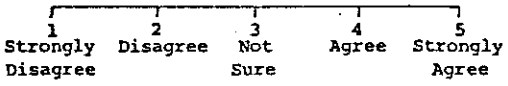
3 . . . regularly attends Divine Service



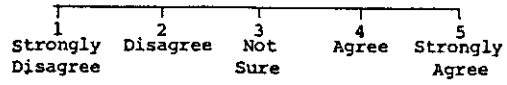
Sabbath School



Pathfinders

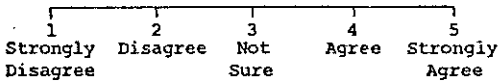


Baptismal Class

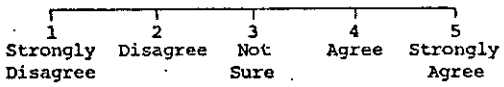


Home

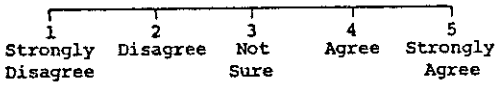
1 . . . parents are interested in his/her progress.



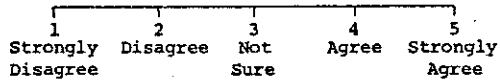
2 . . . has good relationships with his/her parents.



3 . . . is spiritually encouraged by his/her parents.

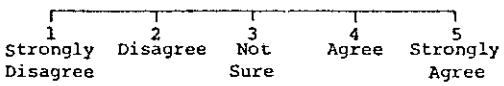


4 . . . parents recognize their responsibility to foster his/her further spiritual growth.

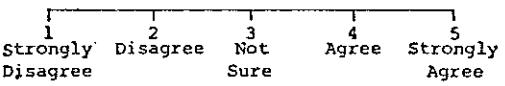


Maturity

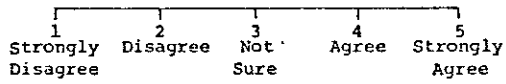
1 . . . is normally a stable person.



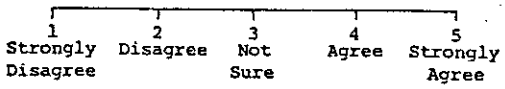
2 . . . is as mature as can be expected for his/her age.



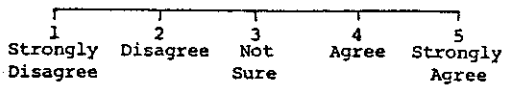
3 . . . accepts and carries out responsibilities.



4 . . . is trustworthy and honest.



5 . . . accepts and responds to discipline when it is administered.



Baptismal Readiness

1. We believe he/she is ready for baptism. Yes No
   Please comment if answer is 'no' .....
   .....

2. Before he/she is baptised we have the following suggestions to make.
   (a)

   (b)

   (c)

3. We believe that the most acceptable age for a growing child to be baptised is .....
   We believe this because .....
   .....

4. Pastor's Comments:

APPENDIX 10

CANDIDATE RESPONSES DOCUMENTED

CANDIDATE RESPONSES DOCUMENTED

Candidates were asked to respond to the following statements on a five point scale by marking one (1) if they strongly disgreed and five (5) if they strongly agreed.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree

Responses were given their individual value, totalled, then divided by the number of candidates. The average response is recorded in brackets after each statement.

SECTION ONE

The Gospel

1. There is nothing we can bring to offer Jesus so that He might save us. (2.8)
2. The gospel is God giving man more love than he deserves. (3.1)
3. Jesus is our Saviour and we are saved by being obedient to Him. (3.9)
4. Jesus, God's Son, lived a righteous life and died for my sin and by believing in Him I am saved. (4.5)

Sin

1. Sin is doing things wrong. (3.9)
2. Sin is inside us even when Jesus has forgiven us. (2.7)
3. A person at birth is neither good nor bad. (3.2)
4. There are some sins so bad that God will not forgive. (1.2)

Forgiveness

1. We are forgiven only if we don't do it again. (1.6)
2. Forgiveness is given to all who believe Jesus died for them and accept Him as their Saviour. (4.7)
3. The only sins forgiven are the ones we especially ask forgiveness for. (2.9)
4. I believe God has forgiven my sins. (4.4)

Faith

1. Faith is the key that unlocks salvation. (4.1)
2. Faith is accepting that Jesus died for me, takes my sin, and gives me His forgiveness. (4.3)

3. Faith is constantly needed by the Christian. (4.6)
4. Faith is the gift of God but the power to exercise it is ours. (4.1)

Repentance

1. Repentance means being sorry for sin. (4.1)
2. Repentance means turning away from evil to God. (3.9)
3. Repentance does not need to change my life. (2.1)
4. Repentance is an experience which happens only before baptism. (1.6)

Obedience

1. I must be obedient before God can save me. (3.3)
2. Obedience is not always easy but Christians love to obey God. (3.9)
3. The main emphasis of the Gospel is on God's rules of conduct. (2.7)
4. It does not make too much difference if Christians sin because they are forgiven by God. (1.8)

Church

1. God saves only Seventh-day Adventist Christians. (1.2)
2. Christians naturally love each other. (3.1)
3. The Church is only a place for Bible study, prayer, and various other meetings. (2.6)
4. The Church should be a group of people who are involved in one another's lives by sharing with, caring for, encouraging and loving each other. (4.6)

SECTION TWO

My Life with God

1. God speaks to me personally. (3.5)
2. I believe God has an overall plan for my life. (4.3)
3. I enjoy reading the Bible. (3.1)
4. At the moment I am not sure I am saved. (3.0)
5. I find it easy to pray. (4.0)

My Life with My Family

1.	I feel that my parents are not as interested in me as I would like.	(2.1)
2.	I feel my parents do not trust me.	(1.6)
3.	I feel my parents force religion on me.	(1.6)
4.	I cannot get along with my brothers and sisters.	(2.7)
5.	I am able to talk about personal matters with my parents.	(3.1)
6.	I feel my friends are not welcome at home.	(2.1)
7.	I feel my parents are expecting too much of me.	(2.2)

My Life and Myself

1.	My parents know who my friends are.	(3.4)
2.	On the whole I am very happy.	(3.7)
3.	I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal place with others.	(4.1)
4.	I feel that I have a number of good qualities.	(4.0)
5.	I am able to do things as well as most other people.	(4.1)
6.	I feel I do not have much to be proud of.	(2.6)

My Life and Others

1.	I have no close friends.	(1.8)
2.	No one understands me.	(1.7)
3.	I frequently feel out of place because I feel awkward.	(2.2)
4.	Others my age seem to enjoy life more than I do.	(2.4)
5.	I am not as popular as I would like to be.	(2.9)
6.	I am often watched by other people.	(3.4)

My Life and My Church

1.	My church is interested in young people.	(3.7)
2.	I generally enjoy the Sabbath day.	(3.7)
3.	I feel relaxed around my minister (Pastor).	(3.6)
4.	The Divine Service is generally very interesting.	(3.8)
5.	I want to be baptized so I will feel I belong.	(3.6)
6.	I feel comfortable inviting my friends to church.	(3.1)

APPENDIX 11

EVALUATION OF CANDIDATES

EVALUATION OF CANDIDATE

This sheet draws together relevent details highlighted through the project which relate to an adolescent's readiness for baptism.

PERSONAL

Name: Dale Age: 12 Reached puberty: Yes [✓] No [ ]

CHURCH

1. Attendance, involvement and attitude to church life: Regularly attends and enjoys the church social life. Believes the church pushes baptism.

2. Regularly attended baptismal class: Yes [✓] No [ ]

3. Participation in baptismal class: Freely communicated to the leader and participated eagerly with his bible.

ABILITIES AND APTITUDES

1. Demonstrated the capacity for religious insights and possible abstract thinking in the following concepts:
Gospel [✓] Sin [✓] Forgiveness [✓] Faith [✓] Repentance [✓]
Obedience [✓]

2. Biblical knowledge: Dale has developed during the year. He asks questions and now enjoys learning about the scriptures.

3. Spirituality: There is a warmth and earnestness in this lad. He says, "I want to go to heaven because God is my best friend." He has his private devotions but finds bible reading difficult.

4. Evidence of social maturity in keeping with his/her age in the home, school, and church: Dale is a little socially inhibited because he is not sure of himself, his abilities, nor of his future. Dale seeks identity through physical prowess.

5. Ability to initiate social relationships: Has some awkwardness here but is able to continue established friendships.

6. Peer friendships: Dale's parents see him with normal peer relationships but he is not sure that he has close friends.

READINESS FOR BAPTISM

Response by candidate and other significant people:

1. Candidate: He desires baptism.

2. Parents: "He is old enough and ready."

3. Teachers: "He may need to understand the significance of baptism for himself."

4. Pastor and Junior Youth Leaders: Dale reflects the group image rather than objectifying his own beliefs. He should be encouraged in his spiritual growth by baptism and supported as he learns to develop his own belief structure.

Nothing distinctive yet nothing out of place: a good lad who needs to be encouraged and affirmed.

EVALUATION OF CANDIDATE

This sheet draws together relevent details highlighted through the project which relate to an adolescent's readiness for baptism.

PERSONAL

Name: Vicky Age: 12 Reached puberty: Yes [ ] No [✓]

CHURCH

1. Attendance, involvement and attitude to church life: A positive and open attitude to church life but is rather shy to express it.

2. Regularly attended baptismal class: Yes [✓] No [ ]

3. Participation in baptismal class: Vicky is attentive to the leaders, and happy to read the texts and respond with comments. Good participation for a younger member of the group.

ABILITIES AND APTITUDES

1. Demonstrated the capacity for religious insights and possible abstract thinking in the following concepts:
Gospel [X] Sin [X] Forgiveness [✓] Faith [✓] Repentance [✓]
Obedience [X]

2. Biblical knowledge: Enjoys regular family worship and study.

3. Spirituality: Has shown spiritual growth and a warm response to spiritual values.

4. Evidence of social maturity in keeping with his/her age in the home, school, and church: Vicky has a good self image and confides in her parents. Her reserve will most likely change to confidence with puberty.

5. Ability to initiate social relationships: Her reserve and natural shyness inhibits her.

6. Peer friendships: Adequate and normal.

READINESS FOR BAPTISM

Response by candidate and other significant people:

1. Candidate: Not expecting to be baptized.

2. Parents: "We feel that Vicky needs another twelve months preparation."

3. Teachers: He gave no comment.

4. Pastor and Junior Youth Leaders: Vicky and her parents had already requested that baptism be deferred before the Pastor asked for a commitment.

If Vicky had requested baptism I believe that it should not have been denied. Baptism would have affirmed her into the church. This would, however, need to be followed through with further studies to encourage personal spiritual development.

EVALUATION OF CANDIDATE

This sheet draws together relevent details highlighted through the project which relate to an adolescent's readiness for baptism.

PERSONAL

Name: Tanya Age: 12 Reached puberty: Yes [ ] No [✓]

CHURCH

1. Attendance, involvement and attitude to church life: Almost regular but is not consistently involved and does not have an overly positive attitude to church life.

2. Regularly attended baptismal class: Yes [ ] No [✓] About half the time.

3. Participation in baptismal class: On only two occasions did Tanya bring her bible. She did however respond actively when present.

ABILITIES AND APTITUDES

1. Demonstrated the capacity for religious insights and possible abstract thinking in the following concepts:
Gospel [✓] Sin [✗] Forgiveness [✓] Faith [✓] Repentance [✓]
Obedience [✓]

2. Biblical knowledge: Not a good achiever in Bible class at school but has a good working knowledge. Could be lazy.

3. Spirituality: Not spiritually orientated, but she does believe God speaks to her personally.

4. Evidence of social maturity in keeping with his/her age in the home, school, and church: Tanya is not socially mature. She does not find it easy to relate to her family, school life, or church. She is unsure of herself and expresses this in rebellion and assertiveness.

5. Ability to initiate social relationships: Tanya does have a personal charm which gains her friends, yet belies personal weaknesses.

6. Peer friendships: She is accepted among her peers and has close friends.

READINESS FOR BAPTISM

Response by candidate and other significant people:

1. Candidate: Tanya desires baptism.

2. Parents: They have pushed for Tanya's baptism and believe her to be ready.

3. Teachers: "She is not ready," says her Bible teacher, "because she shows a poor attitude to Bible class and is often a negative and disruptive element in the class."

4. Pastor and Junior Youth Leaders: Recommended for baptism.

Even though there could be strong arguments why Tanya should not be baptized, she needs to be affirmed by the church because that is one of the significant authorities in her life. Not to baptize her could be interpreted as rejection by God's representatives. The writer believes that because she has presented for baptism and has worked toward this event, the church should accept her as a person who has made the right decision even though we may not agree the decision has been made at the deepest possible level.

EVALUATION OF CANDIDATE

This sheet draws together relevent details highlighted through the project which relate to an adolescent's readiness for baptism.

PERSONAL

Name: Kelly Age: 13 Reached puberty: Yes [✓] No [ ]

CHURCH

1. Attendance, involvement and attitude to church life: Kelly has a positive attitude to church life but finds some spiritual meetings difficult to understand.

2. Regularly attended baptismal class: Yes [✓] No [ ]

3. Participation in baptismal class: One of the most responsive in the group and openly expresses her view when given opportunity. She also enjoyed using her bible.

ABILITIES AND APTITUDES

1. Demonstrated the capacity for religious insights and possible abstract thinking in the following concepts:
Gospel [✓] Sin [✓] Forgiveness [✓] Faith [✓] Repentance [X]
Obedience [✓]

2. Biblical knowledge: Kelly has a good understanding of her bible.

3. Spirituality: A good spiritual lass who says, "God speaks to me and has a plan for my life." She is, however, hesitant about God's acceptance of her.

4. Evidence of social maturity in keeping with his/her age in the home, school, and church: A high level of social maturity and a willingness to listen and please.

5. Ability to initiate social relationships: Has no marked difficulty, just a natural shyness.

6. Peer friendships: Has at least one good friend.

READINESS FOR BAPTISM

Response by candidate and other significant people:

1. Candidate: Kelly is eager to be baptized this year.

2. Parents: "Old enough and ready for baptism."

3. Teachers: "Yes, ready for baptism."

4. Pastor and Junior Youth Leaders: There is nothing which should stop Kelly from being baptized.

EVALUATION OF CANDIDATE

This sheet draws together relevent details highlighted through the project which relate to an adolescent's readiness for baptism.

PERSONAL

Name: Ross Age: 13 Reached puberty: Yes [ ] No [ ] not sure

CHURCH

1. Attendance, involvement and attitude to church life: Has a happy, open, attitude to church life and is involved, but finds Divine Service uninteresting.

2. Regularly attended baptismal class: Yes [✓] No [ ]

3. Participation in baptismal class: Faithfully brought his bible every week, and responded consistantly with meaningful comments.

ABILITIES AND APTITUDES

1. Demonstrated the capacity for religious insights and possible abstract thinking in the following concepts:
Gospel [✓] Sin [X] Forgiveness [✓] Faith [✓] Repentance [✓] Obedience [✓]

2. Biblical knowledge: Ross knows his bible well. He also enjoys Bible class at school.

3. Spirituality: Reveals a genuine, warm, spiritual interest but finds bible study, prayer and personal communion difficult.

4. Evidence of social maturity in keeping with his/her age in the home, school, and church: Hhe has an inner confidence and stability but is often reserved. He has conflict with siblings and believes his parents expect too much of him.

5. Ability to initiate social relationships: No apparent difficulty

6. Peer friendships: Ross enjoys many friends.

READINESS FOR BAPTISM

Response by candidate and other significant people:

1. Candidate: "God wants me to be baptized."

2. Parents: "This is Ross's personal decision."

3. Teachers: "He is ready for baptism."

4. Pastor and Junior Youth Leaders: "Ross has responded very positively to baptismal class. He reveals normal spiritual growth but is unsure of his personal salvation."

EVALUATION OF CANDIDATE

This sheet draws together relevent details highlighted through the project which relate to an adolescent's readiness for baptism.

PERSONAL

Name: Max Age: 13 Reached puberty: Yes [✓] No [ ]

CHURCH

1. Attendance, involvement and attitude to church life:
A regular attender with his family, but willfully detaches himself from normal activities. He is constantly seeking attention of peers.

2. Regularly attended baptismal class: Yes [✓] No [ ]

3. Participation in baptismal class: He only brought his bible twice, read two texts, and made four comments during seven weeks. He did not participate well and at times was unattentive.

ABILITIES AND APTITUDES

1. Demonstrated the capacity for religious insights and possible abstract thinking in the following concepts:
Gospel [ ] Sin [ ] Forgiveness [ ] Faith [ ] Repentance [ ]
Obedience [ ] Not known because he volunatrily decided against baptism before the candidates completed their questionnaires.

2. Biblical knowledge: Not exhibited.

3. Spirituality: No evidence of any because of an apparent disinterest.

4. Evidence of social maturity in keeping with his/her age in the home, school, and church: Max often used disruptive activities to seek affirmation. He seemed to present with a lack of self esteem.

5. Ability to initiate social relationships: Poor.

6. Peer friendships: He needed to be the centre of activity, and did not freely offer friendship.

READINESS FOR BAPTISM

Response by candidate and other significant people:

1. Candidate: Max did not participate in the session when the candidates completed their questionnaires.

2. Parents: With Max voluntarily decided to discontinue baptismal preparation.

3. Teachers: Max did not seem to present with the same 'anti' attitude at school. The teachers had no reason to believe he was not ready for baptism.

4. Pastor and Junior Youth Leaders: No decision was necessary.

EVALUATION OF CANDIDATE

This sheet draws together relevent details highlighted through the project which relate to an adolescent's readiness for baptism.

PERSONAL

Name: Anne Age: 13 Reached puberty: Yes [ ] No [✓]

CHURCH

1. Attendance, involvement and attitude to church life: Enjoys her quiet involvement in church life. She seems nonchalant at times.

2. Regularly attended baptismal class: Yes [✓] No [ ]

3. Participation in baptismal class: Most often brought her bible and enjoyed looking up and reading the texts but shy about responding with comments.

ABILITIES AND APTITUDES

1. Demonstrated the capacity for religious insights and possible abstract thinking in the following concepts:
Gospel [✓] Sin [✗] Forgiveness [✓] Faith [✓] Repentance [✓]
Obedience [✓]

2. Biblical knowledge: Has a good family grounding, co-operative in baptismal class, the lack of involvement at school could be interpreted as disinterest.

3. Spirituality: Her shyness makes expression of spiritual desires difficult. She enjoys her family's spiritual activities and believes God is interested in her future.

4. Evidence of social maturity in keeping with his/her age in the home, school, and church: Pubescence may give Anne inner security and facilitate the development of her social skills. Anne is still a child in an adult world.

5. Ability to initiate social relationships: Anne is very shy and therefore takes a while to get to know people.

6. Peer friendships: No lack of friends nor apparent concern to have more.

READINESS FOR BAPTISM

Response by candidate and other significant people:

1. Candidate: Would like to be baptized.

2. Parents: "She is ready for baptism."

3. Teachers: Two teachers are unsure of her readiness.

4. Pastor and Junior Youth Leaders: Recommended for baptism.

Because of the depth of spiritual commitment exhibited in her home and her own desire for baptism, Anne's stated reserve and immaturity will most probably change into more self assurance during pubescence. She lives in a good spiritual environment which will most likely facilitate personal religious development. Yes, she should be baptized.

EVALUATION OF CANDIDATE

This sheet draws together relevent details highlighted through the project which relate to an adolescent's readiness for baptism.

PERSONAL

Name: Craig Age: 13 Reached puberty: Yes [ ] No [✓]

CHURCH

1. Attendance, involvement and attitude to church life: Craig participates in and enjoys church life. He is eager and ready to co-operate.

2. Regularly attended baptismal class: Yes [✓] No [ ]

3. Participation in baptismal class: He brought his bible only half the time yet there were more significant verbal exchanges between Craig and the leader than any other candidate.

ABILITIES AND APTITUDES

1. Demonstrated the capacity for religious insights and possible abstract thinking in the following concepts:
Gospel [✓] Sin [✓] Forgiveness [✓] Faith [✓] Repentance [✓]
Obedience [✓]

2. Biblical knowledge: An excellent understanding of scripture and always absorbing knowledge even when talking or doing other things.

3. Spirituality: Both parents and Bible teacher have seen spiritual development in Craig. He has yet to develop personal devotional habits.

4. Evidence of social maturity in keeping with his/her age in the home, school, and church: Socially active and capable.

5. Ability to initiate social relationships: Is somewhat hesitant but capable.

6. Peer friendships: No want of friends.

READINESS FOR BAPTISM

Response by candidate and other significant people:

1. Candidate: "I would like to be baptized."

2. Parents: "He is old enough and ready for baptism."

3. Teachers: "He is ready."

4. Pastor and Junior Youth Leaders: "He is ready intellectually, emotionally, socially, and spiritually."

EVALUATION OF CANDIDATE

This sheet draws together relevent details highlighted through the project which relate to an adolescent's readiness for baptism.

PERSONAL

Name: Greg Age: 14 Reached puberty: Yes [✓] No [ ]

CHURCH

1. Attendance, involvement and attitude to church life: Regularly attends and is involved with his family. Demonstrated some disinterest in spiritual activities.

2. Regularly attended baptismal class: Yes [✓] No [ ]

3. Participation in baptismal class: Actively enjoys the classes and responded with many comments. Sometimes detached himself from the group and talked or played with another candidate.

ABILITIES AND APTITUDES

1. Demonstrated the capacity for religious insights and possible abstract thinking in the following concepts:
Gospel [✓] Sin [✓] Forgiveness [✓] Faith [✓] Repentance [✓]
Obedience [x]

2. Biblical knowledge: Not strong but adequate. He did not bring his bible consistently to baptismal class.

3. Spirituality: Did not seem to be very spiritually minded but believed God speaks to him personally and enjoys praying to Him.

4. Evidence of social maturity in keeping with his/her age in the home, school, and church: Very capable of good social behaviour, but at times regressed into immature and provocative activities.

5. Ability to initiate social relationships: Has good resources to start and develop relationships.

6. Peer friendships: Feels he has no close friends although he is very popular.

READINESS FOR BAPTISM

Response by candidate and other significant people:

1. Candidate: Unsure of his ultimate decision.

2. Parents: Concerned that Greg may not be ready. Eager for him to make a commitment which he eventually did.

3. Teachers: "I have not noticed any particular evidence of an important decision like this being made."

4. Pastor and Junior Youth Leaders: "Only in the last weeks prior to baptism did Greg respond to spiritual values. Significant changes had been made."

EVALUATION OF CANDIDATE

This sheet draws together relevent details highlighted through the project which relate to an adolescent's readiness for baptism.

PERSONAL

Name: Stan Age: 15 Reached puberty: Yes [✓] No [ ]

CHURCH

1. Attendance, involvement and attitude to church life: Enthusiastic about church life and makes a positive contribution.

2. Regularly attended baptismal class: Yes [✓] No [ ]

3. Participation in baptismal class: Stan has an agile mind and enjoyed discussion, especially on teen issues.

ABILITIES AND APTITUDES

1. Demonstrated the capacity for religious insights and possible abstract thinking in the following concepts:
Gospel [✓] Sin [✓] Forgiveness [✓] Faith [✓] Repentance [✓]
Obedience [x]

2. Biblical knowledge: Has a good Adventist grounding, was eager to learn but did not always enjoy reading or studying the scriptures.

3. Spirituality: Stan has revealed strong spiritual desires and finds it easy to pray.

4. Evidence of social maturity in keeping with his/her age in the home, school, and church: Good social maturity and has a positive attitude to church relationships.

5. Ability to initiate social relationships: Very confident.

6. Peer friendships: Has a large group of friends.

READINESS FOR BAPTISM

Response by candidate and other significant people:

1. Candidate: Desires baptism.

2. Parents: "Ready for baptism."

3. Teachers: "Stan is ready."

4. Pastor and Junior Youth Leaders: "A very positive adolescent who has a genuine love for his Saviour and church."

EVALUATION OF CANDIDATE

This sheet draws together relevent details highlighted through the project which relate to an adolescent's readiness for baptism.

PERSONAL

Name: Brian Age: 15 Reached puberty: Yes [✓] No [ ]

CHURCH

1. Attendance, involvement and attitude to church life: A normal teenager who regularly attends but is not overly involved.

2. Regularly attended baptismal class: Yes [✓] No [ ]

3. Participation in baptismal class: No vigorous participation. He did not read one text aloud and only responded with five comments in the six lessons he attended.

ABILITIES AND APTITUDES

1. Demonstrated the capacity for religious insights and possible abstract thinking in the following concepts:
Gospel [✓] Sin [✓] Forgiveness [✓] Faith [✓] Repentance [✓]
Obedience [✓]

2. Biblical knowledge: An unknown because there was no formal test and he did not respond in baptismal class.

3. Spirituality: No clear spiritual intensity but parents and a teacher have seen spiritual growth in Brian.

4. Evidence of social maturity in keeping with his/her age in the home, school, and church: Rather nonchalant socially. Brian has not thought through his relationships. He does not have any problems or questions to talk over with his parents.

5. Ability to initiate social relationships: Not a strong point for Brian; he would be happy for others to initiate.

6. Peer friendships: Enough to be content.

READINESS FOR BAPTISM

Response by candidate and other significant people:

1. Candidate: Expected to be baptized.

2. Parents: They believe he is ready for baptism.

3. Teachers: Both teachers indicated he was ready.

4. Pastor and Junior Youth Leaders: "Yes, he is ready, although he may need some thoughtful work in a few years."

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