

UNIVERSIDAD DE MONTEMORELOS
FACULTAD TEOLÓGICA ADVENTISTA DE MEXICO
MAESTRIA EN TEOLOGIA PASTORAL



AN ASSURANCE OF SALVATION IN MONTEMORELOS

A THESIS

PRESENTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
MASTERS IN PASTORAL THEOLOGY

BY

CLINTON BALDWIN

NOVEMBER, 1995

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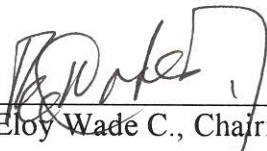
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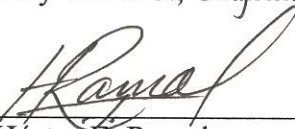
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15 de Noviembre, 1995

Date Approved

DEDICATION

In dedication to my loving wife Andrea, whose love and support
helped to make this work possible.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Declaration of Theme:

An assurance of salvation is the solid confidence that one is totally accepted before God. It means that your sins are forgiven, and you now possess the firm unwavering knowledge that you have eternal life, and will have it in the future when Jesus comes.

The individual is very conscious that this has nothing to do with his good works, but is based totally on the atoning sacrifice of Jesus (John 3:16-19; 36, 5:24; Eph 2:8-10; Rom 5:1-10). An assurance of salvation has a liberating effect that gives the Christian inner joy, faith, and power to live right.

Problem

It is beyond doubt that many Seventh-day Adventists do not possess a healthy assurance of salvation. The passion of the present General Conference president, Robert Folkenberg, is that his members have a greater and more genuine experience of this virtue.

Recent studies done by the General Conference reveal that, although most of the members understand and accept the doctrines of the church, only a small percentage have an assurance of eternal salvation.¹ Could this be a significant reason for our many spiritual

¹Robert Folkenberg, "Needed: Gospel Preaching," Ministry, September 1994, 10-11.

failures? Could it be that Seventh-Day Adventists in general are not experiencing freedom in Christ, but are still pensive as to their eternal destiny; thus they are not liberated to live a successful Christian life? We believe that this is an area of our church's experience that deserves serious attention.

Objective

In this study we hope to:

- One: Establish a sound theology of an assurance of salvation;
- Two: Ascertain the level of understanding and experience of this concept among the Seventh-day Adventist members of Montemorelos;
- Three: Produce a practical model, that will enhance an assurance of salvation among God's people of the area.

Again, we trust that this project will light yet another candle, which will illuminate the path of God's people as we travel to the consummation of our salvation.

Methodology

1. The theology of an assurance of salvation will be developed through a Biblical exposition of a number of key salvation concepts, namely; justification, kingdom, eternal life, perfection and sealing.
2. The nature and understanding of an assurance of salvation will be ascertained by the application of a questionnaire to at least ten of the churches of the area.

Delimitations/Limitations

We will seek to ascertain the nature of an assurance of salvation within the ambits of the Seventh-day Adventist's salvation history and also within the scope of the theology of an assurance of salvation developed within this paper. We cannot consider members of the Montemorelos University Church as this church is a church of a far different nature than the other churches in the town.

CHAPTER II

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST SALVATION'S HISTORY: A BRIEF SURVEY

Whatever is the nature of an assurance of salvation in this area, it would logically be greatly influenced by the church's salvation history, as the Seventh-day Adventist Church is an extremely organized body which filters its major doctrinal beliefs with great effect, to every member church. In light of this fact, we take a look at the church's salvation history, so that we can view that of Montemorelos within its wider context.

Seventh-day Adventist salvation's history¹ traces its roots back to William Miller in the early nineteenth century. In 1818 William Miller, a New York farmer, became convinced from his ardent study of the Bible that Christ would return in 1843.² With tremendous zeal and energy he began to preach his advent message, which quickly caught on. By 1843 there were approximately 100,000 Adventist believers anxiously waiting for the second coming.³

¹We are aware that the church traces its roots back to the early church. We are here concerned with the formal Seventh-day Adventist organization which has its immediate roots in the Advent Movement of the 1830s and 1840s.

²R. W. Schwarz, Light Bearers to the Remnant (Boise: Pacific Press, 1976), 13-14.

³C. Mervyn Maxwell, "The Investigative Judgment Its Early Development", in The Sanctuary and the Atonement, ed. Arnold V. Wallenkampf and W. Richard Leshar (Washington, DC: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1981), 551.

After a number of failed dates¹ they finally settled on October 22, 1844 as being the undisputable day when Christ would return.² That day is still being referred to as the great disappointment day of 1844.

As a result of this bitter disappointment, the Advent believers were divided into three main groups,³ one of which now stands as the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This group reinterpreted October 22 to signify that instead of Christ returning to earth, He was moving from the first apartment to the second apartment of the heavenly sanctuary, to continue His work of atonement. A work similar to that of the high priest in the Old Testament sanctuary.⁴

This was a heavenly judgment, in which sins that were forgiven and not blotted out would eventually be blotted out.⁵ The judgment began with the dead, and none knew how

¹Such as February 10 and 15, 1843; April 14, 1843; March 21, 1844; April 18, 1844. Schwarz, Light Bearers to the Remnant, 44-50.

²Ibid., 48-50.

³One group gave up their faith in the 2,300 days (perhaps half of them); another group, approximately thirty to fifty thousand, retained the 2,300 days, but looked forward to future termination dates; and the third, a few thousand, still held to the 2,300 days and October 22; but reinterpreted the event of October 22, as the commencement of the pre-Advent judgement. This group became the Seventh-day Adventist Church. See C. Mervyn Maxwell, "The Investigative Judgment Its Early Development", 551.

⁴Arthur W. Spalding, Origin and History of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1961), 103.

⁵P. Gerard Damsteegt, Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 127.

soon it would pass to the righteous living.¹

The keeping of the Ten Commandments and the Sabbath in particular were the means for qualifying the believer for passing this judgment.² Of course he could only accomplish this by the power of Christ.³ When an individual's name comes up in the judgment and he passes the judgment he would be sealed for eternal life.⁴ The whole process was referred to as the cleansing of the sanctuary.⁵

All this was anchored in the belief that Christ's work on the cross did not constitute a full and complete atonement,⁶ but was simply a sacrifice. The atonement He began at His

¹Ellen G. White, Great Controversy (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1950), 491.

²C. Mervyn Maxwell, "Investigative Judgment Its Early Development", 561, 576. For a vivid description of the legalistic attitude of the early Adventists see A.V. Olson, Through Crisis to Victory 1888-1901 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1966), 9-15.

³While they were legalists they still believed in the grace of God, but as A.V. Olson said, "the vital life-giving doctrines of the gospel, justification, sanctification. . . were taken for granted. They were neglected." *Ibid.*, 10-15. See also, Ellen G. White, Selected Messages (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1958), 1:371-372.

⁴Damsteegt, Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission, 143-149.

⁵*Ibid.*, 253.

⁶Schwarz, Light Bearers to the Remnant, 168. C. Mervyn Maxwell, "Sanctuary and Atonement in SDA Theology and Historical Survey", in The Sanctuary and the Atonement, 524.

ascension.¹ The second and most important phase of His atonement was then beginning in 1844, as Christ moved from the Holy place (first phase) to the Most Holy place (second phase). In light of the above, believers needed to send on their sins to judgment for none knew just when his case would be decided.²

Adjunct to this concept of the judgment was the Shut-Door doctrine.³ This theory asserted that probation had closed for the world on October 22, 1844. Only faithful Sabbatarian Adventists could be saved.⁴ This doctrine was well entrenched among the

¹Says Arnold W. Wallenkampf, “Our pioneers generally did not believe that atonement was made at the cross. Uriah Smith emphatically stated their consensus in his book Looking Onto Jesus, when he wrote that Christ did not make the atonement when He shed his blood upon the cross. Let this fact be fixed forever in the mind.” Wallenkampf continues, “J. H. Waggoner expresses the same views when he wrote that there is a distinction between the death of Christ and the atonement.” A. W. Wallenkampf, ed., “A Brief Review of Some of the Internal and External Challenges to the Seventh-day Adventist teachings on the Sanctuary and the Atonement,” The Sanctuary and the Atonement (Washington, DC: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist, 1981), 586.

²Ellen White affirmed, “Jesus would not leave the sanctuary until every case has been decided.” Ellen White, Early Writings (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1945), 36-38, 71. Also Ellen White, Great Controversy (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1950), 479-491. James White uttered similar sentiments. “In this awful hour of the Investigative Judgement either sins or names will be blotted out”. James White, “The Judgment”, Review and Herald, Jan 29, 1857, 101.

³William Miller purported, we have done our work in warning sinners and in trying to awake a formal church. God in His providence has shut the door we can only but stir one another up to be patient and be diligent in making our calling and election sure. Spalding, Origin and History of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, 1:157.

⁴Ibid., 102.

Sabbatarian Adventists and even Ellen White held firmly to it.¹ By 1850's, however, they abandoned this belief.²

Apart from the Shut Door theory which was later abandoned, this was primarily the soteriology of the early Seventh-day Adventist Church, up until 1888. The period 1844-1888 could be classified as a legalistic era as the major emphasis was law-keeping. Very little was known or taught on justification by faith.³ It was definitely an era of salvation by law-

¹E.G. White stated that through the visions her original idea that the door of mercy was then (after the Disappointment) forever closed to the world was changed into a shut-door concept which was limited to certain classes of people. She used the following Biblical examples to illustrate this. There was a shut door in Noah's day. There was at the time a withdrawal of the Spirit of God from the sinful race that perished in the waters of the flood. God Himself gave the shut door message to Noah: "My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he is also flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years" (Gen 6:3). There was a shut door in the days of Abraham. Mercy ceased to plea with the inhabitants of Sodom, and all but Lot with his wife and two daughters were consumed... There was a shut door in Christ's day. The Son of God declared to unbelieving Jews of that generation, "Your house is left unto you desolate" (Mat 23:38). Looking down the stream of time to the last days, the same infinite power proclaimed through John, "These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the keys of David, he that openeth" (Rev 3:7). "I was shown in vision and still believe that there was a shut door in 1844. All who saw the light of the first and second angels' message from heaven, and who afterwards renounce their faith and pronounce a delusion, thereby rejected the Spirit of God, and it no longer pleaded with them." MS 4, 1883. cf Letter, E. G. White to Loughborough (SM I, 74). See Damsteegt, Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission, 152.

²Robert Brinsmead, 1844 Re-Examined (Fallbrook: Verdict, 1979), 34. Although Damsteegt shows that there were different strands of this belief even up until the 1870's. The main thrust of it, however, dissipated in the 1850's. See Damsteegt, Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission, 163, 271, 272.

³Olson, Through Crisis to Victory, 11-15. Also Geoffrey J. Paxton, The Shaking of Adventism (Delaware: Zenith, 1977), 54.

keeping, again accomplished by the grace of God.¹ Referring to this period, Mrs. White wrote: "As a people we have to preach the law until we are as dry as the hills of Gilboa, that had neither dew nor rain."²

The present official history book of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, commenting on the period, says: "By the 1870s to 80s a new generation of Adventists evolved, charged as legalists by others and that's exactly what they were."³ It can be safely said that the soteriology of the early S.D.A. Church, while it acknowledged salvation through Christ, it was for all practical purposes, a soteriology based on law-keeping.⁴

The Year 1888

This year was to see a stemming of the legal tide. At the 1888 General Conference of the church two of the church's stalwart ministers, E. J. Waggoner and A. F. Jones,

¹Norval F. Pease notes that an analysis of the extant writings of the period from the 40's to the 80's, reveal that the bulk of the material were of doctrinal disputation, with only occasional articles and chapters on such basic Christian doctrines as grace, faith, and justification. Pease contends that such topics were neglected because they were the common heritage of protestant groups. Norval F. Pease, "The Gospel in Early Adventism", Review and Herald, Sept 4, 1969, 2-3.

²Ellen White, "Christ prayed for Unity Among His Disciples", Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald, March 11, 1890. See also Ellen White, Gospel Workers (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1948), 165.

³Schwarz, Light Bearers to the Remnant, 183-184.

⁴Ibid., 183. Also Spalding, Origin and History of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, (1962) 2:281-288. Ellen White, Testimonies for the Church (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1948), 5:219-253.

presented a series of lectures on justification by faith.¹ These presentations were met with bitter opposition by many, especially the leading men of the denomination.² It shook the very foundations of the young church and threatened to shake it apart.

By the close of the session the delegation was divided into three groups. Those who accepted, those who rejected, and those who were confused concerning the subject.³

Ellen White supported Waggoner and Jones and for the next couple of years, travelled with them all over the United States to preach and to teach this precious message.⁴ While this "new" message⁵ gained a reasonable measure of success up into the 1890s, it never gained a

¹For a good effort to capture the essence of these lectures, see LeRoy E. Froom, Movement of Destiny (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1971), 188-253.

²The General Conference president G.I. Butler was sick and unable to attend the conference but from his sick bed he issued strong instructions to his associates to "stand by the old land marks." Ibid., 242. Also Schwarz, Light Bearers to the Remnant, 185-190.

³Arthur G. Daniels, Christ Our Righteousness (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1941), 41-42.

⁴For a comprehensive sweep of such travels see, Arthur L. White, Ellen G. White, The Lonely Years 1876-1891 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1984), 3:416-433.

⁵For it was really not new, just that it was neglected and poorly understood as was indicated earlier.

complete and lasting acceptance with the church. It was continually fought by the leaders of the denomination.¹

At the turn of the century, what little gain it had achieved was eventually lost as the church shifted its emphasis to concentrate on building schools, clinics, hospitals and publishing houses.² According to Robert Haddock, after 1905 the church returned to its pre-1888 conservatism.³

Thus justification by faith, despite its forthright preaching by Ellen White and others, never gained a commanding foothold in the early days of the church.⁴ In fact, as Paxton observed, what little was known of it, was that it was only the forgiveness of past sins.⁵ There was also no real and effective distinction made between justification and sanctification.⁶

¹Such as Uriah Smith, Frank Starr, J. H. Morrison, R. M. Kilgore. In time most of these men changed their position, to accept Waggoner's and Jones' position.

²Schwarz, Light Bearers to the Remnant, 190.

³Robert Haddock, "A History of the Doctrine of the Sanctuary in the Advent Movement, 1800-1905", (B.D. Thesis, Andrews University Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Berrien Springs, Michigan, 1970), 239, 241, 372.

⁴Robert Wieland and Donald K. Short, 1888 Re-Examined (Leominster: Eusey, 1987), 27-49. See also Paxton, The Shaking of Adventism, 56, 71, 73.

⁵Ibid., 63-79. A. G. Daniels in Christ our Righteousness also indicates that the subject was very lacking in the church the early part of this century. Daniels, Christ Our Righteousness, 5-125.

⁶Paxton, The Shaking of Adventism, 63-79.

Sanctification (good works) consequently became the absorbing passion.¹

Thus the church with an incomplete atonement at the cross, the law as the qualification to pass the judgment and an ignorance or slight regard for justification by faith alone, continued on its legalist trend. We would not deny that the church also at that time had strong points,² but we are speaking specifically of its soteriology.

The 1920-50' was to see another reign of legalism.³ In the 1920s a victorious life emphasis arose resulting in even more perfectionism.⁴ During this time also the sinful human nature of Christ flourished. Christ was seen as our model, and as He by God's grace was perfect, so the believer can overcome the sinful nature to keep all of God's law perfectly. By so doing he will make a complete vindication of God's character. The words of M. L. Andreasen is a typical reflection of the era.

It is in the last generation of men living on the earth that God's power unto sanctification will stand fully revealed. The demonstration

¹Ibid., 79. Justification, as we shall see later, is more than what Christ is doing in us (sanctification), although the two cannot be separated, unless they are distinguished, sanctification tends to become the absorbing passion, eventually resulting in legalism.

²e.g. An aggressive missionary program, a burning zeal to preach the gospel, the establishing of health institutions, schools, publishing houses, among other things.

³Paxton, The Shaking of Adventism, 76.

⁴Ibid., 74.

of that power is God's vindication. It clears Him of any and all charges which Satan had placed against Him. In the last generation God is vindicated and Satan defeated.¹

...In the remnant Satan will meet his defeat. The charge that the law cannot be kept will be met and fully refuted.²

Paul does not claim absolute perfection... but will any ever reach that stage. We believe so.³

So buried was the church in its legalistic trends that it was regarded as a cult by the rest of the Christian world. In order to offset this legalistic pattern and present the church in a more favorable light, the leadership produced the book, Questions on Doctrines in 1957.⁴

Questions on Doctrines sought to present a finished atonement at the cross,⁵ the sinless nature of Christ,⁶ a broader view of the Christian church,⁷ justification by faith,⁸

¹M. L. Andreasen, The Sanctuary Service (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1947), 2:303-304.

²Ibid., 76.

³M. L. Andreasen, The Book of Hebrews (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1948), 467.

⁴For the many efforts made to offset this impression, leading to the production of Seventh-day Adventists Answers Questions on Doctrines, see Froom, Movement of Destiny, 465-492.

⁵General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Adventist Answers Questions on Doctrines (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1957), 349-355.

⁶Ibid., 650-652.

⁷Ibid., 186-196.

⁸Ibid., 13, 23, 387.

among other things. Apart from these changes, it maintained the basic tenets of Adventist soteriology held up until then. Like the 1888 message, this book sent shock waves through the denomination. It was bitterly opposed by many and condemned as a "damnable heresy." It soon fell out of print.¹

Needless to say, during all this time a dirge of assurance of salvation existed through the church. This lack was reflected in the testimony of a young man who was to become an infamous household name in Adventism until this very day, Robert Brinsmead.² His testimony runs:

Back in the 1950s, I came to the settled conviction that this general view of reaching perfection was impossible, and futile . . . Because of this doctrine which was still being taught, when I went to college in 1955, very few people that I questioned had any real buoyant hope of being able to pass the scrutiny of the soon-coming judgment of the living. It is no real exaggeration to say that most lived in real fear and dread of the judgment, having no way of knowing how to be ready except to try harder by God's

¹Somewhere around 1959.

²Brinsmead, an Australian S.D.A., enrolled at Avondale College in 1955, got disgruntled with the church on righteousness by faith. He studied the book Questions on Doctrines, perfectionism and the judgment, among other things. Never finished Avondale, was dropped from the church in 1961, he wrote extensively against the church on many doctrinal issues, started the Awakening Movement, and Present Truth magazine. By late 1971 he had reversed many of his views; an attempted reconciliation with the church was aborted. Today Brinsmead still maintains an anti-S.D.A. position, renouncing even the validity of the Sabbath. For a brief overview of some of his activities see, Schwarz, Light Bearers to the Remnant, 456-460.

grace and to hope that the judgment would not come too soon.¹

Hardly any Seventh-day Adventists living today who have had some knowledge of Adventism up until the 1970s will deny that this testimony reflects whole or in part the general position of Adventists then. In fact this position has not completely died within present day Adventists.

The 1960s was an eventful decade in the soteriology of the church. It saw the emergence of a new position upon which the church stands divided up until today. Robert Brinsmead disturbed things by advocating that the perfection of the saints would not occur until that point when the believer passes the Investigative Judgment.² He taught that the grace of Christ would cover the believer until that time and, having obtained his sealing in the judgement, he will then gain perfection. By God's miraculous action, of course.³

Up until that point, present perfection was taught; which was to prepare the believer to pass the judgment.⁴ Logically the leadership stormed back. Such a view was a denial of

¹Robert D. Brinsmead, "A Review of the Awakening Message part 1", Present Truth (Fallbrook: Verdict, 1972), 4.

²Schwarz, Light Bearers to the Remnant, 458.

³Ibid., 458. Also, Maxwell, "The Sanctuary and the Atonement in SDA Theology an Historical Survey", 518-521.

⁴There can be no doubt that perfection was part and parcel of Seventh-day Adventist teachings back in those days. The Defense Literature of the General Conference - "We warn our ... people not to be lulled to sleep by the dangerous doctrine that we can expect to come up before the scrutiny of the Judge of all the earth in the Investigative Judgment, be found wanting, and then expect Christ to cleanse the soul temple by a miracle in order that we may be accounted worthy of eternal life. General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, The History and Teachings of Robert Brinsmead (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1968), 37.

the power of the Holy Spirit to accomplish perfection here and now in the life of the believer. Thus the perfectionism controversy raged on.

Towards the end of the sixties some of the church's theologians, principally Doctors Edward Heppenstall,¹ Desmond Ford, Han K. LaRondelle and Pastor L.C. Naden, advocated the idea of no sinless perfection now, until the second coming of Christ. This new position, which swept away over 100² years of Adventist teaching on the subject, surprisingly met with relatively little resistance among the leadership. In fact, according to Geoffrey Paxton, it gained much acceptance by them.³

Naturally Brinsmead reacted vigorously. He wrote:

I challenge Pastor Naden to produce any statement in responsible Seventh-day Adventist literature ... which teaches that God's people will not

¹For a good summary and analysis of some of Dr. Heppenstall's major theological positions, see, Eric Claude Webster, Crosscurrents in Adventist Christology (New York: Peter Lang, 1984), 334.

²This of course is in total contradiction to Ellen White on the subject. For example in Testimonies, volume 5, page. 211-216 she wrote, "No one of us will ever receive the seal of God while our characters have one spot of stain upon it. "When the decree goes forth, the stamp is impressed, their character (the sealed ones) will remain pure and spotless for eternity." White, Testimonies to the Church, 5:211-216. We must learn of Christ. We must know what He is to those He ransomed. We must realize that through belief in Him it is our privilege to be partakers of the divine nature, and so escape the corruption that is in the world . . . Then we are cleansed from all sin, all defects of character. We need not retain one sinful propensity. E. G. White, "Christian Perfection", Review and Herald, April 24, 1900, 1,2. See also Ellen White, Selected Messages (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1958), 3:136, Ellen White, "Be Ye Therefore Perfect", Signs of the Times, July 17, 1901, 3-4.

³For an overview of the struggles of the church with Brinsmead on the subject, see Paxton, The Shaking of Adventism, 105-120.

become morally perfect and sinless until Jesus comes in the clouds of heaven. That is simply not basic Adventist doctrine.¹

From our survey thus far, it is obvious that Brinsmead was right in this point. It cannot be successfully contested that the church (up until then, and even today) taught no present perfection of the saints.

The sixties also had its positive elements as there were repeated warnings against legalism in the *Review and Herald*, and many efforts to preach righteousness by faith.²

By the decade of the seventies, however, the new position on perfection led by Heppenstall came in for much fire from the leadership.³ The Adult Sabbath School Quarterly of April-June 1977 entitled "Jesus the Model Man" adopted the perfectionist stance and caused much stir in the church.⁴ It taught the sinful human nature of Jesus, and encouraged sinless perfection. It read:

Our model is not merely an example which beckons us on, but is never to be reached. Jesus was altogether human and possessed a sinful human nature, common to all men. Hence Jesus is qualified to be our example and the gospel (good news) is that He has proved we can overcome sin and live exactly as He did.⁵

¹Brinsmead, Timing of Revelation 18 and the Perfecting of The Saints, an Answer to Dr. Desmond Ford and P.C.Naden, 1969, 37.

²Ralph S. Watts, "The Message That Brings the Latter Rain", Review and Herald, October 20, 1960, 10.

³Paxton, The Shaking of Adventism, 133-134.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Herbert E. Douglas, Jesus the Model Man (Washington, DC: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1977), 22, 96.

The seventies also saw the convening of the Palmdale conference on righteousness by faith. This was in response to the stir caused by Mrs. Desmond Ford's published paper "The Soteriological Implications of the Human Nature of Christ." The paper repudiated the idea of the sinful human nature of Christ and defined righteousness by faith as being strictly forensic, justification alone.¹

Again confusion on the most vital area of the church's soteriology followed. The editor of the *Review and Herald*, Kenneth H. Wood,² and the president of the General Conference, Robert H. Pierson, later advocated the old position of righteousness by faith as including both justification and sanctification. Said Elder Pierson:

. . . It is clear that the Seventh-day Adventist Church accepts two phases or steps in the experience of righteousness by faith. One is the instantaneous experience known as justification, . . . which is the imputed righteousness of Jesus and the resultant peace and joy in Christ . . . The second phase is a lifelong experience of Christian living.³

The seventies, despite its many undercurrents of theological debates, also had its positive. Principally among them was that the church drifted to a more Christ-centered focus.

The 1980s opened with the challenge of Desmond Ford on the traditional interpretation of the entire Sanctuary theology of the church, inherited from 1844. He emphasized a completed atonement at the cross, the sinless nature of Christ, the primacy of

¹Paxton, *The Shaking of Adventism*, 128.

²Kenneth H. Wood, "For Your Information," *Review and Herald*, October 21, 1976.

³Robert H. Pierson, "What is Righteousness by Faith," *Ministry*, February 1977, 9.

Dan 8:14 to Antiochus Epiphanes, the denial of the year-day principle of prophetic interpretation, and principally among them, that Christ went into the Most Holy place at his ascension, not into the Holy place;¹ thus according to Ford, the traditional position of an investigative judgment beginning in 1844 falls out. Needless to say that such a position created great upheaval in the church with many ministers resigning, and many lay members leaving the church.² Ford was eventually defrocked.

Arising out of this, however, the church began to talk not so much of an investigative judgment but of a pre-advent judgment.³ It also abandoned the emphasis on Christ's literal movement from the Holy to the most Holy in the heavenly sanctuary, emphasizing more of a change of phase in Christ's heavenly ministry. Greater emphasis was placed on the judgment as not being an event to be feared but as an event to be confident about. A finished atonement at the cross also came in for greater emphasis. All the foundation pillars of the sanctuary theology as inherited from 1844 remained firmly intact, however.⁴ The theological

¹His views are presented in Desmond Ford, Daniel 8:14, The Day of Atonement and the Investigative Judgment (Casselberry: Evangelion, 1980).

²Eric Anderson and Jonathan Buttler, "Must the crisis continue", Spectrum, 11 (1981) : 44-52.

³This is most obvious from the Sabbath School quarterlies of the early and mid-eighties.

⁴For a summary of the church's response to Ford's position, see, Frank Holbrook, ed., Doctrine of the Sanctuary. A Historical Survey (Silver Springs, MD: Biblical Research 1989), 217-224. This book also plays down the two-apartment heavenly ministry in favour of the two-phase ministry. *Ibid.*, 218-219.

discussion on the entire gamut of salvation issues still continues. Despite the ebbs and flows, however, the church in the last decade and a half has definitely been more Christ-centered in its theology and doctrine. Regrettably the controversy on the precise definition of Justification still continues. In our opinion, officially a stronger effort is now being made to make a sharp distinction between the work of Christ for us and the works of Christ in us, when it comes to the matter of Justification.¹

From this general overview, it can be deduced that the Seventh-day-Adventist salvation's history contains elements that sets the pace for an assurance of salvation and also for a non-assurance of salvation. For an assurance there needs to be the continued recognition that salvation can be obtained only through the sacrifice of Christ. Next is the ever-growing recognition of the enabling power of Christ to accomplish righteousness in man. There has always been a distinctive emphasis on the heavenly sanctuary, and this, however controversial it may become, points people to Christ, and the richness and free nature of God's salvation.

The elements for a non-assurance are:

1) The very legalistic foundation on which the organization began. This phenomenon of the organization's childhood still has lingering effects even now in its mature age, and continues to impinge on its assurance of salvation.

2) The survival of perfectionism officially and unofficially for long periods of its

¹This is evident from General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe. . . : A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines* (Washington, DC: Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1988), 121-123.

history.

3) Its tremendous emphasis on the judgment (investigative) as a final decision-making process.

4) The continued debate and confusion as to the exact nature of justification by faith.

All these factors as we shall see later lend themselves to a reduced assurance of salvation, and in extreme cases none at all.

From our analysis of the salvation history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, it is evident that while it has factors that foster an assurance of salvation, it also contains very strong and monumental elements that lend themselves to a reduced or absolutely no assurance of salvation.

This factor has been recognized by the present General Conference president (world leader) of the church. One of his primary objectives is to see an improvement in his members' understanding and experiencing of this vital doctrine.¹

¹Robert S. Folkenberg, "Needed: Gospel Preaching", Ministry, September 1994, 10, 11, 30.

CHAPTER III

SALVATION

Old Testament Background

The general term for salvation in the Old Testament is yash.¹ It has the basic meaning of being wide, roomy, to be well off, prosperous, consequently to be free.² Yash depicts deliverance from enemies, death (Psa 6:4-5; 107:13-14), the battle field (Deut 20:4), the wicked, sickness, among other things.³

In the Old Testament YAHWEH was considered the principal savior from all foes, both physical and spiritual. While the Jews sought to experience God's salvation in their daily life situations, they fully recognized that they were already the beneficiaries of the supreme

¹According to the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, it is used 353 times throughout the Old Testament. It interestingly observes that the name Jesus is a derivative from this word. Other terms used are Nasal, to pull out, hence to deliver from someone (Exo 3:8, Judges 6:9, Exo 18:9-11); Palat, deliverance (Josh 8:22, Isa 66:19, Jer 42:17); Azar, help (Psa 37:39f); Malat, to escape by slipping away, God often the cause of the delivery (Psa 41:1, 89:48); Haya, to live (1 Sam 10:24); Gaal, redeem by the payment of ransom (Psa 106:10, 107:2, 130:8); Yash is however used far more frequently than all of these. W. L. Liefeld, "Salvation," The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (ISBE), 1988, 4:288-289.

²C. M. Horn, "Salvation," The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible (1976), 5:222.

³Ibid.

salvific act of YAHWEH, that had already occurred in history. That is, in the Exodus.¹ This event was the basis for all their actions and served as an assurance that God would indeed continue to save. Their ethics, morals, and entire life were colored by the fact of the Exodus and were always a joyful reflection thereof.²

It is interesting to note that the principle underlying the Old Testament salvation was grace. Israel obeyed God not in order to become His people or in order to be saved, but because God from His own initiative loved them and would have fulfilled His covenant promises, thus He saved them and made them His people.

The Lord did not set His love upon you, nor choose you, because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the fewest of all people. But because the Lord loved you, and because He would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. (Deut 7:7-8. K.J.V)

They now lived not in order to become the saved people but because they were the saved people. Having saved them, God in His love gave them His laws TORAH as a means of helping them to maintain the saved relationship with Himself (Exo 19, 20; Deut 1-5).

As Israel maintained the covenant relationship through obedience to the Torah, they were assured of God's continued salvation.

YAHWEH was not only described as the giver of salvation, but He was also seen as

¹Roger Nicole, "The Old Testament in the New Testament," The Expositors Bible Commentary, ed., Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), 1:624.

²Exodus 20:1-2; Deuteronomy 5:1-6; 6:20; 7:7-11; 10:17-19; 11:7-8; Leviticus 23; 25, Judges 5:11; Psalm 66; 78; 105; 106; 111:4; 103:6.

salvation itself. He was the epitome and very essence of all that which He gave to His people (Exo 15:2; Psa 118:14; Isa 12:2; 51:5). This registered the fact that He was the very foundation and continued guarantor of their salvation.

The Exodus salvation pointed forward to an even greater salvation, hoped to be experienced by Israel in Canaan; that of the new Messianic age. In this new age of salvation YAHWEH's Messiah would reign supreme above all nations on the throne of David. It would be a time of complete economic, political, social and spiritual prosperity¹ for the covenanted people. So blissful would it be that the lions would dwell with the lambs and a little child would lead them (Isa 65 and 66). It would also be the new age of the Spirit, when the Spirit would be fully given to all God's people (Joel 2:28-32; Isa 44:3; Ezk 36:25-27). It is also worthy to note, that salvation in the Old Testament was also portrayed as a manifestation of YAHWEH's righteousness his (Tsidgot).²

In terms of salvation, God's righteousness in the Old Testament carries the two-fold meaning of deliverance or vindication of the oppressed and judgement upon the wicked.³ (Psa 31:1; 71:2; 15; 9:7-9; 10:16-18). In the supreme salvific act, Israel in Egypt's slavery was the oppressed. God vindicated them by inflicting judgment upon the Egyptians, a full

¹William Dryness, Themes in Old Testament Theology (Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1979), 230-234.

²Tsidgot is used to denote God's saving acts of delivering Israel from bondage in Egypt, and also his accompanying acts of punishing Israel's persecutors (1 Sam 12:7, Judges 5:10-11, Micah 6:5). The Revised Standard Version translates Tsidgot in these texts as the saving deeds of the Lord, while The New International Version translates it as the righteous acts of the Lord.

³Ibid.

demonstration of His righteousness.

In concluding this brief survey of Old Testament salvation, there are a few principal things we can note:

1. Salvation was always God's initiative (Exo 3:7-8; Ezk 36:22).
2. It was always by grace (Deut 7:7- 8).
3. It was a manifestation of God's righteousness given within the context of the covenant.¹
4. The Exodus was the supreme manifestation of God's salvation (Exo 15:2).
5. It pointed forward to a greater Messianic salvation.
6. Israel's ethics grew out of the salvific event of the Exodus and was always a joyful response to it.
7. **YAHWEH** was not only the giver of but he was also their salvation.

All these facts meant a continued assurance of salvation for Israel, as long as they remained within the context of God's covenant.

Salvation in the New Testament

The concept of **yash** is translated by the Greek **soteria** and carries all the sentiments of the Old Testament meaning;² of course, with greater and wider dimensions. According to

¹Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 2:354-355.
R. A. Kelley, "Righteousness", *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, (1988), 4:193.

²M. L. Liefeld, "Salvation," 4:291.

the New Testament, all the principles of the Old Testament's salvation are brought forward, and find their fulfillment in the person of Jesus Christ.

You shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins (Matt 1:21). Blessed be the Lord God of Israel... he... has raised up a horn of salvation for us... (Luke 1:69).

The focal point of the New Testament's salvation, and the entire Bible's salvation, is the cross of Christ. Here Christ effectuated the salvific act of all times that forms the basis of salvation for the entire human race (Matt 20:28; Heb 8, 9; 1 Peter 1:18-20; Rev 5: 9-10). Like the Old Testament model, salvation through Christ is completely a gift of God's grace, to be accepted by faith. "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God." (Eph 2:8; see also Gal 1:16-17; Rom 4:4: 16). It is also a covenantal salvation, for it is only as mankind comes into a covenantal relationship with Jesus that he can truly experience God's salvation (Matt 26:27-28; John 6:53-58).

Although salvation is essentially an eschatological gift,¹ the New Testament presents it as also having a present dimension. Jesus firmly declared to Zacchaeus, "Today salvation has come to your house" (Luke 19:10). On several occasions He describes His healing activity as salvation. In Mark 5:34 He instructed the woman with the issue of blood, "Go in peace...and be saved (sesoken)." In chapter 10:52, the blind man was cheered by the words, "Your faith has (sesoken), saved you." In Luke 8:36 he who was possessed with demons was saved esothern.

¹George E. Ladd, A Theology of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 73.

The parables of the prodigal (Luke 15:11), the lost sheep (Luke 15:3-7), and the lost coin (15:8-10), are all meant to teach the issuing of a present salvation for the outcast. All this must be seen in the context that Jesus had before described His ministry as a fulfillment of the Messianic salvation prophesied by the Old Testament (Luke 4:16-21; Mark 1:14-15). Samuel Bacchiocchi, in his book Divine Rest for Human Restlessness, does an excellent job in showing how Christ's Sabbath healings in particular were all realizing the Messianic salvation promised by the Old Testament.¹ Indeed salvation, as we shall see later, is both a present and future reality. This present salvation, however, is only a foretaste of the consummated salvation to be issued at the parousia (Rom 13:11; Heb 9:28; 1 Peter 1:7-13).

The advent of the Holy Spirit is also another feature of the New Testament salvation. In fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies, the issuing of the Holy Spirit marked or signaled that the new Messianic age of salvation had dawned, in the Christ event (Joel 2:28; Acts 2:22-36).

Luke makes a deliberate effort to demonstrate that the eschatological gift of the Holy Spirit has arrived, and those of the salvation community were under its full influence² (Luke 1:35; 2:26-27; Acts 2; 4:31; 5:32; 8:16-17; 9:31; 19:1-7). We must observe that as YAHWEH was presented as the epitome of salvation in the Old Testament, so Christ as

¹Samuel Bacchiocchi, Divine Rest for Human Restlessness, A Theological Study of the Good News of the Sabbath for Today (Berrien Springs: Biblical Perspectives, 1980), 145-164.

²It was the popular belief among the Jews that Pentecost marked the giving of the Law at Sinai, to all these seventy nations of the world (which only Israel accepted, of course). Luke showed in Acts 2 that instead of the Law, the Holy Spirit descended at Pentecost. F. F. Bruce, The Book of Acts: International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 54.

YAHWEH incarnate is presented in the New Testament, not only as the giver of salvation but also as being salvation.

... Whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness, and sanctification and redemption . . . (1 Cor 1:30).

As the new Israel,¹ Jesus remained faithful to all God's laws. He received in Himself the punishment and also the vindication of God (Isa 53; Acts 2:22-36; Luke 9:31). Thus he fully demonstrated God's righteousness, God's Tsedagah.² He paid the price of salvation with His blood, and He now enjoys the ultimate blessing promised by God's salvation (Acts 2:33, 36, Rev 5:11-14). In Him the entire humanity is encapsuled and, as we shall see later, He being in heaven, it is as if the entire human race is there. The life He lived was our life. Thus Christ is not only the mediator of salvation, but as God-man He is also salvation. He is that which He gives.

Upon this basis we can always have a firm, immovable assurance of salvation, because

¹The first five chapters of Matthew describe in detail Jesus as the New Israel experiencing a New Exodus: coming out of Egypt after a death decree (Matt 2:15), and going through his anti-typical Red Sea experience in his baptism (Matt 3; cf. 1 Cor 10:12). This is followed by the wilderness experience of 40 days paralleling the 40 years of ancient Israel in the wilderness. During this time Jesus indicated his own awareness of his role as the New Israel in the New Exodus by consistently meeting the devil's temptations with quotations from Deuteronomy 6-8 (where Israel's temptations in the wilderness are summarized). Finally Jesus appeared on the mount as a New Moses, with his 12 disciples, representing the twelve tribes of Israel, and repeats the law as Moses did at the end of the Wilderness Sojourn. Matthew and the other synoptic Gospels also depict the death and the resurrection of Jesus as a New Exodus. In Luke, for example, at the transfiguration the First Moses speaks to the New Moses about his "departure" (Greek Exodus) which was to be accomplished at Jerusalem (Luke 9:31). Richard M. Davidson, "New Testament Use of the Old Testament", Journal of Adventist Theological Society, 5 (1994):20, 21, 36.

²As we shall see later, the 'sedeq' word group of the Old Testament is conveyed by dikaioo and its derivatives in the New Testament (Rom 1:16-17; 3:21-26, etc.).

our salvation is not only that which God does within us, but it is an immortal person, Jesus Christ Himself. Indeed we can sing with the apostle to the Hebrews:

We have a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner shrine behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone. . . on our behalf.

In summary we can safely say that the New Testament, indeed the entire Bible, presents salvation for the human race as a free gift of God to be received by faith. This salvation was made possible through the Christ event.

There is indeed a wide spectrum of word concepts that are employed through the Bible to communicate the message of salvation. Needless to say that a detailed description of all these concepts is certainly not the intent of this study. We will only discuss a few of these concepts¹ as they relate to our subject of an assurance of salvation.

¹Namely justification, kingdom, eternal life, and sealing.

CHAPTER IV

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH - PART A - ITS OBJECTIVE DIMENSION

We cannot truly understand the doctrine of justification by faith until we first look at man's real condition, and also at what God has objectively done for him in Jesus Christ.

First, the Bible teaches us that all men have sinned and come short of God's glory (Rom 3:23; Gal 3:22; 1 John 1:8). We cannot think of sins only as wrong acts, as sin is deeper than acts.¹ Sin, as Paul indicates, is a reigning power that is intrinsic to the very nature of man (Rom 6:12-14; 7:7-25).² Whether or not man does bad deeds he still stands as a sinner before God, by the very fact of his existence. He is a sinner by nature (Ps 51:5). Sins plural are a result of sin singular. We now sin not in order to become sinners but because we are sinners³ (Rom 14:23; Matt 12:33-35). This natural condition of man, inherited as a result

¹"Sin is doing or being anything regardless of how good or bad it may be, apart from a faith relationship with Christ." Morris Venden, How to Make Christianity Real (California: Concern Communications, 1984), 126.

²In these texts and many others Paul consistently uses Hamartia in the anarthrous sense, which depicts quality or nature, not specific identity.

³Morris Venden, To Know God (Washington, DC: Review and Herald , 1983), 102, 104.

of Adam's sin, results in alienation and separation from God.¹ All men born subsequent to Adam are born separated from God (Psa 51:5; Rom 5:12). No man, irrespective of how good he may become, can live outside of his nature, lest he ceases to be mortal man. Thus man within himself, in his very being stands eternally lost. His "perfect" law-keeping, if he should ever attain that goal, cannot save him, because his sinful condition goes deeper than acts. It is the very state of his being. His repentance cannot save him either, for he cannot turn away from being himself. Absolutely nothing within him irrespective of how good or righteous it is, can save him.² For after he would have accomplished all that, he would still be himself, and that is where his problem lies. He is a sinner by nature, and he cannot live outside of his nature lest he changes into another being.³

Furthermore, the Bible teaches that this sinful nature cannot be reformed. It is not subjected to the law of God neither indeed can be (Rom 8:7 K.J.V.). Again we stand sinful, condemned, hopeless before God, by the very fact of our existence; moreso by our continued

¹We do not here speak in terms of imputation of sin or guilt from Adam. As Norman Gulley observes, while the Bible speaks of righteousness being imputed, it no where speaks of sin as being imputed. What is imputed to the race is a broken relationship with its tendency to sin. Norman R. Gulley, "The Effects of Adam Sin on the Human Race", Journal of Adventist Theological Society 5 (1994):204.

²We are not saved by anything God does within us but by what He does outside of us in Christ.

³Only at the resurrection, when mortal puts on immortality, will man get rid of the sinful nature (1 Cor 15).

sinning. In brief, this describes the condition of man inherited from Adam (Rom 5, 6).

Left to himself there is absolutely no hope. God so loved the world, however, that He gave his only (monogene) son, to save man (John 3:16). We must look carefully at what God did in Christ for man's salvation.

As the entire human race was legally and cooperatively wrapped up in Adam, so likewise was the entire human family legally and cooperatively encased in the second Adam Jesus Christ¹ (Rom 5, 2; Cor 5:14; 1 Cor 15:47-48). As Adam's action affected all men, so likewise Christ's action has affected all men (Rom 5, 1; Cor 15:47-48). Jesus was not only the new Israel, He was also the new humanity. It was as if God began from Genesis 1 all over again (2 Cor 5:17-18; Gal 6:14-15; Eph 2:10; Luke 1:35,78,79).

Christ bore man's nature and became so identified with us, that all that which He accomplished was not only for us, but it was exactly as if we had done it.² He was both our representative and substitute. Therefore it means that the life Christ lived was not for Himself, but for all men (Rom 5:18-19). When He lived, it was as if all men were living. When He died, humanity died in Him (2 Cor 5:14; Rom 6:1-6). Justice saw us punished in Him. When He was resurrected, all men were resurrected also. As certain as God came to be with man in Christ, so certainly has man gone to be with God forever in the person of Jesus Christ (Eph 1:3-7; 2:4-6; Rom 5:7-10; Col 2:10).

¹Robert D. Brinsmead, "Sanctification-It's Mainspring", Present Truth, (Fallbrook: Verdict, July 1975), 47, 48. Jack Sequeira, Beyond Belief (Boise: Pacific Press, 1993), 51-66.

²Ibid.

It goes to say that in Christ all men have a perfect law-keeping record (Rom 10:4), a perfect righteousness. No wonder Paul declares that He is our perfection and we are complete in Him (1 Cor 1:30; Col 2:10; 2 Cor 5:21).

All this describes the objective act of God in Christ for mankind. We must emphasize that this is for all men, both Christians and non-Christians alike. God did not need the faith, the repentance or the good living of man to accomplish this, as such could not make the least difference in the plight caused by sin. He acted totally from his own initiative and restored man to Himself in Jesus Christ.¹

It is thus why Paul declares in Romans 5:8-10, "But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.... For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his son,... now that we are reconciled we shall be saved by his life."

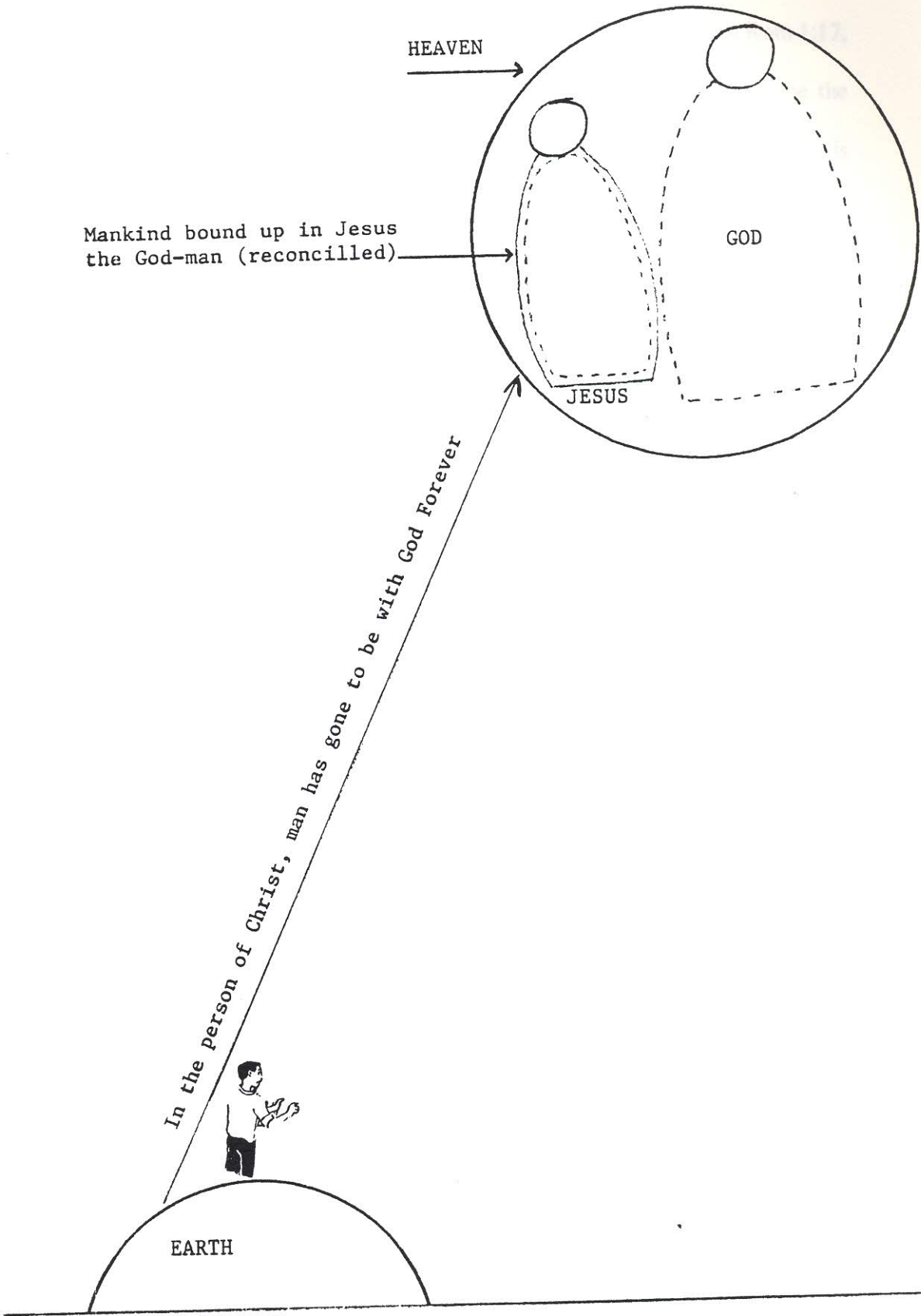
The Greek katallage, reconciliation, is orist and in context denotes a finished action at a point in time. That time, from the context of verse 10, is while we were enemies (Rom 5:8-10). Thus Paul is here saying before man repents or turns to God, a finished and completed action happened on his behalf; that is, the reconciliation. Raoul Dederen puts it beautifully:

...reconciliation is not a change in man's attitude towards God. Rather reconciliation is first of all an event, an objective event, accomplished by

¹To God, the person who has never understood the gospel is a lost sheep, not a wolf; a lost coin, not a junk; a wandering prodigal, not a stranger. All men were legally justified when Christ died for all. When the sinner believes he stands justified by faith. He is now in a justified relationship. Robert J. Wieland and Donald K. Short, 1888 Re-Examined, 192-193.

God for the salvation of sinners... God's love manifested in reconciliation is not focused on the moment when the... sinner believes in Christ, and finds his attitude towards God changed from enmity to love. God's love in reconciliation took place long before, "while we were enemies" of God, in the objective, historical event of Christ's death. Love towards God evoked in the hearts of sinners by the revelation of God's wondrous love toward us on the cross does NOT CONSTITUTE but IS THE ACCEPTANCE of the reconciliation already effected by the cross before sinners hear of it and respond to it.¹ (Emphasis his.)

¹Raoul Dederen, "Atoning Aspects in Christ's Death an Introduction to the New Testament Evidence", in The Sanctuary and the Atonement. Biblical, Historical and Theological Studies, ed. Arnold V. Wallenkampf and W. Richard Leshner (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1981), 302. Edward Heppenstall is also very strong on this point. He affirms, "So when Christ died on the cross the reconciliation was accomplished. . . The reconciling work of God in Christ took place before any change had taken place in man...Reconciliation is something that God accomplished by Jesus Christ at the cross.... Being enemies, we were reconciled to God. This is the objective act. It wrought a change with or upon these enemies, not within them.... It changed the unredeemed world into the redeemed world. The instant Christ died the world of sinners was changed completely. It was now a world for whose sin atonement had been made and no longer a world with unatoned sins". Edward Heppenstall, "Subjective and Objective Aspects of the Atonement", in The Sanctuary and the Atonement, ed. Arnold V. Wallenkampf and W. Richard Leshner (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1981), 585, 586.



The same truth is also conveyed by Paul using the term (dikaiosune Theos, Rom 1:17, etc.) the righteousness of God. In Romans 1:17, he uses what we consider to be the subjective genitive¹ (dikaiosune thou) in speaking of dikaiosune being apokaluptetai, that is revealed. This, he says in verse 16, equals the gospel (to euangelion, 3:21-24). Amplifying more on this righteousness of God, he says it was pephanerotai manifested (3:21). Pephanerotai here is the Greek perfect and indicates contextually that the manifestation of God's righteousness began in the remote past, came to a point of culmination in the past, and its manifestation still stands today as a completed action. The dikaiosune thou is exactly the same as the justifying act of God. Thus what Paul is saying is that the justifying act of God is first a completed action in Christ.

A study of the salvation concepts² in the New Testament will reveal that they are first and foremost an objective event that has already occurred in the person of Jesus. Man's salvation is not firstly what God does in him but what God has done for him in Christ.

Christ is not only our redeemer, Savior or justifier, but He is also our redemption, salvation and justification (1 Cor 1:30). In the person of Christ God has loved, embraced,

¹Gottlob Schrenk affirms, "When the apostle makes his most solemn and mighty pronouncement conceiving the establishment of salvation, he uses δικαιοσυνη θεου instead of the simple δικαιοσυνη. There can be no doubt that this is the subjective genitive. The righteousness of God is God's alone; man is taken into it and set in it." Gottlob Schrenk, "δικαιοσυνη in Paul", Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 2:173.

²For example, Hilasterion (propitiation or expiation, Romans 3:25; 1 John 2:2; 4:10) Lutron or Apolutrosis, (ransom, redemption, Matt 20:28; Acts 20:28; 1 Cor 6:20; Gal 3:13; Col 1:14; etc.); Katallage, (reconciliation, atonement, Rom 5:10-11; 2 Cor 5:19).

pardoned and accepted the entire human family. In Him all men stand completely redeemed and saved (Col 2:10; Eph 1).

This is shockingly good news that baffles the imagination. To think that the worst sinner already stands accepted to God in the person of Christ. It is certainly contrary to our human reasoning, which naturally demands some repentance or restitution before such grace can be initiated. The Bible calls it gospel, good news. The gospel is not just a message, but it is an objective event that stands and continues to be irrespective of man's reaction to it. It is the very person of Jesus.

The salvation process has to be this way because of the sinful condition of man. As long as he remains mortal he will never have enough of the righteousness of God in him to accomplish his salvation. The fact is, he is still a sinner by the very state of his existence. This lays the foundation for, as we shall later discuss that, we are not saved by our faith or by our repentance.

This objective side of the Salvation plan must first be settled before we can truly understand justification and all other salvation concepts of the Bible.

Having taken the initiative to save man, God now communicates this wonderful news to man for his acceptance. (Titus 2:11, 13; Rev 3:20; 14:6-12).

Unless man now accepts this finished reality, it is of no practical value to him. It must be accepted for it to become effective in the life of men. The objective act of God requires man's subjective response in order for it to become effective, but not in order for it to be in the first place.

As man accepts God's declaration of righteousness on him in Christ, he begins to live a holy life, by God's power of course.

CHAPTER V

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH - PART B - AND AN ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

Justification by faith is probably the chief Biblical metaphor that describes an assurance of salvation. In fact that's the center and hub of it. This doctrine is developed most clearly by Paul, more than any other Bible writer.¹ For this reason we will study it basically from his perspective.

The word used by Paul for justification is the Greek dikaioσune.² Dikaioσune is a translation of the Hebrew Tsadaq.³ The use made by Paul of this word concept is based firmly on its Old Testament meaning.⁴

¹Justification is mentioned once in the gospel as the sign of acceptance before God, twice in Acts 13:39, thrice in James 2:21, 24, 25. While the terminology is not absolutely confined to Paul, it is plain that the basic idea was developed by him and no one else in the New Testament. Leon Morris, The Cross in the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 217.

²dikaioo (justify), dikaioσune (justification/righteousness), dikaioσ (just/righteous) are all forms of the same root in the Hebrew and Greek. The Hebrew and Greek do not employ a different word group for justice, justification or righteousness. They are all from the same root, thus for the originals, justice is righteousness and righteousness is justice. We will therefore at times use these words interchangeably as the context demands.

³Gottlob Schrenk, "δικη, δικαιοσ, δικαιοκρισια," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ed., Gerhard Kittle (Michigan: Eerdmans, 1976), 2:309.

⁴Hans K. LaRondelle, "The Biblical Gospel of Salvation", Ministry, February, 1988, 29-33.

In the Old Testament Tsadaq means conformity to a norm. It did not reflect inner ethical achievement but rather a status of rightness that existed as a result of one conforming to the prescribed norms of a particular relationship. Righteousness in the Old Testament was the fulfillment of the demands outlaid by a particular relationship.¹

The life of the Ancient Near East was not as individualistic as modern western society. Each person existed within the context of a definite relationship. King with people, priest with worshippers, common man with family, community with resident aliens and the poor, all with God.²

The norms differ from relationship to relationship. Righteousness (Tsadaq) in one situation may be unrighteousness in another.³ In addition, there was no norm or righteousness outside of the relationship⁴. The righteous man therefore was he who contextually lived according to the demands laid upon him, by the particular relationship in which he stands.⁵ Thus it is right to conclude that Tsedeq represents not an inner moral achievement but an objective status of righteousness based on a particular relationship. In other words, it is a forensic concept⁶.

¹Ladd, A Theology of the New Testament, 439.

²E. R. Achtemeir, "Righteousness in the Old Testament", The Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible, ed., George Arthur Buttrick, (Nashville: Broadman, 1962), 3:80.

³Ibid.

⁴Ladd, A Theology of the New Testament, 439-441.

⁵Ibid., 40.

⁶Millard Erickson, Christian Theology (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983), 955.

It is this meaning of the term that undergirds Paul's theology of diaiosune. First Paul presents God as setting forth his righteousness, his norm we could say, in the person of Jesus Christ (Rom 1:16-17; 3:21-25). As men accept and enter into a faith relationship with Jesus, they are considered justified before God (Rom 5:1ff; Gal 2:16-17). Thus Paul's usage is strictly in keeping with the Old Testament usage of the concept. It is now widely agreed by most Bible scholars that Paul's use of dikaiousune is forensic, that is, it describes a legal status received, not a condition achieved.¹

This is most evident from Paul's trend of thought on Romans. In chapter 1:3-23, he portrays the entire world as being sinful and guilty before God. In 3:23 he summarizes their condition as "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." These same all, however, are justified by his grace as a gift to be received by faith in Jesus Christ (3:24-25). In chapter 4:5 he speaks of God justifying the ungodly. In 5:10 he speaks of the sinner being reconciled by the death of Jesus. It is obvious that Paul is not speaking of righteousness or justification as a quality in man², since it happens to the ungodly (Rom 4:13; 3:23,24), but rather to a

¹Robert A. Spivey and D. Moody Smith, Anatomy of the New Testament: A Guide to Its Structure and Meaning (London: McMillan, 1987), 374. See also Herbert Ridderbos, Paul: An Outline of His Theology (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 163. The word is a forensic one, and Godet goes so far as to say that the word is never used in any Greek literature for making righteous.... Justification is a reckoning or imputation (Greek (logizesthai) of righteousness (v.v 6, 22), not an infusing or making righteousness. The opposite of Justify is not "be a sinner" but is "accused" or "condemned" (Rom 8:33f), and the opposite of justification is condemnation. Besides, it is not the infusing of a life, of a new holiness, that is counted as righteousness, but it is faith that is counted (Rom 4:5; Phil 3:9) J.A. Faulkner, J. Murray and G. W. Bromiley, Justification", ISBE, 2:1170, 1173.

²The Roman Catholic Stream of Theology may want to discredit this fact, but the evidences and the consensus of most modern scholars, even many from among their ranks, are for this position.

status he receives by virtue of being in a relationship with Jesus. The righteousness of God in Jesus is credited to his account because he now stands in a relationship with Jesus (Rom1:16-17; 4; 5; 8:1-4).

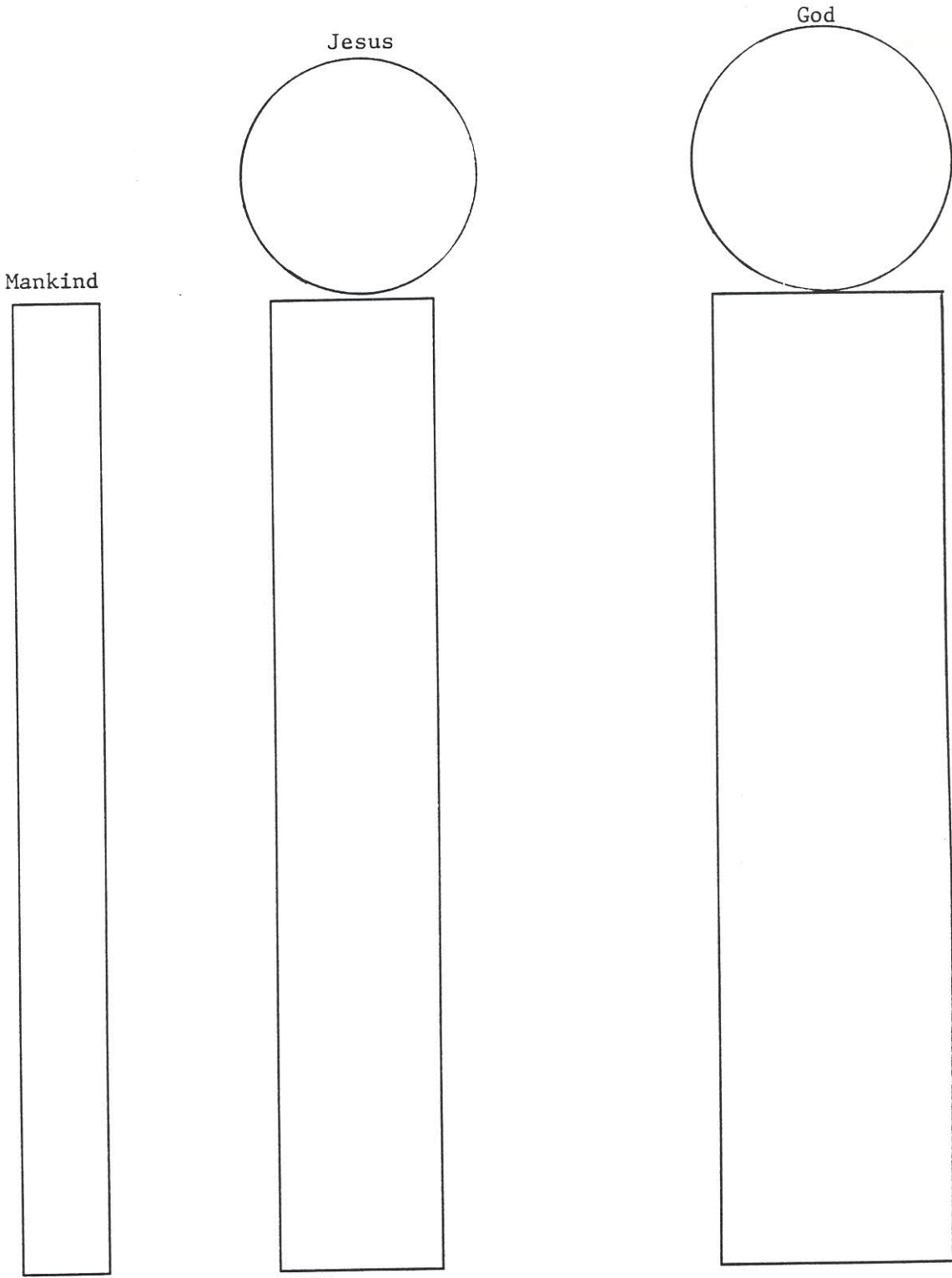
In further support of the forensic use of the term by Paul, he repeatedly affirms that this justification is obtained by faith (Rom 3:22-28; Gal 3:11). Paul must not be understood to mean that the believer's faith is the means of justification. In Judaism (and Paul's arguments were essentially to counter Judaic influences on the same subject)¹ faith was a good work by which one could gain righteousness before God.² Paul, however, sets justification by faith as counter and opposed to justification by works. Therefore he could not be speaking of justification by man's faith, as that would be the equivalent of saying justification by works, as faith was then understood as a good work.³ Paul's point is that faith is a means of acceptance, not the grounds, method or cause of one's justification.⁴ In other words, we are justified by the faith of Jesus, not by our faith in Jesus.

¹Calvin J. Roetzel, The World That Shaped the New Testament (Atlanta: John Knox, 1985), 38-39.

²Rabbinic Judaism knew not only of the merit of the Torah but also of faith. Says Rabbi Eleazer of Modiim, "There is no need to provide for tomorrow, to gather wealth; have faith and God will not forsake thee." W. D. Davis, Paul and Rabbinic Judaism (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1965), 221.

³W. D. Davis, Paul and Rabbinic Judaism, 221-224.

⁴G.C. Berkouwer, Faith and Justification (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954), 103-104.



The Person of Jesus
our Justification
before God

This lands us squarely on the all important fact that the means, the grounds of our justification is the cross of Christ (Rom 5:6-9; 3:21-26). Man's justification is therefore not a quality achieved by God in him, but rather a reality achieved for him, but outside of him in the person of Jesus' life, death and resurrection (Rom 4:24-25; 1 Cor 1:30; Eph 1:3-7). All that man can do is solely to accept by faith; but his faith acceptance does not equal his justification. It's only the acceptance. We must not confuse the reception of the gift with the gift itself. The justification, the righteousness of man, is not just a theory or a doctrine, it is the very person of Jesus (1 Cor 1:30; Jer 23:6; Col 2:10), for in his person the total significance of the cross continues to be (1 Cor 1:23; Gal 3:1).¹

This now leads us to the truth that good works have absolutely no importance to man's salvation (Rom 3:20; Eph 2:8-10; Titus 3:4-8; 2 Tim 1:9; Gal.5:4). The justified will certainly do good works, but these good works (law-keeping) do not add one inch to his salvation. They are at best faith-means of acceptance, but they are devoid of any intrinsic merit. That which saves us from beginning to end is the death of Jesus (Mark 10:45; Heb 8, 9). Anytime the believer accepts Jesus and begins to do good works, keep the law, he has already been saved to a point that all this law-keeping cannot add an inch to his salvation. Again our justification is not anything God is now doing in us, but an objective status of a righteous declaration in Jesus Christ. As was mentioned before, Christ is not only

¹Commenting on these passages, Leon Morris correctly observes: "In each of these cases crucified is the perfect participle which means that Paul preaches not only that Christ was once crucified (which would be the aorist) but that He continues in His character as the crucified one." Leon Morris, The Cross in the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 218.

our justifier, He is also our justification.

It has been held by some that such a justification bespeaks a fictional righteousness. That is, God treating man as if he were righteous when indeed he is not.¹ This is unjustified, however, as the righteousness man obtains from the relationship with Jesus is not just a theory or some abstraction in God's mind, but it is a real person, Jesus Himself. Now to be in a relationship with a person, is to be involved in a reality experience, while at the same time not necessarily having subjectively all the characteristics of the person. Thus the righteousness God bestows on man, while it is not a quality in man, it is still not a fictional thing, for it is righteousness by virtue of a relationship which is indeed a reality.

Forensic and Eschatological

We would do injustice to the subject if we overlooked the fact that justification, while it is forensic, it is also eschatological.² Its forensic nature signifies that God, the supreme judge and law giver, has made the declaration that the man in Christ is righteous³ (Rom 3:4, 20-24; 8:34; Gal 3:11; 1 Cor 4:4). By eschatological we mean that it has to do with the final judgement day.⁴ In short, therefore, justification is the declaration of the final judgement day,

¹William Sandy and Arthur C. Headlam, "The Righteousness of God", A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans (Edinburg: T&T Clark, 1958), 36.

²Faulkner, Murray and Bromiley, "Justification", ISBE, 2:1173-1174.

³Ladd, A Theology of the New Testament, 443-444.

⁴Ibid., 441-442.

that the man in Christ is righteous and is entitled to eternal salvation. The great beauty of it all is that, that declaration has taken place in the present (Rom 3:21-24; 5:1-10; Gal 2:16-17; 3:1-11).

Says George E. Ladd:

Justification is the verdict of the righteous judge, guiltless, which belongs to the eschatological day of Judgment. But which has taken place in history in the Christ event.¹

In this lies an assurance of salvation super-abundant. It is shockingly good news. In Christ the final judgement day has been brought forward and has been successfully passed on behalf of mankind.² The man who accepts Christ, therefore, has a declaration for the ceaseless ages of eternity resting upon him. Says Jesus,

Truly, truly I say to you, he who hears my word and believes on him who sent me, has eternal life; he does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life. (John 5:24 R.S.V.)

The Judaism of Paul's day taught that final justification was completely a future act³, at the

¹Ibid., 439. Says Robert A. Spivey: "The verdict of righteousness that the Jews expected... in the final judgment (Rom 2:2) has already been spoken in favor of humanity, through Jesus Christ. Thus God does not sit back and wait until the end of history to pass judgment, but in a manner known to the Old Testament goes forth to judge in favor of and to save humanity." Robert A. Spivey, Anatomy of the New Testament: A Guide to Its Structure and Meaning (London: McMillan, 1987), 374.

²"Whereas for Judaism a decisive factor in the judicial declaration of God was not to be spoken other than in the future eschatological sense, Paul proclaimed this righteousness as a present reality already realized in Christ." Herman Ridderbos, Paul: An Outline of His Theology (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 164.

³Ibid., 164, 168.

final judgment day. According to them, only the righteous who so lived according to Torah law that his good deeds (yetzer hatob) outweighed his bad deeds (yetzer hara) would eventually be justified.¹

Paul shocked them by declaring that, the final judgement day's justification was now present and furthermore it had nothing to do with a man's relationship with the Torah, but with his relation to the crucified one (Rom 5:7-10; Gal 1-3). In addition, it was even a justification of the ungodly, the totally undeserving (Rom 4:13). Again the grace of God is astonishingly shocking.

Some Implications for an Assurance of Salvation

Justification, from what we have discussed of it so far, is logically saying that the person who accepts Christ stands saved (Eph 2:8-12; John 6:47). It says he does not wonder whether he will make it to heaven, but he rejoices in the fact that he now has the only possible qualification there is for heaven. He does not wonder if he will be saved; he knows he is saved and will be saved, as long as he is in a relationship with Jesus. However, his assurance is not based on the relationship itself (his faith response), but on the immovable constant of the cross, Christ his righteousness.

It also says he has already passed the final judgement and as such he has no fear of

¹Donald Guthrie, New Testament Theology (Leicester: InterVarsity, 1981), 119, 495.

judgment. It is unfortunate that there are still some among us, who are still hoping to pass an investigative judgment ¹, and then to be sealed for God's kingdom. Such belief is similar to Judaism, which places justification in the future, for if any such thing happens to the Christian then he would have gained his salvation by works, for to be in Christ now is to be already justified, and such justification as we have already seen, is not temporary, but is the verdict of the final judgment brought forward (Heb 10:14; John 5:24). We dare say that this traditional presentation of the investigative judgment ² as is incorrectly taught by many is a gross denial of an assurance of salvation.

An investigative judgment can only be a demonstration as to why such decisions were made by God in the judgment, not the actual decision-making process itself. It's like an audit which shows why decisions were made, not the making of decisions.

Another implication that gives tonic to one's assurance of salvation, is the fact that the basis for one's continued salvation does not rest in his performance. Because of this he does not become discouraged by his failures, neither does he become proud by his successes. Behavior, whether good or bad, does not have anything to do with his salvation. It is always based on a constant, an "outside-of-him" experience, which he keeps on accepting with a faith that itself has no merit.

When he fails, he simply takes hold afresh of His Righteousness - Jesus, who was

¹The good news of the gospel is not that we hope to pass God's Judgment in the near future, but that because of Christ we have already passed the final judgment. Now is the time to rejoice and celebrate, as we wait eagerly for the full consummation of our victory.

²As a present decision-making process by God as to who are saved and who are lost.

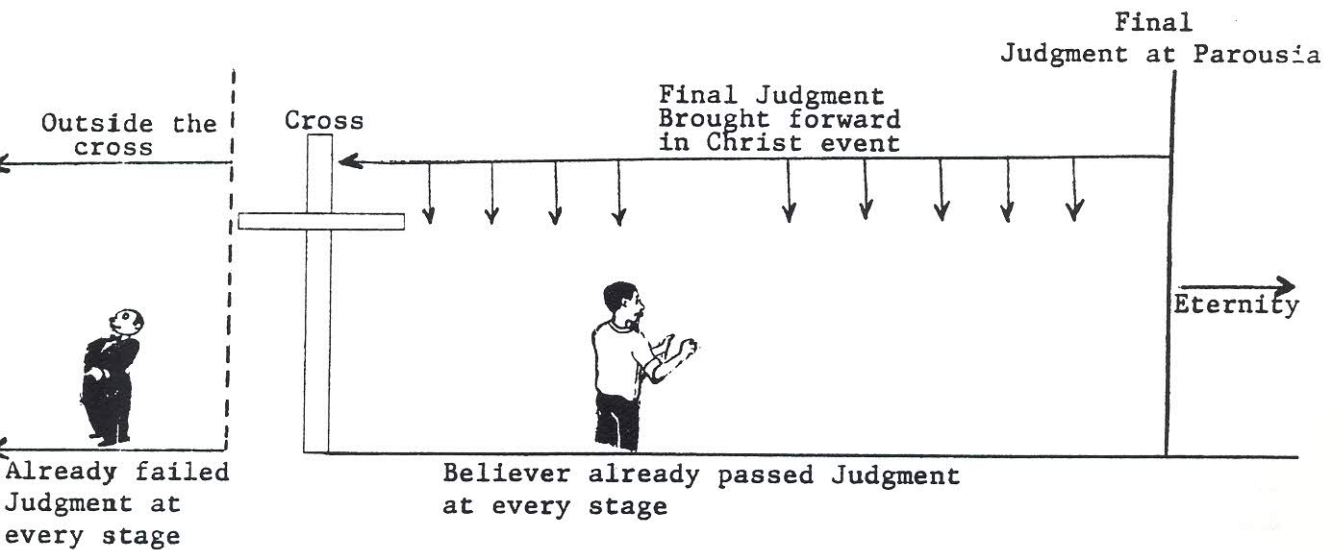
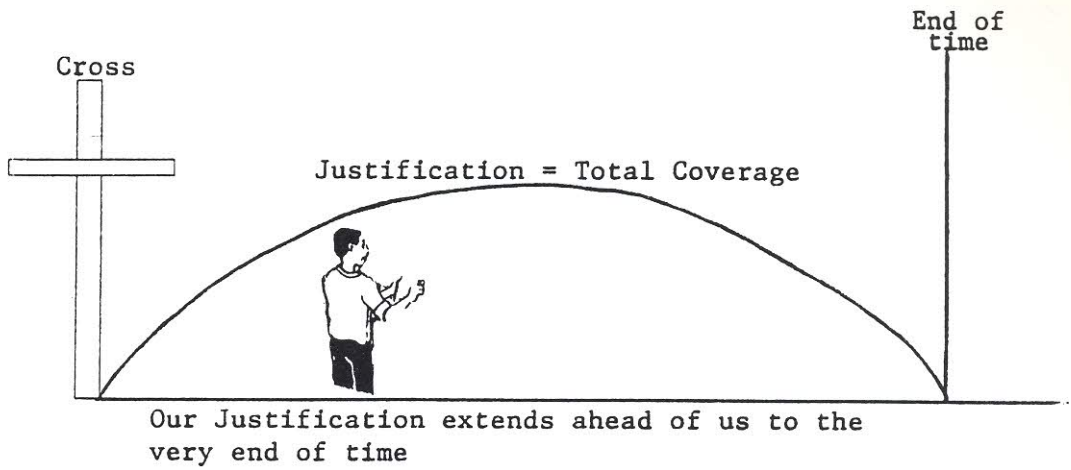
always there. He fails, but His Righteousness, Jesus, did not fail, therefore he need not be discouraged, he is still acceptable before God in Jesus. When he succeeds he cannot boast, for his righteousness, his acceptance before God is not anything God is doing in him, but what God has done outside of him, in the cross, in the very person of Jesus (Rom 5:1-12; 10:4).

He can therefore afford to have a continued firm assurance of salvation, because such is now removed from the ever fluctuating realm of behavior, and is planted on the rock Jesus Christ who, as we saw earlier, became man's righteousness even before man repented and accepted Him¹.

There is even further assurance in the fact that the nature of justification does not allow for the believer to hop in-and-out of justification. Justification is received through a relationship. Relationship has to do with attitude, not acts. Therefore the person who is continually choosing Christ, despite the fact he may fail at times, is still justified because he has a positive attitude towards Christ. "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus," says Paul (Rom 8:1). Such a person, however, is not a perfect person. On this principle perfectionism falls dead, and a vibrant assurance of salvation springs to life. "When we realize that our hope of glory is Christ, that we are complete in Him, we shall rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."²

¹See pages 30-34.

²White, "Address to the Church", Review and Herald, April 4, 1893, 36.



CHAPTER VI

THE KINGDOM AND AN ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

The concept of the kingdom throughout the Bible forms an important basis for an assurance of salvation. In recent times this subject has received much attention from Bible scholars and, like so many other theological topics, a divergence of views has emerged on it. We can only but give a synopsis of some of the major views of modern times.¹

The German scholar Albert Schweitzer propounded consistent eschatology.² By this interpretation he advanced that Jesus expected the kingdom to come in the immediate future, but Jesus was mistaken, and died a disappointed and disillusioned man, when it did not happen. Schweitzer bent all the sayings and acts of Jesus to fit into this theory. He styled the ethical teachings of Jesus Interimsethik; a temporary code of rules until the establishment of the kingdom.³

Two British thinkers, T.W. Manson and C.H. Dodd, emphasized the presence of the kingdom. Manson considered it as being realized when the will of God is being done here and

¹These views are adequately summarized in Ladd's, A Theology of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 58-59. Also in, Donald Guthrie's, New Testament Theology (Inter-Varsity, 1981), 417-418.

²Ladd, A Theology of the New Testament, 59.

³Ibid., 58-60.

now. If everybody could be convinced to do God's will, then the kingdom would have been consummated, and there would be no need for a future eschatological consummation.¹

Dodd's interpretation Realized Eschatology, emphasized that the entire kingdom was realized in the person and works of Jesus, and all future New Testament sayings concerning the kingdom must be seen as symbolic. For him the kingdom equals the transcendent order of the "wholly other" who has entered history in the life and mission of Jesus.² Thus according to Manson and Dodd's interpretation of the kingdom, there is no room for a future eschatological consummation.

Another major view is that of Kummel, who taught that the primary meaning of the kingdom is the eschaton, but this eschaton was also a present activity in Jesus' mission. This view has been criticized for its primary application of the kingdom to a completely future event, while the same event is now being present.³

In the dispensationalist circles, the view prevails that the kingdom will one day be realized with the present nation of Israel along with God's people from other quarters of the earth. This, they claim, will happen according to the prophecies of the Old Testament, which will be fulfilled literally as they are stated in the Old Testament.⁴

In very recent times George Eldon Ladd has given what we consider the most

¹Ladd, A Theology of the New Testament, 59.

²Donald Guthrie, New Testament Theology, 416-417.

³Ibid., 419. Also George E. Ladd, The Presence of the Future (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 29-30. Ladd, A Theology of the New Testament, 59.

⁴Ibid., 60.

balanced and biblically sound interpretation of the kingdom. Essentially his position states that the kingdom is the reign or rule of God. From the New Testament perspective, this reign has two dimensions. The first, began in the person and work of Jesus, and will eventually lead into the second dimension, the consummation of the kingdom at the eschaton.¹ We shall have reason to elaborate on this position later.

From this brief survey it is evident that the kingdom concept of Scripture has had a variety of interpretations. As we shall see later, however, that position as taught by Ladd and an ever increasing number of modern scholars, really gives a firm assurance of salvation to the believer.

We can only truly understand the New Testament concept of the kingdom as we look at it from its Old Testament background. A brief look at its Judaic background will also prove to be instructive as, like the Hebrew Old Testament, Judaism does sway some influence on the New Testament's presentation of the kingdom.²

In the Old Testament, the kingdom, malkuth means essentially the reign of God.³ (Psa 15:11; 13; 103:19). There exists somewhat of a dual idea of this reign, in that, while

¹Ibid., 64. His views are also to be found in his works: Ladd, The Presence of the Future (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), Jesus and the Kingdom: The Eschatology of Biblical Realism (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), The Gospel of the Kingdom (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959).

²Leopard Goppelt, Theology of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 1:48-50.

³F.F. Bruce, New Testament Theology (Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1981), 50.

God is presented as being king, He must also become king. His present kingship must be manifested in the lives of men (Num 23:21; Deut 33:21; Isa 24:23, 52:7; Zeph 3:15; Zach 14:9-21).¹

An interesting dimension to the Old Testament kingdom concept, is its consummation in the day of the Lord. The prophets, especially those from the eighth century onwards, envisioned that great and terrible day of YAHWEH, that particular day when YAHWEH would put an end to history as it then existed. It would be a day of judgment and total destruction for Israel's enemies, but a day of salvation for Israel² (Isa 13:10-16; Amos 9:12, Joel 1, 2, 3; Zach 9).

With the day of the Lord the Messianic age would dawn, the kingdom would have been established with national Israel, and God's Messiah would reign supreme forever. It would be a time of holy bliss, and perpetual Sabbath.³ Such blessings as total forgiveness (Jer 31:31-34, 43:25; Zach 3:1f), the filling of the Holy Spirit (Joel 2:28-29; Isa 44:3), fellowship with the Messiah King (Ezk 36:22-28; Isa 65, 66), vindication for the righteous (Isa 9:1-7, 46:13, 61:10), deliverance from physical evil, sickness and death would be the blessing of

¹Ladd, A Theology of the New Testament, and The Presence of the Future, 112-138.

²H. Porter, "Day of the Lord," ISBE (1939), 2:799.

³Samuele Bacchiocchi does a very good job in illustrating how the Messianic age was considered a time of wholly Sabbath. Samuele Bacchiocchi, Divine Rest For Human Restlessness (Rome: Pontifical, Gregorian University, 1980), 137-149.

that new age.¹

It is important to note that the establishment of the kingdom according to the Old Testament would happen on a particular day in history. It would be ushered in as a one day event.² Secondly, it would only be with national Israel. Judaism continued these beliefs and made additions to them. It made an extremely sharp contrast between this age and the age to come.³ This age of human existence being completely evil and virtually abandoned by God. Soon, however, God will usher in the New Age of his Messianic kingdom, thus terminating this present hopeless era.⁴ In the meanwhile, however, the reign of God does exist, being mediated through the Torah.

Whoever repents towards the Torah, and accepts it completely, and subsequently order his life according to the Torah, so that his good deeds (yetzer hatob) outweigh his bad deeds (yetzer hara)⁵ will be justified and counted worthy for the Messianic kingdom. It is

¹“The Role of Israel in Old Testament Prophecy,” Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (SDABC), rev. ed., Francis D. Nichol (Washington: Review and Herald, 1980), 4:25-36.

²Samuele Bacchiocchi, The Advent Hope for Human Restlessness (Berien Springs: Biblical Perspectives, 1986), 40-46.

³Calvin J. Roetzel, The World That Shaped the New Testament (Atlanta: John Knox, 1985), 38-39.

⁴Ibid., 34-35.

⁵Davis, Paul and Rabbinic Judaism (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 22.

the consensus of the synoptic gospels that the central message of Jesus was the kingdom of God. In both Matthew and Mark He began His ministry with the words, "The Kingdom of heaven/God¹ is at hand," Eggiken. In Luke (4:16-19) He reads from Isaiah 61:1-2 and 58:6, passages that forecast the Messianic kingdom,² and then declared: "This day the Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" (v. 21). There can be no doubt from the synoptic gospels that Jesus saw his life and mission as being the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies concerning the kingdom.³

In Mark 1:15 the verb at hand, Greek Eggiken, is in the intensive perfect. That tense that emphasizes definiteness and sure existence of a particular reality. Thus what Jesus was saying is that the kingdom promised by the Old Testament was indeed present. He was the Messiah (John 4:25-26), and with Him the rule of God's kingdom has begun, the new Messianic age has dawned.

It was on this note that Jesus went about to realize in his mission all the blessings foreshadowed concerning the kingdom. He granted liberation to the captives (Luke 4:16-19,

¹Matthew, who wrote for a Jewish audience, always used the designation kingdom of heaven, as the Jews would consider the divine name too sacred to pronounce. Mark, on the other hand, who addressed a Gentile audience, had no problem in saying kingdom of God.

²For a vivid exegesis of Luke's programmatic blending of these two texts, and of their Messianic import, see Samuele Bacchiocchi, Divine Rest for Human Restlessness, 145-149.

³Glenn W. Barker, William L. Lane and J. Ramsey, The New Testament Speaks (Harper and Row, 1969), 80-93.

31-36, 9:37-42). He opened the eyes of the blind (Matt 12:22-32). He forgave sins (Mark 2:5-10). He breathed the Holy Spirit on his disciples (John 20:22). It was commonly believed that with the Messiah's advent, and that of his kingdom, the demons of evil would lose their power.¹ Jesus exorcised the demons from the possessed and firmly declared that this was a sign that the kingdom of God had arrived (Matt 12:28; Luke 11:20).

When the disciples of John inquired whether or not He was the Messiah, He pointed to His works and used the Messianic passages of Isaiah 35:5-6 that speak of the kingdom, to describe His actions. He then sent them to inform John that indeed the prophecy was being fulfilled (Matt 11:26; Isa 35:5-6).

The metaphor of the banquet was a common Jewish symbol of the future eschatological salvation in the kingdom.² Jesus as Messiah fellowshiped and feasted with the sinners at a banquet (at the chagrin of the Pharisees who obviously read the implications), and further declared that his disciples needed not fast as the bridegroom was with them. Indeed the Messianic feast was on (Matt 9:10-17; Luke 5:29-32).

Jesus did not only promise forgiveness, fellowship, vindication, deliverance from sickness or death, but He bestowed all these realities in abundance (John 11:1-44; Luke 13:14-16; Mark 1:21-28). He declared decisively that "today Salvation has come" (Luke

¹George Rice, Christ in Collision (Mountain View: Pacific, 1982), 69.

²An early Tannaitic saying compares the age to come as a banquet hall: "This age is like a vestibule before the age to come. Prepare yourself in the vestibule that you may enter the banquet hall". "F.F. Bruce, Mark: The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 106.

19:10). "The kingdom of God is in the midst of you"¹ (Luke 17:21). Indeed with his person the kingdom foreshadowed by the Old Testament had arrived. The new age had dawned.

While the New Testament speaks of the kingdom as being present, there can be no doubt that it also speaks unequivocally of it being future. Such passages as Matt 8:11, 26 29, 13:36-43; 16:27-28; Mark 9:1; 14:25; Luke 13:29-29; 22:18, cannot be understood otherwise than referring to the future establishment of the kingdom.

The logical conclusion is clear. That which is to come is now present.² The reign of God (kingdom) has now broken into history in the person of Jesus Christ. The Old Testament was being fulfilled not in its literal minute details, but Christologically. The difference between the Old Testament presentation and the New Testament's presentation can be illustrated by the diagram on page sixty one.

It is important to note that, while the Old Testament portrays the kingdom as being inaugurated in a one-day event, the New Testament teaches that it was inaugurated by the Christ event, which will eventually find its consummation in the eschaton. There is therefore an inseparable link between the kingdom now and the kingdom to come. They can be

¹We believe that "in the midst of you" is the better translation of the Greek entos umon estin, as Jesus would not be speaking of the kingdom being in the Jews (thus warranting the translation "in you") who then did not believe in Him the epitome of the kingdom. According to Hill, ephthasen (has come) of Matt 12:28 affirms the same thing as eggiken (is at hand) but it is more explicit. The kingdom is not just pressing upon them but it has come. David Hill, The Gospel of Matthew (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 216.

²Ladd, The Presence of the Future, 195-217.

distinguished, but not separated; they are dimensions of the same reality.¹ To be in the kingdom now is to be enjoying the foretaste of the kingdom realities yet to come. The Old Testament believer hopes to be in the kingdom; the New Testament believer is already enjoying that which he still hopes to receive ultimately.

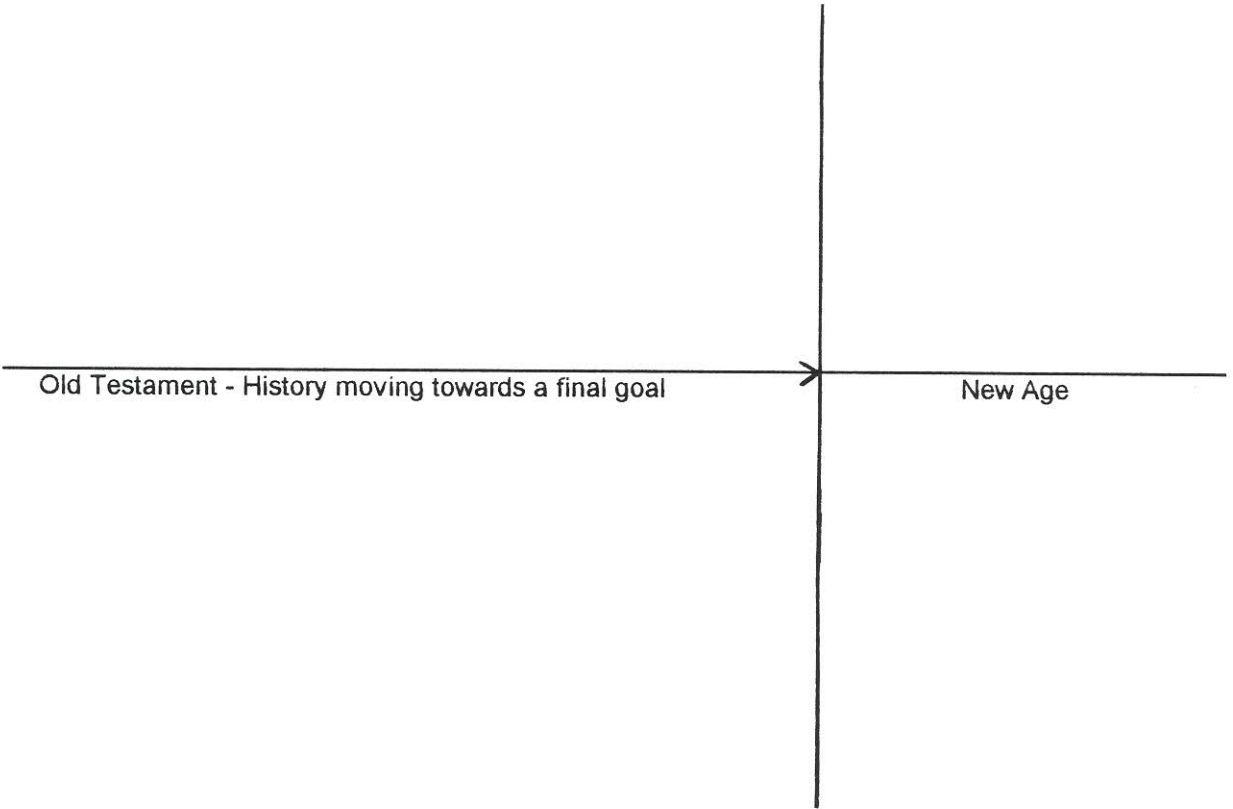
There is still one aspect of the kingdom that bears relevance to our study. This aspect is the relation of the kingdom to the church. From the time of Augustine the kingdom and the church were considered synonymous.² This concept has virtually died or is rapidly dying in light of modern studies on the subject.³ As was observed on the previous page, the kingdom of God (Basilea Tou Thou) means essentially the reign of God. This reign on earth was encapsuled in the person of Jesus (Luke 17:21; Matt 12:28; Col 2:19). Millard Erickson observed that this reign or kingdom of God has always existed in heaven.⁴ We therefore cannot equate the church with the kingdom, although the church is definitely an instrument of the kingdom, it witnesses of the kingdom, and helps to mediate it to humanity.

¹Ladd, A Theology of the New Testament, 68.

²Ibid., 105.

³Ibid. Also from our general survey on the subject.

⁴Millard Erickson, Christian Theology (Grand Rapids: Baker Book, 1974), 1042.



But the church is not the kingdom as it is not Jesus. Neither does the church encompass all there is to the reign of God. The church, as Ladd observes, is only a custodian of the kingdom.¹ The kingdom creates the church but the church does not create the kingdom.² The church is only a manifestation of the kingdom. The kingdom is God's reign and the total realm of its existence. The church, on the other hand, is a fellowship of believers. That an individual is in the fellowship of believers does not necessarily say that he is in the kingdom, as indeed the sons of the kingdom are those who have truly accepted Jesus Christ by faith and are allowing his reign to dominate their lives (Rom 8:9-14; Matt 22:1-10). Not all Israel are Israel, says Paul (Rom 2:25-29, 9:6). The disciples were commissioned to preach the kingdom not the church (Matt 20, Mark 16).

Relevance to an Assurance of Salvation

From the above discussion, the relevance of the kingdom to an assurance of salvation is logically clear. While the believer awaits the kingdom, he is already in the kingdom. While he awaits joy, peace, liberation, rest and salvation, he has already begun to enjoy these

¹Ladd, A Theology of the New Testament 116. Also The Presence of the Future, 262-264. Jesus and the Kingdom, 258-260.

²Here we differ from Ladd who claims that there can be no kingdom without a church. This is tantamount to saying there can be no Jesus without the church, since He is the essence of the kingdom.

realities. Unlike the Old Testament that makes it a reality to be realized in the future, The New Testament presents the kingdom as a present reality to be experienced here and now. Unlike Judaism that makes the Torah the mediator of the kingdom, Jesus Christ Himself is the mediator, and the believer receives the blessings of the new age by accepting Him personally. He no longer needs to repent towards a Law, or outweigh his violation thereof by his obedience thereto, he only needs to repent towards a person, accept the person, and receive freely his justifying righteousness. This and nothing more qualifies him as a child of the kingdom (Acts 16:31; Rom 9:9-13; Matt 11:28-29).

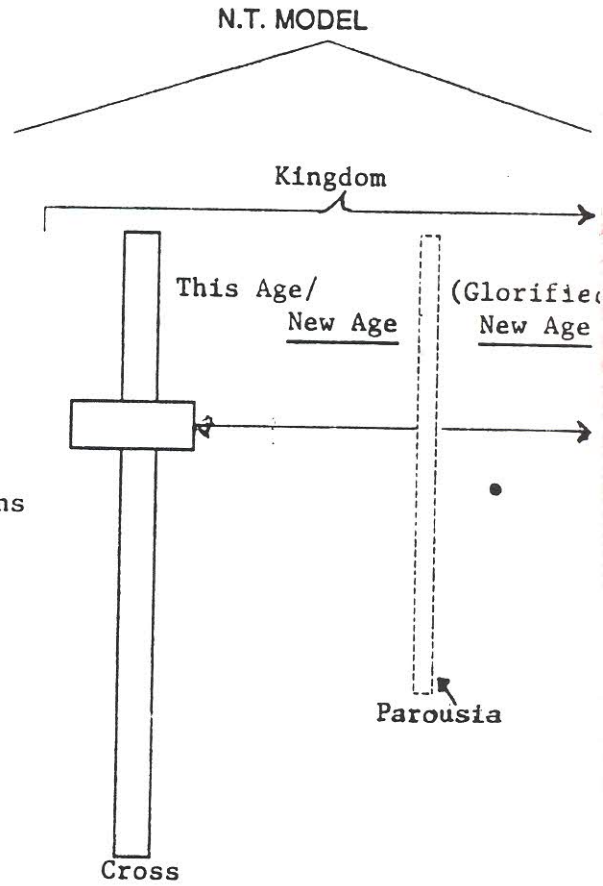
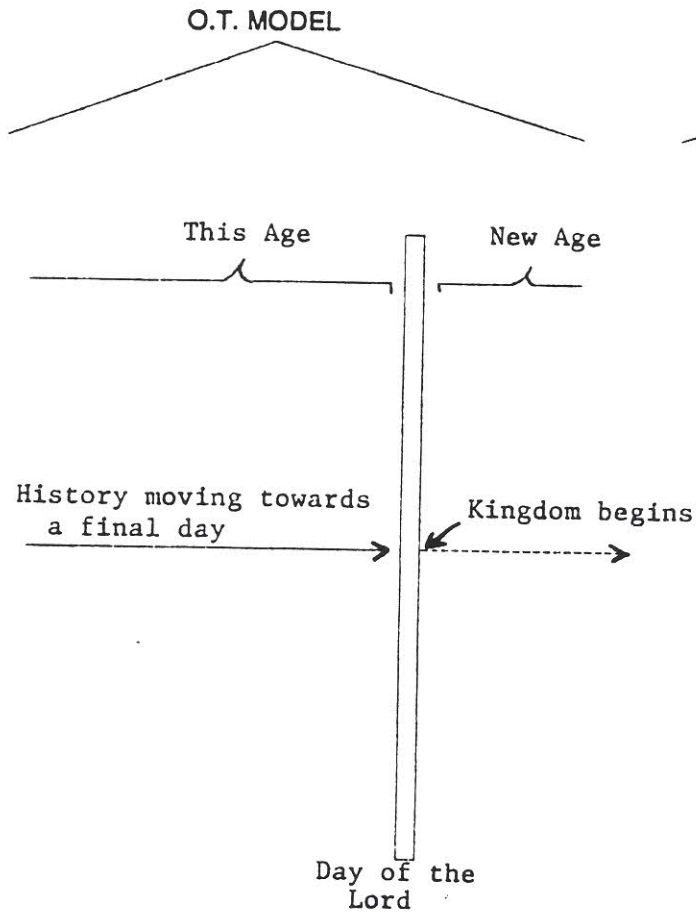
In Christ the future eschatological kingdom has been brought forward, and the believer is now a bonafide part of that which is to come. In Christ, he has received his qualifications for the eschatological kingdom in the present time. It therefore goes to say that he can have a very firm assurance of salvation, as he is already participating in that which he hopes to receive.

Such assurance cannot be gained from realized or consistent eschatology, which limits the kingdom to history. By such norms there is really no kingdom for the present believer. Neither can it be gained from those who propound that the kingdom is being completely realized as God's will is perfectly done here and now. This is futile perfectionism.¹ The Old Testament or Judaism cannot give it either.²

¹On page 71 and onwards we discuss perfectionism.

²That is, separate and apart from its amplification in the New Testament.

KINGDOM



At best they present the kingdom as being realized only with national Israel; there is not a truly universal scope. Such solid assurance of salvation can only be gained from the fact that the kingdom was, is, and will be fully consummated in the activity of Jesus. The one who is both the epitome of the kingdom, and also God's gift of the kingdom. The one who was, is and will ever be (Rev 1:8). To be in Him now is the only guarantee of being in the consummated new age, a solid assurance of salvation.

The fact that the kingdom is not the church also speaks to this definite assurance of salvation. In a world in which the Christian church has splintered into a multitude of denominations, with almost each one claiming to be *the* exclusive right church, if the kingdom equals the church, then salvation could no longer be accessed through a faith relationship with Jesus. It would then be, by sifting through the vast spectrum of churches to find that only right kingdom-church. It would also mean that all those who are outside of that special kingdom/church are lost, although they might have accepted Jesus Christ sincerely. This would be tantamount to Judaism and also salvation by works. The nature of the kingdom being what it is, has made salvation available to every man who has accepted Jesus Christ as his personal savior.

CHAPTER VII

ETERNAL LIFE AND THE ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

The theme of eternal life is another concept that communicates the message of an assurance of salvation. The apostle John dwells upon this theme more than any other Bible writer. In his gospel it is set forth in plain, straightforward and attractive manner.

John wrote his gospel between AD 80-100¹ with the distinctive objective "that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God, and that believing you may have life [zoe] in his name." (John 20:31). The concept of eternal life runs like an unbroken thread throughout John's gospel and is indeed the theme thereof.

The term, eternal life (zoe aionios) occurs 36 times² in John, and zoe life, which carries the same meaning as zoe aionios, occurs 17 times.³ According to G.E. Ladd, the concept is based on Hayye olam (the life of the future age) of Daniel two and signifies life

¹Everett F. Harrison, An Introduction to the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 217. The definite date of John's gospel is still disputed, but it is generally held that it is in the last two decades of the first century. T. Johnson, The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 470-471.

²Leon Morris, The New International Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 82.

³Ladd, A Theology of the New Testament, 255.

after the resurrection.¹ It is abundantly clear in John's gospel that eternal life has an eschatological dimension which refers definitely to life in the new earth.²

He who believes in the son has eternal life, he who does not obey the son shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests upon him (3:36). Other passages such as 4:14, 5:29, 12:35 speak directly to life in the new earth. The key factor about John's concept on the subject, however, and that which speaks most directly to an assurance of salvation, is the fact that this future eternal life is resident in the person of Jesus.

In a most emphatic manner Jesus declared; "Ego Imi"³, I am the way, the truth and the life (14:6). To Mary He again declared; "Ego Imi, I am the resurrection and the life zoe" (11:25);

To the Jews He said:

"For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the son also to have

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., 256.

³Kurt Aland et al, The Greek New Testament (New York: American Bible, 1975), 388. The phrase Ego Imi is clearly a designation of divinity. As examination of the passages in the Septuagint (LXX) where it is used (Deut 32:39; Isa 43:10, 46:4) show that it is the rendering of the Hebrew Anti hu literally I (am) He -- referring definitely to YAHWEH. According to J.H. Brenard, the phrase appears to occur only when God is the speaker. For an exposition on Ego Imi see J. H. Bernard, International Critical Commentary, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John, (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clarke, 1976), 2:icxvii-cxxi. Also, "I an he, ego eimi" [John 8:24], Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (SDABC), rev.ed., ed. Francis D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1980), 5:988.

life in himself' (5:26).

In Him was life zoe and the life was the light of men (1:4).

His very person was the bread and water of eternal life (6:35, 41, 48, 50; 4:10, 14; 6:35; 7:37-38). He was therefore not only the giver of eternal life but he Himself was eternal life.¹ This eternal life of Himself was for all those who accept Him by faith and enter into a personal relationship with him. This brings us to a third dimension of eternal life. That is, it is a present experience for the believer.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life (3:16).

For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world (6:33).

I came that they might have life and have it more abundantly (10:10).

In his epistle he writes:

And this is the testimony, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His son. He who has the son has life; he who has not the son of God has not life (1 John 5:11-12).

John is not only satisfied in portraying eternal life as being present, but he reinforces it by showing that it is a present that has an unbroken connection with the future.

He who believes in the son has eternal life present. He who does not

¹In John, more than any other gospel, Christ is presented as the reality of the themes He taught. The main point in John is not the kingdom but more importantly the king himself.

obey the son shall not see life future but the wrath of God rests upon him (3:36).

Jesus said to her, Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up into eternal life (4:13,14).

See also 6:51, 11:23-26, 17:2-3.

According to John, therefore, the future is now present. The life of the new earth is brought forward in the "now," and there is an unbroken connection between them. It is evident that while the synoptic gospels speak of salvation in terms of the kingdom, while Paul speaks of it as justification, reconciliation, etcetera, John speaks of it as eternal life.¹

It is also evident that, for the believer, this eternal life is essentially the relationship with Jesus. The Rabbis taught that he who studies the Torah would gain life for the age to come.² Jesus refutes this by pointing out that he fulfilled the Torah, and life could only be gained as He was received (John 5:39).

Eternal life is also equated with knowing Him (10:14, 17:3, 1 John 5:20). The knowledge of Jesus in John is based on the Old Testament concept of yada,³ which denotes an experiential relationship with an entity not just a theoretical knowing, but a real fellowship

¹Says Rudolf Bultman, "zoe aionios belongs to the eschatological time of salvation, but is already present for faith." Rudolf Bultman, The Johannine Epistles (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973), 83.

²Ladd, A Theology of the New Testament, 256.

³Ibid., 263.



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and participation with that entity.¹ To know ginosko Christ, therefore, means to accept Him, to participate in an intimate relationship with Him, to abide in Him as the branch in the vine, to obey Him, and all this equals eternal life (chapters 6, 7, 8, 15:1-10).

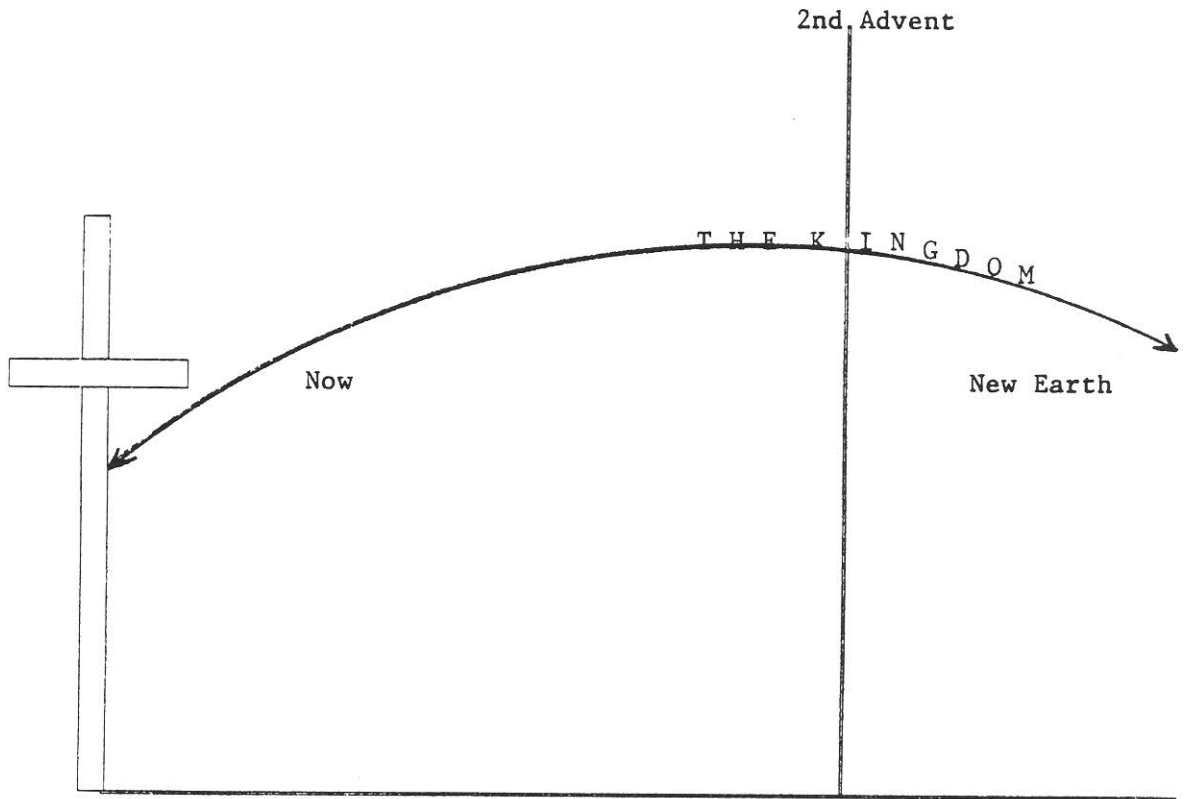
All this testifies to a mighty assurance of salvation, as again it asserts that that which we hope to receive, we have already received by virtue of the fact that we are in Jesus Christ. The person in Christ, therefore, has absolutely no fear for the future, for his eternal destiny has already been revealed to him. In fact he is now enjoying it each day.

Those who see Christ in His true character, and receive Him into the heart, have everlasting life. It is through the spirit that Christ dwells in us; and the Spirit of God, received into the heart by faith, is the beginning of the life eternal.²

¹Ibid.

²Ellen White, Desire of Ages (Washington: Review and Herald, 1940), 388.

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The kingdom brought forward by the cross. To be in it now is to be in it then legally.

CHAPTER VIII

PERFECTION AND PERFECTIONISM AS THEY RELATE TO AN ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

It is not our concern here to deal with this subject in detail, as it is a very broad and technical subject which would lead into extensive discussions. We will only assert a few cardinal points, as they relate to our study of an assurance of salvation.

1. The Bible, while it teaches perfection, does not teach sinless perfection (perfectionism) in this life.¹
2. The perfect man in the Bible is not the person who is sinless, but the person who consistently orders his life according to God's will.²
3. Thus perfection is the state that exists by virtue of a continuous relationship with God.³ Not by virtue of having realized sinlessness.

¹Hans K.LaRondelle, Perfection and Perfectionism (Berrien Springs: Andrews University, 1984), 113-154, 159-165.

²For example, the Bible refers to such men as Noah, Abraham, as being perfect. But no one, by reading the life records of these men, would want to conclude that they were sinless (Gen 6, 17, 26, Job 1,3).

³Says LaRondelle, "The provision of atoning sacrifice and forgiving grace through appointed priests created a sanctifying fellowship between the repentant believers as Noah, Abraham, Job and other 'righteous' or 'perfect' persons (Gen 6:9, 17:1, 26:5; Job 1:1-8; Psa 84:11, 119:1; Prov 11:20). They have the law of God not as a yoke on their neck but as a reborn will and desire in their hearts (Psa 37:31, 40:8; Jer 31:31-34; Ezk 36:26-27). The righteous ones are therefore not the sinless ones but those who repent of their sins and turn

4. Man is sinful not only because of wrong acts, but also by the state of his being. He is a sinner by nature (Rom 6:12, Psa 51).
 5. The Bible teaches that only at the resurrection will mortal put on immortality. If such is the case, it therefore means that only then will we be rid of our sinful nature, for it is essentially our nature that makes us mortal (1 Cor 15:51-56).
 6. If sinful nature, then inevitable acts of sin will follow, as your nature makes you who you are. It is impossible to live outside of your nature, while still having that nature.¹
 7. At conversion, God in His love gives man a new nature, that coexists with the sinful nature, suppressing its sinful demonstrations (Gal 5:16-17).
 8. Therefore, while man may never be completely sinless, he will certainly sin less, and less, by virtue of his new nature.
 9. To advocate sinless perfection as a requirement of eternal salvation, is therefore to advocate the impossible.
 10. Such is a recipe for Phariseism or discouragement. Phariseism, and self-righteousness for the person who thinks he is reaching sinless perfection; and
-

to God in His sanctuary for forgiveness. . .” Hans K. LaRondelle, “The Biblical Message of Salvation”, 5.

¹This is by no means giving an excuse for sin. It is only an honest and frank admittance of the fact of a reality. It reveals the depth to which we have fallen and the matchless love and power of God's salvation in Jesus Christ. It is because of this why God accepts Jesus separate and apart from his doing in us as our righteousness, as we will never within our persons have enough of God's righteousness to merit our salvation.

utter discouragement for the sincere believer who cannot now claim an assurance of eternal salvation, for he self-admittedly, is still committing sins.¹

11. We should therefore never say that unless one overcomes all his weaknesses, he cannot be saved. By this rule no one will ever be saved.
12. Whatever one wants to construe as being the nature of Christ, it certainly was not sinful human nature, lest He too would have been a sinner, in need of repentance.²
13. Christ was like us, but He was certainly not us.³
14. Christ did no sin, neither was any sin found in Him. He had sinless perfection (1 Peter 2:21-22, Luke 1:35, 23:41).
15. Because of the extremely lost condition of man, God made the person of Jesus

¹Those who advocate sinless perfection now, claim that Christ came, lived and demonstrated that man too can become sinless. This position in our opinion conceives of sin only in terms of acts. But sin, as we have discussed, is more than acts. It is virtually the base of man's nature. Christ came as the second Adam to demonstrate that Adam before the fall could have remained perfect. Like Adam who fell He could have fallen, but He did not.

If the sinless position is right, then God has been losing the battle in the great controversy since the cross, as any man who says he has no sin is a liar and the truth is not in him (1 John 1:7-8). How many people will He wait on to reach sinless perfection before Jesus returns?

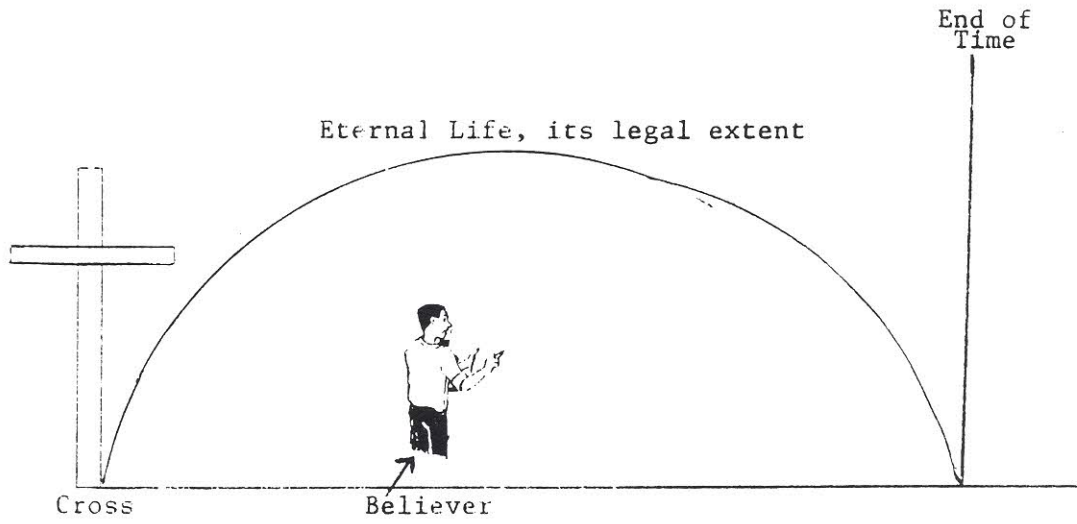
²It is reasonable to hold that the nature of Christ was that of Adam before the fall.

³Philippians 2:7-8 is a key text used by many to support the position that Christ shared sinful human nature. In describing the state of Christ before the incarnation, Paul affirms that he existed in the morphe (form) of God. But in describing the state of Christ after the incarnation, he employs a different word, omoiomati-- likeness. Omoiomati denotes likeness or similarity, not sameness. In commenting on this text the International Critical Commentary has this to say: "To affirm likeness is at once to assert similarity and to deny sameness." Marvin R. Vincent, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Phillipians and to Philemon, The International Critical Commentary (1979), 59.

man's righteousness. All who now accept Him are reckoned as sinlessly perfect, not in themselves, but in the person of Christ.

16. The good news of the gospel is also that God does not need man's sinless perfection in order to save him. Christ's perfection is sufficient. He has offered to man His own righteousness (Rom 1:16-17, 3:21-26) in the person of Jesus.
17. Christ, therefore, and not sinless perfection is the only and all-important decisive issue in salvation.
18. Never forget that we are unworthy not just for the bad things we do but also because everything good we do is defiled by sinfulness. That is why Martin Luther insisted that even our good deeds need forgiveness. That is why Ellen White said even our prayers are defiled by passing through corrupt channels of humanity. Sin is not only electing to do wrong but also neglecting to do right, we might never yield to temptation yet still be under the curse of the law.¹

¹Martin Weber, Who's Got The Truth (Silverspring: Home Study International, 1994), 104, 105.



CHAPTER IX

THE SEALING AND AN ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

The doctrine of the sealing is yet another Biblical metaphor that expresses the idea of an assurance of salvation. Like the other metaphors mentioned earlier, this one plays a very important role in Seventh-day Adventist theology, and impacts heavily on the reality of an assurance of salvation.

The current position of the Seventh-day Adventist Church on the sealing is aptly set forth in the Sabbath School Quarterly of October-December 1994. The position in summary affirms:

1. All those who accept Jesus receive a FIRST seal. This is the Holy Spirit.¹
2. We receive God's seal, not because of our works, but because of Christ's sacrifice on our behalf, and because we obey God's laws.²
3. The first seal of the believer is the new birth experience.³

¹General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Adult Sabbath School Quarterly (Silver Spring, DC: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, October-December 1994), 67. This position can also be found in many Seventh-day Adventist publication on the subject.

²Ibid., 66.

³Ibid., 67.

4. Towards the end of time those who remain completely faithful to all God's laws will receive God's final end-time seal, that seal is the Sabbath.¹
5. This final end-time seal will be given only to those who keep the Seventh-day Sabbath.²
6. This seal fortifies the believer to withstand the final onslaughts of persecution just before the end of time.³
7. Opposite to the final seal of God, the Sabbath, is the end-time mark of the beast, Sunday observance.⁴
8. No one has yet received the mark of the beast. It will be received when Sunday observance is enforced by Law.⁵
9. Sabbath or Sunday observance, which will then be made plain to all, will therefore be the final decisive issue with respect to the sealed remnant, who will eventually be saved, and those who receive the mark of the beast and eventually will be lost.⁶

It must be observed that this position is buttressed in the writings of Ellen White, from which we can glean further insights into the subject as taught by the Seventh-day

¹Ibid., 68.

²Ibid., 66, 68.

³Ibid., 68.

⁴Ibid., 69-71.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid., 68.

Adventist church.¹

According to Ellen White, all who receive the final seal of God will be perfect, they would have reflected the character of Christ perfectly. She states:

No one of us will ever receive the seal for God while our characters have one spot of stain upon them. . . .²

Now is the time to prepare. The seal of God will never be placed upon the forehead of an impure man or woman. . . . all who receive the seal must be without spot before God. . . . candidates for heaven. . . .³

She also asserts that the final seal will be a property exclusively of God's commandment-keeping people.⁴ In essence therefore, the S.D.A. position states that there is a first and second sealing of God's people. The first seal is the Holy Spirit. The second is the Sabbath. The former happens at conversion and is similar to the new birth experience. The latter happens close to the end of probation, when the Sunday Law is issued and the world is made to choose between the Seventh-day Sabbath and Sunday observance. It further affirms that both seals give a guarantee of eternal salvation.

It is our opinion that this presentation of the sealing betrays the full assurance of

¹These positions, in part or in whole, can also be founded in almost every Seventh-day Adventist Literature on the subject.

²Ellen White, Testimonies for the Church (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1948), 6:211-216.

³Ibid., 211-213.

⁴White, Testimonies for the Church 6:15. For other Ellen White statements on the sealing, see Ellen White, Patriarchs and Prophets (Boise: Pacific, 1958), 307. Ellen White, Early Writings (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1882), 38, 44, 71. Ellen White, "God's Holy Sabbath", Review and Herald, July 13, 1897.

salvation to be found in Jesus Christ. As we shall demonstrate later, it takes salvation away from Christ only, and rests it partially on Christ and partially on law-keeping.

Seal - A Brief Biblical Background

Seals have been in use from the Patriarchal age.¹ Basically it was a device used to make a distinctive design in another object; for example clay or wax. Its purpose was to indicate authenticity, authority, assurance, completion, inviolability and ratification.² The seal instrument was made of metal or stone, and might have been a ring or some cylindrical or conically shaped object. Its design, which might have included the owner's name was peculiar to the owner (Exo 28:11; Est 8:8).³

The real importance of the seal in the ancient world was a legal one.⁴ The owner puts his mark on his possessions, his beasts, his slaves, his documents, etcetera, and thereby guards them against theft.⁵ It was a protecting and distinguishing sign. When used with documents or letters the seal served as a signature to authorize and to authenticate.⁶

Throughout the Bible we see the activity of sealing being used in different senses. For

¹Siegfried H.Horn, Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1960), s.v. Seals.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴R. Schippers, "Seal", Dictionary of the New Testament Theology ed., Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 3:497.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

example, as security and inviolability (Dan 6:17; Matt 27:62-66), as authenticity (2 Kings 21:6-16), as ownership (Jer 32:10), and as authority (Ezra 8:8-12).

Seals were not just a possession of the wealthy, but each man could have his own seal.¹ It is interesting to note that people usually demonstrate themselves to be the possession of their deity by the imprint of their seal.² Essentially, therefore, the seal in the ancient world was an instrument (figuratively or literally) that served to demonstrate ownership, security, guarantee, authority, inviolability and ratification.³

In the context of justification by faith and future eternal salvation, Paul makes some statements concerning the sealing which are very important to our study of the subject.

In 2 Cor 1:20-22 he writes:

For the promises of God find their yes in him. That is why we utter the Amen through him. . . But it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has commissioned us, He has put His seal upon us (o kai sphragisamenos emas) and given us His spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

2 Cor 5:5 - He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us His spirit as a guarantee.

And then in Ephesians Paul makes his most explicit statement on the concept:

In him you also who have heard the word of truth the gospel of your salvation and have believed in him, were sealed (esphragisthete), with the promised Holy Spirit, which is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of His glory (1:13-14).

¹Ibid., 497.

²Ibid.

³According to John F. McArthur, seals were made from hot wax, which were placed on the documents and then impressed with a signet ring. John F. McArthur, New Testament Commentary: Ephesians (Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1986), 34.

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God in whom you were sealed (esphragisthete), for the day of redemption (4:30).

Let's note a few very important points here.

1. The point of sealing:

When you believed (Eph 1:13). That is, at the point of accepting Jesus.

2. The nature of the sealing:

Completed, finished, not repetitious. The verb esphragisthete (1:13 and 4:30) is aorist tense.

3. The Seal:

The Holy Spirit.

4. Purpose:

A guarantee, a down payment.

5. Duration of Seal:

Until the second advent - "until we acquire possession of our salvation" (1:14, 4:30, etc.).

It would be instructive to take a second look at the verb for "seal" used by Paul in Eph 1:13-14 and Eph 4:30. From the context it is obvious that esphragisthete is a culminative aorist, that emphasized finished action and a resulting state of being.¹ This is so, as the act of sealing, while it has reached a point of culmination in the past, is to last until Jesus comes

¹Ray Summers, Essentials of New Testament Greek (Nashville: Broadman, 1950), 67.

the second time. It's a finished act with a resulting state of being.¹ It therefore means that the sealing here described is not a process but a status.² It is not an ongoing process being worked out in the believer, but rather a sealed status that the believer now has by virtue of the Holy Spirit in his life. In other words, the texts do not describe an ongoing activity of the Holy Spirit (sanctification) but instead a continued status bestowed (justification).³

This is in keeping with his "In Him" theme which he so lustily sings through chapters one and two, and which obviously illustrates the new status the believer now has in Christ. It is also very much in keeping with his argument of Justification by faith, which is the underlying principle of this epistle. Justification, as we have already discussed, is a status, not a process. The seal here, like justification, is said to qualify the believer for heaven.

Furthermore, such was the nature of seals in Paul's day. When an entity was sealed, the seal did not add to the actual content of the entity but simply changed the status of the content.⁴ It now acquires the authority, the ownership, the confirmation of the owner. There

¹The "Culminative Aorist" carries the same sense as the Greek Perfect tense. Ibid., 67.

²As was mentioned earlier, the function of seals back then was essentially a legal instrument.

³It is the view of many commentators, that in verses 11-14 Paul was using a baptismal liturgy. This seems quite plausible as baptism was referred to in the early church as sealing. In Rom 6:7 Paul explicitly declares that at baptism the believer is justified, "For he who has died has been justified (didckaiotai)."

⁴R. Schippers, "Seals", Dictionary of New Testament Theology, 3:497.

can be no doubt that sealing, like justification, is here used in a forensic sense to describe a status. This is further reinforced by the fact that it occurred not after the believer has spent some time in Christ, but at the point of accepting Christ. When you believed (esphragisthete, Greek aorist) you were sealed; a completed action. It must not be overlooked that Paul presents the basis for all this as being God's gracious actions in Jesus Christ (chapters 1 and 2).

The overriding thought is that Christ by his death has secured an eternal salvation for mankind. Man is yet to realize the totality of this: but until such occurs, however, man has a down payment, a guarantee, an arrabon,¹ a pledge from God that this salvation will be issued eventually. He now has a foretaste of his eternal salvation.²

It is abundantly clear by now that Paul's position runs contrary to our Seventh-day Adventist position. Firstly, it lasts until the day of redemption. Again there is no room for a second sealing. Secondly, it's a status received. This allows no room for it to be an ongoing sanctified process. Thirdly, it happens when the person accepts Christ and is completely based on the blood of Christ. In light of this there is no allowance for one becoming perfect to receive³ it, or for the seal itself being a law that one has to keep.

The fact is, the basic function of seal in terms of salvation is to identify, to distinguish,

¹Aland, K[urt] et al, The Greek New Testament (New York: American Bible Society, 1975), 667.

²In Greek culture the arrabon was the initial amount paid as a commitment that the rest of the debt would be finally paid.

³White, Testimonies for the Church, 6:211-216.

to guarantee, to mark one off as belonging to God. The unquestionable reality is, that which guarantees us salvation, that which says we belong to God is Jesus Christ Himself, not some law. It is thus that John presents Jesus as being the very seal of God:

Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the son of man will give to you; for on him has God the Father set his seal (John 6:27).

In Jesus is to be found the name, the authority, the power, the authenticity, the inviolability, the dominion, the everything of God. Not in a symbolic sense but in a real powerful way. We are justified by Him, we are acceptable before God because of Him. His very person, separate and apart from what He is doing in us, is our righteousness before God. If his person, separate and apart from his dwelling in us, is our righteousness before God, it therefore means that that which says we belong to God is Jesus Himself. He not only makes us distinct, but He Himself is our distinction. He not only gives us bread, or light, or way, but his very person is our bread, light, way (1 Cor 1:30-31; John 6; Eph 1). He not only seals us for eternity but he, by virtue of his life, death and resurrection has become our seal, he signifies that we belong to God, and He by His power keeps us as God's (Rom 8:9-14; 2 Cor 5:2; Col 2:10).

The Holy Spirit is therefore the seal in a representative manner. In the same way that He is another parakletos of the main parakletos Jesus Himself (John 14:16). It is thus that Paul does not in Ephesians present the workings of the Spirit as being the seal, but rather the Spirit's person as being the seal.¹

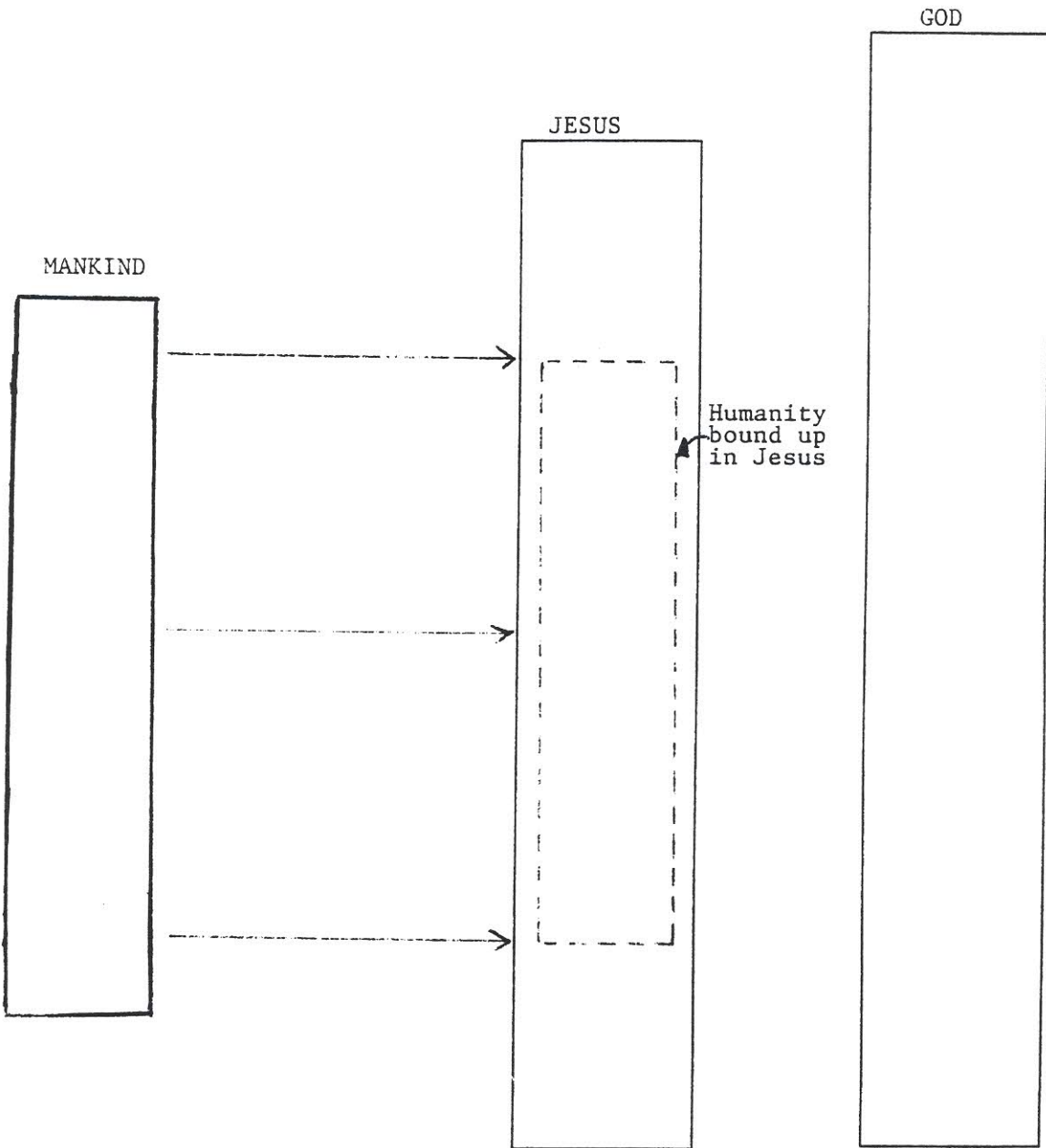
¹This is in keeping with Luke, who in Acts consistently portrays the gift, not the fruits, of the Spirit as being the distinguishing mark of the new Christian community.

Let's dwell on the subject a while longer as there is more to it. The seal, as we have seen, guarantees ultimate salvation, it is received without works (Eph 1:13), it is punctiliar, it's a status and it is based on the cross (1:7). From our study of Justification, there can be no doubt that sealing and justification are different terms to describe the same reality. Sealing is justification, justification is sealing.

Now, if sealing presently qualifies you for heaven, do you really need a second qualification? Can there be a second justification while one is still justified? If there is a second sealing or justification, it therefore means that the present qualification, the now assurance of salvation that the believer has is only temporary. We should therefore not speak in terms of an eternal assurance of salvation, for then we have an assurance which is not eternal, only temporary, until hopefully we receive that one which is eternal (the second sealing). Paul is therefore mistaken when he says we are sealed for or until the day of redemption (Eph 4:30).

It also means that only the Seventh-day Adventist who keeps the Sabbath and who hopes to keep it then (no one can guarantee what he will do in the future) can have some sort of a genuine assurance of salvation. All other assurances must be second class, and temporary. Why? Because the real test, the real pass mark to be sealed eternally, to receive the final assurance, is yet to be. The logical conclusion is self-evident. Salvation is not based squarely and solely on the cross.

If another sealing is to occur of the believer in Christ, if Sabbath keeping is that seal, it therefore means one will be sealed based on what he does then. That is, keep the Sabbath. Isn't that salvation by works, justification by law-keeping? If at any cost the sealed person



Acceptable before God
because of Him. His
Person is our Justification
our Seal.

has to receive a second seal, it cannot be denied that the first one was not all sufficient. It therefore means that, that which he gains based on the cross, his justification, was insufficient.

Yet another question is raised. The Holy Spirit is presented as the seal, Jesus is also presented as the seal. If the Sabbath later becomes the seal, it goes to say that at that point in time, the Sabbath and Jesus will be equal. The creator and the creature.¹

We submit to make the Sabbath the final test and the seal is to shift the entire grounds of salvation from the cross to a day. It is to make justification based on what I do. It is to remove the person of Christ as the decisive issue in the whole business of salvation and place it in a day. It's a categorical denial of Ephesians 1:13-14, which says that upon accepting Christ one is sealed until the day of redemption. It is undoubtedly saying you are sealed or saved until you are confronted with the Sabbath and you accept or reject it. Isn't this also a subtle way of saying only Sabbath-keepers will be saved in the final generation?²

We must never forget that we do not accept our salvation by accepting a set of rules, but by accepting a person. And having accepted that person we do not go aside and

¹The Sabbath is now referred to as the seal, but not in final terms as the deciding issue as to the saved and the unsaved. If it is not now the deciding issue, what is? Unquestionably it must be Christ and His cross. If later on the Sabbath becomes the deciding issue between the saved and the unsaved, it would therefore mean, at that point in time, it would have ascended to an equality of position with Jesus, at least in a specific function-- the one that Christ, and Him only, now serves.

²This was a dominant belief in early Adventism, and is still alive today in many areas of the world. In fact there are many who quote Ellen White as saying the ascending saints will spend a Sabbath in the air before they enter heaven. The index to Ellen White's writings rightly lists this saying as one of the "apocryphal" quotes made concerning E.G. White, The Comprehensive Index to the Writings of Ellen White, Ellen White Estate Inc., Washington, 1963, 3189.

keep his laws as the badge, as the sign that we are acceptable before God. The person also stands as that badge, that seal or sign of acceptance.¹

¹The Sabbath was the seal of God in the Old Testament (Exo 31:13; Ezk 20:12). Then it was the Torah that served as the document of election. That is, it served to identify and separate the chosen people of Israel (Deut 5:15; Exo 19:1-6). It therefore had had commands such as the Sabbath(s) that were elective in their function, among other functions of course. Whenever a Gentile accepted Judaism he had to become a Jew by pledging full allegiance to the Torah. This he did through the act of circumcision, and other rites. He thus signaled that he was now a child of the covenant, a member of the chosen race.

The early church, which was still couched in Judaism and whose pioneer members were predominantly Jews, still wanted to continue this practice (Acts 2,21:20-21). Consequently the circumcision controversy arose in the early church. Paul vigorously opposed this age-long practice on the basis of justification by faith (Gal 1, 2, 3, 5; Rom 2:27-29; Col 2:11, 3:11).

On the basis of the cross the dividing wall of hostility, the Torah, was abolished, and now both Jews and Gentiles are one in Christ (Eph 2:14-16). In Galatians he chided the believers for wanting to return to the law (nomos which equals Torah) having begun with the Spirit (Gal 3). In other words, having been justified freely by the blood of Christ they had now received the Spirit as the pledge and sign that they were indeed bona-fide members of the chosen covenant community. To return to Torah law as such a sign was to deny what God had done for them in Christ. The Acts 15 conference was essentially about this same issue. It is very interesting to note that the grounds on which the Gentiles needed not to be circumcised, that is, become Jews, was that they had received the Spirit "just as we do" (Acts 15:8-9). The book of Acts is extremely forceful on the point that that which identified the believers as being God's chosen was the person of the Spirit (see Acts 2:1-3, 38; 6:3, 8:14-18, 10:44-48, 11:15, 24; 15:8-11, 19:1-6).

In Romans Paul declares, "Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. . . for all who are led by the Spirit are sons of God" (Rom 8:9, 14, see also Gal 4:5-6).

The overwhelming evidence of the New Testament is that, while the law is still applicable as a moral code, it has lost its distinctive function as a document of election. Christ and his cross and consequently his Spirit have replaced it as such. It is because of this principle that no where in the New Testament does it ever state explicitly or implicitly that the Sabbath or any other commandment is the seal of God. Again this is not to deny the relevance of the Sabbath or any other command. It is only to deny their continued function in the new age of the Spirit, as the seal of God. Only Jesus and his Spirit can truly set one aside as belonging to God. A day cannot do such. When it did such for Israel it was only provisionally and symbolically until the real mark of distinction came, Jesus and his Spirit. It was thus that although the Jews continued to keep the Sabbath, they were rejected as the chosen, because they refused Christ. We must never forget also that the New Testament has

The beauty of the gospel is, God from his own unilateral initiative accepts all men in the person of Jesus Christ. In Him God came to be with man, and man has ascended to be with God. We are chosen in Him, says Paul (Eph 1). All that we can now do, is to accept our acceptance. He offers acceptance, and He Himself represents the fact that we are accepted before God, for in his very person humanity now lives with God in heaven. (The diagrams on pages 35 and 86 illustrate this).

This gives an overwhelming assurance of salvation that cannot be found otherwise. What of the Sabbath test towards the end of time? The fact is, when such happens the believer who accepts the Sabbath then, would not be accepting that which seals him, or cause him to receive God's final seal. He would not be receiving a second justification, while he is in Christ. There can be no such thing. It would only mean, as an already sealed or justified person, he is accepting an additional element of truth, not an additional truth that now causes him to receive God's final seal. The salvation he had before was and will always be of an eternal nature. It's based on the cross of Calvary (Heb 10:14; Matt 20:28; Rev 1:6, 5:9-10).

The issue will be the same as it is today. As a person in Christ is presented with new truths, he is under obligation to accept. If he refuses he would have forfeited his salvation. If he accepts, however, the additional truths accepted, would not have caused him to be more

its totally new symbols of salvation. A new temple, a new covenant, a new people, a new land, a new priesthood, a new sacrifice and certainly a new seal (Heb 8, 9; Rom 2:28-29; Heb 3, 4; Rev 21; Heb 7, 8; Eph 1:13-14; 2Cor 1:21). The overwhelming good news of the New Testament is: Whereas I (God) gave them (Israel) my Sabbaths to be a seal, . . . I now give Jesus (and his Spirit) to be your seal (N.T. believer). The greatest assurance of salvation.

saved, or to be finally justified or to receive a second and ultimate seal. He has all these already by virtue of he being in Christ. What an assurance of salvation! No wonder why Ellen White declared that "justification is the act of God of placing the work of man in the dust¹...." For even when he learns more truths, his faithful obedience to these extra truths does not add one iota to his salvation. They do not qualify him to be more, or finally sealed. He can now rejoice that such is already his experience, imperfect though he is.

We should therefore never speak of a second sealing as this is to deny a present full assurance of salvation in Christ. It is like saying you are resaved or re-justified every time you learn something new. It places one's ultimate salvation on truths accepted, and not on Christ.

As we have seen, to accept Christ means to be in the kingdom now; to be a child of God now; to be an heir of eternal life now; to have eternal life now; it is to have already passed the judgment, it is to be justified now, it is to be sealed for the kingdom of God now. All that which is to come you now begin to enjoy (1 John 5:11-13; John 5:24; Eph 1:13-16, 4:30; Matt 13; Luke 17:21).²

¹Ellen White, Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1962), 456.

²And please note that the New Testament writers were speaking eschatologically. As far as Paul and all the other writers of the New Testament were concerned there could have been no other "more" end time than their day. So close and imminent was the eschaton that for them it had already begun in principle. All prophecies were fulfilled christologically (Rom 3), eternal life was already present, even the resurrection had begun.(I Cor 15:20)

When Paul therefore speaks of the seal of God he was therefore speaking of God's final end time seal, which he equates with justification. If we would therefore speak of God's final end time seal then we've got to speak of the said seal Paul spoke of. The long delay in the Parousia, even if it be a 1000 years hence cannot and will not change the fact that the person of Christ, not teachings about him, but his very person will always be the decisive issue in the whole business of salvation.

Revelation Seven

Revelation seven is the key passage used to support the second sealing theory. This cannot be derived from a careful contextual study of the chapter, however. In brief, what Revelation seven is saying is: God will finally destroy the earth and only those who are sheltered by the protection of God (sealed) will be saved. The motif is one of impending destruction for the wicked but sure deliverance for God's people. It is "sealed" being used in the sense of protection from disaster, not "sealed" in the sense of justification and a final decision for heaven as we have already discussed.

The context begins from chapter four. Here John had a vision of the throne, where God sits and is being worshipped by the living creatures around the throne. In verse five a scroll is presented and there is lamentation as no one is able to open the scroll. It has been generally accepted, and rightly so, that the scroll represents the title deed of man's salvation. However, the slain lamb - Jesus - is able, worthy to open the scroll based on his atoning sacrifice (5:9-10). That is, based on his atoning sacrifice man would receive the ultimate content of the scroll-salvation. Here again we see salvation based on the cross, justification by faith.

As the seals are opened, different scenes of destruction and woe are unfolded until things reach an awful climax in 6:12-14. Here John, as he does so often, uses Jewish cosmology coupled with the day of the Lord concept of the Old Testament, to paint a picture of universal destruction. So terrible is the destruction that the question is raised, "And who shall be able to stand?" (Rev 6:17).

The scene slides right into chapter seven which gives the answer. In short those who

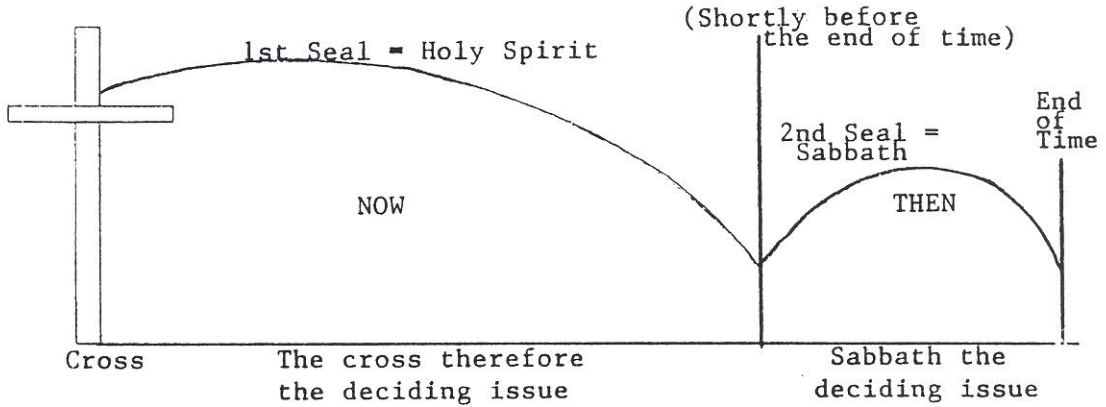
are sealed. They are presented from verse 9-17 as being happy and safe in the kingdom. In verse 14 they are described as those who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Again salvation based on the cross. Immediately after this the scene changes, as the seventh seal is opened, chapter eight, and again using the three-tiered Jewish cosmology of the universe, John presents a final universal destruction. It is most clear from the context that John is here speaking of sealing in terms of protection,¹ not as an initial decision as to whether or not the saints must be saved.

Like Paul, John presents salvation based on the cross (Rev 1:5-6, 5:9-10). There cannot be on the basis of the cross a sealing or justification that lasts until the second Advent (Paul - Eph 1; Rom 5), and on the basis of the said cross, a sealing that is temporary and leads to a second sealing (John - Rev 7, supposedly). John and Paul do not contradict. There can be only one type of salvation from the cross of Calvary.

Finally, if there is a second sealing, what would have qualified the believer to receive it? It could not be acceptance of Jesus. It could not be the cross. These the believers already have. Logically it would have to be acceptance of something else, like an additional truth. But then and there we would be left with a sealing or justification based on works of law, the acceptance of additional truth.

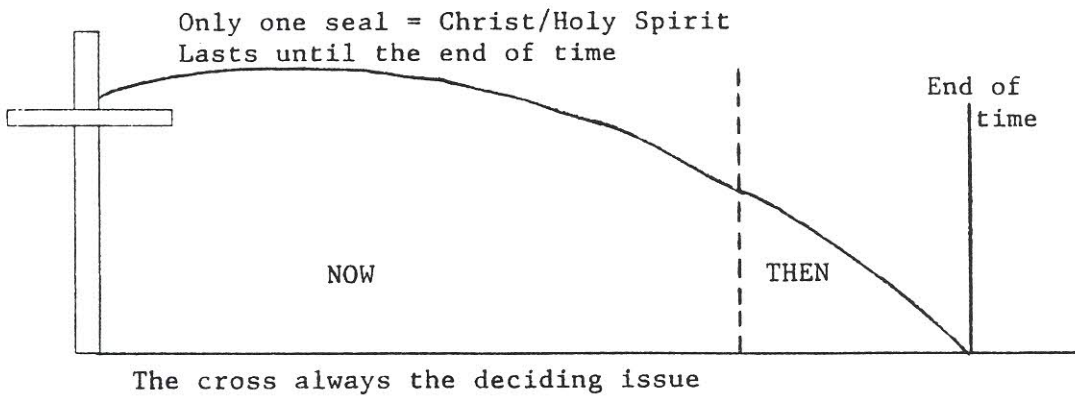
¹Protection from the final eschatological disaster.

S.D.A. MODEL



According to the above (S.D.A.) model there are two deciding elements in the salvation issue. The cross and the Sabbath.

NEW TESTAMENT MODEL



According to the New Testament's model, the person of Christ is always the deciding issue in man's salvation (John 3:17-18).

CHAPTER X

WHAT THEREFORE IS AN ASSURANCE OF SALVATION ?

From our survey so far, we have discovered that all the realities of the age to come have been brought forward into our time in the person of Jesus Christ. We have seen that in His person man now lives (legally) in heaven (Eph 1 & 2). In His person, man already has a perfect law-keeping record before God (Rom 5:18-19, 10:4). He already stands accepted in the beloved (Eph 1:1-6). In the person of Christ all men have a fixed immovable place with God; for He is indeed our peace (Eph 2:14; Col 1:20). Again it can be repeated, that as surely as God came to be with man in the person of Jesus, so surely has man gone to be with God in Jesus also. As the book of Hebrews shows, he continues in a special way to be the God-man (Heb 5:1-14).¹

Because of this gracious act, the believer now stands justified, he now enjoys the life of the kingdom. He is not just a citizen of this earth but, more importantly, he is a citizen of heaven. He is indeed sealed for heaven, and as such he presently enjoys zoe aionios, eternal life, the life of the age to come.

All this is based not upon his perfect obedience, not upon his repentance or his reformation; not upon the work of the Holy Spirit in him, not upon anything God has or

¹For a beautiful exposition on the significance of the human-divine priesthood of Christ, see William G. Johnson, In Absolute Confidence (Nashville: Southern, 1979), 78-83.

continues to do in, through or by him, but rather upon what God has unilaterally done in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

Because of this, therefore, the believer has a firm, immovable and unquestionable guarantee that he now stands saved and will be saved when God comes. He does not "if," "but," or doubt, his eternal destiny. He knows that he is saved. It is as fixed as the stars, and as immovable as the hills. We do not here advocate once saved always saved. Such is contrary to Scripture. What we do advocate, however, is once saved, always saved as long as you remain saved. The man in Christ does not worry or is perturbed about the future judgment. Neither does he hope to pass it. Rather he bubbles and rejoices in the fact that he has already passed the judgment, and now stands justified. All this means an assurance of salvation. A new realization, and an eager anticipation for the life that is to come.

Having obtained this firm assurance of salvation, the believer now seeks a relationship with the person of Jesus. Not in order to gain favors from God, not even in order to keep laws, important as this is, but with the sole objective of being with Christ for Christ's sake only. For being in His company, to praise Him, to glorify Him, to thank Him, to honor Him always. Because he so constantly seeks the presence of Jesus, God wills in him, "both to will and to work for his good pleasure" (Phil 2:13). In short, Christ now lives His life in Him (Gal 2:20). He receives a law-abiding life as a result, and also as a gift of his being in the presence of Jesus.

Thus, having been saved his immediate duty is relationship. Good works will be the natural consequence thereof. But all this, however, is not the basis and grounds for the believer's assurance of salvation. What is, is the objective reality of God's doing in Christ.

While they are inseparable, they must be distinguished.

Its Relevance to the Questionnaire

Since such is the nature of an assurance of salvation, then the respondents have the right to answer resounding yes to such questions as, Are you saved?¹ Do you have eternal life now?² Are you now sealed for God's kingdom?³ and, If Christ should return today would you be saved?⁴

While affirming these positions, he would recognize that all this is totally based on the cross of Christ,⁵ thus he will not consider good works as being of any importance,⁶ to his salvation, not even of little importance, but as having absolutely no importance to his salvation. With this goes the recognition that one is saved and will be saved despite the fact that he is not perfect.⁷

¹Question 5 and 7.

²Question 10.

³Question 8.

⁴Question 7.

⁵Question 17.

⁶Question 9.

⁷Question 6.

Such an assurance, of course, usually manifests itself in an active devotional life,¹ and an outreach to spread the gospel.²

¹Question 12, 13.

²Question 14.

CHAPTER XI

THE RELATIONSHIP AND AN ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

We have seen so far that an assurance of salvation is an experience that happens within the context of a relationship with Jesus. We will now seek to discuss briefly the posture to be taken towards that relationship, and then exactly what constitutes relationship with Christ.

The Correct Posture Towards Relationship

A key element that must undergird our relationship approach is that element that we have been emphasizing so far. That is, the very person of Christ and not His working in us constitutes our righteousness before God. When this is recognized we cannot help having an ever outward, upward gaze; we will never be caught up with the marvelous victories Christ may be accomplishing in us; for that is not our righteousness before God. Our righteousness is an objective person, therefore we will seek to be with Him at all times, for only as we are with Him we can truly have our righteousness.

Another factor that must be observed is that we must not take the relationship itself as our righteousness. It is only a means of accepting our righteousness. Having come to Christ, and having received of His justifying grace, we submit that the Christian's next duty

is not to seek to keep the law, but rather to seek to be with Christ,¹ for Christ's sake and nothing else. We believe that the often repeated statement, "Being justified you now have a responsibility to keep the law," while not intentionally wrong, is not an accurate expression and may eventually blur the assurance experience.

From our analysis, the justified person's duty is not to seek to do (in terms of a set of rules), but to be with Christ, to praise, to worship to adore Him primarily for His sake, and not primarily because He wants to keep laws. When we stay with Christ for His sake only He takes over and keeps the law within us (John 15:1-5; Phil 4:13). Right living, like our justified status, is also completely a gift we receive when we come to Christ. Our responsibility is, therefore, not to seek to keep laws, but rather to strive to be with a person. We would then literally have stopped trying to live right (of ourselves and begin a new quest of finding and staying with Jesus, leaving the law-keeping to Him).

The often repeated phrase should therefore be: Having been justified, one needs to relate to Christ. Or having been justified one has the responsibility to seek the presence of Christ. In fact that is all we can really do. The posture is now not to give up our sins but to give up our persons.

There are definite dangers when we seek Christ for law-keeping. Firstly, conceit and

¹In fact, as W.D. Davis rightly asserts, the person of Christ is the law. Davis, Paul and Rabbinic Judaism 148. His energies must therefore be directed towards "keeping" a person, not towards keeping a set of rules however good they may be. Says Ragnar Bring, "For primitive Christian theology Christ Himself is The Word. He has not only spoken the words of the Bible or written. He Himself is present in them. He Himself is the new law, not only the giver of a new law. He Himself is righteousness, not only the one who did righteous deeds. He is divine love, not merely the one who acted out of divine love. Ragnar Bring, "Preaching the Law", Scottish Journal of Theology 13 (1960):6-7,9.

self-righteousness soon set in on our success. Secondly, we soon experience self-rejection, and a decreased assurance of salvation as we fail. Why? Because the objective of the relationship was to keep laws, and you are now failing in your objective. In other words, there now exists a Christ-centered legalism.

However, if the focus of the relationship is to be with a person, for the sake of being with the person then neither success or failure can cause you to lose your way; as whether or not you succeed or fail, your objective is being met; that is, of being in the presence of Jesus. Once we stay with Him, correct law-keeping will inevitably begin to follow.

Another danger of emphasizing law-keeping, having been justified, is that the very relationship will soon become law-oriented. This demonstrates itself in inflexibility to set liturgies, inflexibility to certain posture in prayer, inflexibility to times, and place of worship. Such was the experience of the Jews in the time of Christ. The end result is an inner gaze, legalism and a decreased assurance of salvation. We therefore submit that it is of paramount importance to emphasize relationship, as the Christian's main responsibility, having accepted Christ.

What Constitutes the Relationship

We firmly agree with Morris Venden that prayer, Bible study and the sharing of one's faith is essentially what constitutes the relationship experience.¹ To this we add the entire worship encounter. Relationship is essentially communication. We communicate with somebody as we talk, listen, share, do things with-as we spend time with the person.

¹Morris Venden, How to Make Christianity Real, 74-78.

Therefore the believer cannot afford to neglect these, as herein lies the source of his spiritual energy. Jesus made it emphatically clear that it is only as we abide in Him as the branch in the vine, that we can accomplish anything good (John 15:1-5).

When we emphasize that it is our primary responsibility to keep the law, having been justified, then naturally we will focus our attention on trying to keep the law, for indeed this "is" our responsibility.¹ If, however, we sense our responsibility as seeking a person, we will naturally relax our emphasis on the law and center it on the person, for again that is your main responsibility.

The surest way to break the law is to be law-focused. "The strength of sin is the law," says Paul (1 Cor 15:56). New Testament ethics are always the result of being with Christ. Righteousness in terms of a status, and also in terms of right living, is always a gift we receive when we come to Christ.² The Christian, therefore, who fails to spend adequate time with God is a legalist in a double sense. One, he is seeking to stand righteous before God outside of his righteousness, the person of Christ; and two, he is seeking to live right outside of the power for right living -- again Jesus Himself. We will agree with Venden³ that good works performed outside of a relationship equals sinful works. We cannot have or accomplish any

¹Let it be clear that we do not here reject the importance of God's laws. What we reject is a wrong method of keeping that law; that is, of focusing on the law in order to keep the law.

²No wonder Christ said, "My yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matt 11:28).

³Morris Venden, To Know God, 95, 126.

righteousness outside of Christ. In light of all this, the relationship activity of spending time with Jesus, just for being there in His company, to worship Him, is indispensable for a healthy assurance of salvation.

CHAPTER XII

AN ASSURANCE OF SALVATION IN MONTEMORELOS

Having established a sound biblical theology of an assurance of salvation, we now take a practical look at the town of Montemorelos, in light of this theology.

During the months of September, October and November, 1994, a survey on an assurance of salvation was conducted in this community. The instrument used is described overleaf. For its administration a special session was held in each church. These sessions were presided over by the author, assisted by the church pastors and local elders.

With all members seated and adequate instructions and clarifications given, the deacons then distributed the questionnaires to all baptized members present. They were completed and returned immediately. A total of 364 persons from twelve churches participated. All the sessions were conducted in the Lay Activities period on Sabbath mornings. The findings and analysis of the survey follow.

MONTEMORELOS--AN OVERVIEW

Montemorelos is a small town of 49,000¹ people located in the Northern section of Mexico some 75 km away from the city of Monterrey to the West and some 300 km from the United States border of McAllen to its North. Like all Mexican communities it is a Spanish speaking town with people of Hispanic descent.

Economy:

The main stay of its economy is Agriculture. It is one of the larger citrus producing areas in Mexico. It has many large citrus groves with factories that produce a variety of citrus products. There is a lively commercial area, with many shops, and a few factories.²

Education:

By Third World standards the town is fairly literate. It has seventy one (71) educational institutions including one university.³

Communication:

Again by Third World standards the communication is fairly good. There are postal

¹Jose de Jesus Martinez Perales, Montemorelos Anales de Su Historia (Monterrey: Jose de Jesus Martinez Perales, 1993), 79.

²Ibid., 144.

³Ibid., 140.

services, telephone and telegraph services, which offer reasonable services most of the time. The town boasts three radio stations, and seven major bus companies,¹ which provide fairly easy communication with the environs. The major roadways are good -- a principal type dual carriageway with several secondary-type arteries.

Religion:

Montemorelos is 75 percent Roman Catholic, 10 percent protestant, 0.014 percent Jews,² and other religions forming two percent. The Seventh-day-Adventist Church began in Montemorelos about 1942. Through the influence of Montemorelos University the church sways a very strong and positive influence in the town. There are eighteen Adventist churches which are growing steadily. The heavy Catholic influence however, continues to be a challenge.

¹Ibid., 141.

²Ibid., 79.

THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The following questionnaire was applied in the churches of Montemorelos.

As a requirement for completing the Masters in Pastoral Theology at the University of Montemorelos, it is necessary to administer this questionnaire on the assurance of salvation in the believer. Mark with an X the appropriate response.

1. Age
2. Sex Male
Female
3. Years Baptized?
 1. Less than one year
 2. 1-5 years
 3. 6-10 years
 4. 11-20 years
 5. 21 or more
4. For you an assurance of salvation means?
 1. If Jesus should come this moment, I am sure that I will be saved.
 2. Things are not too bad with me spiritually.
 3. If I continue to work hard I will be saved eventually.
5. Can you say with all confidence, that you are now saved?
 1. Yes
 2. No
 3. I am trying
 4. Maybe
 5. Don't know.

6. Unless a person overcomes all his weaknesses he cannot be saved?
 1. Agree
 2. Disagree

7. If Jesus should come this moment, would you be saved?
 1. Yes
 2. No
 3. Maybe
 4. I am not sure

8. Can you say that you are sealed for the kingdom of God?
 1. Yes
 2. No
 3. I am not sure
 4. No one knows this

9. Of what importance are good works for your salvation?
 1. Little importance
 2. Very important
 3. No importance

10. Do you believe that you now have eternal life?
 1. Yes
 2. No
 3. Not sure

11. Do you feel like giving up, because despite your efforts you keep on failing?
1. Never
 2. Sometimes
 3. Frequently
12. How much time do you spend in personal devotion with God daily (for example in Bible study and prayer)
1. Ten minutes
 2. Fifteen minutes
 3. Twenty minutes
 4. Thirty minutes
 5. One hour
 6. More than one hour
13. How often do you have family worship?
1. Each morning
 2. Each morning and evening
 3. Now and again
 4. Each evening
14. Are you involved in a continuous witnessing program?
1. Yes
 2. No
 3. Sometimes

15. Do you think your church emphasizes the cross of Christ enough.
1. Yes
 2. No
 3. Sometimes
16. How much do you understand about the doctrine of Justification by Faith?
1. Little
 2. Sufficient (good)
 3. Nothing
 4. An Idea
17. The basis for justification before God is?
1. The acceptance of Jesus
 2. The acceptance of Jesus and the keeping of the commandments
 3. Keeping the commandments
 4. Don't know

Thank you.

ENCUESTA

En cumplimiento de un requisito de Maestria en Teologia Pastoral de la Universidad de Montemorelos, se esta realizando esta encuesta sobre: la seguridad de salvacion en el creyente. Marque con "X" en cada cuadro segun sea el caso.

1. Edad
2. Sexo Masculino
Femenino
3. Anos de ser bautizado(A)
 1. Menos de 1 ano
 2. 1-5 anos
 3. 6-10 anos
 4. 11-20 anos
 5. 21 o mas
4. ¿Que Significa Para Ud. Seguridad de la salvacion.?
 1. Si Jesus viniera en este momento, estoy seguro(a) de que sere salvo.
 2. Las cosas no estan mal conmigo espiritualmente
 3. Si yo continuo trabajando duro sere salvo eventualmente
5. ¿Puede ud. Decir, con toda la confianza, que es salvo en este momento?
 1. Si
 2. No
 3. Yo estoy todavia intentando
 4. Quizas

5. No se
6. A menos de que cada persona venza sus debilidades no sera salvo
1. De acuerdo
2. En desacuerdo
7. Si Jesus viniera hoy, ¿Ud. seria salvo?
1. Si
2. No
3. Quizas
4. No estoy seguro
8. ¿Puede ud. decir que esta sellado(A) para el reino de dios?
1. Si
2. No
3. No estoy seguro
4. Nadie puede saber eso ahora
9. ¿Cuan importante son las buenas obras para su salvacion?
1. Poco importantes
2. Muy importantes
3. Nada importantes
10. ¿Cree ud. que tiene la vida eterna en este momento?
1. Si
2. No
3. No estoy seguro

11. ¿Te has sentido rendido por que a pesar de tus esfuerzos sigues fallando?
1. Nunca
 2. A veces
 3. Frecuentemente
12. ¿Cuanto tiempo pasa en devocion personal con Dios al dia (por ejemplo en el estudio de la Biblia y oracion)?
1. diez minutos
 2. quince minutos
 3. veinte minutos
 4. treinta minutos
 5. Una hora
 6. Mas de una hora
13. ¿Con que frecuencia tienes culto familiar?
1. Cada manana
 2. Cada manana y cada tarde
 3. De vez en cuando
 4. Cada Tarde
14. ¿Estas involucrado en un programa de testimonio continuo?
1. Si
 2. No
 3. Algunas veces

15. ¿Piensas que tu iglesia enfatiza bastante la cruz de Cristo?
1. Si
 2. No
 3. Algunas veces
16. ¿Cuanto entiendes acerca de la doctrina "justificacion por la fe"?
1. Poco
 2. Bastante
 3. Nada
 4. Un idea
17. La base para ser justificado ante Dios es:
1. La aceptacion de Jesus
 2. La aceptacion de Jesus y guardar los mandamientos
 3. Guardar los mandamientos
 4. No lo se

Muchas Gracias Para Su Participacion.

Clarification of the Questionnaire

The reasons for questions 1-3 are self evident. We'll begin clarification with question 4.

Question 4

This question seeks to ascertain if there is the basic understanding of an assurance of salvation. We propose that such an understanding is captured in statement 1 of this question.

Statement "2" is vague, and does not speak accurately to the issue. Statement "3" is completely wrong as salvation, as we have discussed, is not based on works, but on the cross of Christ.

Question 5

This question speaks more to the subjective experience of the respondent. Its intent is to ascertain whether or not the respondent believes in and is experiencing salvation as a present experience. It is asked against the background that traditionally many Seventh-day Adventists were reluctant to say "I am saved."

Answer "3" indicates that the member does not understand neither is enjoying the joys of salvation. For as we have discussed above, one does not try to be saved, he is or is not saved. It is a reality that he knows. Such an answer would therefore indicate little or no assurance of salvation. The same goes for answers 4 and 5.

Questions 6 & 7

One's attitude towards perfection and perfectionism certainly does impact on his concept of salvation. The Christian who believes in achieving sinless perfection before Christ returns, would naturally have a reduced or delayed assurance of salvation (if he manages to have any at all). This is so as with the expectancy of the advent being at any moment, how can he be

so sure of making it, when admittedly he is still imperfect?

To answer 1 (agree) would therefore indicate a perfectionist leaning; to answer 2 (disagree) would indicate more a concept of salvation by free grace. That is, being saved despite who you are.¹

Question 8

This question tests more for understanding than experience. The relevance of this question is most obvious from our discussion on the subject earlier. To be sealed means to be saved, to be justified, etcetera, therefore the respondent should answer yes (1) to this question. Any other answer indicates a misunderstanding of the concept and possibly no assurance of salvation.

Question 9

Keeping the law, good works, is a strong emphasis of Adventism. Many are still unable to distinguish between good works as a result of salvation, and good works for salvation. As we have discussed above, good works have absolutely nothing to do with our salvation, it's totally based on grace. The response to this question is very revealing.

Question 10

Eternal life is one of those concepts that beautifully conveys the idea of an assurance of salvation. It is a well taught concept within the church generally.

How well is it accepted, and how well does the understanding of this concept tallies with the other salvation concepts asked so far?

¹That is, despite the fact that you are not perfect.

Yes and No (1,2) are obvious and clear cut. 3 "I am not sure," indicates doubt and the possible non-understanding or non-experiencing of this reality. For either you have it or you do not have it.

Question 11

With a healthy assurance of salvation the christian will not want to give up because of his weaknesses. He is ever aware that he is accepted despite who he is. Thus an attitude of giving up could indicate an unhealthy assurance and a steadfast attitude a more healthy assurance. Thus this question.

Question 12 & 13

A healthy assurance of salvation will manifest itself in time spent with God, in private and public worship. Thus questions 12 and 13.

Question 14

We also believe that a healthy salvation experience will extend itself to others in some witnessing activities. Consequently question 13. This question, along with 12 and 13, also serves to give some reason for the results obtained in the overall test. The relationship activities are inseparable to the justified saved status, consequently the practicing or non-practicing of these things (12, 13) does indicate the nature of the salvation if there is any at all.

Question 15

The church will always have a very great impact on the assurance of salvation or non-assurance of its members. In no other way can it be more influential than in its emphasis on the cross. Question 14 seeks to ascertain this.

Question 16

The understanding of any concept has great bearing on the experiencing of the said concept. Justification by faith, more than any other salvation concept, covers and conveys the whole gamut of the salvation message. Within the S.D.A. church this has always been a debated issue, with varying levels of understanding. How well is it understood by our study group? This question could give us the underlying factor to whatever results are obtained from this study.

Question 17

This line between salvation by grace and salvation by works can grow very thin at times. Is salvation obtained solely through the acceptance of Jesus, or through the acceptance of Jesus combined with keeping His commandments? As the survey reveals, this question cannot be taken for granted, for even when many may earlier indicate a salvation based purely on Christ, they are still not completely liberated from a salvation concept in which works play a key factor.

If the basis for receiving justification is the acceptance of Jesus plus keeping His commandments, then a healthy assurance of salvation cannot exist. In such a situation the member is looking simultaneously at what God has done for him, and what God is doing in him as the basis for his salvation. In such a case he will always discover an imperfect picture, which will inevitably sap on his assurance level. Furthermore, the inward look will soon take over the complete gaze. Our salvation is based completely on Christ and not on Christ plus our acceptance of him, in the keeping of commandments.

CHAPTER XIII

THE SURVEY-RESPONSES

The following pages show the responses to each question asked.

FIGURE 1

Question 1 - Age Distribution of Sample

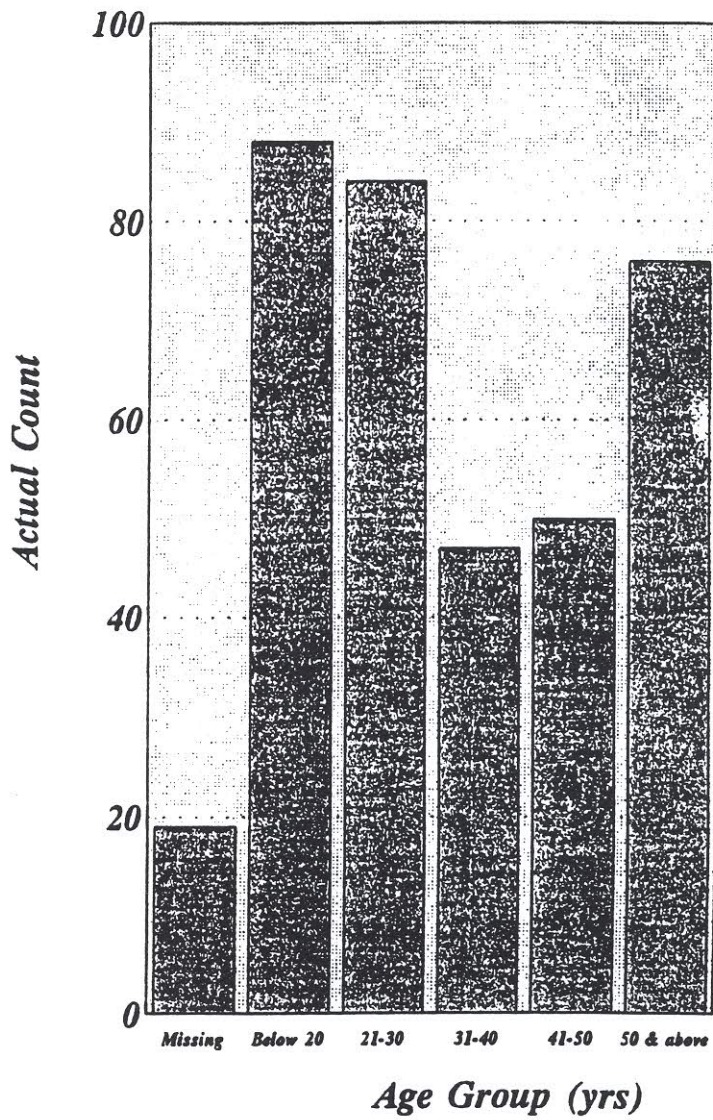


Figure 2

Question 2 - DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY SEX

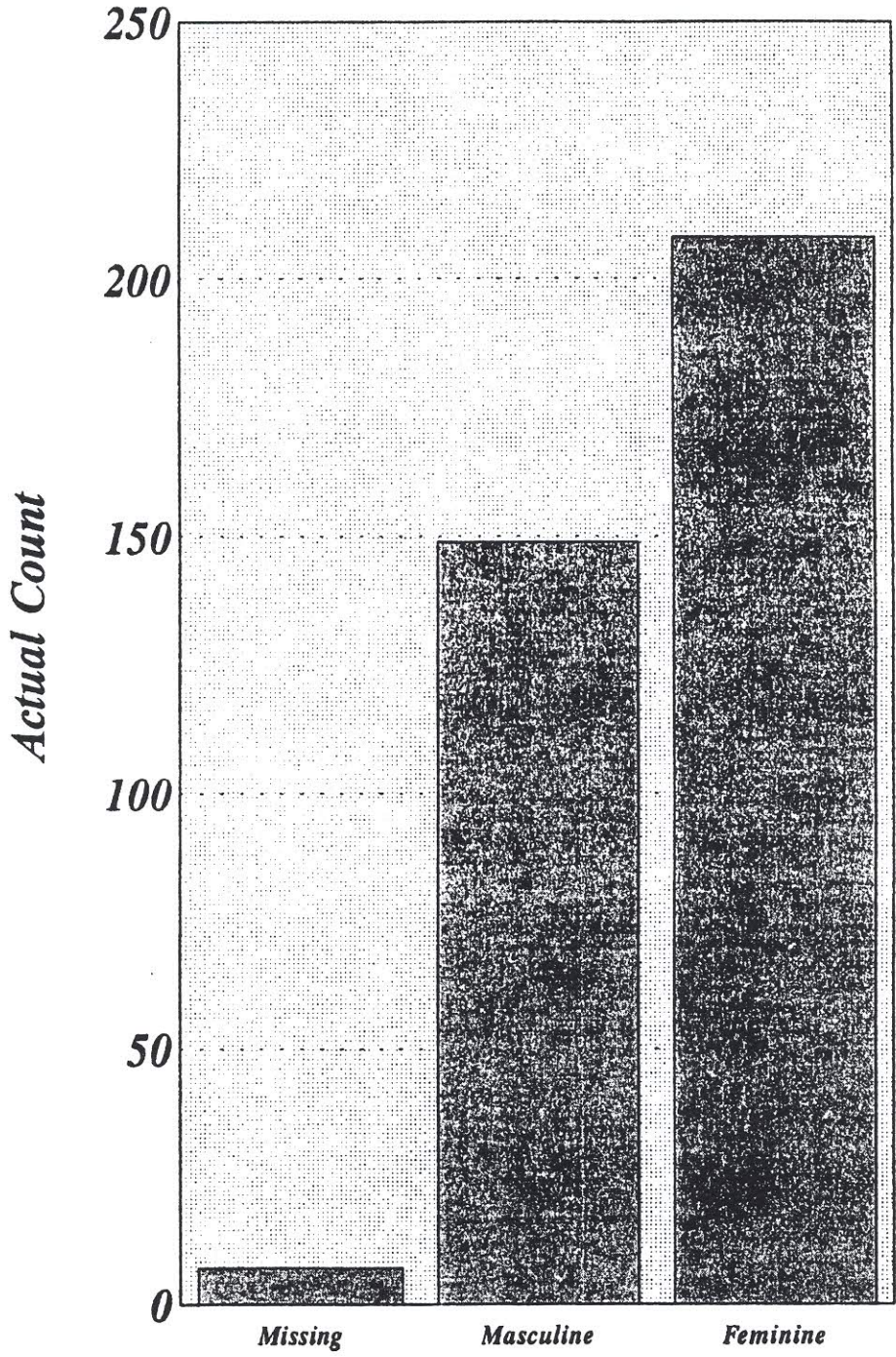
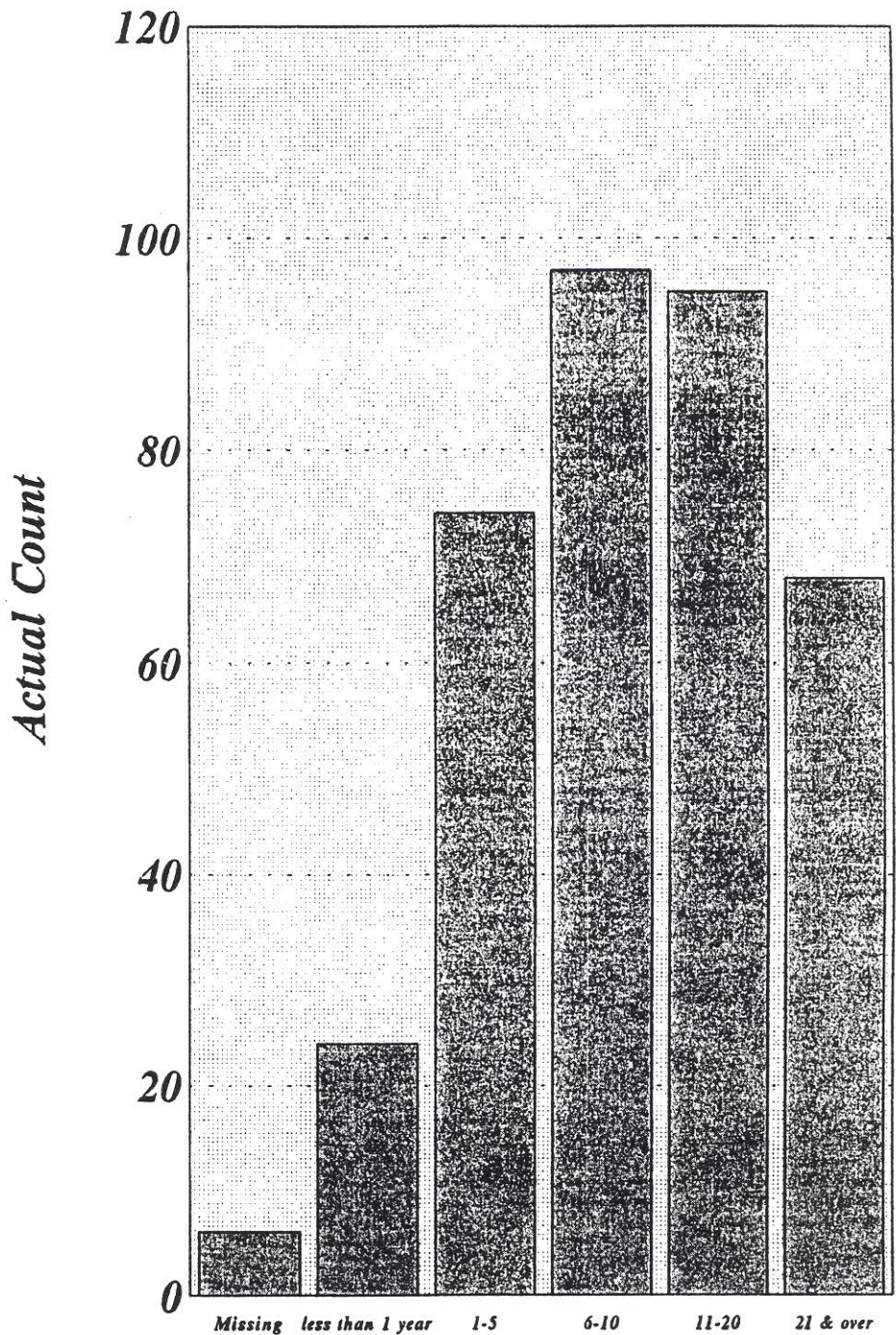


Figure 3

Question 3 - NUMBER OF YEARS BAPTIZED



Number of Years Baptized

TABLE 001

Qu.1 - FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION BY AGE GROUP

Age Group	Value	Frequency	Percent
Below 20	1	88	24.2
21-30	2	84	23.1
31-40	3	47	12.9
41-50	4	50	13.7
50 & above	5	76	20.9
Missing	•	19	5.2
Total		364	100.0

Valid cases 345

Missing cases 19

TABLE 002

Qu. 2 - FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION BY SEX

Age Group	Value	Frequency	Percent
Masculine	1	149	40.9
Feminine	2	208	57.1
Missing	•	7	1.9
Total		364	100.0

Valid cases 357

Missing cases 7

TABLE 003

Qu. 3 - NUMBER OF YEARS AFTER BAPTISM

Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent
less than 1 year	1	24	6.6
1-5	2	74	20.3
6-10	3	97	26.6
11-20	4	95	26.1
21 & over	5	68	18.7
Missing	•	6	1.6
Total		364	100.0

Valid cases 358

Missing cases 6

TABLE 004

Qu. 4 - UNDERSTANDING OF AN ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent
Saved	1	214	58.8
Things not bad	2	64	17.6
Work hard-saved	3	56	15.4
Missing	•	30	8.2
Total		364	100.0

Valid cases 334

Missing cases 30

TABLE 005

Qu. 5 - RESPONSES TO BEING SAVED NOW

Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent
Yes	1	176	48.4
No	2	30	8.2
Trying	3	110	30.2
Maybe	4	16	4.4
Don't know	5	17	4.7
Missing	•	15	4.1
Total		364	100.0

Valid cases 349

Missing cases 15

TABLE 006

No. 6 - RESPONSES TO THE QUESTION OF PERFECTION

Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent
Agree	1	219	60.2
Disagree	2	116	31.9
Missing	•	29	8.0
Total		364	100.0

Valid cases 335

Missing cases 29

TABLE 007

Qu. 7 - CONFIDENCE FOR TRANSLATION NOW

Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent
Yes	1	189	51.9
No	2	26	7.1
Maybe	3	56	15.4
Not sure	4	76	20.9
Missing	•	17	4.7
Total		364	100.0

Valid cases 347

Missing cases 17

TABLE 008

No. 8 - RESPONSES TO THE QUESTION ON THE SEALING

Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent
Yes	1	176	48.4
No	2	16	4.4
No one knows	4	99	27.2
Missing	•	21	5.8
Total		364	100.0

Valid cases 343

Missing cases 21

TABLE 009

Qu. 9 - THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD WORKS FOR SALVATION

Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent
Little	1	47	12.9
Very	2	276	75.8
No	4	17	4.7
Missing	•	24	6.6
Total		364	100.0

Valid cases 340

Missing cases 24

TABLE 010

Qu. 10 - HAVING ETERNAL LIFE NOW

Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent
Yes	1	88	51.6
No	2	52	14.3
No sure	3	102	28.0
Missing	•	22	6.0
Total		364	100.0

Valid cases 342

Missing cases 22

TABLE 011

Qu. 11 - RESPONSES TO THE QUESTION ON PERSISTENCY

Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent
Never	1	79	21.7
Sometimes	2	208	57.1
Frequently	3	48	13.2
Missing	●	29	8.0
Total		364	100.0

Valid cases 335

Missing cases 29

TABLE 012

Qu. 12 - DAILY TIME WITH GOD

Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent
10 Min.	1	82	22.5
15 Min.	2	64	17.6
20 Min.	3	59	16.2
30 Min.	4	60	16.5
1 Hr.	5	42	11.5
More than 1 hr.	6	24	6.6
Missing	●	33	9.1
Total		364	100.0

Valid cases 331

Missing cases 33

TABLE 013

Qu. 13 - FREQUENCY OF FAMILY WORSHIP

Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent
Morning	1	119	32.7
Morning & Evening	2	578	15.7
Occasionally	3	133	36.5
Each evening	4	14	3.8
Missing	•	41	11.3
Total		364	100.0

Valid cases 323

Missing cases 41

TABLE 014

Qu. 14 - INVOLVEMENT IN MISSIONARY WORK

Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent
Yes	1	120	33.0
No	2	234	36.8
Sometimes	3	59	16.2
Missing	•	51	14.0
Total		364	100.0

Valid cases 313

Missing cases 51

TABLE 015

Qu. 15 - EMPHASIS OF CHURCH ON THE CROSS

Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent
Yes	1	215	59.1
No	2	36	9.9
Sometimes	3	78	21.4
Missing	•	35	9.6
Total		364	100.0

Valid cases 329

Missing cases 35

TABLE 016

Qu. 16 - UNDERSTANDING OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent
Little	1	93	25.5
Sufficient (good)	2	119	32.7
Nothing	3	8	2.2
Average	4	109	29.9
Missing	•	35	9.6
Total		364	100.0

Valid cases 329

Missing cases 35

TABLE 017

Qu. 17 - BASE FOR JUSTIFICATION

Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent
Jesus	1	91	25.0
Jesus & Comm.	2	220	60.4
Keep Commandment	3	19	5.2
Don't know	4	5	1.4
Missing	●	29	8.0
Total		364	100.0

Valid cases 335

Missing cases 29

ANALYSIS OF THE SURVEY

The Understanding of an Assurance of Salvation

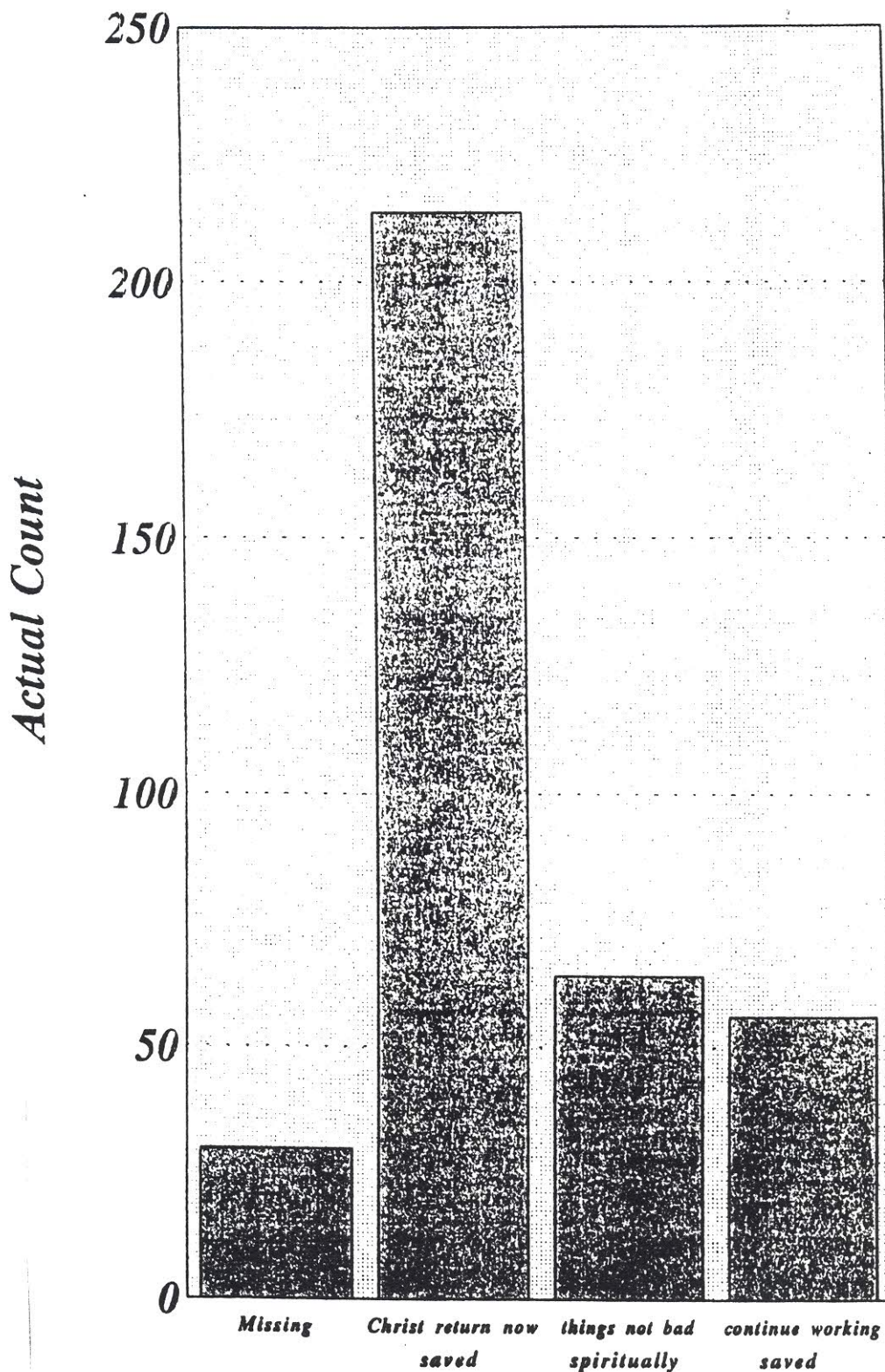
Question four is the first question that tests directly on the subject of an assurance of salvation. It seeks to ascertain the basic levels of understanding that exist among our sample group. As we have shown earlier the correct answer to this question is response 1. That is "If Christ should come in this moment I am sure I will be saved". As is shown in table 004, of a total of 334 members who responded to this question, 58.8% answered positively choosing response "1".

As the entire Biblical theology on the subject reveals, to have an assurance of salvation means to be saved, to be justified, to have the full qualification for heaven now; thus if Jesus should come today, with confidence one can assert, I am sure I will be saved. Such a position is a healthy and correct assurance of salvation. 58.8% of our sample group expresses this type of understanding. This is a comparison to 17.6% who indicated that an assurance of salvation means that "things are not bad spiritually" (option 2) and 15.4% for whom it means that "if they continue working hard they will be saved" (option 3).

From this early response we see that there are three times as many members who seem to have a correct understanding of an assurance of salvation than those who have a faulty understanding. The response "Things are not bad with me spiritually" is rather evasive and inconclusive. It is a non-committal middle of the road response. It is also a very subjective response to what is a more objective based reality. It indicates that one has acquired a certain level of spiritual mileage, therefore on that basis he can now affirm that he has an assurance of salvation.

FIGURE 4

MEANING OF AN ASSURANCE OF SALVATION



It also indicates self analysis and an inner justification as the reasons for an assurance of salvation. In fact, the option as given in the questionnaire is vague. To have chosen this option when response "1" was available does demonstrate a poor understanding of the concept. Only 17.6% chose this option.

Fifteen point four percent (15.4%) considers an assurance of salvation as having to do with working hard to be eventually saved. We can categorically say that this 15.4% does not understand what an assurance of salvation means. As a christian an assurance of salvation is not something you will have, but something you now possess. It is not something that issues salvation at the end of a period of hard human labor. You do not work to receive your assurance of salvation. It is a free gift you accept, and must continue to accept to the very end of time. We have already demonstrated conclusively that it is all based on the blood of Jesus Christ, and not on human effort. To mingle works with it, is certainly to misunderstand it.

From our first question therefore we can say that 58.8% of our sample size seems to have a correct understanding of an assurance of salvation. Another 17.6% have a poor understanding and the other 15.4% does not understand the concept. We would also say from this initial stage that 33% has a misguided understanding of an assurance of salvation.

Is there an Assurance of Salvation?

While question four seeks to ascertain the level of understanding of an assurance of salvation, question five endeavors to discover if in fact there is an assurance of salvation in the churches. The table above (005) shows the responses. From the table we see that 48.4% say definitely that they are saved. This is 10.4% below the number (58.8%) of those who indicated that they have a correct understanding of an assurance of salvation.

Questions seven and ten are companion questions to question five, and they seek to test the validity of the response to question five. It is interesting to note that the responses to these two questions are very close to that of question five. Fifty one point nine percent (51.9%) and 51.6% respectively, are the responses (see tables 007 & 010).

That is, 51.9% acknowledge confidently that if Christ should come today they would be saved and 51.6% affirmed that they have eternal life now. These two values are just 3.1% above those who say they are now saved.¹ We can therefore safely conclude that 50% of our sample size are saying confidently that they are saved. It therefore means that another 50% is in doubt with regards to their salvation.

This is confirmed as the values show that 30% are trying to be saved. This is indeed a demonstration of doubt and non-assurance. Salvation is a real experience of the spirit. You do not try to have it, you either have it or do not have it! You cannot try to put on your clothes while you are wearing them, it's futile and impossible. If one is clothed with Christ's righteousness - his salvation, it reflects doubts and futility to say you are trying to be clothed

¹In real terms this does not represent many people.

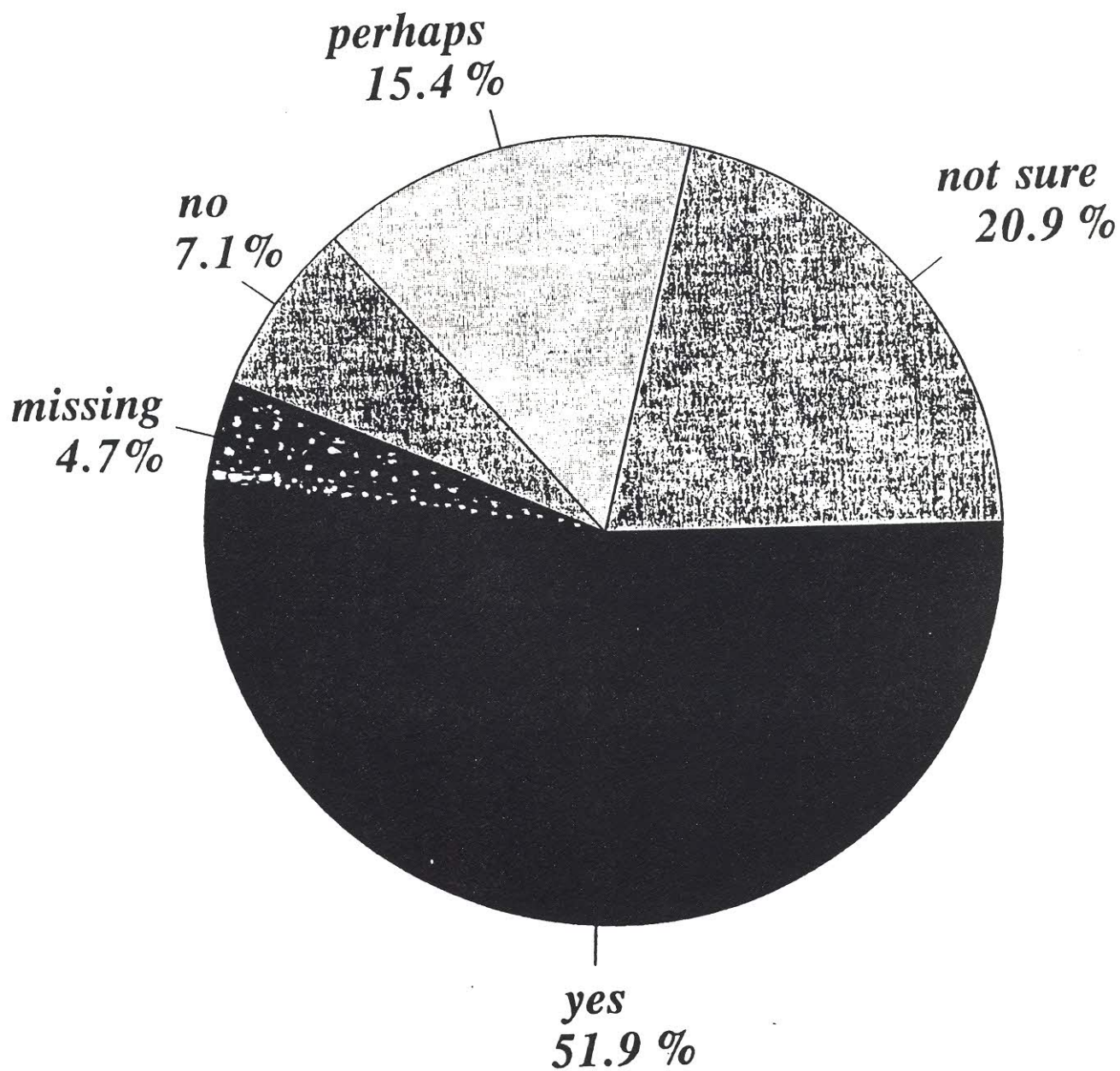
again - to be saved.

It suggests a working attitude for salvation. If a person is trying to be saved he will always be trying, as he will never reach that point where he can relax for any considerable period of time and say with confidence, "I am saved." As was demonstrated earlier, we will never have enough of the works of Christ within us, by which we can say that we are saved. The works of Christ outside of us, the cross will always be the sole basis for our salvation. The table (005) also shows that 8.2% say definitely that they are not saved, another 4.7% do not know, and 4.4% say perhaps.

When we combine and classify the responses: "trying", "perhaps", and "don't know", as doubts in respect to salvation, we have 39.3% being doubtful. With regards to their salvation, we also have another 8.2% who say definitely that they are not saved. From the above showing, we can therefore conclude that roughly 50% of our group is saved and virtually the same percentage 47.5% is either not saved or is doubtful with regards to their salvation.

FIGURE 5

IF CHRIST SHOULD COME TODAY I WILL BE SAVED



Being Saved As it Relates to Number of Years Baptized.

We turn next to examine the relationship between the attitude of being saved and the number of years baptized. The baptismal year categories were distributed as follows: less than one year, 1-5 years, 6-10 years, 11-20 years and 21 years and above.

It was our intention to ascertain if the number of years that the individual spent as a baptized member had any significant effect on his conviction of being saved or not being saved. The following table illustrates the correlation (using the actual count, row, column and total percentages).

TABLE 018

BEING SAVED AS IT RELATES TO NUMBER OF YEARS BAPTIZED

	Count Row Pct Col Pct Tot Pct	less than 1 year	1-5 years	6-10 years	11-20 years	21 & over	Row Total
		1	2	3	4	5	
Yes	1	16 9.1 66.7 4.6	18 10.3 24.7 5.2	36 20.6 37.5 10.4	58 33.1 64.4 16.8	47 26.9 75.8 13.6	175 50.7
No	2	3 10.0 12.5 .9	9 30.0 12.3 2.6	8 26.7 8.3 2.3	8 26.7 8.9 2.3	2 6.7 3.2 0.6	30 8.7
Still trying	3	4 3.7 16.7 1.2	35 32.7 47.9 10.1	38 35.5 39.6 11.0	20 18.7 22.2 5.8	10 9.3 16.1 2.9	107 31.0
Perhaps	4		7 43.8 9.6 2.0	5 31.3 5.2 1.4	2 12.5 2.2 0.6	2 12.5 3.2 0.6	16 4.6
Don't know	5	1 5.9 4.2 .3	4 23.5 5.5 1.2	9 52.9 9.4 2.6	2 11.8 2.2 0.6	1 5.9 1.6 0.3	17 4.9
	Column Total %	24 7.0	73 21.2	96 27.8	90 26.1	62 18.0	345 100.0

It is evident that for all the groups (except those baptized 1-5 and 6-10 years) the majority indicate that they are saved. Over all, there is hardly any significant correlation between the number of years baptized, and the conviction of being saved. The different year groups read as follows:

I. Less than one year

1. 66.7% of all those baptized less than a year consider themselves as being saved.
2. 12.5% consider themselves not saved.
3. 16.7% consider themselves still trying to be saved.
4. 4.2% do not know if they are saved.

II. Those baptized 1-5 years

1. 24.7% say yes they are saved.
2. 12.3% say no not saved.
3. 47.9% say they are trying to be saved.
4. 9.6% say perhaps they are saved.
5. 5.5% say don't know if they are saved.

The showing of the age group 1-5 is very poor indeed, as compared to the previous age group (less than one year). In terms of percentage there are almost three times as many people within year group less than one year, who are saved, than there are in year group 1-5 (66.7% as compared to 24.7%).

There are also almost three times as many members in year group 1-5 who are trying to be saved than there are in category below one year. While the percentage of responses "not saved" within each group is basically the same, the 1-5 year group has a greater percentage of people who are negative about their salvation. There is a much larger percentage who say perhaps saved, and don't know if they are saved.

If we should combine responses 2-5 as doubtful positions to salvation, year group 1-5

would show that 75.3% of the respondents are doubtful towards their salvation. This is in contrast to 33.4% of those who doubt among those baptized for less than one year.

This striking negative show among those who are baptized between one and five years should be great cause for concern. Why is it that immediately after the initial months of great confidence in salvation there is such a dramatic decline in confidence? We shall have a diagnosis and recommendation later.

III. Of Those Baptized 6-10 Years

1. 38.5% say yes they are saved.
2. 8.3% say no they are not saved.
3. 39.6% say they are trying to be saved.
4. 5.2% say perhaps they are saved.
5. 9.4% say don't know if saved.

As is evident the very negative trend from the previous year group continues. Like the previous group there are more people who are trying to be saved than those who confess that yes, they are saved. The percentage of non-confidence is just a little lower than the previous category, (62.5% compared to 75.3%) and almost two times as high as the category of those baptized with less than one year in the church 62.5% as compared to 33.4%. The 6-10 year category is only showing a slight recovery from the 1-5 year category. Its overall showing is still lower than the category of less than one year.

The question now is: why is it that, even up to ten years after baptism, members are showing a poorer confidence level towards salvation than they showed in the first eleven months after their baptism? This factor ought to be a subject of great attention and

investigation by the pastors of the constituency. We shall have more to say later.

IV. Of Those Baptized 11-20 Years

1. 64.4% say yes they are saved.
2. 8.9% say no not saved.
3. 22.2% are still trying.
4. 2.2% say perhaps.
5. 2.2% do not know if they are saved.

Overall, this category shows a tremendous increase in a positive attitude towards salvation than the previous two groups. The percentage of those who say "yes" they are saved has increased to the level it was in the first eleven months after baptism (that is, 64.4% as compared to 66.7%). In fact the overall showing is very much the same, as the responses 2,3,4, and 5 combined, which indicate that doubt or insecurity are virtually the same in this category as they are in the first eleven months category (34.6%, and 33.4%).

We can therefore conclude that there is a very positive attitude towards salvation in the first eleven months after baptism, which then deteriorates tremendously for the next ten years, and eventually returns in the eleventh to twenty years after baptism. This is a very hopeful signal and suggests maturity, of those who survived up until then.

V. Of Those Baptized For 21 Years or More

1. 75% affirmed being saved.
2. 3.2% not saved.
3. 16.1 still trying.

4. 3.2% perhaps.
5. 1.6% do not know.

This category has the largest percentage saying "yes" they are saved; by far the smallest percentage saying "no-not saved", the smallest percentage saying "don't know" and the second smallest percentage indicating "perhaps saved". It is therefore by far the most positive category in respect to their salvation. It is of interest to note that it has an equally high percentage of those in the category of being saved (75%) as there are of members being doubtful in the 1-5 year category (75.3%).

From the above findings it is most evident that the very new converts are more sure of their salvation than those who have been in the church for up to ten years. There is a very high confidence level in the first eleven months, but this confidence level dips drastically in years 1-5, remains in an almost equally bad situation in years 6-10 and then begins to increase during years 11-20, reaching a far more mature stage by years 21 and over, where the confidence factor seems to be even better than the first eleven months period.

It is common knowledge that new converts usually experience a high spiritual vitality. This could explain why the confidence of "being saved" is comparatively so good in the first eleven months period. As time progresses however, this initial zeal wanes and lethargy sets in. This explains in part, we believe, the decrease in the confidence level.

Another cause for the decrease after the first year is the strong possibility that the older members take it for granted that the new converts have been completely anchored in Christ, after they have spent two or more years in the church. Consequently, the nurturing shifts to the more immediate converts and the relatively new converts up to five years after

baptism, are left to fend on their own. The new convert in his second year and sometimes even up to year five is still a spiritual babe. He is still adjusting, and usually with the tapering off of the initial ecstasy after baptism, there is much trauma, confusion, insecurity as the growing spiritual babe seeks to adjust, understand, and deal with his new environment-the church. In many countries the apostasy rate is very high during these first five years.

Yet another cause is the fact that in most Seventh-day Adventist churches today, regular Bible class was once a practice. Thus most new converts are left to survive on the primary teachings that clinched their decision for baptism. As time progresses however, rehearsal, strengthening and broadening of these early teachings are absolutely necessary for the effective consolidation of the new believer. If such is not done, along with good person-to-person nurturing, the new convert is likely to apostasize or slump to a lukewarm condition.

It would appear that these combinations of factors are affecting this constituency. From the authors observation there is no Bible class in most of the churches surveyed. Obviously the initial retardation of the first years takes another five years to recover, thus the situation remains almost the same up to year ten after Baptism. We would recommend that more serious Bible classes be implemented and that closer attention be given to those in the church up to five years after Baptism.

The Importance Of Good Works For Salvation

Salvation, by works has always been a human problem. Having discovered that basically 50% of our constituency possesses an assurance of salvation and consider themselves being saved, we turn next to the attitude of works towards salvation that may exist in the area.

As was discovered in our historical survey of the Seventh-day-Adventist church, good works was an important consideration in the early days of the church. It was also observed that the genesis stage of an organization has much to do with its nature in its mature stage.

What is the attitude of this constituency towards works and salvation? Does the foundational attitude of salvation by works still exist among this group? Does our sample group consider works as being of importance to salvation? If so, to what extent?

We therefore turn next to the question: What is the importance of good works for salvation? The table and figure illustrate the response.

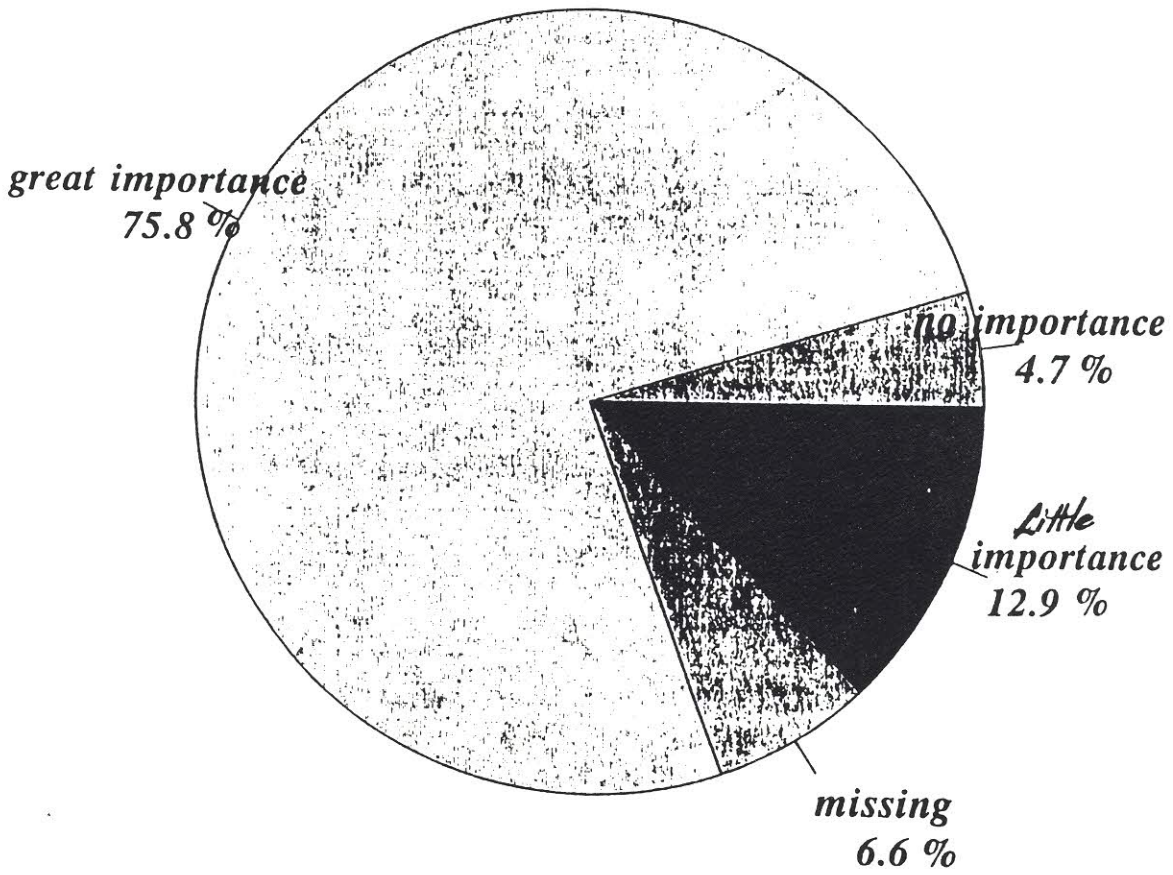
Importance Of Works for Salvation

- | | | | |
|----|-----|-------|-------------------|
| 1. | 47 | 12.9% | little importance |
| 2. | 276 | 75.8% | great importance |
| 3. | 17 | 4.7% | no importance |
| 4. | 24 | 6.7% | missing |

A surprisingly 75.8% thinks that works are very important to salvation.

FIGURE 6

IMPORTANCE OF WORKS FOR SALVATION



This is very unfortunate for as we have earlier discussed, works have absolutely nothing to do with one's salvation. It is always a free gift based on the cross of Christ.

A very small percentage of 4.7% believes that works is of no importance to salvation. Therefore there are sixteen times as many people who think that work is important for salvation as there are who think that it is of no importance for salvation. Another 12.9% believe that works are of little importance for salvation. This is an indication of a subsidy religion. With such thinking the individual thinks that he has to try just a little and God will make up the default. Like those who consider good works very important to salvation, he too has a salvation by works attitude. It may not be as chronic as the former, but it can be equally dangerous.

This individual may become careless in his christianity as in his mind, salvation is almost free; in that, he only needs to work a little and on the merits of Jesus he will be saved. This is in contrast to the former class for whom salvation may also be free but he has to work mighty hard if he would be saved eventually. One (seeing it as of little importance) tends towards liberalism and the other towards legalism.

When we consider the total works attitude towards salvation we have a combined total of 88.7% (75.8% + 12.9%) who reckon good works as having to do with salvation, as compared with a mere 4.7% who thinks it has nothing to do with salvation. Again this is unfortunate, as it does indicate a legalistic attitude over-all. It also indicates that the basics of the gospel is not well understood.

For 88.7% of any group to subscribe to salvation by works within a church that believes in salvation by faith alone is cause for alarm. Some serious thinking and hard work has to be done.

Good Works For Salvation as it Relates to an Understanding Of Justification By Faith

Having discovered that such a strong attitude of salvation by works exists, we now relate this attitude to an understanding of justification by faith to see if there is any relationship (see table 019, page 147). A correct understanding of justification by faith should reflect a thinking of works as being of no importance to salvation. The better the understanding of justification by faith, the less works should be seen as important to salvation.¹

Of all those who think works is of Little Importance to Salvation:

31.1% have a little understanding of justification by faith.

37.8% have a sufficient understanding of justification by faith.

2.2% do now know anything about it.

¹See chapters on Justification, Redemption, etc. of this study.

TABLE 019

GOOD WORKS FOR SALVATION AS IT RELATES TO AN UNDERSTANDING OF
JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

	Count Row Pct Col Pct Tot Pct	little 1	sufficient 2	nothing 3	an idea 4	Row Total
little importance	1	14 31.1 15.6 4.4	17 37.8 14.7 5.3	1 2.2 12.5 0.3	13 28.9 12.4 4.1	45 14.1
great importance	2	75 29.2 83.3 23.5	89 34.6 76.7 27.9	5 1.9 62.5 1.6	88 34.2 83.8 27.6	257 80.6
no importance	3	1 5.9 1.1 0.3	10 58.8 8.6 3.1	2 11.8 25.0 0.6	4 23.5 3.8 1.3	17 5.3
	Column Total	90 28.2	116 36.4	8 2.5	105 32.9	319 100.0

The majority within this category claim that good works are very important to salvation.

This can be clearly understood, for to have a little knowledge of justification one will inevitably think of good works as important to salvation. It is interesting to note that only one person within this category thinks of works as being of no importance to salvation.

Of Those Who Have a Good or Sufficient Understanding of Justification By Faith

14.7% consider works of little importance.

76.7% consider works of great importance.

8.6% consider works of no importance.

Again works being of great importance scores the highest percentage and works being of no importance the lowest percentage. One would expect that with a sufficient knowledge of justification by faith, works being of no importance would score the largest percentage. This is not the case however. The contrary results reveal that this majority who purport to have good understanding of justification by faith really do not possess good or correct understanding of justification, for there is no way that one can claim to have sufficient knowledge of justification by faith and at the same time present works as being very important for salvation.

As the table reveals the majority of those who understand nothing and also those who have an idea believe that good works are of great importance to salvation. Therefore irrespective of the understanding of justification by faith, good works are considered as being of great importance to salvation. All this means is that there is a very poor understanding of justification by faith. Now we can better understand why so many people believe in good works as the key to salvation. They have a warped concept of the gospel.¹

¹In Galatians chapters one and two and also in Rom 1:16,17; 3:21-26, Paul tactfully shows that justification by faith equals the gospel. We have adequately developed this in the first few chapters of this study.

Good Works for Salvation As it Relates to Number Of Years

Baptized

We have seen so far that the majority of our group considers good works as being very important for salvation. One would want to believe that with maturity in the church, a member would be more inclined to understand the non-importance of good works for salvation. Is there a significant difference between new converts and older members with respect to their understanding of the relationship of works and salvation? Does the number of years in the church really makes a significant difference in this factor? We will now carefully examine the results of this test as shown in the table 020.

TABLE 020

IMPORTANCE OF GOOD WORKS FOR SALVATION BY NUMBER OF YEARS
AFTER BAPTISM

	Count Row Pct Col Pct Tot Pct	less than 1 year	1-5 years	6-10 years	11-20 years	21 & over	Row Total
	1	1	2	3	4	5	
little importance	1	4 8.7 17.4 1.2	10 21.7 14.3 3.0	12 26.1 12.8 3.6	14 30.4 15.9 4.2	6 13.0 9.8 1.8	46 13.7
great importance	2	18 6.6 78.3 5.4	59 21.6 84.3 17.6	78 28.6 83.0 23.2	71 26.0 80.7 21.1	47 17.2 77.0 14.0	273 81.3
no importance	3	1 5.9 4.3 0.3	1 5.9 1.4 0.3	4 23.5 4.3 1.2	3 17.6 3.4 0.9	8 47.1 13.1 2.4	17 5.1
	Column Total	23 6.8	70 20.8	94 28.0	88 26.2	61 18.2	336 100.0

Of All Those Baptized Less Than A Year

17.4% says works are of little importance for salvation.

78.3% says works are very important for salvation.

4.3% says works are of no importance.

Therefore works being of great importance for salvation is the highest consideration, in this category. The overall works attitude is therefore $(17.4\% + 78.3\%) = 95.7\%$. We can safely conclude that those who are baptized less than one year have a very strong works attitude towards their salvation.

Of Those Baptized Between 1-5 Years:

14.3% say works are of little importance.

84.3% say works are very important.

1.4% say works are of no importance.

Again the consideration of great importance is the highest. There is also an overall works attitude of 98.7%, as compared to a non-works attitude of 1.4%. This is indeed an extremely wide gap. As was in the case of "Being saved", again the 1-5 year group, performs worse than the "less-than-one-year" category. In the former case the 1-5 category has far less people attesting that they are saved, and in this case there is a higher percentage attributing works to salvation, than the less-than-one-year category.

Now we can better understand why the 1-5 year category has a lower percentage "being saved" and also why they are more works oriented towards their salvation. The fact is, one attitude enhances the other. The more an individual considers good works as being important for his salvation the less likely he will consider himself or others as being saved. The fact is

he will, within himself never have enough of this very important element-works to consider himself confidently saved. And if an individual has accepted Jesus, and he cannot with all confidence say "I am saved", it can only mean that he is reckoning performance (works) ignorantly or willfully, as being important for his salvation. Having accepted Jesus, the first thing that happens to you is that you are saved to a point that all works subsequently cannot add a single value.

Again the 1-5 year group comes in for serious consideration.

Of All Those Baptized 6-10 Years

12.8% consider works of little importance.

83.0% consider works very important.

4.3% consider works of no importance.

Again as was in the case of "being saved" we see the very negative trend that began in the 1-5 year category continuing in the 6-10 year group. And again it is just a shade of improvement above the 1-5 category. It further confirms the fact that there has been a spiritual decline from the second year after baptism, which continues up to year five, making a slight improvement from year six to year ten after baptism. It therefore means that the first ten years within the church should be a time of careful spiritual nurturing. Apostasy rates are usually highest in these early years after baptism, especially in the first five years after baptism.

Of Those Baptized 11-20 Years

15.9% consider works of little importance.

80.7% consider works very important.

3.4% consider works of no importance.

For all practical purposes, the overall works attitude of this age group is exactly the same as the previous age group that is, works are of great importance to salvation.

Of All Those Baptized 21 Years and Over

9.8% consider works of little importance.

77% consider works of great importance.

13.1% consider works of no importance.

Again the 21 and over age group has a better attitude than the other groups. Their thinking of works towards salvation while it is high is not as high as the other groups. It supports the fact that years of experience in the church have straightened out their theology and spiritual experience a little better.

In summary we can say, that irrespective of the year baptized, the respondents think works are of great importance for salvation. Again the members surveyed are desperately locked in a salvation by works mentality.

We test next to ascertain whether or not the chronological age has any bearing on how the members consider works as being of importance to salvation.

TABLE 021

THE IMPORTANCE OF WORKS FOR SALVATION AS IT RELATES TO
CHRONOLOGICAL AGE

	Count Row Pct Col Pct Tot Pct	below 20 years 1	21-30 years 2	31-40 years 3	41-50 years 4	50 & over 5	Row Total
little importance	1	19 41.3 22.1 5.9	12 26.1 14.8 3.7	3 6.5 6.7 0.9	4 8.7 8.9 1.2	8 17.4 12.1 2.5	46 14.2
great importance	2	65 25.0 75.6 20.1	64 24.6 79.0 19.8	39 15.0 86.7 12.1	37 14.2 82.2 11.5	55 21.2 83.3 17.0	260 80.5
no importance	3	2 11.8 2.3 0.6	5 29.4 6.2 1.5	3 17.6 6.7 0.9	4 23.5 8.6 1.2	3 17.6 4.5 0.9	17 5.3
Column Total		86 26.6	81 25.1	45 13.9	45 13.9	66 20.4	323 100.0

In The Below 20 Age Group

22.1% think works are of little importance.

75.6% think work is very important (of great importance).

2.3% think works are of no importance.

The majority thinks works are of great importance for salvation. The overall works attitude equals 97.7%.

The 21-30 Age Group

14.8% consider it of little importance.

79% consider it very important.

6.2% consider it of no importance.

Again the majority thinks works are very important for salvation. A decreasing percentage however considers it of little importance (that is, 14.8% as compared to 22.1% of the previous group). An increasing percentage of 6.2% thinks it is of no importance.

Although this age category shows a slightly higher percentage of consideration of works as being very important for salvation, its decreased percentage towards "little importance" and its increased percentage towards "no importance" gives it a marginally better overall attitude towards salvation than the previous group.

To have a decreased percentage in "little importance", means that there are fewer people who are considering works as being of some value to salvation. To have an increase towards "no importance", means that there are more people who are considering good works of no value for salvation - as compared to the previous group of course. The positive gains obtained in these two areas are much higher than the loss shown in the group in the area of works being of "great importance" for salvation. Therefore it can be concluded that the 21-30 age group has a slightly healthier attitude towards works/salvation than the below 20 age group. This can be easier seen if we add the total percentage measuring attitude towards works of each group and compare them.

In the "below 20" group it is $(75.6\% + 22.1\%) = 97.7\%$. In the 21-30 category it is $(14.8\% + 79\%) = 93.7\%$. We must emphasize that while these differences are only marginal,

to the gospel worker, they can provide that marginal advantage from which he may be able to effectuate great change.

Of The 31-40 Age Group

6.7% consider good works of little importance.

86.7% consider good works of great importance.

6.7% consider good works of no importance.

Once again works being of great importance for salvation is the dominant response. Although this category makes gains in the areas of little and no importance it's overall rating remains virtually the same as the previous group, (21-30) as all its gains have been absorbed by the dramatic increase in its consideration of works as being very important for salvation. When its overall percentage for consideration of works for salvation is added, we obtain a total of 93.4%. This is only 0.4% lower than the previous age group, and in real terms there is no difference. We must note however that its overall attitude is still better than the below 20 age group.

The 41-50 Age Group

8.9% rate good works of little importance.

82.2% rate good works as very important (of great importance).

8.9% rate good works of no importance.

The overall attitude of this category is marginally better than all previous categories. However good works being of great importance is still the dominant consideration.

The Over 50 Age Category

12.1% consider good works of little importance.

83.3% consider good works very important.

4.5% consider good works of no importance.

As always works being very important gains the highest ranking. The overall attitude of this group is marginally worse than all previous groups except the below 20 age group being 95.4%. As the table illustrates there is a marginal increase in the response "very important" as the years increase. Taking this attitude as an indication of greater commitment to the idea of works being very important for salvation, the older members show a little more commitment towards the importance of works for salvation.

In terms of percentages; the marginally best thinking of works towards salvation is found among the 41-50 age group. The marginally worst thinking is in the below 20 age group. The marginally most committed is in the above 50 age group, and the marginally least committed is in the below 20 age group¹. It is very unfortunate that the young people share virtually the same attitude of works towards salvation as the older people. The only encouragement is that they seem to be less committed to their position than the older members.

We suggest that there is an ignorance on the part of the young people that gives them a similar attitude, that probably age and inflexibility on the part of the adult give them towards works and salvation. Thus both groups end up with the same overall attitude, just that the adults are more committed and steeped in this attitude than the younger members explain this.

¹Note: there is virtually an equal works attitude running throughout just that the increasing response of "very important" in the older age groups shows that while they share the same overall attitude as the young people, they are more committed to their attitude.

Such close similarity of attitude should never exist, in that, the younger people by virtue of their youth, natural flexibility and greater opportunity for education, et cetera, should have more enlightened thinking on the subject than the older folks. This is certainly not the case however, and it suggests strongly that the churches are not making any greater impact on their young, active, more impressionable minds, than they are making on their old, less active and least impressionable minds - at least in the area of the gospel. This is cause for great concern as it means that the church will be in the same position for a very long time hence. It also means that the next generation of leaders will not be more informed on the gospel than the present generation of leaders. Again these factors are cause for great concern.

**The Importance Of Good Works For
Salvation as it Relates to Sex and Chronological Age**

While the top leadership of the Seventh-day-Adventist church is dominated by men, ladies dominate the bulk of the lower leadership positions in the church. In fact the influence of women within the local church is just as great and even greater than that of men sometimes. The reality is, there are more active women in the church than there are active men. They also tend to be more educated.

As such therefore, it would be interesting to see their attitude towards the gospel, as it compares with those of the men of the church. We therefore look at their thinking on the importance of good works towards salvation.

Tables 022 and 023 (pages 160 and 161 respectively), illustrate the correlation of these factors.

TABLE 022

GOOD WORKS/SALVATION - MALE

	Count Row Pct Col Pct Tot Pct	below 20 1	21-30 years 2	31-40 years 3	41-50 years 4	50 & over 5	Row Total
little importance	1	8 30.8 24.2 5.9	8 30.8 26.7 5.9	1 3.8 5.6 0.7	3 11.5 15.8 2.2	6 23.1 17.1 4.4	26 19.3
great importance	2	24 23.8 72.7 17.8	20 19.8 66.7 14.8	16 15.8 88.9 11.9	13 12.9 68.4 9.6	28 27.7 80.0 20.7	101 74.8
no importance	3	1 12.5 3.0 0.7	2 25.0 6.7 1.5	1 12.5 5.6 0.7	3 37.5 15.8 2.2	1 12.5 2.9 0.7	8 5.9
	Column Total	33 24.4	30 22.2	18 13.3	19 14.1	35 25.9	135 100.0

TABLE 023

GOOD WORKS/SALVATION - FEMALE

	Count Row Pct Col Pct Tot Pct	below 20 1	21-30 years 2	31-40 years 3	41-50 years 4	50 & over 5	Row Total
little importance	1	11 55.0 21.2 5.9	4 20.0 7.8 2.2	2 10.0 7.7 1.1	1 5.0 3.8 0.5	2 10.0 6.5 1.1	20 10.8
great importance	2	40 25.5 76.9 21.5	44 28.0 86.3 23.7	22 14.0 84.6 11.8	24 15.3 92.3 12.9	27 17.2 87.1 14.5	157 84.4
no importance	3	1 11.1 1.9 0.5	3 33.3 5.9 1.6	2 22.2 7.7 1.1	1 11.1 3.8 0.5	2 22.2 6.5 1.1	9 4.8
	Column Total	52 28.0	51 27.4	26 14.0	26 14.0	31 16.7	186 100.0

A. Among Males Of Different Age Groups

1. It is obvious from the table that once again, irrespective of the age, the men folk consider good works of great importance to salvation.
2. The overall attitude of males 50 years and above is virtually the same as males 20 years and below, except that the males 50 years and above by their higher percentage response to "great importance" indicate that they are marginally more committed to their works attitude than the males 20 years and below.
3. Comparatively speaking, males 41-50 show a marginally better attitude of works to salvation than males of all other age categories. Their commitment to works/salvation is

also lower than all other categories, showing a lower percentage indicating that works are very important for salvation. We must underscore that these differences are very marginal, but again for the keen gospel worker they could be of great value.

B. Among Females Of Different Age Groups

1. The table shows that irrespective of the age category the majority of the ladies consider good works as being very important to salvation.
2. Like the attitude of the males 50 years and above, it resembles closely that of the males below 20 years so likewise the attitude of females above 50 years resembles very much that of the females below 20 years. The combination of their overall percentages of works to salvation (that is: of little importance plus very important) are virtually the same. They match closer than any other category.

By Way Of Comparison

For all practical purposes, the attitude of females irrespective of their age is just the same as males irrespective of their age when it comes to thinking of works toward salvation. Again the close resemblance of the attitude in the over 50 age group with that of the attitude in the below 20 age group is cause for concern. It suggests that the young people may be very ignorant about the subject and the older are either equally ignorant or desperately misinformed, that they become so stringent in their attitude, equating that of the young in their ignorance. Both are at the extremes of their spectrum, ending up with the same net result.

The Attitude Towards Perfectionism In Montemorelos

The passionate desire to overcome every bad trait is a possession of every sincere believer. Unfortunately however, the goal of overcoming has etched its way into Christian thought as a requirement for salvation. Thus they look to their ability to overcome rather than to the overcoming power of Jesus as the basis for their salvation. Many Christians are desperately reluctant to affirm an eternal salvation, because admittedly they have not obtained the victory over every weakness of the flesh. Such an attitude is a direct detractor to one's assurance of salvation for if our eternal destinies depend on us overcoming every iota of weakness then who and when can anyone have an assurance of eternal salvation. The attitude of perfectionism is definitely a debilitator to an assurance of salvation. We now examine our constituency to see how dominant this attitude is among them.

The members were asked to give their opinion on the statement: "unless each person overcomes his weakness he will not be saved. Agree or disagree"? (That is, question six). Of the 335 people who answered to this question 65.3% agreed, and 34.6% disagreed. Therefore we have almost twice as many people who believe that one has to be perfect before they can be saved as we have who believe otherwise. There is definitely a perfectionist attitude among our sample group. Now we can better understand why there is such a heavy emphasis on salvation by works and why only 50% have an assurance of salvation.

The Sealed Ones In Montemorelos

We have already demonstrated that the concept of sealing has an important bearing on the salvation thinking of Seventh-day-Adventists. How well our group understands this concept of the gospel is our next task. The question was poised: Can you say with all confidence that you are sealed for the Kingdom of God? The options being yes, no, not sure, and no one can now know this. The following (figure 7, page 166) shows the responses.

It is interesting to note that the percentage that affirms yes, is essentially the same percentage that affirms that they are saved (48.4%)¹ that if Christ should come today they would be saved (51.9%)² and that they have eternal life now (51.6%).³ 14.3% indicate that they are not sure if they are sealed. This corresponds exactly to those who indicate that they do not now possess eternal life⁴ (14.3% also).

It can also be seen that 45.9% are in a state of insecurity as to whether or not they are sealed; for as we have already shown, to accept Jesus is to be sealed. Therefore for the Christian to respond no, not sure, or no one now knows this, represents insecurity and misunderstanding. It is also of interest to note that this 45.9% corresponds closely to the percentages of those who are unsure as to whether or not they are saved (47.5%), of those who are not ready for translation 43.4% and of those who do not possess eternal life now

¹Question 5, table 005.

²Question 7, table 007.

³Question 10, table 010.

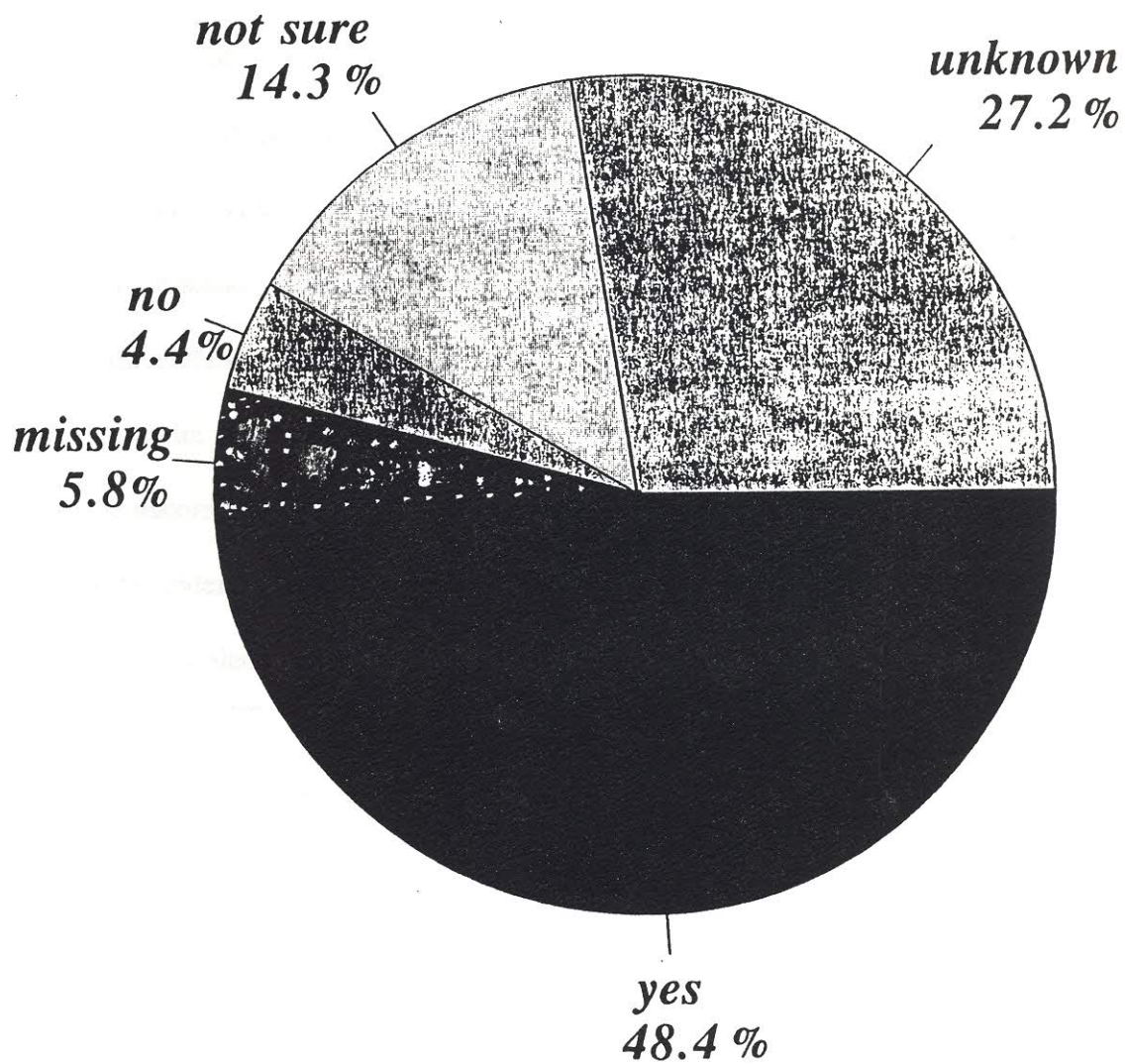
⁴Question 10, table 010.

(42.3%).

All of the above is therefore substantiating our theology that to be sealed is to be saved, is to possess eternal life now, is to be ready for translation now. Close to 50% of our group attests to being sealed and almost the same percentage 45.9% indicates not being sealed.

FIGURE 7

SEALED NOW



**Being Sealed As it Relates to An
Understanding of Justification By Faith**

A good understanding of Justification by Faith should enhance a healthy concept of the sealing, as sealing is essentially justification. We therefore correlate our question on the sealing with the question that has to do with the understanding of justification by faith (question 16).

The results show that:

For all those who say yes they are sealed:

26.2% understand little of justification by faith.

47.0% understand sufficient.¹

0.6% understand nothing.

26% have an idea.²

Therefore the majority in this category 47% have a good understanding of justification by faith. This can be understood, as having a good understanding of justification, will indeed lead one to say he is sealed.

¹Sufficient understanding means good understanding.

²More or less indicates "an idea of" the concept.

TABLE 024

POSITION ON PRESENT SEALING AND AN UNDERSTANDING OF
JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

	Count Row Pct Col Pct Tot Pct	little 1	sufficient 2	nothing 3	more or less 4	Row Total
yes	1	43 26.2 46.7 13.4	77 47.0 66.4 23.9	1 0.6 12.5 0.3	43 26.2 40.6 13.4	164 50.9
no	2	9 60.0 9.8 2.8	4 26.7 3.4 1.2		2 13.3 1.9 0.6	15 4.7
not sure	3	16 34.0 17.4 5.0	8 17.0 6.9 2.5	3 6.4 37.5 0.9	20 42.6 18.9 6.2	47 14.6
unknown	4	24 25.0 26.1 7.5	27 28.1 23.3 8.4	4 4.2 50.0 1.2	41 42.7 38.7 12.7	96 29.8
	Column Total	92 28.6	116 36.0	8 2.5	106 32.9	322 100.0

Of All Those Saying No Not Sealed

- 60% understand little of justification
- 26% understand sufficient or good understanding
- 2% have an idea understanding.

This result too can be understood. To say, no, not sealed, is an indication of little understanding of justification. Thus the majority who say no are also saying they have a little understanding of the concept.

Of All Those Saying Not Sure (Sealed)

- 34% understand little.
- 17% understand sufficient.
- 0.4% understand nothing.
- 42.6% have an idea.

Those having just an idea is the largest percentage in this category. This is in keeping with the fact that they are not sure of being sealed. A good understanding as in the case above would certainly indicate confidence of being sealed. To understand justification by faith is to be more positive of being sealed.

Of All Those Who Think Nobody Knows This Now

- 25% understand little.
- 28% understand sufficient (good understanding).
- 0.4% understand nothing
- 42% have an idea.

Again the category that indicates a poor understanding scores the highest percentage. This can be understood, for to say that nobody now knows whether or not we are sealed is an indication of a vague or poor understanding of justification by faith.

In summary it is evident from the above analysis, that most of those who have a poor or insecure attitude about being sealed also have a poor understanding of justification by faith. Also most of those who have a positive attitude of being sealed also have a good understanding of justification by faith. This substantiates our position that to understand justification by faith is to understand that one is now sealed, for indeed justification equals

sealing and sealing equals justification.

The Sealing and the Importance of Good Works For Salvation

When the thinking of our group on the sealing is correlated with their thinking on the importance of works for salvation, it is discovered that their understanding on the sealing is one squarely based on works (see table 025, page 173). The results show that irrespective of their understanding of the sealing the majority believe that good works are very important for salvation. Eighty one point one percent (81.1%) believe that good works are of great importance for salvation as compared to 14.1% who think it is of little importance and a mere 4.8% who think it is of no importance.

With such a great works motive underlying almost every attitude of their salvation theology, there should be tremendous uneasiness in the hearts of many members, even among those who indicate that they have an assurance of salvation.

TABLE 025

THE SEALING AND THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD WORKS FOR SALVATION

	Count Row Pct Col Pct Tot Pct	yes	no	not sure	unknown	row total
little importance	1	19 40.4 11.1 5.7	2 4.3 12.5 0.6	16 34.0 31.4 4.8	10 21.3 10.5 3.0	47 14.1
great importance	2	144 53.3 84.2 43.2	14 5.2 87.5 4.2	33 12.2 64.7 9.9	79 29.3 83.2 23.7	270 81.1
no importance	3	8 50.0 4.7 2.4		2 12.5 3.9 0.6	6 37.5 6.3 1.8	16 4.8
	Column Total	171 51.4	16 4.8	51 15.3	95 28.5	333 100.0

The Cross and An Assurance of Salvation

The nature of the assurance of salvation within any Christian group should be directly related to the emphasis that the church places on the cross of Christ. A strong emphasis on the cross should result in a strong assurance of salvation. A weak emphasis would result in the opposite. We therefore ask the members for their evaluation as to their church's emphasis on the cross (See table 015).

59.1% said yes their church emphasized the cross enough.

9% said no it is not emphasized enough.

21.4% said it is emphasized sometimes.

Again the percentage that registers sufficient emphasis corresponds closely with those who are saved (48.4%) who have an assurance of eternal life (58.8%) who are ready if Christ should come today (51.9%) and those who possess eternal life now (51.6%).

TABLE 026

CORRELATION OF THE CROSS AND AN ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

	Count Row Pct Col Pct Tot Pct	Christ return	Things not bad	Continue working	Row Total
yes	1	133 64.9 65.5 42.9	37 18.0 63.8 11.9	35 17.1 71.4 11.3	205 66.1
no	2	25 71.4 12.3 8.1	6 17.1 10.3 1.9	4 11.4 8.2 1.3	35 11.3
sometimes	3	45 64.3 22.2 14.5	15 21.4 25.9 4.8	10 14.3 20.4 3.2	70 22.6
	Column Total	203 65.5	58 18.7	49 15.8	310 100.0

It goes to say that the nature of an assurance of salvation is indeed closely linked with the church's emphasis on the cross. Therefore if the churches of this area would improve the quality and quantity of assurance, then greater emphasis must be placed on the cross.

Emphasis On The Cross As It Relates to an Understanding of An Assurance of Salvation

When we correlate the opinions of the church's emphasis on the cross (table 015) with question four that tests for an understanding of an assurance of salvation, we discover that the church's emphasis on the cross has no bearing on the understanding of an assurance of salvation. The results show (see table 026) that irrespective of the opinion on the church's emphasis on the cross the majority holds a correct opinion on an assurance of salvation. It therefore suggests that while the church's emphasis on the cross may be helping to foster a saved experience, it is at the same time not effective in helping the members to have a good understanding of that saved experience. In other words its emphasis on the cross speaks more to the heart and not to the head.

This is further substantiated by the very large percentages who think good works are very important to salvation (See table 009).

There is indeed tremendous need for an improvement in the quality and quantity of the church's presentations on the cross.

Time With God

The primary Christian duty is relationship. To spend time with God. It is within the context of a relationship that all God's blessings including an assurance of salvation are gained. We will now examine the quantity of time our group spend with God daily and how this might have an impact on the quality of assurance of salvation that we have seen so far.

Table 012 (page 126), shows the distribution of daily time spent with God. From it we can see that the majority of the group spend up to a maximum of 20 minutes with God daily, with the greater number of that majority (71.2%) spending closer to 15 minutes than 20 minutes. This is very sad.

A mere 16.5% spend half an hour with God daily.

Also a mere 11.5% spend one hour with God daily.

We have twice as many people who spend a maximum of 20 minutes daily, than we have who spend between half an hour to an hour with God on a daily basis. As is obvious 205 members or 56.3% spend up to 20 minutes with the greater portion spending closer to 15 minutes than twenty minutes. One hundred and two (102) or 28% spend up to an hour with the greater number (58.8%) spending closer to half an hour than one hour.

Therefore we can conclude that the majority 56.3% spend a maximum of 20 minutes with God daily. It is interesting to note that this percentage is very close to the percentages that we have been seeing possessing an assurance of salvation (51.9%), being sealed (48.4%).

If we would divide this time into morning and evening devotion, it would mean that the majority of our sample group is only spending ten minutes with God in the morning and ten minutes in the evening on an average.

Christianity without much relationship time with God is naturally legalistic Christianity, for then the adherents focus more on not doing anything wrong. Works at the expense of the relationship. We can now better understand why almost 88.7% of our sample size consider good works as being important for salvation.

**Devotional Time As It Relates to
An Understanding Of Justification
By Faith**

We have seen that our group spends very little time with God. Does this limited time have any bearing on its understanding of justification by faith and consequently on its whole outlook on salvation? We'll now examine the results of the correlation between these two factors.

A close examination of the results will reveal that the level of sufficient or good understanding increases with time. Those who spend 30 minutes with God record a 42.6% understanding as compared to 30.9% of those who spend only 20 minutes. Those who spend one hour record 52.5% as compared to 43.6% among those who spend 30 minutes. Those who spend more than one hour record 66.7% as compared to 52.5% of those who spend one hour.

It is also of interest to note that everybody who spend from half an hour upwards indicate that they have some understanding of justification by faith. The conclusion is plain. The more time spent with God the greater the level of understanding of justification. Could this be another contributing factor to the heavy works-based salvation outlook that exists in our group? We believe so.

Summary of Survey Results

From the above analysis we can conclude:

1. That there is a 58.8% basic understanding of an assurance of salvation.
2. That 50% affirmed that they are saved.
3. That the constituency is very legalistic with 75.8% considering works as being very important to salvation and an overall number of 88.7% considering it of some value to salvation.
4. That there is a gross misunderstanding of the gospel.
5. That those baptized between 1-5 years enjoy the lowest level of an assurance of salvation.
6. Those baptized 21 years and over enjoy the highest level of assurance of salvation.
7. That up to ten years after baptism members are showing a poorer confidence level towards their salvation, than they showed in the first eleven months after baptism.
8. While the church's emphasis on the cross does enhance a measure of assurance of salvation, it is not very effective in engendering a good understanding of an assurance of salvation.
9. The majority of the membership spends a maximum of 20 minutes with God each day in bible study and personal devotion.
10. This very limited time with God is a significant contributing factor to the works-oriented assurance of salvation that exists.

CHAPTER XIV

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

In light of the above findings, it is our recommendations that:

1. There be greater Emphasis on Justification by Faith

Greater emphasis be placed on the subject of Justification by Faith of Jesus with the all important distinction being made between the works of Christ for us and the works of Christ in us. This very important distinction is obviously not well understood, as is evident in the very high percentage that believe in the importance of works for salvation¹

2. There be Gospel Seminars

Such seminars as Health, Marriage, Family life, Stewardship, among others, are certainly a more common phenomenon of our church than are Gospel Seminars.

We strongly recommend that there be an increase or a beginning of such seminars, not only in Montemorelos but throughout the world. These could be conducted by the district pastors, together as a district or alone in their respective churches. Groups of churches could also combine for some seminars.

In these seminars, instructions, group discussions, question and answer periods, could all

¹This is the inevitable result of failing to make this distinction, it cannot be avoided. It also expresses itself in such beliefs as: we are justified by the acceptance of Jesus plus keeping his commandments.

combine to teach and make more understandable the principles of the gospel. This would result in an increase in an assurance of salvation and less emphasis on works for salvation.

3. There be District Symposiums

There are many bright thoughtful minds in the constituency, who could be assigned a particular area on the subject of an assurance of salvation-justification by faith etc. who could then research and present a paper on that area. The subsequent free discussions and clarification could be a great enlightenment and forward movement.

4. Greater utilization of the Theological Department of Montemorelos University

The theology teachers and students could be invited to the community churches on a regular basis to speak specifically on the subject. The school is within very close reach of all the churches. The rich resources of the department could be of tremendous help.

5. That there be more Bible Study Sessions in the Church

Bible class each week should be a standard. It is only as members are studying the Bible seriously that they will come to learn the principles of the gospel.

6. That greater attention be given to the young converts up to year five of their stay in the church.

This would help to minimize the rapid deterioration in the assurance of salvation experienced between years one to five.

7. That the Pastors do some writing on the subject

Pacific Press Publishing Association, the resources of which are greatly under-utilized is located in the constituency. This is a tremendous opportunity for the Pastors and other informed people to publish books, tracts, magazines, etcetera on the subject. This would certainly be a blessing to the members.

8. That the Pastors educate their Elders and other leaders on the Subject

Many congregations are more a reflection of their elders than they are of their Pastors. With such an overwhelming attitude of salvation by works prevailing in the area, it's highly possible that the elders also think along this line. Educating them properly on the subject could have a great spin-off effect on the congregations, for indeed their influence are usually very effective.

9. Sponsored Pastoral Discussion on the Subject

The voice and the opinions of district pastors are generally greatly respected among their members. (We believe such is the case in this constituency). It could be a very impressive gesture for all the pastors of the constituency to host joint forums in central church(es) in their respective districts in which they as a panel discuss the dynamics of the gospel. Folks would be attracted to such meetings and the net result could be phenomenal.

10. Bible Contest on the Topic

A book of the Bible that emphasizes righteousness by faith, for example Romans or Galatians, could be given to a group of persons from different churches to study over a period of time. At a designated time the churches could then meet for a healthy Bible quiz contest on the subject of justification by faith as it is related in that particular book.

This practice could also be done locally in each A.Y. society. It could be made a regular feature. Incentives being given so as to encourage the continuation of the practice.

All this would result in more consciousness and greater understanding of the gospel. The end result can only be a greater assurance of salvation and improved Christian living among the brethren.

11. That the constituency continue to foster the measure of an assurance of Salvation that now exists. It is not the worse and should be encouraged and improved.

CONCLUSION

Without an assurance of salvation the Christian life is only an imprisonment with very little hope. The themes of this subject while they are simple do take some doing at times to grasp. However the Holy Spirit always helps the sincere seeker.

Historic Adventism has been plagued with a limited assurance of salvation; even today the effects still linger on in many quarters. We trust that the discourse here given and the practical illustration of Montemorelos will light yet another candle that will illuminate our path as we journey to the consummation of our eternal salvation.

APPENDIX

THE SEALING - PRINCIPLE POSITIONS IN RELATION TO ELLEN WHITE'S WRITINGS

For the reader who may find our position on the sealing disturbing in relation to writings of Ellen White, we would like to point out the following principles:

1. The Seventh-day Adventist Church does not regard the writings of Mrs. White as an infallible and final voice on Biblical interpretation. She herself did not regard herself as such, and warns against such an attitude.¹
2. The writings of Mrs. White were not intended to be technical scientific exegesis of Scripture. They are rather practical religious counsel, of an homiletical nature, geared to foster a relationship with Jesus. Some 90% of her writings are strictly homiletical.²

As such, therefore, it can never be safe or even fair to her to judge an exegetical position based on her writings. Mrs. White did not conceive of her commentary on Scripture as to be declaring its meaning once and for all. This was evident as she gave different interpretations to the same Scriptures on different occasions. In Christ's Object Lessons she interprets the parable of the ten virgins in terms of the second coming of Christ, and in the Great Controversy she applies it to the period before the

¹LeRoy Froom, Movement of Destiny, 91-106.

²Desmond Ford, Daniel 8:14: The Day of Atonement and the Investigative Judgement, 184-203.

1844 disappointment, stating that it "illustrates the experience of the Advent people."¹

Such varied use of Scripture in her writings could be multiplied by scores. Again her task was not

3. She passionately points us to the Bible and the Bible alone. She writes, "The Bible and the Bible alone should be our creed . . . the sole bond of union. . . God's word is infallible."²

"The Bible is the infallible guide under all circumstances." "Every position we take should be critically examined and tested by Scripture. Now seem unnoticed but it will not always be so. . . ."³

4. She writes: Lay Sister White right to one side; lay her to one side. Don't you ever quote my words again as long as you live, until you can obey the Bible. When you take the Bible and make that your food, and your meat, and your drink, and make that the elements of your character when you can do that you will know better to receive some counsel from God. But here is the word, the precious word, exalted before you today. And don't you give rap anymore that Sister White said that, and Sister White the other thing. But say thus saith the Lord, the Lord God of Israel, and then you do

¹Ellen White, Great Controversy, 393. See also Harold W. Weiss, "Are Adventists Protestants?" Spectrum 4 (1972) : 75-77.

²Ellen White, Selected Messages, 1:46; Ellen White, Early Writings, 78.

³Ellen White, Testimonies for the Church, 5:264, 389.

Ellen White, Evangelism, 69.

Ellen White, Desire of Ages, 253.

Ellen White, Great Controversy, 204-205.

just what the Lord God of Israel does and what He says."¹

She went on further: "But don't you quote Sister White. I don't want you ever to quote Sister White until you get your vantage ground where you know where you are. Quote the Bible. Talk the Bible. It is full of meat, full of fatness. Carry it right on in your life and you will know more Bible than you know now."²

5. In light of the above we ought to judge Ellen White's writings in light of Scripture, not Scripture in light of Ellen White. Consequently a position taken based on Biblical exegesis can only be adequately judged based on the Bible alone. We can therefore go to the Bible to see the Biblical position and we go to Ellen White to see Ellen White's position, which may or may not be an exegetical position.
6. As is acknowledged by the church, Ellen White borrowed extensively from her contemporaries. In the process she took gems from places where they were of little or no good and left them in places where they are of the greatest good. It cannot be denied, however, that in the same process she also took "warts." She made mistakes in many cases, where her sources made mistakes. The shut door position, her position on the law in Galatians (which she later changed), her view on the atonement, among

¹Ellen G. White, "Spalding and Magan Collection", 165, as quoted in Martin Weber, Who's Got The Truth (Silver Springs: Home Study International, 1994), 202.

²Ibid.

many others are examples.¹ We must hasten to say, however, that we do not consider her less of a prophet because of these errors. If such is done one would inevitably have to disregard the Bible prophets also.²

7. In making decisions on doctrinal points as it relates to Ellen White, one always has to bear in mind how the revelatory process functions. Firstly, the prophet Jesus is that prophet through whom God has spoken His final word to humanity (Heb.1:1-3, Jude 3). In Jesus, God has already spoken unto the very last day of earth's history. There is nothing that any other prophet can say, that God has not already, in principle, said in the historic Jesus.

It therefore means that all other prophets are only "prophetlets," making applicable

¹In comment on the progressive development of Ellen White, Martin Weber asks: Those who hesitate to acknowledge the reality of Ellen White's development theology please ponder this, at what point would you endow her with infallible spiritual authority?

In her childhood, before she received the prophetic call? In the 1840's when she interpreted her early visions to mean that nobody but Millerites could be saved?...The 1850's when she still ate pork and counseled against taking a stand against unclean meat?...In the 1860's when she taught that Jesus didn't love bad children?...In the 1870's before she equated Rome with Babylon and before she changed her position on the Law in Galatians?...In the 1880's before she taught that the Holy Spirit was a person?

Weber later pointed out that perhaps the greatest enemies of Ellen White are those who are ever zealous with regards to her writings and would place her on equal authority with the Bible. He further acknowledged that Ellen White like all true prophets experienced growth. Martin Weber, Who's Got The Truth (Silverspring: Home Study, 1944), 196-202. See also E.G. White, An Appeal To You, 42,62; E.G. White, Testimonies For The Church, 1:206-207.

²For example, the synoptic problem, in which so many events of Matthew, Mark and Luke cannot be harmonized. John the Baptist, Elijah, David, all made serious errors.

to their generation the timeless principles already proclaimed by Jesus.¹ It means, therefore, that the people of a later generation can only use the prophet correctly, as they accept the principles underlying a particular prophetic message(s) and not necessarily the local dressings in which that message may have occurred.

The principle of the sealing in Ellen White is correct. It says God knows His people; He cares for them; He protects them, He gives them salvation full and free, through the blood of Jesus Christ. He justifies them; He seals them.

We would not want to accept, however, that, salvation is first partially given (first sealing), both happening before the second coming of Christ. Such we believe is only the historical dressings of the time of Ellen White. Furthermore, the prophetic pronouncements of an extra biblical prophet are for the most part applications of scripture. The prophet is always addressing his local situations in which there is a need to stir people to return to, or to abide in righteousness. He is always applying the message of the gospel to those around him.

Now it takes only common sense to realize that an application of scripture cannot be used a final tool for interpreting scripture. If such is done then the application will automatically be placed above the Bible. Reason--the application is coloured by a particular historical setting, that gives it its relevant meaning. But scripture also has its own historical context. It must therefore be interpreted in light of its own historical setting. To interpret it in light of a later historical context, and to

¹The function of prophecy is to bear testimony to the Gospel.

use that later context (i.e. application) as the yardstick for ongoing interpretation is inevitable to place that later application above the Bible. For then the Bible would always be taken from its primary context. Scripture must be its own interpreter. We go to Scripture to see what Scripture is saying. But we do not use the former as a tool for interpreting the latter. Again, Scripture is its own interpreter. All this in no way detracts from the application (Ellen White), it only places her in her proper perspective.

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