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Proposal [250-500 words]

Beliefs about Personal Salvation held by Primary and Secondary Teachers in North American Seventh-day Adventist Schools

This paper explores responses to a questionnaire that was administered at the 2018 North American Division of Seventh-day Adventist's Teachers Convention as part of a worldwide research project examining the perceptions of institutional workers at Seventh-day Adventist institutions regarding the mission of their institution. This paper will report specifically on approximately 140 responses to a subgroup of questions that relate to the participant's conception of salvation and their personal spiritual practices. These questions asked participants to rate their level of agreement or disagreement in relation a number of statements that represent different approaches to salvation such as: I am saved the moment I believe and accept what Jesus has done for me, I can only be saved through the church, I will make it to heaven only if I have personal relationship with Jesus, I should be all right in the end if I am a morally good person, and I will not get to heaven unless I obey God's law. Other questions consider assurance of salvation and one's personal relationship with Christ.

The immediate theological context for the Adventist theology of salvation was Methodism with its Arminian approach to salvation (Hanna, Jankiewicz & Reeve, 2018). The adoption of this largely Arminian approach to salvation has resulted in some questioning whether Christians can have genuine assurance of salvation (Whidden, 2018). The movement that formed the Seventh-day Adventist church also grew out of strong apocalyptic expectations of the soon return of Jesus, and at its inception emphasized the eternally binding nature of the law of God, particularly the commandment to observe the seventh-day Sabbath. It was only as the church matured that its leadership, particularly James and Ellen White, realized that the strong emphasis on law had left many Seventh-day Adventists to underemphasize that salvation was by faith alone. The tension between the emphasis on obedience to the law of God and salvation by grace alone has remained in the Seventh-day Adventist church throughout its history (Knight, 2009). This tension lies close to the heart many theological disputes within the church, and has contributed to a variety of positions with regards to salvation (Moskala, Peckham & Whidden, 2018).

This paper will explore the range of beliefs represented by the answers participants provided, and any correlations that attitudes about salvation have on the teacher's perception of how their work in an Adventist School contributes to the wider mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

References:

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Abstract: [50 words]

This presentation reports the responses of teachers from the North American Division to questions regarding their understanding of salvation. The responses reveal a diverse understanding of salvation in keeping with the variety influences which have shaped this doctrine in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.