

THESIS AND DISSERTATION ABSTRACTS

Theological Seminary, Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies

“The New Testament Attitude toward the Old Testament Distinction between Clean and Unclean Animals”

Researcher: Davidson Razafiarivony, Ph.D., 2006

Advisor: Clinton Wahlen, Ph.D.

This study set out to determine the NT attitude (conformity or abolition) toward the OT distinction between clean and unclean animals within the larger context of purity and defilement.

The first task in this investigation was to understand the relevant backgrounds for the distinction between clean and unclean animals, including how defilement from the ingestion of unclean animals is perceived within the OT and subsequent Jewish literature. The study assessed the prevailing assumption that ingestion of unclean animals incurs cultic defilement and explored the possibility that ingestion of unclean animals might have been viewed as incurring moral defilement. The study also explored the relation of the concept of purity to food habits and worship in the Greco-Roman world.

The second task consisted of analyzing relevant NT passages (Mark 7:1–23; Acts 10:1–16; Rom 14:1–23; Col 2:16–23; and 1 Tim 4:1–5), in light of table fellowship and food controversies within the NT Christian church, in order to determine whether they teach abolition of the OT food laws as is often claimed or whether they give hints to the contrary.

The third task was to analyze the theological framework that lay behind the Christian attitude toward food regulations. The study attempted to relate the larger NT concepts of holiness and purity to the distinction between clean and unclean animals. This was done by establishing the link between the concepts of purity and holiness and food regulations in the NT.

The study revealed that, in the OT and subsequent Jewish literature, the ingestion of unclean animals results in moral rather than cultic defilement. Further, the study found that the abolition of the distinction between clean and unclean animals cannot be substantiated from the NT. Since holiness was the main motive behind such a distinction (Lev 11:44; 19:2; Deut 14:2), exploring the concepts of holiness and purity in the NT (esp. 1 Pet 1:15, 16; 2:9) revealed that the distinction between clean and unclean animals is important also for Christians.

The antithetical notions of holiness and impurity have theological and practical components. These notions evoke separation from the customs of other peoples. Through separation from the world, Christians construct their identity and justify their exclusiveness in maintaining boundaries as God's holy people. The NT use of the OT cultic, holiness, and purity language suggests that the NT theological outlook is greatly shaped by such language and, at the same time, universalizes it.

"The Meaning of John's Baptism in Luke-Acts"

Researcher: Kambale Muhongya, M.A. in Religion, 2007

Advisor: Richard A. Sabuin, Ph.D.

Luke describes John's baptism as a "baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" (Luke 3:3). He also reports that John claimed that his baptism was of water in contrast to the mightier one's baptism of the Holy Spirit and fire (Luke 3:16). Repentance being the work of the Spirit (John 16:8; 20:22-23), John's water baptism is not to be disassociated from the mightier one's spirit baptism. Even though in Luke 3:16 spirit baptism points to Pentecost, the initial work of the Spirit in repentance can also be called spirit baptism (Luke 3:8; 24:47; Acts 2:38; 5:31; 10:43; 11:15-18; 13:38; 26:18; Rom 8:13; Gal 5:22-23).

Luke 3:16 contains three contrasts: ἐγώ "I" versus αὐτός "he"; ὕδατι "water" versus πνεύματι ἁγίῳ "Holy Spirit"; and the contrast expressed by the conjunction μὲν ... δέ "on the one hand ... on the other hand." The emphatic position of the pronoun ἐγώ and its constant presence in the parallel texts (Luke 3:16; Mark 1:8; John 1:26) show that John was primarily contrasting himself to the mightier one. This is in accordance with the context (cf. Luke 3:15). Regarding the contrast ὕδατι ... πνεύματι ἁγίῳ, this word pair appears constantly in agreement, whether in the OT, at Qumran, or in the rest of the NT.

John's baptism is distinguished from the mightier one's spirit baptism by the correlative conjunction μὲν ... δέ. This conjunction is found in Luke 3:16, but not in the parallel texts (Mark 1:8; John 1:26, 33). Mark 1:8 has only δέ instead of μὲν ... δέ. δέ is weaker than ἀλλά "but" and is usually indistinguishable from καί "and." John 1:26, 33 has neither μὲν nor δέ. Therefore, μὲν ... δέ does not set water baptism in opposition to spirit baptism; rather, it connects two clauses.

John's statement in Luke 3:16 is true, not only in John's baptism, but also in the Early Church (Acts 10:44-48) and in current Christianity. Nobody can baptize with the Spirit; only the mightier one, Jesus Christ, can do it.

“An Investigation into the Motif of Works and Reward in the Letters to the Seven Churches of Revelation”

Researcher: Mesfin Mandefro, M.A. in Religion, 2007

Advisor: Joel Musvosvi, Ph.D.

The emphasis on works and reward in the letters to the seven churches of Revelation is understood differently by various scholars. Of the twenty references to ἔργον in the Book of Revelation, twelve (= 60%) occurrences are concentrated in Rev 2 and 3. Furthermore, this thesis suggests that twenty apocalyptic metaphors involving rewards can be identified in these two chapters. The relationship between works and the promised reward has caused significant theological problems. Thus, it was sought to determine the role of the works and reward motif in the letters to the seven churches of Revelation, providing some answers to the following questions: Does the works and reward motif suggest salvation by works? What kind of works and rewards is John talking about?

Based on the theological analysis of these letters, the good works did not initiate the salvation of the believers, but rather are evidence of a faith-love-saving relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. They reflect the lordship of Christ in the reality of these churches. Additionally, it was found that bad works are evidence for different loyalties of those performing the bad works. Another aspect of the reward motif involves their eschatological nature, which is closely associated with the gift of eternal life. To have no reward is equivalent to losing eternal life. Therefore, even though the works and reward motif does not suggest salvation by works, it suggests that judgment is according to works and encourages or fosters accountability and holy living. It thus emphasizes that Jesus is the Lord and Savior of the believer's life.