

## THESIS AND DISSERTATION ABSTRACTS

Theological Seminary, Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies

"Faithfulness in the Book of Revelation: its Identification and Significance"

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Advisor: Kim G. Papaioannou, Ph.D.

Among the πίστις word-group, the adjective πιστός, "faithful" predominantly occurs in the book of Revelation. This word describes Jesus, the words of the prophecy, and the saints. In the case of the noun πίστις occurring 4 times and the negative adjective ἀπιστος occurring once, there is no consensus in translating and identifying them, due to the semantic and syntactical ambiguity of those terms. For instance, πίστις can be translated either "faith" or "faithfulness," likewise, ἀπιστος can be translated either "unbelieving" or "unfaithful." Such a different translation affects the meaning and identification. Moreover, in the case of πίστις with a noun of genitive form (the so-called "subjective-genitive" or "objective-genitive"), not only its meaning but also the relation is ambiguous.

Revelation was sent to the 7 churches in Asia, of which the saints are those who were the believers. This assumes that the message of the book was not of believing in Jesus and the Gospel. It is notable that there is neither command nor counsel to believe (have faith in)—there is actually no verb πιστεῦω, "believe" in Revelation. Interestingly John is the predominant user of the verb πιστεῦω in the NT. In his Gospel, in which the verb occurs most frequently, he demonstrates that he wrote in order to lead people to believe in Jesus Christ and have life in His name (John 20:31). However, unlike the Gospel, it is more likely that Revelation emphasizes faithfulness rather than faith (act of believing). Eight occurrences of πιστός and 2 of 4 occurrences of πίστις clearly designate faithfulness. Also, the contexts support that the rest of the occurrences of πίστις and ἀπιστος also probably designate the faithfulness of the saints. Therefore, the πίστις word-group may be translated as "faithfulness" consistently in Revelation.

The passages of the πίστις word-group and the contexts indicate the identification of the faithfulness found in Revelation: divine origination and totality. Faithfulness is not simply a means of human to be saved, but a divine character shared by Jesus Christ, which should be called “a character of totality.” The “faithfulness-victory motif” confirms the significance of faithfulness in Revelation. Jesus, the Lamb, as the faithful One overcame by faithfulness at the risk of His life; likewise, the faithful saints of God will be victorious by their faithfulness.

“Analysis of the Golden Calf Incident (Exodus 32:1–10) and its Impact on the Sinai Covenant in the Pentateuchal Text”

Researcher: Feliks Ponyatovskiy, Ph.D., 2012

Advisor: Mathilde Frey, Ph.D.

The purpose of this study is to examine the role of the golden calf incident in the Pentateuch and to analyze its impact on the covenant relationship between God and His people. The method chosen for this study is to compare Exod 19-24 with chap. 34 and with other related passages in the books of Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. In the process of comparison special attention has been paid to some characteristics of the covenant such as promises, obligations, covenant formula, revelation, and ritual. As an addition to the comparative analysis, this study utilizes a literary approach in the sense of a close reading of the biblical text by concentrating on rhetorical features, syntax, structure, and context.

In the result of this study the following conclusions have been made: The golden calf incident is portrayed in the Pentateuch as a paradigmatic sin and as a serious threat to the covenant. By making the molten image and worshiping it, the Israelites failed to withstand in their relationship with God; thus, the covenant was completely broken from their side.

This study shows that the covenant was not completely restored during the events described in Exod 34, as most scholars assert. God’s promise given in Exod 34:10 marked only the beginning of the restoration process, which ended when the rituals of Lev 8-9 were performed.

This study also demonstrates that the golden calf incident greatly affected the relationship between God and His people. Before this incident the Israelite society was described as a community of holy people where every member was promised a priestly status. However, after the incident Israel is presented as a stratified society where priestly functions

are restricted to a small group of people and people's holiness depends upon their status. Nevertheless, through the keeping of the oath of Nazirite everybody in Israel society could for a short time enjoy the style of living which in many aspects resembles that of the High Priest. For this reason, the promise of becoming a kingdom of priests and holy nation can be fulfilled for everybody in Israel.

Another aspect of the Divine-human relationship that was changed is the model of revelation. The book of Deuteronomy introduces a new form of communication between God and the people—through the ministry of prophets, which should substitute the direct public manifestation of God's glory.

"A Description and Contextualized Strategies of the Muen Seventh-day Adventist Church in Shanghai Under the 'Three-Self' Patriotic Movement"

Researcher: Huang Yibing, D.Min., 2012

Advisor: James H. Park, Ph.D.

The purpose of this study is to introduce the unique context of the "Three-Self" Patriotic Movement of Protestantism under the government of the Communist Party of China in Shanghai and to determine how the Shanghai Seventh-day Adventist Church can be effective within this context. In order to accomplish this purpose, the study first examines the geography, culture, history and the religious heritage of Shanghai. Secondly, it gives an overview of the "Three-Self" Patriotic Movement in general and outlines how the Shanghai Seventh-day Adventist Church has been affected both before and after its implementation.

After enumerating some contemporary scholars' strategies about healthy church growth, this study shows that leadership, God's Word, small groups, dynamic evangelistic methods, and witnessing through social services could be effective church growth strategies which may be appropriate for the current political and social situation in Shanghai. The study also shows that contextualization is a very crucial factor for church ministry, especially in Shanghai which is faced with a unique yet challenging background given the presence of the government oversight of all church activities. Based on the findings of this study, several

effective recommendations regarding church growth are proposed for the leaders of the Shanghai Seventh-day Adventist Church.

"The Meaning of *γυμνός* in 2 Corinthians 5:3 and its Theological Implications"

Researcher: Luis Iván Martínez Toledo, Ph.D., 2012

Advisor: Richard Apelles Sabuin, Ph.D.

The image of *γυμνός*, "naked," in 2 Cor 5:3 has been understood in anthropological way to refer to the state of the human being between death and resurrection. In this view, the disembodied person survives death either conscious, or unconsciously, awaiting the resurrection. This interpretation supports the duality of the human composition. Those who have a monistic view of this composition interpret the image in a spiritual realm. The images of clothing and unclothing refer to the spiritual acceptance of Jesus justification, and being naked means to be with a sinful nature.

This dissertation takes the images and language used in the passage in an anthropological realm, as the majority of the scholars do, and according to the immediate context of the chapter and the letter. It also links the passage with 1 Cor 15:35-55, and the same concepts of resurrection and death in the OT. A comparison of the use of anthropological terms as they have been used in the LXX to translate related Hebrew terms shows the anthropological and monistic background of the passages. Therefore, the interpretation of *γυμνός* goes to a monistic view of the passage.

*Γυμνός* refers then to a state of nonexistence, death. The houses, which are used as clothes before and after nakedness, refer to anthropological natures. The logical conclusion is that resurrection is a new creation. The use of *γυμνός*, and its relation to other images used by Paul to refer to the same state, reveals an intention to link the identity of the person before death with the identity of the same person after resurrection. In that sense, the one who dies is the same person who will be raised, even though the nature, which is expressed as body, is different. Thus, the person who will receive the reward from God at resurrection is the same who received the promise before death.

Paul presents two processes of changing the human nature: (a) resurrection, that implies having nakedness before; and

(b) transformation without experiencing the state of nakedness, which is death. Paul groans desiring to experience the latter, but lies in the hope of resurrection if the former happens.

The image of γυμνός reinforces the monistic view of life, death, and resurrection. At the same time it highlights the continuity of the identity despite a period of total cessation of existence, and consequently life, which death represents.