

ANDREWS UNIVERSITY DOCTORAL DISSERTATION ABSTRACTS

Andrews University doctoral dissertations are microfilmed by University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106. Some dissertations will also have been published in dissertation series (e.g., the Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series), and in such cases, the pertinent information will be noted in connection with the abstract printed herein.

THE CONCEPT OF VENGEANCE IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION IN ITS OLD TESTAMENT AND NEAR EASTERN CONTEXT

Author and Degree: **Joel Nobel Musvosvi**, Ph.D.

Date When Dissertation Completed: August 1987.

Adviser: Kenneth A. Strand.

(Joel Nobel Musvosvi is currently a member of the Religion Faculty of Solusi College, Zimbabwe, Africa.)

This study attempts to resolve the theological and ethical problems raised by the call for and rejoicing at vengeance as they appear in Rev 6:9-11 and Rev 19:2, respectively. Central to the study is the question of whether vengeance in Revelation expresses a vindictive human attitude or a divine attribute of justice.

In Chap. 1 a review of pertinent literature reveals the lack of agreement among scholars on the interpretation of vengeance in Revelation. Chap. 2 examines the concept of vengeance as it occurs in several Ancient Near Eastern vassal treaties, the OT, and the Pseudepigrapha. This examination reveals that vengeance, in both biblical and extra-biblical documents, occurs in the context of covenant or treaty relationships. The evidence suggests that vengeance is not a human action of self-help; rather it is the prerogative of the highest authority in protecting loyal subjects.

Inasmuch as the survey of Ancient Near Eastern and OT backgrounds reveals suffering to be the context in which calls for vengeance occur, there was need to examine evidences for persecution in the Apostolic era. Chap. 3 reviews these evidences in the NT and especially in the book of Revelation.

Chap. 4 examines Rev 6:9-10 and 19:1-2, wherein the call for and response to vengeance occur in juridical contexts. In view of the unfair human verdicts against his saints, God must "retry" the case between them and the persecutors, so that the innocence of the saints and the guilt of the persecutors can be declared. The trial—a covenant lawsuit—involves an open review of the records of both defendant and plaintiff; and in line with

the law of malicious witness, God reverses Babylon's judgments. Thus, vengeance is demonstrated to be a divine attribute of justice.

The scenes of rejoicing in Rev 18 and 19 recall the Exodus-from-Egypt/Fall-of-Babylon motif and have parallels in some Ancient Near Eastern vassal treaties. The rejoicing is theocentric, and focuses on God's redemptive purpose. Vengeance means deliverance and the restoration of the kingdom to the saints.