

To:
Uniwersytet Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego
ul. Dewajtis 5
01-815 Warszawa
POLAND

Institut für Pastoraltheologie
Univ.-Prof.ⁱⁿ Dr.ⁱⁿ Klara-Antonia Csiszar
T: +43 732 78 42 93 4186
F: +43 732 78 42 93 4155
E: k.csiszar@ku-linz.at

Linz, 22.04.2020

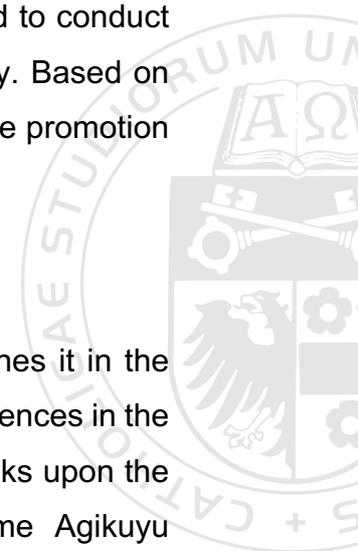
ASSESSMENT OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS OF ZACHARY NDEGWA KABATHA

The doctoral thesis of *Zachary Ndegwa Kabatha* (D4059) under the title “Agikuyu Understanding Of The Last Things In The Light Of Catholic Eschatology” which has been the object of this assessment, is a well-written dissertation, linguistically correct, conducted with a clear methodological approach, presents new scientific insights on the given topic, thus contributing to the on-going discourse on a local, inculturated theology of Agikuyu people in particular, and to the African, or even larger, world-wide effort to make the truths of Christian eschatology more and more understandable and life-related.

The dissertation shows that the Author is competent in, and well qualified to conduct independent scientific, more specifically, theological research and activity. Based on this result of the assessment of the dissertation I support with pleasure the promotion of *Zachary Ndegwa Kabatha* to a Doctor of Theology.

Evaluation of the Thesis

The dissertation presents the Agikuyu concept of the last things, examines it in the light of Catholic eschatology (9), and tries to find common points and differences in the Agikuyu and Christian understanding of the last things. Additionally, it looks upon the possibility of enriching the universal Catholic eschatology using some Agikuyu practices on the last things (196). In this way the Author has succeeded in presenting



a local religious teaching on eschatology (of Agikuyu) in a wholistic manner, enriching the self-understanding of the local culture/religion, correcting its weak points, adding to the local believes new insights from the Christian faith, and, at the same time, proposing some idea from the Agikuyu concept of the life after death which can be used for the presentation of Christian eschatological teaching in Africa and broader.

The content and structure of the thesis

The thesis has a clear structure, starting with a general introduction (11-18), followed by three chapters (19-195), and closed with a separate final text of conclusions (196-205).

The main methodological tool of the Author is the theological analysis of different sources used for the study (16). This method is used in evaluation and summing up of the most important points of oral tradition (especially in the first chapter) and written material on the culture and religion of Agikuyu. With the use of the same method the Author studies the Christian teaching on the last things (second chapter). A comparative method of the results of the previous two chapters is used in the third, most important chapter, keeping in mind all the time the imperative of inculturation and its theological implications.

In the first chapter the Autor present the Agikuyu people in a comprehensive manner, starting from historical-geographical description, continuing through the presentation of its cultural/religious believes on most important questions of life, notably family, rites of passages in the community of Agikuyu, and the teaching and praxis regarding the last things of every person (9-12). The last things are part of the normal process of passages of every person, as understood by Agikuyu people.

In the second chapter the Christian teaching on eschatology is presented. The Author bases his research on such sources as Revelation found in the Bible, Christian

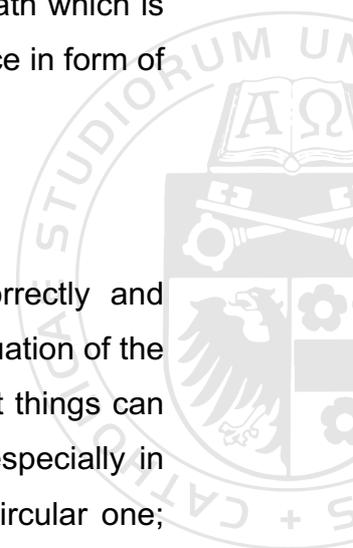
Tradition (especially patristic theology on the last things), official doctrine of the Catholic Church as it can be found in the documents of the Council of Trent and II. Vatican Council, and some noted theologians in the XX. century (74-135). The Author presents in a coherent style the most important Christian truths regarding the last things, as they were formulated and dogmatized during centuries, and enriches his research results with personalistic and anthropological insights of K. Rahner, H. Urs von Balthasar and of the three last Popes of the Catholic Church.

The third chapter is the most original part of the research, showing the capacity of the Author, using the previously gained information (in chapter one and two) to compare the eschatology of Agikuyu with Christian doctrine, showing the common points, underlining the differences and proposing some positive elements which could enrich both sides of this comparison (136-190).

The study argues that Christian eschatology is hope filled and can be used as a model to inspire Agikuyu Christians to live fully their Christian calling. After stating that the notion of life after death in the Agikuyu religion was purely spiritual with no evidence of the eternal life for man's body and the material world, the Author stresses that through Christian eschatology the Agikuyu Christians are invited to a life after death which is both material (bodily resurrection), and not only a spiritual eternal existence in form of good ancestors - living dead. (9)

Acknowledgment of the Thesis

The thesis of the Author is presented in a clear manner, using correctly and consequently the methods chosen for the research, comparison and evaluation of the results of it. He clearly states that the right Christian teaching on the last things can help the Agikuyu to overcome their traditional eschatological beliefs especially in accepting the proper biblical time concept (linear), thus giving up the circular one; bringing about the concept of good ancestors to the practice of veneration of the saints



in the Catholic Church. In this way, it would eliminate from the traditional culture the belief that ancestors can bring evil to the community of living, especially to individual persons, members of the family of a dead person (57-59).

According to the Author the Agikuyu belief of constant contact between ancestors and living members of the community could reinforce in the Christian the sense of belonging to the glorified members of the Church who already achieved the positive end of their lives. This could strengthen the hope in all Christians that they are not alone (there are our intercessors), on the one hand, and that everyone has the possibility to achieve the eternal life in union with God, on the other hand. And, finally, it could bring back to the everyday life of Christians the meaning of eschatological truths on the last things. These truths can help to bring peace and reconciliation to the members of families and communities, to change the general atmosphere in the society and in the Church. The proposal of an existential, life-oriented approach to the questions of the last things is surely a major achievement of the Author, worthy to be realised in the evangelizing work of the local Church of Agikuyu, Africa and broader. It is worth to hail the Author's skill to lead the reflections on the last things to the sacrament of Eucharist, which is the anticipation of the final, everlasting feast in God's heavenly Kingdom.

Some critical remarks

There are technical mistakes in the text (typing errors) which could be corrected for the final edition of the doctoral thesis (e.g. pp. 10, 17, 76, etc.). For the clarity of the text it would be good to use a single way of quoting different authors in the thesis: sometimes they are quoted only by second (family) name, in other cases by Christian and second (family) name (pp. 17, 20, 46, etc.). The name of quoted theologians should be once more verified (e.g. Shonborn is most probably Schönborn?). It is not always clear why some theologians were selected to be examined as sources of Christian teaching on last things in this thesis, and others not. And finally, for the final

version of the text, before publication, it would be maybe good to verify the chronological order of Church Fathers' lives and activity time (e.g. the views of Augustin on purgatory is now before the presentation of Tertullian's teaching on the same topic, although Tertullian lived before Augustin, 102).

Final opinion

Taking into account the result of the examination of the doctoral thesis of *Zachary Ndegwa Kabatha* (D4059), as presented above, I am sure that his work is a great contribution towards a better inculturation of Christians teaching on the last things into the African context, concretely in the reality of Agikuyu. It is an original work, addressing important aspects of Christian teaching and praxis, giving a very helpful theological and catechetical tool in the hands of the local Church. Because of these reasons I give the Author the vote of

summa cum laude



Univ.-Prof.ⁱⁿ Dr.ⁱⁿ Klara-Antonia Csiszar

