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Title: Jewish Ritual Washing and Christian Baptism

Authors: Jones, William Herbert

Advisor: Schuller, Eileen

Department: None

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Abstract: The thesis by William H. Jones examines the dual rituals of tevilah (Jewish ritual washing) and Christian baptism, especially in relation to the New Testament and Second Temple periods. The extent of Jewish ritual washing is apparent in the excavations at the Ophel since 1967 with the unearthing of numerous cisterns and mikve 'ot, the immersion vats used in traditional Judaism at that time as a preparation for entrance to the Temple. It also notes variances in the use of mikve'ot at Qumran among

the sect living there and at Masada, the final retreat for some of the sect members. Many observant Jews continue to use mikve 'ot today as a purification ritual. Christian baptism developed in this same time period, introduced by John the Baptist as a proclamation of the arrival of the kingdom of God and as a means of introducing the atoning and eschatological work of Jesus. Jewish ritual washing provides both a backdrop and an analogy for Christian baptism, since it uses the same immersion procedure and some of the same language, i.e., "born anew," and "change of status." The differences, however, such as no "agent" in tevilah but clearly an "agent" in Christian baptism suggest that baptism is not an evolution from tevilah but a revolution. Tevilah is self-immersion; baptism requires a baptizer, a clear understanding that the one being baptized cannot cleanse him/herself but relies on the mediator Jesus Christ. Christian baptism implies a believer's identification in the Holy Spirit with the death and resurrection of Jesus. Moreover, it points to the eschatological hope of the completion of the kingdom of God which has come and is coming.

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