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The Salvation of the Household in Lukian Theology A Tool for Mission and Evangelism in the West African Church; Acts 16:25-34 as a Case Study

Jean Baptiste Mberebe
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, mberebej@csl.edu

THE SALVATION OF THE HOUSEHOLD IN LUKAN THEOLOGY
A TOOL FOR MISSION AND EVANGELISM IN THE WEST AFRICAN CHURCH
ACTS 16:25–34 AS A CASE STUDY

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By
Jean Baptiste Mberebe
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Approved by_____
Dr. Bruce Hartung Advisor

_____
Dr. Victor Raj Reader

_____
Dr. William Schumacher Reader

Tom Maïtao, my beloved companion

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ABBREVIATIONS

ESV	English Standard Version
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
ATR	African Traditional Religion
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
JSNT	Journal for the Study of the New Testament

ABSTRACT

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What is the “salvation of the household” in Lukan theology? What does it mean for mission and evangelism in the West African context? These are the questions the author is attempting to answer, and in so doing he hopes to draw the attention of the reader, both in the West, and especially in Africa, on the nature of salvation–that the nature of salvation is not only individualistic, but also communal, as can be seen in the pericope he studies, namely Acts 16:25-34. He asserts that the salvation of the household has implications for Mission and Evangelism in West Africa, especially among the Tupuri people of Northeastern Cameroon and Southwestern Chad. In Luke and Acts, salvation is not restricted to the spiritual, or salvation of the soul. Salvation is both temporal and timeless, physical and spiritual, individual but also, and more so communal. Salvation comes to an entire household or family; it comes to people who have shown personal faith, but also to people who cannot speak for themselves, but can count on the faith of others. This is so because in first century Palestine and Greco-Roman world, the personality of the individual is dyadic, not individualistic, that is to say, an individual finds his or her identity in connection with a web of people, the dyad, an entity composed of more or less extended family members under the authority of the householder or the *pater familias*, who inn general is the decision maker of the group. Thus when preachers of the Good News enter his house, they speak the word to him. And when such a householder believes, he believes for all under his roof, when he acts, his acting engages the fate of the whole household. This can be seen in Luke as well as in the Acts of the Apostles.

If this is so, what shall be done with a society that has a similar worldview? Wouldn’t it be expected that such a people will act in like manners? The author answers this positively. He posits that the Tupuri of West Africa, when they hear words like those of Acts 16:31, they understand that because of their faith their entire household is saved. It cannot be otherwise, because those under their care take their cue from the householder, and what he says, they say, what he believes, they believe. There are two important lessons the missionary or evangelist can learn here: 1) the household is readily a church for the missionary to use as the locus of his ministry, and 2) the people of this household can be easily reached through the head of the household, rather than one individual at a time. Once the householder commits to the faith, his entire household is committed, and Scripture says, “Salvation has come to this house.” Though the householders are generally more resistant to change, once they do embrace change, they do so for the entire family. They can also become the catechist of their family. All this to say that the missionary or evangelist operating in West Africa, can see his work eased away through the model of the salvation of the household.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Vignette One

The missionaries came to Kourbi and preached about a new way, the way of Jesus Christ, "which demands a turning away from idols and evils spirits, and to Jesus, the Son of God who died for our bad behaviors and our worship of false gods that do not speak nor hear, nor heal, nor deliver us. Jesus can do that, and even more: he delivers from our worship of ancestors, and sacrifices to demons." Though it only vaguely made some sense, many of the villagers turned to Christ, stating that they renounced the way of the ancestors, and wanted to follow this Jesus. The missionary wanted to count those who had embraced the faith. The men came forward, some with their whole family (several wives and many children, young and small), some with only a part of their family, obviously counting in their mind the members who were absent. They were in for a big surprise when they were told that they could not just count the members of their family. Each person had to confess for themselves, small and old, men and women alike. Moreover, the men who had many wives were told they could not become "followers of Jesus" if they did not have but one wife. After some thoughts, some said they would send off other wives and remain with one, while many judged the price too heavy and declined to be followers of Jesus. Those who committed to following Jesus were told they would be instructed for two years, and after that they would be baptized. The householders (the adult males) went away in deep thought, wondering whether they made the right choice or had simply exposed their families to the wrath of God and the ancestors. They pondered what this new religion was, that involved both women and children, and denied "the father of the house" the responsibility to speak on behalf of his wife or wives and children. Was this a serious business, or just some child play? In

the end, some men came back for the catechumenate, but many joined the polygamists who had refused to send away the wives, and they together became strong detractors of the new religion, dubbing it a children's business.

Vignette Two

Bangmo is the eldest of two brothers and three sisters. He married two wives and had many children. All of his siblings, except his younger brother, and his parents followed traditional African religion. But his children, who began to follow neighbor children to Sunday school, soon became catechumens and were baptized as Christians. This did not trouble Bangmo at all. Then, many of his neighbors began exhorting him to abandon the way of tradition and to follow Jesus. They told him that the old way leads nowhere, while following Jesus gives eternal life, and escape from Hell. But, every time Bangmo would respond, "I have to accomplish my duty as the eldest son of my father. If I were to become a Christian who would honor my late father and fulfill the required annual sacrifice to his memory? Who would bring him the appeasing offering when he is angered and brings ill fate to my family? The children are with you already. You can also take with you the youngest wife. As for me and my first wife, we must continue to carry our responsibility towards the departed one."

But then, Bangmo's first wife became ill and he offered many sacrifices for her healing. He went to different health centers with the hope that she would recover, but she only intermittently felt better, and then her health would deteriorate again. He began to ponder what he should do. Then it dawned on him to make a bargain with his departed father. The next time he offered food to his late father he spoke to him thus,

> You are the protector of my family and I have been faithful in bringing you the annual offering, and anytime I eat, the first cut I throw to you. Why then do you let the one who cooks the food suffer so much? This last time I will offer the food and I

beg you to heal her. And know that if she isn't healed I will leave you and follow the way of Jesus. For you would agree with me that I have been a good son, wouldn't you? I have offered all the sacrifice you requested. What else can I do?

Vignette Three

Joboyang was a prison guard. Two missionaries were preaching in town, but the authorities arrested them and put them in jail after they had them beaten by the prison guard and the soldiers. Joboyang himself secured the chains on the prisoners' feet. At night the missionaries were singing and praying. Joboyang could not sleep. All of a sudden there was an earthquake, the prison doors flung open, and the chains broke from the feet of the prisoners. Joboyang, who had gone to his house to rest, came out running. He found the doors wide open so he wanted to fall on the spear he had in hand. For, he thought of what the authorities would do to him and his family. At best he would be publicly flogged a hundred blows and thus dishonored in the sight of all. His own family would lose face and not dare to come out. Or worse, he and his family could be sold into slavery. How could he bear that? But the prisoners shouted, "Do no harm to yourself. We are all here. No one has escaped." Trembling, he came in with a lamp and checked on the prisoners. All were there. Then, a new fear gripped him. He said to himself, "These men, who were preaching a new religion - their God is really powerful, and I have become guilty for flogging and chastening his servants. How will I escape his wrath? I am doomed. So he threw himself at their feet and begged, "What must I do to escape the wrath of your God?" One of the missionaries answered him, "Believe in Jesus whom we were preaching, and nothing will happen to you, nor to your family. You will be reconciled with God, and his wrath against you has been put on the man Jesus, whom he offered as guilt offering for our offenses." Joboyang invited the men into his house, woke everyone up, and ordered his wife to heat water and clean the wounds of the men. He ordered also that food be served to them. After eating, the missionaries baptized

him and all his family that very hour of the night. Joboyang rejoiced greatly with his family that he had become a Christian and had escaped the wrath of both men and God.

Vignette Four

The pastors gathered for their annual retreat, which was usually devoted to addressing the challenges encountered in the mission. This year the topic was about baptism, especially paedo-baptism. Some pastors were wondering how it made sense to ask babies to respond to the baptismal questions and confess the faith. The debate went on for two days. The arguments ran something like this: Luther and Evangelicals are clear that no one can be saved on account of another's faith. Others objected that were this the case, then we have no business baptizing children, since we could not in good conscience say that we witnessed their confession of faith; it is parents and /or sponsors answering on their behalf. Thus, are we not recognizing that it is our confession (that of the parents and the community gathered), which forms the foundation of the baptism of children? Still others argued that there are several biblical passages that tell us of the baptism of the whole family on account of the householder's confession of faith: Acts 10; 16:25–34; 18: and the healings of persons brought to Jesus by relatives (Luke 7:1–10; 8: 49–56 ; Matt. 8:5–13; 9:1–8, etc.). Some retorted that these were examples of physical healing and not of salvation per se. The others shot back that there was really no difference. If Jesus could heal or resurrect a person on account of another's faith, why couldn't he do the same for the salvation of those who could not ask for it by themselves? In the end the pastors agreed that it was foolish(?) to address children who can't speak as though they could speak, and answer in their place and pretend that it was them answering. From then on, they would address the baptismal questions directly to the parents. But, even then the unanimity was fragile, as many wondered whether this approach was not amounting to re-baptizing the adults, though children were the ones receiving

the water of baptism.

The above vignettes raise questions that seemingly are settled in some Western churches. However, they stir endless debates in non-western churches, notably in Africa, where according to Philipp Jenkins, the center of Christianity is moving. In fact Philipp Jenkins has forcefully alerted the academic community to the shifting of the center of Christianity southward in his provocative book, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*.[1] He sees Africa as playing a major role in this shift. Concurring with Jenkins, Andrew Walls posits that Africa has always played a major role in the development of Christianity and will continue to do so in the new millennium.[2] Needless to say, Africans have taken the bull by the horn, They continue to witness many theologians who attempt to formulate and make contributions to theology, just like their forebears of Antiquity: Joseph Mbiti of Kenya, Lamine Sanneh and Jehu Hanciles of the Gambia, Kwame Bediako of Ghana, Andre Kabasele, Ka-Mana, and Jean-Claude Loba-Mkole of the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Jean Marc Ela of Cameroon, just to name a few. These are fitting voices of the emergence of African theology. If Jenkins' and Walls' assessments are right, then we must expect that new solutions will be offered to some old questions. As an illustration, Ed Stetzer summarizes thus the characteristics of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries,

> For about 150 years prior to the 1960s, Protestants who used the Great Commission as their foundation for mission assumed the following:
>
> - that salvation was individualistic;
> - that salvation had to do primarily with a spiritual and personal relationship with Jesus Christ;
> - that the primary calling of the church's mission was geographic: Christians were called to "go";

[1] Philipp Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 2–3.

[2] Andrew Walls, *The Cross-cultural Process in Christian History* (Edinburg: T&T Clark, 2002), 112–15.

- that the "going" was primarily from the west and north of the globe to the east and south;
- that the "make disciples" portion of the Great Commission was more important than the "baptizing" and "teaching" portions;
- that new converts should be gathered into churches resembling—and often belonging to—the sending churches and missions;
- and (especially during the last half of the nineteenth century) that new individual converts should be extracted from their non-Christian contexts, gathered into Christian mission stations, and taught the culture and civilization of the missionaries.[3]

It could be safely said that these characteristics may still apply to missiology today, at least for points one, two, five and six though there is an attempt to change course. But, such a stand is essentially stemming from the Enlightenment definition of the individual as an "autonomous self,"[4] and not the biblical definition of the person. That salvation is individual is almost axiomatic and raises no question in a culture that holds "freedom" and "self-determination" as the greatest of human rights. If such an understanding works within the western culture, it is resisted in many parts of the world with strong group commitments. The question in those cultures arises - What about those who cannot speak for themselves? If their salvation cannot be entrusted to their spokespersons, how will they be saved? For the community-oriented culture, episodes like that of Acts 16:25–34 carry a weight of hope that Christianity does welcome them with all that is theirs.

"What must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30 ESV) is one of those questions. This fundamental question is asked one way or another in every human society. People are all too

[3] David J. Hesselgrave & Ed Tetzer, *Missionshift: Global Mission Issues in the Third Millennium* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2010), 15.

[4] Rene Descartes' basic formula is "Je pense donc je suis." *Discours de la méthode*, (La Haye : Imprimerie Ian Maire, 1637), Part IV. Thus he posits that a person is only as a thinking being. No one without self-consciousness can be said to exist. Later philosophers and psychologists expanded the idea of the self as the agent of its own becoming. Such theoretical reflection on the self as simultaneously the subject and object of its peregrination appears to be absent in the biblical Palestinian worldview. See also Jerrold Seigel, who thinks that the notion of the modern self can be traced back to the Aristotelian concept of soul, in *The Idea of the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 46–49.

often aware of the dangers looming in their life. Philosophers call this type of question an "existential question." But, theologians are not agreed on whether the Philippian jailer's question was just an existential question, or a more specific concern about the fate of his soul; Joseph Fitzmyer, like many, dubs this the "classic question of everyone on the threshold of faith."[5] The question itself is not the focus of this research. What makes it important is the response given. The response to the question, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household," (Acts 16:31 ESV) is a puzzling statement. What should one understand by this statement? From what does the man need to be saved? Is his household in danger too, as hinted at by the missionaries' answer? One could almost picture the man retorting with astonishment, "Really, I just need to believe in Jesus and all of us are saved?" Thus, perhaps, the rejoicing in the end. But, Christians in the west want to clarify, "No no, what we mean is, if your family members too will believe, they also will be saved." Other cultures seem to hear, "Since your guilt affects your family, believe in Jesus, and not only you, but your whole family will be saved." Thus, the meaning of the phrase, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household," is no longer self-evident. How did the jailer or the people of Luke's time understand it? What does it mean for us today? And, what are the implications for today? These questions from the fourth century onward have drained much ink and saliva. In modern times these questions have received various answers, ranging from "salvation is made possible to all in the family," to "all who believe are saved," to "all including children and all extended family."

The Thesis

The claim this research attempts to demonstrate is that the answer to the jailer's question in

[5] Joseph Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 589.

Acts 16:30–31 constitutes household salvation, the divine means in Lukan theology for the communication of the gospel. As such, the household salvation concept has considerable transforming power for our missiology. I believe coming to grips with household salvation has the potential for revolutionizing how the church does mission and evangelism. Put more bluntly, in Lukan theology salvation is first and foremost a matter of the whole family. The Lukan corpus is replete with such passages: Luke 19:1–10; Acts 10; 16:11–15; 16:25–34; 18:8. Individual salvation is in fact the exception. Thus, through this study I want to strongly challenge the church to rethink our manner of reading these two books of the New Testament in a more corporate sense, and to fully exploit the thrust of this teaching for missions and evangelism strategies for the West African context.

The Current Status of the Question

Household salvation does not feature often on the titles of biblical essays or at the indices of most scholarly works on Luke-Acts. This fact seems to characterize scholars who hold synergistic views of salvation. Most often these scholars would rather speak of household conversions. For one, household salvation does not fit into the theological framework of Evangelical scholars in the west. Not even modern Lutheran theologians are inclined to promote the idea. “Faith by proxy” has become the catchword to characterize any idea of corporate or representative faith. Another catchword is the famous slogan, “God does not have grandkids.” Scholars who raised the issue of household salvation spoke of people movements or group conversions.[6] In Catholic circles the topic makes the front page generally through missionaries or missiologists.[7] Otherwise, the evangelical principle of personal faith and salvation seems to be

[6] D. A. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans, 1990), 333.

[7] J. Waskom Pickett and Vincent Donovan are two such missionaries.

well entrenched, and anything else is dubbed heresy or heterodoxy. Even in Lutheran circles, the idea of personal faith and salvation is not entirely absent, as seen in the popular editions of the Small Catechism which expand and explain the Articles of the Apostles Creed in these terms, "Why do we say, 'I believe,' and not, 'We believe'? Everyone must believe for himself or herself; no one can be saved by another's faith."[8] Though I intend to speak of household salvation, and not conversion—the reason being that conversion emphasizes man's doing, and not God's gracious act of salvation, which has been termed "divine monergism"—the survey of recent scholarship on Luke-Acts or on the topic of household salvation will nevertheless include discussions of household conversion and even the issue of baptism because they are inherent to the reading of the basic text used as the case study of this research. Such a survey aims at giving a history of interpretation on the topic of household salvation, both by biblical scholars as well as missionaries or missiologists.

The theological landscape on the theme of household salvation is rather diverse. Because the present research is essentially an exegetical study with missiological application in a particular context, i.e. the West African contemporary region, the study of the current status of household salvation will cover both the fields of Biblical studies and that of Missiology from the west as well as from the non-western world, West and Central Africa in particular.

Biblical Scholars' Views

Biblical scholars have struggled with the meaning of passages such as Luke 19:1–10 or Acts 16:25–34 that speak of household salvation. Based on their response to the question "were all saved in the jailer's household?" the different views will be grouped under three headings: the

[8] *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1986), 100.

unstated views, the inclusive views, and the exclusive views. The scholarly views of the last century of household or corporate salvation can be classified into three groups: first, the unstated/undecided position, second, the exclusive view, and finally, the inclusive view.

The Unstated Position

Belonging to this group are those scholars who do not go into details of what is meant by "you and your household" or "him with his entire household." They simply restate what the text says. Among these is scholar Richard N. Longenecker, who writes, "to judge by their actions, the jailer and his family believed in Christ and received the Holy Spirit. The jailer washed the wounds of Paul and Silas, probably at a well in the prison courtyard, and there too he and all his family were baptized."[9] Though these scholars clearly restate what the text says, they are not explicit as to of whom the family is comprised. J. A. Alexander, who tries to balance the two end positions, affirms that the solution should be found on other grounds. He writes,

> He who considers infants as excluded from this ordinance by its very nature, will of course exclude them from the *all* here mentioned; he who regards them as entitled to it by the stipulations of a divine covenant will just as naturally give the word its widest application. What is most important is to settle this disputed question upon other grounds and higher principles, and then explain these historical details accordingly.[10]

Alexander too chooses not to state his own position. Yet it would accord with an exegetical enterprise to at least state what the writer and his original readers might have meant and understood by that statement, because the tools for such an educated guess do exist nowadays.

[9] Richard N. Longenecker, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Expositor's Bible Commentary, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 465.

[10] J. A. Alexander, *A Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1857), 127.

The Exclusive Point of View

The opinions in this category range from mild to strong. Asserting Paul's declaration to the jailer, Hanz Conzelmann argues that "this expression provides no information about the baptism of children or infants."[11] However he admits that Joachim Jeremias believes otherwise. It must also be clarified that Conzelmann is not denying the salvation of other members on account of the faith of the head of the family. He simply doesn't assent to the idea that children were also included in the οικος that received baptism, which makes his mention in this category a bit haphazard also. David J. Williams, though, writes on Acts 10:48, "The subjects of this baptism were Cornelius and the 'large gathering' assembled by him to hear Peter, including, we may suppose, 'all his family', which may have included children. That the whole family and even the whole household (servants, etc.) should be baptized with the head of the house would have been a natural assumption in that society and as much a mark of family solidarity as of their own faith.[12] Commenting later on Acts 16:31–32, he adds "The missionaries assured him, moreover, that not only he but his whole family could be saved, though this should not be taken to mean that his faith was sufficient for their salvation also. They too would have to believe."[13] George Eldon Ladd on his part declares,

> The question of baptism of infants cannot be settled on the basis of exegetical data in Acts but only on theological grounds. The promise in Acts 2:39 need not mean that children are to be baptized; the promise may mean no more than that the gospel is a blessing not only for the present generation but to their descendants as well– not only to people in Jerusalem but also to those of distant lands– and is analogous to "your sons and daughters" in 2:17. The "children" are limited by the following phrase, "every one whom the Lord our God calls to him." The references to the baptism of households (11:14; 16:15, 31; 18:8) may refer to the "wife, children, servants and relatives living in the house," but they may equally well designate only those of

[11] Hans Conselmann, *Acts of the Apostles,* trans. James Limburg, A. Thomas Kraabel, and Donald H. Juel (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1987), 130.

[12] David J. Williams, *New International Biblical Commentary Acts* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson 1985), 197.

[13] Williams, *Acts,* 290.

> mature age who confessed their faith in Christ. It is not certain that such passages mean that the faith of the head of the household sufficed for his children anymore than it did for his relatives and slaves.[14]

More strongly William Neil Affirms, "Baptism would not take place until Paul has been satisfied that what had begun as superstitious fear ended as genuine Christian Faith. Not only is it unlikely that baptism would be a perfunctory formality, but we may assume that the jailer's family were not included simply because they formed part of his household."[15] Even more strongly Horton contends, "By this Paul did not mean that the jailer's household would be saved simply because the jailer was. Paul wanted the jailer to know, however, that the offer was not limited to him, but the same kind of faith would bring salvation to all who believed."[16] Then he goes on to denounce those who think otherwise, but his own argument seems more of a conjecture;

> Some writers try to use this passage as an argument for infant baptism since the entire household was baptized in water. But when we examine the passage more carefully it is easy to see that everyone in the household heard the Word of God, everyone believed, and everyone was full of joy. Clearly, no infants were included. It is possible that the jailer had no small children. He was actually the "governor" of the prison and was probably an older man before being appointed to this position. It is probable too that Roman custom would not consider babies or small children as part of the household until they reached a certain age.[17]

Commenting on Luke 19:9, Hendriksen says, without excluding the necessity of faith for all,

> To his home, apparently not just to one individual in that home. The covenant is still in effect. See Gen. 17:7– 9; 18:19; Ps 103:17, 18; Luke 1:72–75; Acts 2:38, 39. As is clear from all these passages, this by no means excludes the necessity of living faith

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[14] George Eldon Ladd, *Theology of the New Testament*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1993), 387.

[15] William Neil, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Greenwood, SC: Attic), 185.

[16] Stanley M. Horton, *The Book of Acts* (Springfield, MO: Gospel, 1981), 197.

[17] Horton, *Acts*, 198.

> on the part of the children. It very definitely requires such faith on the part of all who have reached the years of discretion.[18]

Polhill is even bolder, when he writes, with regards to the Lydia section, "There is no evidence whatever that this included infants, and it cannot be used in support of infant baptism. Previous references to Cornelius's household indicate that those who were baptized both heard and believed the message (10:44; 11:4, 17). Throughout Acts baptism is based on personal faith and commitment, and there is no reason to see otherwise in the household baptisms."[19] He adds, referring to the jailer's pericope, "Here Luke made explicit what was implicit in the Lydia story: the whole household heard the gospel proclaimed. There was no "proxy" faith. The whole family came to faith in God (v. 34)."[20] Barrett also is of the same opinion; on οικος he writes, "It would be difficult to maintain that the word here includes infants, since not only were οι' αυτου απαντες baptized (v. 33), all heard the word of the Lord spoken by Paul and Silas (v. 32) and as a result the whole household rejoiced (ηγαλλιασατο πανοικει).[21] But, this is more of an argument from silence with no effort to find out the likelihood of children being part of the celebration.

The Inclusive Position

John Chrysostom, one of the church fathers, delivering a homily on this text comments, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household. This especially draws men, that their household too will be saved."[22] In fact the church father seems to see no

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[18] William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary Exposition of the Gospel according to Luke* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), 857.

[19] John B. Polhill, *Acts* New American Commentary, vol. 26 (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1992), 350.

[20] Polhill, *Acts*, 356.

[21] C. K. Barrett, *A Critical Commentary on The Acts of the Apostles* vol. 2, *Introduction and Commentary on Acts XV–XXVIII* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), 797–98.

[22] Francis Martin, ed. *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament* V, gen. ed., Thomas C. Oden (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 208.

need to further explain how the household of the jailer was saved together with him. It seemed obvious to him and his audience that his believing in the Lord Jesus and subsequent salvation entailed that of his household. That children were not excluded can be drawn from the short comment he makes that the promise of salvation to the whole household is particularly appealing to men. The gender specification is due once again to the spiritual responsibility that is laid upon a man in his home and the role he must play for the welfare of those under his care. That God would grant salvation to the household on account of the man's engagement to follow Jesus is certainly recognition of his good management of his household. This is not to say everyone was drawn against their will, rather that the loyalty of the members is presumed; it is up to the dissentient to express their refusal to follow the head's leadership. Barnes also speaks strongly in favor of the inclusive view; he writes,

> Whether they believed before they were baptized or after is not declared. But the whole narrative would lead us to suppose that, as soon as the jailer believed, he and all his family were baptized. It is subsequently added that they believed also. The joy arose from the fact that they all believed the gospel; the baptism appears to have been performed on account of the faith of the head of the family.[23]

If Barnes' position was discarded as marginal, a few years later a well-established scholar, Alan Richardson, made an avant-gardist statement in 1958. "There is no place for our modern individualism in biblical thinking."[24] For him, "when the head of the household took a decisive step, he committed every member of his 'house' (οικος); he was a 'representative man', a kind of inclusive personality, and what happened to him happened to all. . . . The NT principle of representative faith is established."[25] What Richardson perceived then unfortunately did not

[23] A. Barnes, *Notes on the New Testament Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1953), 248.

[24] Alan Richardson, *An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958), 358.

[25] Richardson, *Introduction*, 358.

retain the attention of many, and only a handful of scholars followed in his footsteps. Parker, writing in 1966, affirms, "As with Lydia (verse 15), so with the jailer, their households were baptized with them. The household was regarded as a unit. 'Crispus… with all his household' became believers 'in the Lord' at Corinth (18:8). The company at Cornelius' house similarly received a mass baptism (10:48)."[26] Of the same opinion is Ernst Haenchen who writes, commenting on verse 31, "Included in the salvation is the entire οικος, family and servants."[27] Although he does not expand, he is here making an important statement. The question that remains is whether he would be willing to assert that the family and servants were included on account of the head of the household's faith.

In Lutheran circles, Robert H. Smith, writing in 1970, treats the family like a unit, as did J. W. Parker who wrote, "He received the genuinely Pauline answer that faith alone is the way to salvation for him and all his house. . . . And then the jailer and his house were renewed and washed in baptism."[28] Though he never defines what is meant by house, in connection with the conversion of Lydia and her household he affirms, "Without further ado Lydia was 'baptised with her household,' an expression which seems to indicate the presence of children and even infants (Josh. 2:12–3; 6:17–21) but may indicate her slaves and dependents. (10:7; 6:14; 16:15)"[29]

With the rise of critical methodologies, interest shifted to questions of genre, authenticity/reliability, or the unity of Luke-Acts. In Evangelical circles Acts did not garner

[26] J. W. Packer, *Acts of the Apostles, Commentary by* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1966), 138.

[27] Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles, a Commentary by* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1965), 497–98.

[28] Robert H. Smith, *Concordia Commentary: Acts* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1970), 250.

[29] Smith, *Acts*, 246.

much interest either, dubbed as it was as a 'narrative-not-fit-for-formulating-doctrine' book. Only evangelists and missionaries delighted in the evangelistic discourses as ready materials for their kerygmatic ministries, as well as Pentecostals in search of a biblical foundation to their pneumatology.

Scholars of the Last Two Decades

In the last two or three decades, thanks to the works of the likes of Jerome Neyrey and Bruce J. Malina, anthropologists and archeologists who rediscovered that first century personality was "dyadic,"[30] interest was rekindled in the family dynamics of the New Testament in general, and in the household narratives of Luke-Acts in particular. Thus, scholars have addressed the text of Act 16:25–34 or similar passages in different ways. Some show awareness or take into account the new developments in social sciences, especially anthropology and archeology, allowing them to inform their interpretations. Others simply gloss over the intricate issues raised by the text, thus betraying the difficulty there is to formulate a definite answer to these issues. Still others, comfortable with the beaten paths, stick more closely to their doctrinal commitments.

Scholars Who Avoid the Issue

Arthur A. Just could be said to belong to the first category, i.e. those who avoid the issue of corporate salvation altogether. In his commentary on the gospel of Luke, Just rightly defines οικω as "the people of his household."[31] A simple replacement of household with "people of the house" would yield the following translation of Jesus' pronouncement in verse 9, "Today

[30] Jerome H. Neyrey, ed., *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 72.

[31] Arthur A. Just, *Luke 9:51–24:53* Concordia Commentary (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1997), 716.

salvation happened to the people of this house, since he also is a son of Abraham." A powerful declaration indeed! However, in the ensuing commentary, Just completely abandons the household motif in Jesus' declaration, and focuses only on the salvation of the tax-collector. The household disappears from his radar. One would expect that as a Lutheran, and with the backing of social sciences, Just would further Smith's position, but he misses out completely on the opportunity to drive home Luther's doctrine of salvation by grace through faith, or that of divine monergism. He does not address the question of why in Luke salvation is bestowed sometimes even to people on account of the faith of those who brought them, sometimes out of pure grace in the absence of any obvious sign of faith, except the helplessness of the party involved.

Scholars Who Allow the Social Context to Inform Their Reading

Chalmer E. Faw, who is a member of the Church of the Brethren and a former missionary in Nigeria, shows awareness of the different ways in which people in non-western parts of the world respond to the gospel. In contrast with the title of his commentary series, i.e. *Believers Church Bible Commentary*, Faw surprises the reader by saying about the Lydia periscope, "Her *household,* also was *baptized,* would be family members, domestic servants, and/or business associates."[32] One must not however be mistaken to think that he is affirming the salvation of the household on account of the head of that household. Faw does distinguish "group conversion"[33] from people movements. Speaking about the jailer he writes, "Though he does not know the Christian meaning of salvation, these evangelists see that he is ready for that experience and answer that he must *believe on the Lord Jesus*, he and his whole *household* (16:31)."[34] Thus,

[32] Chalmer E. Faw, *Believers Church Bible Commentary: Acts* (Scottdale, PA: Herald, 1993), 183.

[33] Faw, *Acts*, 183.

[34] Faw, *Acts*, 186.

faith is made the condition which the jailer must fulfill, as well as his whole family, in order to be saved.

Larkin is also one theologian who attempts to draw on the implications of the household conversion narratives for mission; in his commentary on Acts published in 1995, though he recognizes what he calls multi-individual conversion, he nevertheless cautions in regards to the conversion of entire households in these terms. "[T]oday we must be ever mindful of the strategic importance of social networks for the rapid spread of the gospel, for multi-individual household conversions can snowball into people movements."[35]

A few years later Ajith Fernando, while stressing household conversions as a positive strategy for missions, affirms almost the same thing as Faw by distinguishing between "multi-individual" conversion and "people movements."[36] For him group conversion is an occasion where a number of people consult together to embrace Christianity, while a people movement is a social action where one, the big man (to use the anthropological concept), decides for the group. Fernando, who writes for the Application Bible Commentary series, in fact does a good job of making an application of the lessons or principles he identifies in the text, unlike many who consider their job as exegetes done when they have unpacked the meaning from the text. Contra Waskom-Pickett argues that "This is . . . not mass conversion, where individuals do not have a will of their own. It is the conversion of all the members of a social unit (a household)."[37] Moreover he suggests, "In whatever culture one ministers, when working with non-Christians it

[35] William J. Larkin Jr. *Acts*, IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 237.

[36] Ajith Fernando, *The NIV Application Commentary: Acts* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 451.

[37] Fernando, *Acts*, 448.

is always helpful to take into account the wider contacts of the persons we reach."[38] However, I believe Fernando's reading skews his doctrinal commitment more than anything; he introduces a distinction that upon close scrutiny will not stand. It is precisely because the members of the family have no say that there is a group conversion. It is not as though they consulted one another and came up with the decision to convert. It is likely that the head of the household took the lead and everyone else followed suit. As Vincent Donovan explains in his experience of how people responded to the gospel in Eastern Africa, the distinction is oftentimes blurred in practice.[39] Donovan tells of a people group which, after hearing the message of the gospel for some time, deliberated among themselves whether they should embrace Christianity. But, it is clear that not all were called in for the deliberation. Women and children awaited the conclusion the elders or the men of the community reached, and, in their role as obedient wives and children, followed the lead of their men. Should obedience in this case be equated with believing? If so, then the distinction between group conversion and people movement becomes obsolete altogether.

David L. Matson is another scholar whose work helps us understand the household conversion narratives in Luke-Acts. In his work, *Household Conversion Narratives in Acts: Pattern and Interpretation*,[40] he stresses the literary importance of household conversion in the Lukan corpus. His main argument is that the mission of the Seventy-two functions as the *Modus operandi* of the Jesus movement and of the Household Conversion narrative in Acts, that is to say, the disciples and then the Apostles are sent to the houses, not simply to individuals. His

[38] Fernando, *Acts*, 451.

[39] Vincent Donovan, *Christianity Rediscovered* twenty-fifth anniversary edition (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2003).

[40] David L. Matson, *Household Conversion Narratives in Acts: Pattern and Interpretation*, JSNT Supplement Series 123 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996), 15.

conclusions are key to formulating a new mission strategy that takes the household as both the locus and target of gospel proclamation. But, as mentioned earlier, his work is more interested in the literary function of the household conversion narrative in Luke's organization of his material. He affirms in that regard that the mission of the 72 [see note above] is a creation of Luke.[41] A similar concern transpires in the article written by Adriana Destro and Mauro Pesce "[is this formatting correct?]Fathers and Householders in the Jesus Movement: The Perspective of the Gospel of Luke." Their essential argument is that Jesus' call to become an itinerant disciple is addressed to individuals to join a free association which may conflict with household dynamics, because these are not voluntary associations. Yet, Jesus turns to households when he is in need of hospitality. Thus, they see a dialectic and complementary function of households and individuals in the Jesus Movement.[42] Yet, Destro and Pesce also fail to ask the essential question of why Jesus sends the householders back to their families and accepts individual followers as disciples.

Chance, quoting Malina in his commentary on Acts, says,

> Acts 16:31–32 (cf. 16:14–15) speaks of whole households being baptized. Christians who view baptism as a personal and individual response of faith to the gospel might be troubled by statements that seem to indicate that the whole household can be saved based solely on the response of the head of that household (cf. 16: 14b–15a, 31). To be sure, v. 32 makes clear that Paul and Silas spoke the Word of the Lord to all who were in the jailer's house, allowing for the conclusion that baptism only followed personal confession.
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> While one likely can assume that confession of some sort preceded baptism, modern readers still must not assume that individualistic notions of personality and identity prevailed in the ancient world. Ancients had a more collectivist understanding of personality and identity. That is, persons in antiquity tended to find their identity and personality in the context of the larger significant groups in which persons were embedded. The most significant such group would be the kinship group, and especially the immediate household of which one was a part. Members of the household would likely take their "cues" even of *voluntary* religious identification

[41] Matson, *Household Conversion*, 31.

[42] Adriana Destro and Mauro Pesce, "Fathers and Householders in the Jesus Movement: The Perspective of the Gospel of Luke," *Biblical Interpretation* 11, no. 2 (2003): 214–16.

> from the head of the household, which was usually male (cf 16:31–33), but could also be female (cf. 16:14–15). Texts within the gospel tradition do indicate, however, that the gospel message could divide families (see Matt 10:34–39 ‖ Luke 12:51–53; 14:26; Matt 19:29 ‖. Mark 10:29; cf. Matt 12:46–50 ‖ Mark 3:31–35 ‖ Luke 8:19–21).[43]

Chance's commentary is helpful in that it provides these background vignettes that make for an informed reading of the text.

Malina himself, when writing in 2008 with Pilch, reinforces his previous opinion. Malina and Pilch put the vast amount knowledge the former has on the New Testament world, especially the background of Luke-Acts, to good use in determining why the people in the narrative acted the way they did. In other words, they fill in some of the cultural blanks with which every modern reader of ancient texts is confronted. In their *Social-Science Commentary on the Book of Acts* they write regarding the Lydia pericope, "The fact that Lydia's entire household submits to baptism is typical of collectivistic societies (see Josh. 24:14–15; also Acts 16:33). Everyone acts with a view toward harmony and promoting the common good. Individual choices and preferences simply do not factor into consideration."[44] Speaking later on the episode of the Philippian jailer, they elaborate further,

> In these contexts where entire households were baptized, some have wondered whether children were included. It would seem that those baptized had to be capable of attentively listening to and understanding Paul's instruction. Scholars think this would exclude children. On the other hand, while individuals were baptized, in collectivistic societies children were part and parcel of their parents and the whole collectivistic ingroup—hence the baptism of a family's adults sufficed for the ingroup children as well.[45]

That is to say, in Malina's view, it was not necessary for children to be baptized, for their personality is contained in that of the adults in the family, thus they are baptized sort of by

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[43] J. Bradley Chance, *Acts*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2007), 283.

[44] Bruce J. Malina and John J. Pilch, *Social-Science Commentary on the Book of Acts* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2008), 117.

[45] Malina and Pilch, *Acts*, 120.

procuration. The least one could say is that this view undercuts the long held view that baptism of children could be traced back in the primitive church. However, it might be that Malina is mistaken in his last point, or simply betraying his own bent toward rejection of infant baptism. Otherwise, how could one explain the appearance later on of infant baptism in the primitive church?

A balanced analysis can be found under the pen of the Lutheran scholar M. A. Powell. With two helpful tables on Luke and Acts, Powell demonstrates that for Luke, salvation is multi-faceted and is a gift from God, offered to all, received sometimes by one's own faith, or by another's faith, or given even in cases where there is no evidence of faith, by pure grace.[46] Powell's view does justice to Luke's theology and provides the starting point to the proposal I am making in this research: it is congruent with scripture and the Lutheran doctrine to affirm that salvation can be corporate, that is, that the faith of one person can avail for the salvation of many under his care.

Scholars Who Are Determined by Doctrinal Positions

Dunn, in his 1995 commentary on the book of Acts affirms concerning verses 32–34, "The offer/promise of salvation to the jailor was to 'you and your household' (16:31). The word was spoken to 'all in his house' (16:32). He was baptized forthwith 'all of his' (16:33). And he thereafter 'rejoiced with all his household' (16:34)." Then, he stumbles over the question of who was included. "This is the third household baptism in Acts (see Acts 16:15) and it is equally unclear whether household slaves and other adults alone are in view or also children (as also 18:8)."[47] This probably speaks more to his qualms about infant baptism than about who was or

[46] Mark Allan Powell, "Salvation in Luke-Acts," *Word & World* 12**,** no. 1 **(**Winter 1992): 6–7.

[47] James D. G. Dunn *The Acts of the Apostles* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996), 223.

was not part of his household.

Robert W. Wall, who holds a prominent position, writes,

> Luke resists the divorce between bodily and religious species of salvation: the God who saves the jailer from the executioner's sword is the same God who forgives him and his household of their sins. In fact, conversion often occurs at the intersection of the two wants, when the need for healing or physical rescue occasions the need to hear the gospel appeal, "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved" (16:31 NRSV).[48]

Thus, Wall is important to this research in that he brings to light the multidimensional nature of salvation in Luke. Yet, Wall is oblivious to the importance and redundancy of the household theme, except to note that "The repetition of 'household' (*oikos*) both in Paul's gospel presentation and then again in Luke's following summary (16:32) recalls the images of 're-housed' Israel from Amos's prophecy to remind the reader that God has granted Gentiles a share of Israel's blessings (see 15:13–1 91 [sic])."[49]

Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland affirm, "To judge by their actions, the jailer and his family believed in Christ and received the Holy Spirit. The jailer washed the wounds of Paul and Silas, probably at a well in the prison courtyard—and probably there, too, he and his family were baptized. Then he brought the missionaries into his home and fed them. And the 'whole family,' Luke tells us, 'was filled with joy, because [they] had come to believe in God.'"[50] One can observe that Longman and Garland get around the question of corporate faith and salvation by reworking the text and translating the singular as plural. But, that rendering raises other problems.[51] Longman and Garlan are the prototype of scholars who do away too

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[48] Robert W. Wall, *The New Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2002), 10:235.

[49] Wall, *New Interpreter's Bible*, 10:234.

[50] Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, eds.; *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 10: 970.

[51] The majority of modern scholars connect the family with the rejoicing, not the believing. See slso Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids:

easily with the grammar and syntax of the text. They simply reword it in the terms that suit their predetermined conclusions. However, in his own commentary on Luke, Garland seems to distance himself from the above observation; he writes, making a more straightforward affirmation, "Zacchaeus's entire household would have been assumed to be implicated in his guilt (see Josh. 7) and is also included in his salvation (see Acts 10:2; 11:14; 16:15, 31)."[52]

Thus, it appears from the above survey that the vast majority of scholars say these passages simply affirm the availability of salvation to the whole family, provided each member believes for themselves. Others simply choose not to make a theological opinion based on these texts. A minority only dare say that the passages deal with group conversion or people movement. A still smaller group affirm that such passages posit that members of a household are saved on account of the faith of the householder.

Missiologists on Acts 16:25–34

In the field of mission, theologians of the evangelical persuasion have struggled with such passages in light of their commitment to the principle of personal faith and salvation so dear to Evangelicalism.[53] Thus, there is a dearth of specific data regarding the text under consideration. There are, however, elements that can be gleaned from a number of missiologists and missionaries.

Waskom J. Picket is the first to draw attention to mass conversion when, as a missionary in India in the 1930s, he came face to face with a new method of receiving the gospel message found among the Indians. This experience would lead him to write *Christian Mass Movements in*

Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 631–32.

[52] David E. Galand, *Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Luke*, ed. Clinton E. Arnold (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 750.

[53] Ed Stetzer, "'Mission' Defined and Described" in *Missionshift*, 15.

India.[54] In this book he alerts churches and scholars on the phenomenon of a mass of people embracing together the Christian faith, unlike anything he had thus far experienced. Though he is a Methodist bishop, Pickett's ideas will be picked up by his pupil McGavran (Disciples of Christ's Church) who develops them into what is now known as the Church Growth Movement. The Church Growth Movement, despite all the critiques leveled against it, deeply influenced missions in the twentieth century. Though McGavran drew many of his principles from Scripture, he also leaned heavily on social sciences and marketing strategies to ensure exponential increases in Church attendance in many parts of the world. Yet, McGavran did not at all addressing the issue of whether Scripture taught household salvation which, I would think, should be the starting point of the discussion regarding mass conversion or people movement in Christianity. In the late 1970s, Vincent Donovan took the scholarly community by storm with the initial publication of his book, *Christianity Rediscovered.*[55] In this book Donovan brings home to his North American audience the challenging "We believe"[56] that he encountered in East Africa, a collective response to the gospel message, instead of the traditional "I believe" he was accustomed to.

Since then missiologists were forced into taking a fresh look at what salvation means and "who can be saved?" as Terrance Tiessen's book title indicates. In that regards, Tiessen, for example, endorses the corporate nature of salvation, yet, like most evangelicals, wrestles with the question of personal faith or personal response to the gospel.[57] Though his work deals with the

[54] J. Waskom Pickett, *Christian Mass Movements in India* (Lucknow, India: Lucknow, 1933); Donald McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth,* 3rd ed., (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990).

[55] Vincent J. Donovan, *Christianity Rediscovered,* (Chicago: Fides, 1978).

[56] Donovan, *Christianity Rediscovered,* 61.

[57] Terrance L. Tiessen, *Who Can be Saved: Reassessing Salvation in Christ and World Religions* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 23.

larger question of who can be saved, Tiessen is aware of how context makes the question take on a new dimension. As illustration he narrates how theologians gathered to discuss the very topic were comfortable in affirming that those who died without hearing the gospel were lost, until the question was applied to children. There and then only did they begin to nuance their responses. The same can be said about Bryan Stone. He writes regarding conversion to the Christian Faith, "[W]e would be mistaken to think of faith as a simple act of individual will. Faith is instead a disposition formed over time and handed on in community. This does not mean that faith is passed along automatically from one generation to the next or that freedom is absent in the passing along of faith; but the freedom involved in coming to faith is not that of the individual autonomous self of modernity."[58] Stone is by no means endorsing corporate or household salvation, but he is pointing out the overlooked truth that faith and conversion necessitates a group dynamic, thus he concludes that "[I]ncorporation into the church precedes conversion—or rather is intrinsic to conversion—for it is only by being made part of a community of language and practice that we begin both to recognize the need for the kind of transformation that Christ has to offer and to discover the resources for moving toward it."[59] However limited, Stone's insight represents a further step towards the realization of the corporate character of salvation. In his appraisal of conversion he is also backed by social sciences.[60]

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[58] Bryan Stone, *Evangelism after Christendom: the Theology and Practice of Christian Witness* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2007), 261–62.

[59] Stone, *Evangelism after Christendom*, 263.

[60] Stefano Federici, Pierluigi Caddeo, and Francesco Valerio Tommasi speak of a community of universally recognizable elements that form that "universal grammar" of the "religious man," the effect of which is, "The existence of these cognitive structures that appear innate to us may give us reasons for the question why the belief in a supreme being is found in all cultures. Each human being is well prepared in advance to believe in the possibility that an animated being may be the cause of the existence of all things: in this sense we are born as believers already—at the most we run the risk of dying as atheists. The conversion process, then, does not so much open the mind to the possibility of accepting a metaphysical causality as reinforce it," "A Cognitive Psychology Perspective on Religious Conversion as Told in the Gospels" in *Conversion in the Age of Pluralism*, ed. Guiseppe Giordan (Boston: Brill, 2009), 290, 293.

On the issue of the household as the locus of salvation, Runyon rightly observes that "In the early church, evangelism usually took place in three settings: public evangelism, personal evangelism (one-on-one witnessing situations), and household evangelism," and claims that in his view, household evangelism "is still the most important method or strategy available to laymen today,"[61] and I would add, to clergy as well.

An area where missionaries and missiologists will be helpful to this research is the area of contextualization. In that regard, David J. Bosch's seminal work *Transforming Mission*[62] gives a thorough *tour d'horizon* of the issues. Of particular interest are his treatments of Luke-Acts where he defines salvation according to Luke and gives a summary of Luke's missionary paradigm. Bosch rebuts those who claim that salvation in Luke is different than what it is in Acts. "There is in the final analysis, therefore, no irreconcilable discrepancy between the gospel of Luke and Acts (although the tension between the emphases of the two volumes should not be denied). In both salvation is tied to the person of Jesus."[63] And, when Bosch gives the Lukan Missionary Paradigm, he does not fail to summarize what salvation is for the author of Luke-Acts. "With Scheffler (1988:57–108), one could say that, for Luke, salvation actually had *six* dimensions: economic, social, political, physical, psychological, and spiritual."[64] Thus, Bosch makes obsolete the dualistic understanding of salvation (temporal-eternal, material-spiritual). Though the distinction may be helpful sometimes, ultimately drawing a wedge between temporal-eschatological and material-spiritual oftentimes proves reductionist and misleading.

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[61] Ronald D. Runyon, "Principles and Methods of Household Evangelism" in *Vital Missions Issues: Examining Challenges and Changes in World Evangelism*, ed. Roy B. Zuck (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1998), 218.

[62] David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 20th anniv. ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2011).

[63] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 108.

[64] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 119.

Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, and Paul G. Hiebert are three important figures in the discussion over the issue of contextualization of the gospel. Bevans and Schroeder document the changes in the theology and practice of missions throughout the ages, with some constants kept in every epoch.[65] As for Hiebert, he offers the anthropologist's insight on culture around the world in order to enlighten the missionary. Both offer a model of contextualization. They suggest that flexibility must be allowed in the appropriation of the gospel by a new culture, and the views of the mother church should not simply be imposed, lest the new church fails to appropriate the message for itself. Unfortunately, although they have encountered many societies in which group commitment is very strong, few of these scholars are willing to formulate household salvation as a viable contribution from Luke for the understanding of how salvation happens in practice. Many, hiding behind the idea of the sovereignty of God, shun the very idea of saying that such and such are saved.

Andrew Walls is without a doubt one of the most prolific and most knowledgeable scholars on African Christianity from the west. He has written extensively and spent a long time as a missionary in Africa. Two of his books are of great interest for this research. In *The Cross-cultural Process in Christian History*, Walls argues that "Christian expansion is serial," that is, the "centre of gravity of Christianity is subject to periodic shifts."[66] This is a prelude to his major argument in the book, that Christianity's center is shifting southward, especially to the African continent. Furthermore, Walls offers three test of Christian expansion, the first being the "Church test." For him, "it is doubtful whether the New Testament provides a single example of an

[65] Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Constants in Context*, American Society of Misssiology 30 (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004).

[66] Andrew F. Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission and Appropriation of Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2002), 30.

individual convert, a 'saved individual,' left to plough his lonely furrow without family or congregation. The influence of Jesus not only produces group response; it works by means of groups, and is expressed in groups."[67] In *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, Walls posits that "the divine saving activity can be understood in terms of translation. Divinity is translated into humanity, but into *specific* humanity, at home in specific segments of social reality."[68] If so, would there remain any "historic" Christian message? For Walls, the Christian message weaves through history by joggling with two principles, that of "indigenizing" and that of "Pilgrim."[69] That is to say, the Gospel must be made at home in every culture or context, but it must also challenge the new context or culture, opening it up to realities outside of it. Walls is key in understanding the necessity of contextualization, not as a sign of respect to the target culture, but as an emulation of the divine model of incarnation. One could lay on him the charge of holding a totally anthropocentric view of Christianity, but even so that would be a refreshing new breath amidst the modern totalizing attitude of so many western theologians, who leave little breathing room for non-western viewpoints. It must be stated to his credit that Walls does wholeheartedly embrace the idea of mission as being God-initiated in the Incarnation.

The Dissertation in the Context of Current Scholarship

The above survey leads us to a number of observations: first, most biblical scholars tend to expound the meaning of the text without much consideration as to how that meaning might apply in practice. Others cannot go past their doctrinal commitments, and would rather bend the text to justify their preconceived position. Second, missionaries and missiologists on the other hand, try

[67] Walls, *Cross-Cultural Process*, 10.

[68] Andrew. F. Walls, *The Missionary Movment in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996), xvii.

[69] Walls, *Missionary Movement*, 7–8.

their best to conform to the official teachings of their church, though confronted with a different reality on the ground. Those who wrestle with that reality, like Vincent Donovan or J. Waskom-Pickett, usually fail to develop their new approach from a biblical standpoint; they are content to integrate, with the help of disciplines like anthropology, cultural practices that do not fit their own religious and cultural map. They call for contextualization of the Christian message. Thus, one is confronted with the choice of either following the biblical scholars, or giving more room to social sciences. This need not be.

The present dissertation, though addressed primarily to the West African audience, intends to bridge the gap between exegesis and missiology; thus, it reviews the readings hitherto offered concerning the household narratives of Luke-Acts by biblical scholars, and how these readings have translated into the mission field. This writer is convinced that household salvation, as expressed in Lukan thought, has played a key role in the expansion of the Christian Faith, and has today the potential to transform missiology and theology in general in a significant way. Therefore, this research will address the question whether the readings brought to Africa by missionaries and African scholars espousing the prevailing interpretations of their mentors in western academies are congruent both with the original hearers' understanding, and with the context of West Africa. The assumption is that these readings, in their vast majority, do not give due attention to the cultural context in which these narratives developed, nor do they properly contextualize the message to the West African audience. I will use at least two types of criteria to evaluate these readings: the exegetical failure and the missiological mishap.

First, exegetically, there is a failure to rightly gauge the thrust of the jailer's question. Fitzmyer is an example of that failure, with his concepts of "classic question" and "classic answer." That question becomes for him a reified formula on the lips of seekers. Most scholars

with like-minded views tend to be oblivious to the peculiarity of the jailer's situation, his anguished question, and of the response offered him. Thus, they lose sight of the urgency of the situation he finds himself in, namely that he is faced with the perspective of God's judgment, though he had just escaped that of the Roman officials. However, many scholars do recognize that the question the jailer asks stems from a superstitious fear that he had done wrong to the messengers of God, and therefore stands guilty before this God who just showed his might through the earthquake. Smith is amongst that category. For him, "The Jailer's fear of the earthly was exchanged for fear of the heavenly, and he cast himself at the feet of Paul and Silas."[70] As hinted by Paul's answer to the distraught jailer, the man was not afraid for his life alone, but for that of his entire household. With corporate responsibility comes also corporate guilt and punishment. If the jailer thought he had become guilty of opposing God and his ambassadors, then this guilt extended to his family too. Whatever judgment would befall him, that same judgment would also befall the other members of his family.

The failure to measure the scope of the jailer's worries leads to underestimating the kind of response that would soothe his angst. Thus the view of those who insist that everyone must believe makes Paul's response to be, not the solution to his worry, but the condition he must fulfill, and his family as well, in order to be saved. Such a rendering makes the gospel proclamation into a legalistic demand, and a sort of man's counter-offer in order to benefit God's salvation. Using a reified concept of salvation, they need no longer ask the basic logical question, from what does the rest of the family need to be saved that they too must believe? The flow of the narrative requires that from whatever the jailer needed to be saved, his family needed the same. To put it in Lutheran jargon, the law has already done its job of threatening and

[70] Smith, *Acts*, 250.

condemning the man and his family. Now he is ready to hear nothing but the gospel. And, it would not occur to Paul to lay before the man whose life he just saved a law that would only crush him and his family all the more. So, Paul's declaration cannot be anything but the sweet gospel that says, "The solution is Jesus." As so many Evangelical Christians love to say, "believe." The imperative here is not a command, but the gracious invitation to accept the answer to his distress. As will become clear in this study, Luke's salvation is a gracious gift emanating from God as a response to humans' deepest trouble, not at all a bargaining chip.

Moreover, some exegetes abuse the versatility of the Greek language and change the structure of the text to suit their own pre-established conclusions. Horton, for example, insists that "everyone in the house had to believe." Or, Longman and Garland who write, "the whole family was filled with joy because [they] had come to believe in God." These scholars seem to be backed by Wallace, who identifies the construction at Acts 16:31 as a case of compound subject.[71] Yet, one need not bow too quickly to Wallace's expertise on the matter. Unlike Wallace, A. T. Robertson, when expounding on compound subjects, does not cite Acts 16:31 as a case in point. It seems that the more important issue here is the function of the conjunction και between the sentence in the imperative and the one in the future. It also appears in Acts 2:38 in response to a similar question that was posed in Acts 16:30. It functions to express the scope of what happens as a result of trusting in Jesus Christ. Thus, in Acts 2:38–39 Peter explains that the promise of forgiveness and of the gift of the Holy Spirit is "for you and your children, and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God shall call to Himself" (Act 2:39 NAS). Against Wallace who limits the cases of result clause to those introduced by the conjunctions w[ste(w`j(

[71] Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 402.

o[ti(and less frequently i[na[72] but asserts that the two subjects constitute a compound subject, it can be argued that the first και introduces a result clause (cf. Frieberg's Lexicon), and the second is a logical connector in the "ascensive" category,[73] the compound subject applying only to the second verb. Verse 31 would read thus: "Believe on the Lord Jesus, so you will be saved, even your family." Moreover, the genitive of possession in verse 33 reinforces the corporate nature of what is taking place: as the jailer believes, so believes his entire household. As he is baptized, so are all who belong to him. The rejoicing of verse 35 that he has believed in God with all his family is more an indication that there were no renegades than that all had made a personal confession of faith in Jesus. All of this indicates that syntax alone cannot solve the issue at stake. The logic of the thought flow, embedded in the worldview of the time, will help shed some light on the understanding of this verse, thus the need for a background study of the world of Luke-Acts.

Sociologically, these interpretations do not seriously consider the cultural setting in which this narrative arose. If the jailer's question expresses a deep fear for his life and that of his family, it makes sense that Paul's answer will cover those fears. Otherwise, Paul will be answering a question that was never asked. Despite Fitzmyer's assertion that the question is "the classic question of everyone on the threshold of faith," and that the response is the classic formulation of the "basic Christian proclamation,[74] the details of this response are unique in that they correspond to the felt need of the jailer. In other words, such a response establishes the fact that the salvation of an individual in those days could not be imagined in isolation from that of

[72] Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 677.

[73] Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 670–71.

[74] Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 589.

his family. If Malina, Neyrey, Hiebert and Tiessen are right about the more corporate worldview of first century people of the New Testament, it should be expected that this translates into a group dynamic than has not been recognized so far. Scripture speaks of personal salvation or personal responsibility, but always with reference to an audience made up of adults. However, these adults never stand alone unless they have experienced a drastic loss of all their extended family members. It sounds repulsive to the modern man's ear to speak of people who have no separate status of their own, or who belong to someone, and therefore have no say in many of the decisions that affect their lives. But, archeologists and anthropologists tell us this has been the case of slaves, women, and children who have not attained their majority. Some of the works on first century families and households are listed below.[75] Some categories of people within a household did not have a say in some of the domestic decisions, including the spiritual direction of the family. Should they choose to go against the view of their householder, they would show an act of rebellion; they would become renegades.

Second, missionaries for the most part were interested in reduplicating Christians that resemble in every way, except for their skin color, the model Christian of the west.[76] Missiologists, in the same way, were more concerned with staying in line doctrinally, and called attention only to cultural differences. The common result is that neither Pickett (or McGavran for that matter), nor Donovan gave solid biblical foundation for their new conviction about mass conversion, or the "we believe" response to the gospel message. The effort to take into account

[75] J. D. Cohen, ed. *The Jewish Family in Antiquity*, (Atlanta, GA; Scholars Press, 1993); Suzanne Dixon, *The Roman Family* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1992); *Families in the New Testament World: Households and House Churches*, ed. C. Osieck and Balch D., (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1997); M. MacDonald, and Moxnes, Halvor 'Domestic Space and Families in Early Christianity: Editors' Introduction *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 27, no. 1 (2004): 3–6; Geoffrey S. Nathan, *The Family in Late Antiquity: The Rise and Endurance of Tradition*, (London: Routledge, 2000).

[76] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 297–300.

the unique way non westerners were responding to the gospel was dubbed indigenization in Protestant circles, while in Catholic circles it was enculturation. It was not seen as a genuine biblical response to the good news. Therefore, this study aims at proposing that household salvation, being congruent with the New Testament worldview—because Lukan theology does not constitute an isolated case—provides the biblical foundation for a new missiology that puts the household at the center of outreach efforts. Household salvation expresses the common practice in first century Christianity, with the result of what scholars call the house churches. These became the primary venues where Christianity grew and expanded beyond its initial setting.

Thus, this research argues that readings of such types of passages as Acts 16:25–34 need to incorporate this corporate worldview in order to get the full view of Lukan soteriology and missiology. There is no claim to originality here, for Richardson in his own time had already drawn attention to the corporate mentality of first-century people,[77] and Neyrey and Malina have been, in the past few decades, calling attention to the dyadic nature of first century personality.

The second contribution of this study is to claim that the new appraisal of Luke's soteriology and missiology should impact how missiology is conceived and practiced in the church, particularly in West Africa. It wants to affirm that Waskom-Pickett and his pupil McGavran and Vincent Donovan, for all the shortcomings of their ideas, do have something meaningful to say to us in terms of how we carry out the gospel proclamation and go about planting new churches. Waskom-Pickett drew attention to the unique way the people of India were receiving the gospel. He rightfully observed that people were accepting the gospel message as a group, and not so much as isolated individuals. This discovery led McGavran to formulate

[77] Richardson, *Introduction*, 358.

the principle of the homogeneous unit.[78] Unfortunately McGavran's scale begins one level higher, ignoring the family as the basic homogeneous unit in almost all societies, whether the extended or the nuclear family. Nor did subsequent scholars attempt to capitalize on this principle in order to redefine their missiology. As illustration of this failure, Bosch does a very good job of analyzing Luke's importance in mission study, yet is oblivious to the ubiquitous household motif when it comes to summarizing the Evangelist's missionary paradigm. Such a failure cannot simply be explained as a lack of attention. It betrays the mental framework, or the cultural grid, through which he has processed the data. It would be unthinkable for an African or Latin theologian not to notice the household theme that runs through the Lukan corpus. It is then the assertion of this study that the most basic homogeneous unit is not the clan, the tribe, or the people group, but the family, which in the first century was extended to include servants, paid workers, and extended kin. It is at this level that we need to apply the principle of the homogeneous unit. The larger groups are only an extension of this basic unit.

A new mission strategy growing out of this appraisal and taking into account the worldview of West Africa suggests that the family become the primary locus and target of the gospel proclamation, at least in pioneer outreach. This approach will center on the head of the household as the "representative of" or the spokesperson for his family. Such an approach will employ a user-friendly method to share the gospel, thus avoiding the hurdles of confrontational evangelism. As Neyrey so rightly suggests, shame is a very strong concept in most cultures.[79] Any action that berates a household head, especially in the presence of his wife and children, is particularly shameful and can lead to overt opposition in order to restore the affront. Thus people

[78] McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth,* 95.

[79] Neyrey, *Social World or Luke-Acts,* 25

who might otherwise receive the gospel will choose to reject it just because conventional civility has been violated. In addition, an "*oiko*-centric" missiology will guaranty that no member falls through the cracks of decision theology. For, if on the one hand we are conscious of the urgency of the situation of the unbeliever, and on the other we know that in every social context there are always those who cannot speak for themselves, it becomes imperative to formulate how this category of people will benefit from the good news of salvation in Christ, if not through those to whose care they are entrusted.

A legitimate question that can be raised is how really different is West African culture is from the rest of the world at this time of globalization. And, if different, is that culture itself not in need of redemption, i.e., shouldn't the missionary attempt to change that worldview in order to make it fitting for the Christian message? Of course, many a missionary of the past century has identified such as their ministry goal among the "heathens."[80] Although Africa has been changing since its contact with the outside world,[81] and especially in recent years with the advent of globalization thanks to the new communication technologies, the cultural matrix of the continent, especially sub-Saharan Africa, remains largely community-oriented. In the last decade, with the democratization process triggered by the collapse of the Eastern Bloc, eastern European people started to return to their former cultural practices. It was as though they were waking up in the midst of globalization. They realized they would completely disintegrate if they

[80] See Bevans and Schroeder, *Constants in Context*, 228–30.

[81] Though D. W. Waruta affirmed in 1994, concerning changes in African marriage and family, that "The impact of the new influences from the West—new religions particularly Christianity; the process of social change within the African countries during this century; the growth of cities; the introduction of monetary economies; the advent of schools and western educational systems; the shift from a predominantly kinship system to individualism and nuclear families — all these factors have drastically altered the value systems of traditional African society." "Marriage and Family in Contemporary African Society: Challenges in Pastoral Counseling" in *Pastoral Care in African Christianity: Challenging Essays in Pastoral Theology*, ed. Douglas W. Waruta and Hannah W. Kinoti (Nairobi, Kenya: Acton Publishers, 1994), 87.

had nothing to hold on to. One aspect of this return is the resurgence of traditional religion, by no means in its pure form, but in a rather acculturated, if not syncretistic form. Nevertheless, this return is accompanied with a rediscovery of local languages and a return to family values that were on the verge of disappearance under the assault of western mass-media and educational systems, one of these values being the acclaimed African solidarity, and its corollary, community. The concept of community begins with the family, albeit the extended family. That worldview expresses itself in the common pursuit of the wellbeing of the group. For all the misrepresentation of the patriarchal system, the patriarch in West Africa is responsible for the wellbeing of all the members of the extended family, clan, or tribe. Anthropologist Paul G. Hiebert has abundantly treated the topic.[82] He consults the adults (generally those who are married, as single people were not given much consideration; as long as they were single they were considered to be lacking maturity) of the community for major decisions that will affect the lives of the members. His spiritual acts are accomplished in behalf of all the members. If a member has committed an offense in the community the patriarch will consult diviners about the proper course of action to cleanse the guilty party and purge the land from the curse such an offense could bring. He is also the intermediary between his group and the ancestors. He must accomplish each year the necessary rituals to please or appease them. Failure to accomplish his duties rightly can bring sickness and death in the family. The weight of his responsibility makes him the guardian and guarantor of the religion of the ancestors. Thus, it is with the utmost care and consideration that he will commit to a change of religion, offending by the same token the ancestors. This explains why he needs a gospel of power greater than that of his ancestors and

[82] Cf. Paul G Hiebert, R. Daniel Shaw, and Tite Tienou. *Understanding Folk Religion* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999).

other evil spirits.

That leads us to another peculiarity of the West African worldview: its cosmogony. Paul G. Hiebert et al call this cosmogony a three-story worldview: there is the visible world constituted by humans, animals, and trees. There is an invisible counterpart to this world, constituted by the living who have crossed the river separating the visible and invisible worlds. Just as there are good and evil people in the visible world, the invisible world is constituted of ancestors and evil and good spirits. The ancestors, who now have access to the secrets of the invisible world, are the best allies of the living. That is why it is important to keep them happy, so they can defend and protect the family. However, in matters of life and death, they have no power over the living. That is the undisputed realm of God, the creator. This is the third level of African cosmogony. No one can stand the decrees of God, though through sacrifices one may ask for his blessings, or make do for any offense.

Of course objections are numerous against such a view, some seemingly stemming from scripture itself. Due attention will be given these objections. One that needs to be addressed at the outset is the affirmation in Martin Luther's Small Catechism that "Everyone must believe for himself or herself; no one can be saved by another's faith."[83] This seems a straightforward argument against household salvation, and one that has also been the bedrock of the Evangelicals' position. Fortunately this affirmation is only a modern explanation of the initial catechism, and therefore does not necessarily reflect the view of Martin Luther himself. However, it confirms that even among Lutherans the doctrine of personal faith and salvation is not absent altogether. No one can dispute that an unbeliever will not be saved just by the faith of another. But is this the same thing for one who cannot express their belief, either by physical or

[83] *Small Catechism*, Christian Questions, 88.

social incapacity? While they are in that situation, are they lost in spite of the faith of those to whom their lives are entrusted? Whether in feudal or patriarchal societies where women, children, and slaves have no say of their own except for an act of rebellion, or even in modern families, there is always a case where a member of the group is unable to speak or confess for themselves. Does not the faith of their householder and his or her prayers for their salvation amount to something? Moreover, with close look, the biblical foundation of the Small Catechism' statement is at best puzzling, if not questionable. The text of Hab 2:4 does not appear to address the question raised. The same is seen in the passage of Luke 7:50. If we admit that in Luke salvation is defined broadly, encompassing deliverance from danger, healing, forgiveness, resurrection, etc., it must be said that there are cases of salvation in Luke where it is the faith of others that bring healing to a sick person: Luke 7:1–10; 8:40–56; 9:37–42. The argument that these are providential acts that the Lord operates on all, as he raises the sun both on the wicked and on the just, fails to do justice to Luke. In fact, scholars acknowledge that salvation in Luke has more to do with life here and now.[84]

The Methodological Procedure to Be Employed

The present project is intentionally a hybrid of exegetical analysis and practical, or better yet missiological, quest. On the one hand, it intends to do the exegetical analysis of the key text, i.e. Acts 16:25–34. For this reason, it is important to state upfront the hermeneutic that will be employed and the presuppositions I bring to the text. In the 1980s and 1990s, reader-centered hermeneutics have arisen and influenced to a degree the field of New Testament studies. Their

[84] Powell writes, "The reign of God in Luke-Acts is both a present (Luke 11:20; 17:21) and a future (Acts 22:18, 29–30) reality. Therefore, salvation has both present and future dimensions. A glance at column two on our charts, however, reveals that Luke emphasizes the present dimensions over the future ones**.**" "Salvation in Luke-Acts," 6.

attractiveness lies in their claim that meaning emanates, not from the text, but from within the reader. In other words, there is no meaning outside the reader which he is to discover; rather, meaning lies within him as he interacts with the silent text. But, the reader-response hermeneutic is conceived within cultural parameters that may still set up some hurdles for the African reader to overcome. As illustration, Fawler insists that the reader is "the critical reader."[85] That way, most African theologians, and all laymen and laywomen readers of the Bible are disqualified. In order to overcome this flaw, a new approach must be found that guarantees a fair hearing to all readers. Such as the claim of Intercultural Hermeneutic [Should this be italicized ?].[86] Jean-Claude Loba-Nkole affirms, "*L'exégèse biblique interculturelle en Afrique vise à développer une plate-forme qui puisse garantir, autant que possible, un mouvement de conversion authentique mais non obligatoire qui soit sensible aux particularités de chaque culture*."(Italics in the original)[87] Thus the hermeneutic that will be applied here is what has come to be known as intercultural hermeneutic. Loba-Mkole defines it thus,

> L'exégèse interculturelle biblique implique un dialogue constructif entre la culture biblique originale, la culture de la communauté cible contemporaine et la culture traditionnelle d'une Eglise. La culture est une réalité globalisante (Penoukou 1991 :45) ou un système de symboles particuliers qui relient et englobent des personnes, des choses et des événements. Il prend ce qui est disponible dans l'environnement physique et humain et le remplit par un sens et un sentiment qui est socialement partagé par tous les membres d'une communauté donnée (Malina 1993: 12–13). En d'autres termes, il reflète la totalité de l'expérience humaine dans un temps et un espace donnés (Kabasele-Mukenge 2003: 22).[88]

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[85] Robert Fowler, *Let the Reader Understand: Reader-Response Criticism and the Gospel of Mark* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1991), 31.

[86] André Kabasel Mukenge, J.-C. Loba-Mkole and D. P. Aroga Bessong, eds *Lectures, Culturelles de la Bible en Afrique Centrale,* (Yaounde, Cameroon: Editions CLE, 2009), 57–58.

[87] Kabasele Mukenge, Loba-Mkole and Aroga Bessong, *Lectures Culturelles de la Bible en Afrique Centrale,* 55.

[88] Kabasele Mukenge, Loba-Mkole and Aroga Bessong, *Lectures Culturelles de la Bible,* 53: "Biblical intercultural exegesis implies a constructive dialogue between the original biblical culture, the culture of the contemporary target community, and the traditional culture of a given church. Culture is a globalizing reality (Penoukou 1991:45), or a system of specific symbols which connect and engulf people, things, and events. It takes

Yet the intercultural hermeneutic is not without its problems: this method, in the words of its proponents, is built upon enculturation. A serious critique leveled against enculturation is its alleged syncretism. A by-product of intercultural hermeneutic is low Christology, or Christology from below, through concepts like the "black Christ,"[89] or "Jesus the ancestor."[90] Moreover, the method demands a priori a respect of the African culture without defining the parameters of such respect. This leads to the question, which value will prevail when conflict arises between the African value and the Christian value? For these reasons I will be doing more of a critical contextualization, in the model of Paul G. Hiebert. But unlike him, and in line with the intercultural approach, I deem it important to enter into dialogue not only with first century context, and the West African contemporary culture, but also with the culture behind the Christian tradition received from western missionaries. James Voelz so rightly recognized that no interpretation occurs in a vacuum, but that all interpretations are perspectival.[91]

On the other hand, the research is conceived as a quest for a new missiology appropriate for the West African church. For this reason it will attempt an application of the missiological implications drawn from the Lukan household narratives in general, and Acts 16:25–34 in particular, to the West African context with a view to develop an appropriate and effective

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what is available in the physical and human environment, and fills it with a meaning and a sentiment that is socially shared by all the members of a given community (Malina 1993:12–13). In other words it reflects the totality of the human experience in a given time and space (Kabasele-Mukenge 2003:22)."

[89] For more on the "black Christ," see *African Christianities*, ed. Eloi Messi Metogo (London: SCM, 2006).

[90] See Charles Nyamiti, *Jesus Christ, the Ancestor of Humankind: Methodological and Trinitarian Foundations* (Nairobi, Kenya: CUEA Publications, 2005); also Uchenna A. Ezeh, *Jesus Christ the Ancestor: an African Contextual Christology in the Light of the Major Dogmatic Christological definitions of the Church from the Council of Nicea (325) to Chalcedon (451).*

[91] James Voelz, "All discourse is situated or contextualized (as are the data of the reality which it seeks to reflect) which means that there is no discourse which is a non-context-bound description of reality and, therefore, immediately trans-ferrable to all other context. This applies to biblical discourse, even as it does to all others," in "Reading Scripture as Lutherans in the Post-Modern Era," *Lutheran Quarterly* 14 (2000): 312.

missiology for the church in this part of the world. In this regard McGavran's principle of the "homogenous unit"[92] will serve as the starting point, but unlike him I believe the smallest homogenous unit is the family or household, not the group, the clan or the tribe.

These aside, there are some matters of isagogics that require some attention at the outset. One has to do with the question of the unity of Luke and Acts, which has dominated the debate during the apex of the reign of critical methodologies, until the publication of Tannehill's volume on the topic.[93] I believe his proposition of the literary unity of Luke-Acts deserves full acceptance, and will elaborate no further on it. A nagging question that remains is the theological unity of the Lukan corpus. Though some have argued for discrepancies existing between the soteriology of the Gospel and that of Acts,[94] I believe the literary unity of the two books sufficiently establishes the theological continuity between Luke and Acts, to which the church and scholarship testified until critical research arrived on the scene.[95] The other isagogical issue has to do with the genre of the Acts of the Apostles. It is debated whether Acts can be used to develop theology, since it seems to put forward diverse narratives with sometimes paradoxical practices. But, many do recognize in Acts the book of the New Testament that is missionary from start to finish. Bevans and Schroder's assessment is worth noting in this connection, "We believe, however, that it is also fair to say that Acts is the principal New Testament source for seeing the emergence of the church's first understanding of itself. 'For Luke, what makes the church is mission, and the reality at the heart of the church is the impulse of the Spirit for the

[92] See above note 78.

[93] Tannehill, Robert C. *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation*, vol. 1. (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1986).

[94] Richard I. Pervo, *Dating Acts: Between the Evangelists and the Apologists* (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge, 2006)

[95] Smith, *Acts*, 11–12. Also Haenchen, *Acts*, 96–97.

increase of the Word.'"[96] Again, "What we hope emerges from our reading of Acts is, first, a clear realization that the church, even at its origin, is 'missionary by its very nature'; mission, in other words, is prior to the church, and constitutive of its very existence."[97] It is my view that Acts is a sort of jurisprudence for the principles laid out in the gospel, the application of models elaborated in Luke. As for the traditional isagogical questions, the following summary provides my thoughts on the issues:

Author, Date, Recipient

Author

Since Irenaeus and the Muratorian Fragment (middle second century) tradition has firmly held that Luke, the companion of Paul, was the author of this book. The argument is drawn from the prologue to the third gospel and the introduction to Acts which seems to connect the two books as two parts of the same corpus. Moreover the "we" sections in the book of Acts and Colossians 4:12 function as the linking factors to the *Apostle of the Gentiles*. Haenchen offers an extensive treatment of the development about authorship from the primitive church to the modern era.[98] About three decades ago (1990) Boismard and Lamouille went as far as suggesting three different books as the structure of Acts, with different authors every time:

> Selon nous, les Actes des apôtres ont connu trois rédactions successives, que nous appellerons, sans faire preuve de beaucoup d'imagination: Act I, Act II et Act III. Au niveau de Act I, les Actes n'étaient pas encore séparés de l'évangile attribué à Luc, ou plus exactement d'une forme plus ancienne de 1'évangile de Lc, position tenue par nombre de commentateurs modernes. C'est Act II qui aurait fait 1a séparation entre évangile et Actes.[99]

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[96] Bevans and Schroeder, *Constants in Context*, 11.

[97] Bevans and Schroeder, *Constants in Context*, 13.

[98] Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, trans. Basil Blackwell (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971) 3–49.

[99] M.-E. Boismard and A Lamouille, *Les Actes des Deux Apotres,* vol. 1 *Textes* (Paris: Gabalda 1990), 3.

But, one must not understand these as referring to sections or portions of the book. They describe more of a redactional activity than a division of the book of Acts in the manner of Isaiah. Act I, the first composer, is described thus, "L'auteur qui a rédigé Act I était un judéo-chrétien resté attaché à un messianisme politique encore vivace dans les milieux juifs du premier siècle. Il attendait la libération du peuple de Dieu, soumis au pouvoir des Romains, et, selon lui. Jésus de Nazareth devait revenir sur terre ; comme Roi-messie, pour effectuer cette libération…Son nom nous demeure inconnu."[100] After the authors have noted similarities in style and vocabulary between the third gospel and Act II, as well as Luke's eschatology and ecclesiology that are close to the gospel of Mark, they conclude thus, "On peut donc affirmer que l'auteur de Act II est identique au Rédacteur du troisième évangile que la tradition chrétienne unanime a identifié avec Luc, un des compagnons de Paul (Col 4, 14; Phm 24; 2 Tim 4, 11)."[101] In Act III the authors address who, in their view, is the composer who wrote the final form of the book. They assert that this author eliminates the Greek drawn from the Septuagint, writes in better Greek, and shows a strong opposition to Jews. Another interesting feature of his style in their view is the transliteration of some Latin words into Greek. This indicates in their view that the author wrote from some urban center, Rome probably. But, who is he? According to Boismard and Lamouille, no one can tell.[102] Based on their arguments then, all that Boismard and Lamouille achieve is the rejection of some portions of the final form of Acts as genuine parts of the original Lukan version of Acts. It is arguable whether their criteria for arriving at the dismemberment of the text of Acts are beyond pure conjecture. Why do they chose certain portions as part of Act I, and determine that others do not belong, but rather constitute Act II? It

[100] Boismard and Lamouille, *Actes*, 30.

[101] Boismard and Lamouille, *Actes*, 42.

[102] Boismard and Lamouille, *Actes*, 50.

appears that they randomly proceed, though they have put forward a number of criteria supposed to guide their discriminations. As a matter of fact these arguments are couched essentially in the conditional tense, indicating a degree of uncertainty on the authors' own part. One must ask Boismard and Lamouille's as well as Chance's question of the skeptics about Lukan authorship, "Why the church would have attributed these narratives to Luke, given that he was hardly a famous person in his own right in church tradition and history?"[103]

In recent decades Tannehill has extensively researched the unity of Luke and Acts from a literary standpoint, concluding a "narrative unity of Luke-Acts." Parsons on his part remains faithful to tradition. "The author of Acts," he writes, "traditionally known as 'Luke,' wrote what became known as the 'Acts of the Apostles' as a sequel to a plurality of gospels then currently in use of which the Third Gospel (which 'Luke' also wrote) stands as the 'first among equals.'"[104] Yet he adds, "Little can be known for certain regarding the identity of the author of Acts."[105]

In the absence of more tangible evidence to the contrary, the present writer takes his stand alongside tradition.

Date

The date of Acts is another ground of sharp disagreement in scholarship. The clash between traditionalists and modernists reaches the apex here, with dates fluctuating between as early as late AD 50 or early 60 and as late as the middle of the second century AD.

Tradition has seen traces of Acts in the church fathers as early as *1 Clement*, dated somewhere between AD 80–96, though this is much debated; the references on which most agree

[103] J. Bradley Chance, *Acts* (Macon, GA: Smith & Helwys, 2007), 2.

[104] Michael C. Parsons, *Acts* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 3.

[105] Parsons, *Acts*, 4.

do not appear until the mid-second century in the writings of Justin Martyr, the *Apology* and *Dialogue with Trypho*. Therefore, since the second century AD church fathers, Lukan authorship has been affirmed as a fact beyond doubt. Worth mentioning in this line of thought is Charles Culter Torrey, who suggests a date between AD 60–62, with the first part being composed as early as AD 49–50.[106] His argument is based on the premise that the author used an Aramaic source in composing the first part of the book, of which he came into possession somewhere before AD 49.

Critical scholarship has strongly contested such suggestions. Martin Debelius and his followers at Tübingen—Conzelmann, among others—argued invariably for a date as late as the middle of the second century. Of course, with such late date Lukan authorship cannot stand. Therefore, they suggest that it might be some writer of that period of the church. Their main argument is that it is at this time that the writing really appeared in the life of the church, thus denying all previous traces of the document.

Boismard and Lamouille suggest that Act I was composed sometime in 60–62, because it shows no awareness of the outcome of Paul's trial in Rome.[107] Act III was composed probably in Rome in the last decade of the first century AD.[108]

More recently Pervo has challenged the traditional sixties-nineties window on several grounds. Some of Pervo's arguments can be summarized thus: (1) the author of Acts made use of Mark; Mark can only be dated after AD 75 because he was aware of the destruction of Jerusalem

[106] Charles C. Torrey, *The Composition and Date of Acts*, Harvard Theological Studies (Cambridge/London: Harvard University Press-Humphrey Milford Oxford University Press, 1916), 65–68.

[107] Boismard and Lamouille, *Actes*, 30.

[108] Boismard and Lamouille, *Actes*, 50–51.

and the temple, which occurred in AD 70.[109] (2) He used the Pauline letters but was not a companion of Paul,[110] (3) He also used Josephus'*Antiquities* as a source for writing Acts; *Antiquities* appears in AD 93/94. Therefore, Acts must be dated later than AD 94.[111] (4) "On both textual and typological grounds the trends delineated above belong to the first third of the second century."[112] Especially noticeable in Pervo's view is the similarity between Acts and *1 Clement* in terms of "legitimating narratives" to present Christianity as a valid religious movement to be reckoned with by the ruling class. (5) A second century date accounts more accurately for most of the features of the Church described in Acts.[113] Consequently, "Approximately 115 is therefore the most probable date. Acts is one product of an era and of understandings that lay between the 'Evangelists' and the Apologists."[114] Though Pervo has developed a sophisticated case for the late date, upon scrutiny, his arguments can be dismantled as a card castle. By his own admission, Pervo is a skeptic who rejects any prophesy or miracle. Thus, he cannot admit any date that would allow for the content of the gospel to function as prophesy. From this premise, the rest of the arguments are carefully chosen to confirm his stated presupposition. If Mark is not written after AD 75, and the Pauline epistles not as late as Pervo wants them to be, then the traditional date of AD 70–90 regains solid ground. The other arguments are an attempt to "make a forest out of a pile of wood."

For Parsons, as for Pervo, "The Third Gospel was written in the '80s (or '90s), followed by

[109] Pervo, *Dating Acts*, 49.

[110] Pervo, *Dating Acts*, 145.

[111] Pervo, *Dating Acts*, 198–99.

[112] Pervo, *Dating Acts*, 257.

[113] Pervo, *Dating Acts*, 346.

[114] Pervo, *Dating Acts*, 346.

Acts (within the first two decades of the second century, ca. AD 110).[115] Chance asserts that "the consensus seems to fall within a range between c. 70 to the early 90s."[116]

The internal evidence is scant; however, inferring from the author's acknowledgement that "Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us" (Luke 1:1 NAS), and admitting that Acts is a sequel to the gospel, one can conclude that the author was aware of the existence of at least two of the Gospels, namely Luke and Mark, if not Matthew. That is also the point Parsons makes when he writes, "On the basis of Luke's reference to 'many' other attempts to write accounts of Jesus' life, it seems that a plurality of gospels was already a reality by the time the Third Gospel was written (probably in the 80s or early 90s)…These gospels (Luke and Mark and an indeterminate number of others) were already being read together in Christian worship by the time Acts was published."[117] If so, one must allow for the time of composition of these two gospels before Luke could write his own volumes. Therefore, if Matthew and Mark were written in the '60s or '70s, enough time must have elapsed before they circulated widely, which would take us into the '80s for the composition of the third gospel, and the following years or decade for the writing of Acts.

Robinson is one scholar who rebuts quite adequately the critical charges against traditional views of the writing of Acts. He maintains an early date rather than a late date of Acts. For him, the late dating of Acts is based on three basic premises: a) the prophecies about the destruction of the temple, b) the dependence of Luke-Acts on Mark, and c) the supposed use of Josephus by the author of Acts. Against the argument that the prophecies are written *ex eventu*, Robinson retorts, "these prophecies afford no ground for supposing that they were composed or even written up

[115] Parsons, *Acts*, 3.

[116] Chance, *Acts*, 5.

[117] Parsons, *Acts*, 3.

after the event . . . In themselves they provide no evidence for a later dating."[118] Against the argument of Luke's dependence on Mark, Robinson demonstrates quite convincingly that the synoptic problem could be resolved by the suggestion that there was a compiling of some common sources constituted primarily of stories and sayings. Even Mark might have written up notes from Peter's preaching in Rome on the request of the Roman believers, as indicated by Eusebius' quotation of Papias.[119] From those "proto-gospels, the evangelists then wrote the gospels as we know them today. "Matthew is written for the Jewish-Christians; Luke for the "imperial world evangelized by Paul; and Mark is the gospel for the 'Petrine centre', serving a mixed community like the church in Rome."[120]

Against the argument of Luke's use of Josephus as a source, Robinson writes, "[W]e may note in passing that one argument, namely, the supposed dependence of Acts on Josephus' *Antiquities*, which would require a date after 93, seems to have been almost totally abandoned."[121] In the footnote he references the scholars who dealt with the issue, "Cf. F. J. Foakes Jackson, *Acts* (Moffatt NTC), 1931, xivf.; Kummel, *INT*, 186; Lampe, *PCB*, 883; Manson, *Studies in the Gospels and Epistles*, 64f. Writing in 1910, Harnack regarded this point as having been 'settled thirty-four years ago by Schurer'. Quoting the latter's summary, 'Either St Luke had not read Josephus, or, if he had read him, he had forgotten what he had read,'

[118] John A.T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1976), 88.

[119] Eusebius writes, "This also the elder used to say. Mark, indeed, having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote accurately, howbeit not in order, all that he recalled of what was either said or done by the Lord. For he neither heard the Lord, nor was a follower of his, but, at a later date (as I said), of Peter; who used to adapt his instructions to the needs [of the moment], but not with a view to putting together the dominical oracles in orderly fashion: so that Mark did no wrong in thus writing some things as he recalled them. For he kept a single aim in view: not to omit anything of what he heard, nor to state anything therein falsely," in Robinson, *Redating*, 95.

[120] Robinson, *Redating*, 101.

[121] Robinson, *Redating*, 88.

Hamack said: 'Schurer here exactly hits the mark' (*Date of Acts*, 114f.)."[122] All of them, he surmised, can be dated between AD 50 and 60. As for Acts, "Whatever precise pattern of synoptic interdependence will prove to be required or suggested by the evidence, all could quite easily be fitted in to comport with the writing of Acts in 62+."[123]

Concurring with Robinson, Carson, Moo and Morris summarize their arguments thus,

> While it is difficult to be certain, then, we are inclined to think that the most natural explanation for the ending of Acts is that Luke decided to publish the book at that particular point in history . . . The ending of Acts, we have argued, suggests a date of about A.D. 62 for the book. But since this argument is by no means certain, we should seek for other grounds on which to establish a date. In fact, several other factors point to a date of about the same time (e.g., 62–64): (1) Luke's apparent ignorance of the letters of Pau1; (2) Luke's portrayal of Judaism as a legal religion, a situation that would have changed abruptly with the outbreak of the Jewish rebellion against Rome in 66; (3) Luke's omission of any reference to the Neronian persecution, which, if it had occurred when Luke was writing, would surely have affected his narrative in some way; (4) the vivid detail of the shipwreck = voyage narrative (27: 1–28: 16), which suggests very recent experience.[124]

If Robinson and Carson, Moo, and Morris are right, then we have in the gospels and Acts a glimpse of the very early life of the church. This is of great importance as the argument that Acts represents a later theological development is thus debunked.

As for the Philippian jailer incident per se, though there is not much indication in the text that would allow a dating of the prison incident with precision, the rough estimate of c. AD 49–52 is acceptable unless one is too skeptical to even admit the historicity of the incident.[125]

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[122] Robinson, *Redating*, 88n.

[123] Robinson, *Redating*, 116.

[124]D. A. Carson, D. J. Moo, and L. Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 194.

[125] For an example of such skepticism see M.-E. Boismard and A Lamouille, *Les Actes des Deux Apotres, vol. 1 Textes* (Paris: Gabalda 1990). These authors argue that the Philippian jailer incident is a pure invention of the author.

Recipient

In the prologue to the book the author identifies his recipient as ὦ Θεόφιλε, (Act 1:1), an addressee that reminds us of the stated recipient of the Gospel of Luke who is addressed as κράτιστε Θεόφιλε (Luke 1:3), rendered "Most Noble Theophilus" or "Most Excellent Theophilus." Whether it is the hand of a late redactor or composer, or the work of the first writer, the recipient seems to be the same person.

For Parsons, "Acts is a 'charter' document of Christian self-identity and legitimation, written, not for a specific 'Lukan community,' but rather for a general audience of early Christians in the ancient Mediterranean world."[126]

Genre of Literature

What is the genre of Acts? This seemingly innocuous question has implications with regard to the content of the book and the message it conveys. According to one's stand, the book could at worst lose its value altogether, or it could at best withstand the critics and hold its irreplaceable position within the New Testament and the life of the Church. Parsons' brief survey of the scholarship on Acts will serve well as an introduction to the discussion of the genre of Acts:

> Surveyors of the Lukan landscape typically categorize the scholarship on Acts in terms of interest in Luke the historian, and, more recently, Luke the litterateur… As a historian, though he had his defenders (see Ramsey 1906, Gasque 1975, Hemer 1989, Marshall 1990), Luke was routinely criticized for his unreliable depictions of various characters (e.g., Vielhauer 1966, 33–50, on Paul) and events (e.g., Knox 1950 on the Jerusalem conference). As a theologian Luke was accused, among other things, of advocating a triumphalistic 'theology of glory' that was inferior to Paul's 'theology of the cross' and of replacing the pristine eschatology of early Christianity with a three-stage salvation history—an 'early Catholicism' shaped by the delay of the parousia that represented a degenerative step away from the primitive Christian kerygma, which proclaimed the imminent return of Jesus (so Kasemann 1982, 89–

[126] Parsons, *Acts*, 4.

92). Even Luke's abilities as a writer have been called into question from time to time (see Dawsey 1986).[127]

Acts as a Biography

Many scholars in recent decades dubbed Acts a biography. As such, for some it presents the two major figures of early Christianity, Peter and Paul. For others, though it recounts the acts of Peter and other apostles of the first generation of Jesus' followers, its final aim is a legal defense of Paul and of Christianity. The goal of such an endeavor is to make the Way palatable to the Greeks and Romans, and to win them to the faith, if it is not to win Paul's release from prison.

Acts as History

A history of early Christianity is probably the oldest characterization of the book of Acts. As mentioned above, as a historian Luke has had his fervent defenders and staunch critics. Despite Carson, Moo and Morris' claim that "Most scholars agree that Acts should be put into the category 'history'," [128] a consensus is far from being reached on the issue. Some of the critiques are leveled against the descriptions of places or events or characters. Others are directed against the speeches, as in Chance's estimation they constitute one-third of the book.[129] Chance claims that "It is the critical consensus that the speeches in Acts *in their present* form are Lukan compositions," [130] and that divergence arises with regard to the reliability of these speeches. In other words, are they a "précis of things actually said or artistic, rhetorical creations of the narrator?" [131] Boismard and Lamouille readily claim that not only the speeches, but also many of

[127] Parsons, *Acts*, 7.

[128] Carson, Moo, and Morris, *Introduction*, 194.

[129] Chance, *Acts*, 9.

[130] Chance, *Acts*, 9.

[131] Chance, *Acts*, 10.

the events, are the creation of the author.[132] As Chance has aptly said, "Much debate revolves around the statement of the historian Thucydides: 'With reference to the speeches in this history, some were delivered before the war began, others while it was going on; some I heard myself, others I got from various quarters; it was in all cases difficult to carry them word for word in one's memory, so my habit has been to make the speakers say what was in my opinion demanded of them by various occasions, of course adhering as closely as possible to the general sense of what they really said (*Histories,* 1.22.1).[133] Chance compares two scholars who investigated Thrucydides' statement and came up with different conclusions, namely Martin Dibelius and Ben Witherington. The former concludes,

> This survey was merely intended to show concerning historical writing in ancient times that, where it contains speeches, *it follows certain conventions*. What seems to the author his most important obligation is not what seems to us the most important one, that of establishing what speech was actually made; to him, it is rather that of introducing speeches into the structure in a way which will be relevant to his purpose. *Even if he can remember, discover or read somewhere the text of the speech which was made, the author will not feel obligated to make use of it*.[134]

In other words,

> One is to assess the speeches not according to their word-for-word accuracy or even whether they represent generally what was actually spoken, to allude to Thucydides, but their literary and artistic function *within the narrative*. One simply misses the mark and is 'looking for the wrong thing' to seek in the speeches a record, even a précis, of 'what the speeches really said.[135]

For Whitherington, "It was not, however, a matter of the nonrhetorical historians versus the rhetorical ones. The debate was over whether distortion or free invention was allowable in a historical work in the service of higher rhetorical aims. No one was seriously arguing that

[132] Boismard and Lamouille, *Actes.*

[133] Chance, *Acts*, 10.

[134] Chance, *Acts*, 10.

[135] Chance, *Acts*, 11.

composers of written history should eschew all literary considerations."[136] Rejecting the proposition that most ancient historians freely created discourses to suit their artistic purposes, Whitherington contends that "It must be acknowledged that such standards (of good historiography) were not observed a good deal of the time in antiquity. Thucydides and Polybius *were* in various regards exceptional, but it is also true that it was not impossible for a well-educated and apparently well-travelled person like Luke, who claims to have taken time and pains to investigate matters closely, to follow in the footsteps of other exceptional historians."[137] Parsons, following in the footsteps of Whiterington, asserts,

> In terms of Luke as historian, Acts suggests an author deeply committed to historical verisimilitude, a commitment that rests in part on Luke's determination to get the story straight. A modern reader, however, must recognize that getting the story straight in ancient context does not imply that Luke 'got it right' historically in terms of every detail (though neither is Luke free simply to 'make stuff up'). Rather, Luke's commitment to verisimilitude is just as much a reflection of Luke's training in rhetoric as it is a reflection of his knowledge of ancient historiography.[138]

Whiterington hits the mark here; many modern scholars want to anachronistically apply modern historiography to this work of the first century. But, taken within its own chronology Luke is quite a reliable historian. Thus, I believe, contra Pervo and Boismard and Lamouille, that the narrative of Acts 16:25–34 is not a creation of Luke, but reflects what actually happened the night of Paul and Silas' imprisonment in Philippi.

The Outcome(s) Anticipated

This study hopes to establish that household salvation is congruent with first century corporate responsibility/personality, present both in the Jewish and Greco-Roman world, at least

[136] Chance, *Acts*, 11.

[137] Chance, *Acts*, 14.

[138] Parsons, *Acts*, 8.

as perceived by Luke, and contemporary non-western worldviews. Therefore, passages in Luke that deal with household salvation deserve to be read with a corporate perspective in mind and to be given greater consideration in the formulation of the church's missiology. In light of the ecclesio-centric approaches hitherto promoted in mission strategies and taught in systematic courses, I wish to put forward an approach that is "oiko-centric," taking the household both as the locus and the target of mission. This, in my view, is the model of the Jesus movement as established in Lukan theology,[139] and I hope people in parts of the world with a corporate understanding of the individual, especially in West Africa, will appreciate the fact that this mindset is in line with the biblical perspective on the individual and seize the opportunity of the conclusions of this research to review their outreach approaches for a more effective kerygma. The proposed method entails the house becoming the privileged space for sharing the gospel with non-believers, allowing the head of the household to play a role as the leader of the nascent community. This approach has the advantage of honoring civility codes in the home and contributes to increased attention on the part of the listeners. Moreover, as with the jailer, a household model of missiology brings the right answer to the very anxious question that arises from a householder confronted by the law of God, What must I do to escape, to make it right, to appease the offended party? In a dyadic society, as in a "we"[140] society, the burden of action lies with the head of the household; his or her failure to act can be supplemented by another member, but he is the first responsible for the whole group. Considering the gravity of the condition of the lost, it is only fitting that the whole family be part of the benefits the reception of the gospel

[139] See Matson, *Household Conversion Narratives in Acts.*

[140] Tapiwa Mucherera argues that the African's self-understanding of his personality can be expressed in the saying "I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am," in *Pastoral Care from a Third World Perspective*, (New York: Peter Lang, 2001), 55.

entails, otherwise a good news that excludes some members of the family is no good news at all in societies with strong family ties. I also hope that this study will contribute to enrich the ongoing missiological debates on contextualization.

CHAPTER TWO

FORMULATION OF THE SALVATION OF THE HOUSEHOLD HYPOTHESIS IN ACTS 16:25–34

The text of Acts 16:25–34 recounts the religious experience of the Philippian jailer and his family. After Paul and Silas were unjustly imprisoned and custody of them given to the jailer, they spent their jail time praising God, and the unexpected happened: a violent earthquake occurred. As a result the fetters of the prisoners came loose, and the doors of the prison flung wide open, giving a chance of escape not only to the men of God, but to all the prisoners. Alerted certainly by the commotion, the jailer ran to his first duty, the prison, only to find it open. What ensues is a perfect case of crisis that in our day would call for counseling. But for the missionaries it was a spiritual crisis that afforded the perfect opportunity to share the gospel message; not only with the jailer, but with his entire household, resulting in the salvation of all. But how a seemingly personal and individual crisis got extended to the whole family in its resolution? Or does it? This is the question taken up in this chapter, as I attempt to uncover the meaning of the words uttered to the jailer in response to his question, and the ensuing actions of the different protagonists. The answer to this question requires a syntax and grammar analysis of the text under consideration, and a definition of the keys concepts of belief, and a background study of Acts 16:25–34. This will take place as the sentences are broken into their smallest unit. But before the analysis of the text is taken up, a word on methodology is warranted here.

Methodological Considerations

As I embark on the study of the biblical text that lays the foundation of the *oiko-centric*

mission strategy, I am mindful of James Voelz' keen observation that "*All discourse is situated or contextualized (as are the data of the reality which it seeks to reflect) which means that there is no discourse which is a non-context-bound description of reality and, therefore, immediately transferrable to all other context* (italics in the original). This applies to biblical discourse, even as it does to all others."[1] And he adds, "*Concomitantly, all interpretation of discourse is situated or contextualized, which means that there is no objective interpretation of any text* (italics in the original)."[2] The implication is a complex maze of relationships between the author, the text and the reader. The reader reconstructs the author, who then becomes the implied author, while at the same time actualizing the story through the signifiers; but the reader also discovers that the author had readers or addressees in mind, the implied readers. Then Voelz asks the question, "Who, then, is a valid interpreter of a text?" His response, "It is the one who conforms to the expectations of the author. It is the one who conforms to the given text's assumptions. It is the one and only the one who becomes the implied reader of a given text. Which means that an "objective" reading, a non-involved reading of a text, is not only impossible; it is not to be desired!"[3] This remark echoes the assertion Henry J. Cadbury made regarding the rise of Christianity that "it did not grow up *in vacuo*. It bore close likeness to the world which surrounded it. They were typical first century minds that gave form to its thought, as they were first century cities that gave it geographical setting. Even much of its religion was in accord with not merely Jewish but even with pagan outlook."[4] For me this means I must engage in the triple task of uncovering the context both of the author and the implied readers, and that of previous

[1] Voelz, "Reading Scripture," 312.

[2] Voelz, "Reading Scripture," 315.

[3] Voelz, "Reading Scripture," 317.

[4] Henry J. Cadbury, *The Book of Acts in History* (London: Adam and Charles Black 1955), 7.

real readers, and to show awareness of how my own context influences my reading. Otherwise one runs the risk of doing what Malina calls a decontextualized reading[5] of the text.

A Family in Crisis: What Must I Do?

The narrative under consideration takes place in the prison and the home of the ward of the prison in a Roman colony of Asia Minor called Philippi. According to Acts 16:12 Philippi was "the leading city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony." Matthew Henry writes, "The Romans not only had a garrison, but the inhabitants of the city were Romans, the magistrates at least, and the governing part. There were the greatest numbers and variety of people, and therefore the most likelihood of doing good."[6] Thus the jailer is likely a Roman official rather than a local Greek. Besides, the masters of the girl with the spirit of divination, who brought charges against Paul and Silas before the magistrates, self-identified as "Us Romans," (Acts 16:21) an indication of more their ethnic background than simple citizenship. Therefore the setting of this event is essentially an urban Roman setting. Richard L. Rohrbaugh warns however that care must be taken to avoid anachronistic concepts of urban settings. He distinguishes between the industrial (modern) and the pre-industrial city.

> In contrast to agrarian societies in which the primary economic unit was the family, in the industrial city of today the labor unit is of necessity the individual worker. Capital concentration, cost efficiency, and exploding specialization of the labor process (as opposed to specialization of product in antiquity) all require a large, mobile labor force composed of persons who can be detached from their geographical and social place of origin. These people thus constitute a flexible work-force for employers seeking to adapt to changing market conditions at minimum cost… By contrast, pre-industrial cities existed in a system which required a socially and geographically fixed labor force. Specialists in the city primarily produced the goods and services needed by the urban elite, who were the only existing consumer market. Since that market was small, the labor force needed to supply it was correspondingly

[5] Bruce J. Malina, "Reading Theory Perspective: Reading Luke-Acts" in *the Social World of Luke-Acts: Models of Interpretation*, ed. Jerome H. Neyrey (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 20.

[6] Henry, *Acts*.

> small and, as Leeds notes, it thus became a "major interest to keep others than these out of the towns, fixed in their own agrarian, mining or extractive areas" (1979:238). In fact most agrarian societies established legal restrictions on city residence that kept the peasants out.[7]

In terms of relations Rohrbaugh contends,

> The patterns of pre-industrial cities were very much the consequence of the role played by the city in the larger urban system. As the center of control, the city gathered to itself those non-elite necessary to serve its needs as it carried out the specialized functions it had collected. It was a system characterized by the dominance of a small center, by sharp social stratification, and by a physical and social distancing of component populations that were linked by carefully controlled hierarchical relations. The city was a ready example of human territoriality in which the elite occupied a fortified center, ethnic, socioeconomic and occupational groups the periphery, and outcasts the area immediately outside the city walls.[8]

This insight will shed new light on the text as I now begin its exegetical analysis. At the outset it is important to ascertain the meaning of the jailer's question. As noted above, Fitzmyer's answer that this is the "classic question" on the lips of everyone at the threshold of salvation is not very helpful, for it overlooks the specificity of this quest. To Fitzmyer's credit, the question appears not only on the lips of the jailer, but also of Peter's listeners on the day of Pentecost while he boldly answered those who insinuated that the manifestation of the gift of the Holy Spirit was actually a sign of alcoholic intoxication, "What shall we do?" they asked (Acts 2:37). The crowd in Luke 3:10 also ask of John, "What then shall we do?" In each case there is a sense of danger to which the inquirers feel exposed. Besides these instances, however, there are numerous occurrences of salvation where such a question is not raised, Acts 8:12, 36–37; 10:44; 13:42, 48; 16:15. So it cannot be said that the question is classic on the lips of those on the threshold of salvation. So then what is the meaning of the jailer's question?

[7] Richard L. Rohrbaugh, "The Pre-Industrial City in Luke-Acts: Urban Social Relations" in *The Social World of Luke-Acts*, 131–32.

[8] Rohrbaugh, "Pre-Industrial City," 136.

Confronted with the Roman's Punishment for Negligence

To understand the question, it is important to keep in mind the sequence of events leading up to that moment: after Lydia's conversion, Paul and Silas developed the routine of going to the place of prayer, they were met by the girl with the spirit of divination who kept shouting after them, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation." Such a publicity is of the greatest annoyance to Paul. The latter rebukes the spirit and chases it out of her. The owners of the slave girl, seeing that they have lost their means of gain, seize the missionaries and bring them to the magistrates; without proper judicial proceedings the two men are beaten and thrown into jail with other prisoners. Against all expectations, the newcomers began to sing and praise God until well into the night. At midnight an earthquake shakes the prison precinct to its foundations; the doors fling open, and the shackles come loose. Hearing the commotion, the jailer comes to his duty station, and with great dismay discovers that the prison doors are wide opened. He decides to take his own life rather than face the dishonorable punishment he would be dealt according to Roman law (cf. Acts 12:19). It is odd that an earthquake would not produce more commotion in the city, thus bringing more people out from the community. But if, as Rohrbaugh suggests, the urban center was a sort of gated community where only the elite resided, while the commoners are at the outskirts, and the prison probably isolated from the residential area, it would make sense that the only people involved are the jailer and his family. Anthropologists have long established that honor and shame are two important factors in shaping behavior in society, more so in ancient times. The jailer's desire to take his own life is not only motivated by the shame and dishonor he would bring on himself when the magistrates discover that the prisoners have escaped; the dishonor would befall his family as well. Never again would they receive any consideration in the public sphere; they

would become the laughing stock of all in town. Taking his own life would at least clear the shame, and give a chance to his family to save face in the public sphere. Thus it is not an egoistic attitude, but an attitude that carefully waged the options, and opted for the course of action least problematic for all. However Paul shouted to him not to harm himself because all the prisoners were all there. Now the fear of the Roman magistrates subsides, but at the same time, is replaced by a more dreadful one, that of the Most High God, as the man realizes that he had joined in with the magistrates and the slave owners to deal unjustly with his servants.

Confronted with Divine Threat: The Nature of the Crisis—"Classic," "Existential," or Particular?

Και προαγαγων αυτους εξω εφη κυριοι, τί με δει ποιεν 'ίνα σωθω; Trembling, and falling at the apostles' feet, the jailer cries out, "My lords, what must I do in order to be saved?" It is important to grasp the nature of the question the jailer is asking here. For the thrust of the answer can be fully appreciated only when the depth of the question is understood. To see this question as simply the "classic question" on the lips of seekers is to ignore and overlook the important details the text provides in order to make sense of what follows. The jailer abandons his pedestal as the prison guard, and falls at the feet of the missionaries in the manner of a beggar or mendicant, the very form of humbling oneself in ancient time. He is trembling with fear, and calls the two men *Κύριοι*, "My lords," *contra* E. J. Schnabel's rendering "gentlemen" and his contention that the "Greek term may be nothing more than a polite address of the two men who saved his life."[9] Such a rendering downplays the urgency of the situation, the sense of guilt on the part of the jailer, and his utmost despair. To his credit Schnabel recognizes that others have seen in the jailer's attitude the "'religious terror' caused by the recognition that his abuse of the

[9] Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts:* Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Clinton E. Arnold (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 591.

prisoners 'had aroused the ire of the apostles' gods'," citing thus B. M. Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*. Moreover in a footnote Schnabel recognizes that Philo attests to the cruelty of Roman jailers. The quote is worth reproducing here as it sheds light on the jailer's plea for mercy:

> Everyone knows well how jailers are filled with inhumanity and savagery. For by nature they are unmerciful, and by practice they are trained daily toward fierceness, as to become wild beasts. They see, say, and do nothing good, not even by change, but instead the most violent and cruel things. . . . Jailers, therefore, spend time with robbers, thieves, burglars, the wanton, the violent, corrupters, murderers, adulterers, and the sacrilegious. From each of these they draw and collect depravity, producing from that diverse blend a single mixture of thoroughly abominable evil" (*Joseph*. 81, 84).[10]

They makes the prisoners feel totally helpless and at their mercy. But now in a sort of reversal, the roles are inverted, the master becomes the servant, while the prisoners go from *δούλοι* to *Κύριοι*. Though the term is not always used with reference to God or to the gods, it carries more weight than our modern "Sirs," or "Gentlemen." The jailer recognizes in them agents of the divinity. The attitude of the jailer is that of complete contrition. His question is really not only an expression of fear, but also of deep repentance even though he was not confronted by the Apostles. The earthquake alone is enough law already to drive him to his knees. On the justification of the sentiment of guilt on the part of the jailer, Chance, quoting Charles Talbert, explains, "Based on descriptions of ancient prisons found in the literature of antiquity, Charles Talbert offers a vivid description that allows one to imagine the setting: 'Prison was the most severe form of custody. Jailers were notorious for their cruelty. . . . The inner prison was the worst possible site. . . . Many would be confined in a small area; the air would be bad; the darkness would be profound; the stench would be almost unbearable.'"[11] That the jailer was in charge of enforcing such inhumane conditions of detention, and now that he is

[10] Schnabel, *Acts*, 691.

[11] Chance, *Acts*, 288.

confronted by higher authority, it is understandable that the man is terrified in his guilt. There is much truth to Chance's argument concerning the hymns and prayers, that the jailer, as a pagan, "might have heard [them] as magical incantations.[12] If so he has much reason to fear, since these resulted in the earthquake, revealing the power of their magic. It seems more plausible however to see this fear as resulting from his sense of having offended the God these missionaries were proclaiming and for which proclamation they were now held captive. Chance again tells us that "In the biblical and larger Hellenistic tradition, the shaking of the earth commonly denoted the divine presence (see Isa. 29:6; Matt. 27:59; 28:2). In apocalyptic material, such quaking regularly denoted divine judgment (see Rev. 6:12; 8:5, 11:3, 19, 16:18; 2 Esd.3:19)."[13] Robert H. Smith also sees the jailer's question as arising out of his fear of the divine judgment, "The jailer's fear of the earthly was exchanged for fear of the heavenly, and he cast himself at the feet of Paul and Silas."[14] He knew the punishment for failure to secure the prisoners; it was harsher than taking one's own life by falling on one's own sword. But this offense, he knew not how it would end. Who best could hold the answer to his trouble than the very people who showed such a bewildering attitude of resilience and compassion? They should have been stressed out by their condition, instead they were singing and praying; they had a chance to escape, but did not. On the contrary they prevented the other prisoners from doing so. They could have let him kill himself, but chose to preserve his life. Such actions make no sense to him,[15] these are definitely unusual people, and if they worship a god, that god is most certainly irritated by the treatment

[12] Chance, *Acts*, 289.

[13] Chance, *Acts*, 289.

[14] Smith, *Acts*, 250.

[15] Schaff, reports one of the early church fathers as noting that same marvel on the part of the jailer: "Do you mark how the wonder overpowered him? (a) He wondered more at Paul's kindness; he was amazed at his manly boldness, that he had not escaped when he had it in his power, that he hindered him from killing himself." *Early Church Fathers*, Homily 36 on Acts 16:25, 26, 224.

meted out to his messengers. So the jailer is ready to do whatever it takes to appease such wrath. This question gives an opportunity to theologians with synergistic background to see it as setting the stage for Paul's answer: he asked what he must do, and Paul told him what he must do is believe. But if that is the condition for the man to be saved, where is the gospel proclamation? Why is that good news to the man? This issue will be taken up below. Suffice it for now to say that the jailer is confronted with a threat greater than the perspective of the prisoners escaping. Taking his own life will not do; the consequences could still reach his surviving family members. Something draws him to the apostles to ask the desperate question.

Another point that needs to be addressed here is, what is it that the jailer was really seeking? What did he mean by save or more exactly "to be saved?" For many theologians, after they have reified the concept of salvation, the ready answer is the Fitzmyer "classic question." Yet again, etymologically the verb σώζω and its cognate σωτερία do not convey a particular religious sense. According to Gerhard Friedrich, the religious usage is one among at least five different usages in the Greek world, saving from peril, keeping, benefitting, preserving the inner being, and the religious use proper.[16] Even in the biblical usage, the term conjures up a wide range of meanings, though all related. Friedrich affirms that σώζω and σωτερία translate most often the Hebrew ישׁע and its derivatives, conveying the idea of "to keep," "to help," "to free," to some extent it is used to translate the stem פלט and its derived forms meaning "to escape," "to deliver," "to find safety."[17] In the NT the polysemy of σώζω remains intact: the word is used to refer to both the saving of physical and spiritual life. Luke demonstrates the enormous range of meaning of σώζω. He uses it of rescue from death, i.e., from mortal danger (Luke 23:35, 37, 39;

[16] Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, transl. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 966–69.

[17] TDNT, 970.

Acts 27:20, 3) or from death that has already occurred (Luke 8:50), of the fundamental element of help in Jesus' healing deeds (6:9; 8:48; 17:19; 18:42; 23:35) and in those of the apostles (Acts 4:9; 14:9), including the liberation of a possessed person (Luke 8:36). He also uses it of forgiveness of particular sinners (7:50; 19:10) and of collective forgiveness of the people (Acts 2:40), the goal of the activity described by σώζω. The substantive is often translated safety, salvation, rescue, protection or forgiveness. The immediate context of Acts 16:25–34 gives us strong reasons not only to consider the meaning salvation, but also safety. Therefore, in order to determine what the jailer meant by salvation, it is important to keep in mind Powell's judicious observation that in Luke-Acts "the content of salvation . . . appears to be determined . . . by the needs of the person or persons involved."[18] Therefore a strict dichotomy between spiritual and physical, temporal and eschatological, is not very helpful, for it can overshadow the complexity and overlapping usage of the term, especially in Luke. Powell rightly recognized this, "In presenting salvation as participation in the reign of God, Luke makes no distinction between what we might describe as physical, spiritual, or social aspects of salvation (cf. Luke 5:23). God is concerned with all aspects of human life and relationships, and, so, salvation may involve the putting right of any aspect that is not as it should be."[19] Thus if Chance is right that earthquakes were seen in ancient times as a sign of God's judgment both in the Palestinian and Greco-Roman worlds, then it is safe to affirm that the jailer wanted to be spared the judgment of God, or the gods; he wanted to escape the consequences his offense entailed. We need not consider such a concern a trivial matter. The next question in light of the social system of the jailer is whether his concern was an egoistic or individualistic one, or it included other members of his family, as

[18] Powell, "Salvation," 5.

[19] Powell, "Salvation," 7–8.

would be expected from a man in that culture?

Confronted with Divine Threat: The Scope of the Threat

The wrath of God or of the gods is perceived in ancient times to extend to all family members. Theologians have called it corporate responsibility or corporate solidarity.[20] Examples of corporate responsibility in the OT can be found in the account of Korah, Dathan and Abiram who perished with their households and all who belonged to them, (Num. 16:32) and the story of Nabal (1 Sam. 25).

Behind the idea of corporate responsibility lies a certain conception of the individual. In Western culture Descartes' formula "Je pense, donc je suis" captures very well how the individual sees himself. He defines himself not in relation with other beings, but with himself. He defines himself as an autonomous self, a thinking being. That is the theory that lies behind modern western philosophy and psychology. It is encountered in Western thought through different formulae. From the pen of the public figure Cicero of Rome, we have the saying "Man is the measure of all things." Existentialism is a fuller development of that philosophical idea. The French version is stated by Jean Paul Sartre who posits that "l'existence précède l'essence."[21] Though Sartre is hailed as refuting previous views, it must be noted that his rebuttal has to do only with the rejection of a predetermined essence that humans acquire in order for them to be humans. Sartre sets out to remove any idea of determinism, whether by divine predetermination or by accident of birth circumstance, when it comes to defining our identity or status. For him, man is the master of his own destiny. He alone is in charge of whom he will be.

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[20] J. S. Kaminski gives a nice survey of the concept of corporate responsibility or solidarity in his work *Corporate Responsibility in the Hebrew Bible*. Journal for the Study of Old Testament Supplemental Series 196. (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995).

[21] Jean Paul Sartre, *L'existentialisme est un humanisme* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996), 26.

Thus Sartre refutes the divine agency in defining who a human is, but he still builds on Descartes' idea of existence as established through self-reflection or the capacity to make one's own self the subject of one's peregrinations. With this philosophy, the Western man doubly alienates himself from God, thus the idea of the autonomous self: God is no longer the source of his being, like in Descartes, and neither does God intervene in the course of his existence. "God is dead," thus declared Friedrich Nietzche in 1882. That constitutes the philosophical matrix upon which western thought is built, and not even Christian thinkers, and by correlation Christianity itself have escaped its influence. In this context, there is no such a thing as corporate or family responsibility. It repulses the ears of people in this worldview to hear about one's own fate as dependent upon another's action, be they parents.

But such is not the *Weltanschauung* of first century Greco-Roman World, especially Palestinian. Richardson rightly observed that for first century people, "there is no place for our modern individualism in biblical thinking; we do not live unto ourselves."[22]

Malina and Neyrey call the mentality of first century people "dyadic,"[23] that is, "the basic, most elementary unit of social analysis is not the individual person, but the dyad, a person in relation with and connected to at least one other social unit, in particular the family.[24] They further suggest, "To understand the persons who populate the pages of the New Testament, then, it is important not to consider them as individualistic. They did not seek a personal, individualistic savior or anything else of a personal, individualistic sort."[25] Another formula that eloquently characterizes first century personality would be "A *ben* or *bar* B," A the son or

[22] Richardson, *Introduction*, 358.

[23] Neyrey, *Social World of Luke-Acts*, 72

[24] Neyrey, *Social World of Luke-Acts*, 73.

[25] Neyrey, *Social World of Luke-Acts*, 72.

daughter of B. A person identifies themselves with regards to their genealogy. That is why genealogies hold such a prominent place both in Matthew and Luke. What then was the scope of the jailer's question? Was he concerned about his life solely? If so why then does Paul give him an answer that includes his family? Some have argued that Paul meant to simply extend the offer of salvation to the rest of the family. Such a reading becomes what Neyrey calls a de-contextualized reading, a reification of salvation and faith that loses sight of the needs for which they were offered as solutions. A more plausible reason is that though the jailer spoke in the first person singular, Paul as a man of his time, clearly understood that the man was as much concerned for the rest of his family. For whatever danger he thought he was exposed to at this point, that same danger faced his entire family. Thus anticipating upon the jailer's next question, and killing two birds with one stone, Paul tells him the solution applies to his family as well. But what is that solution?

The Answer to the Crisis

To the jailer's anguished question, which suggests that he expected to be given a list of requirements in order to thwart the divine anger he so dreaded, Paul's response is "believe."

πίστευσον ἐπὶ τὸν κύριον Ἰησοῦν

A Gracious Invitation: πίστευσον…

What does Paul mean by πίστευσον? Is that the condition the jailer must fulfill in order to escape the punishment?

πίστευσον: Second person singular aorist active imperative of πίστευω. The term, according to the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, means to trust, to rely on. It is not primarily a religious term, and does not imply a religious act on the part of the one who πιστεύει.

Thus to believe is not necessarily to perform a religious act. This is fundamental to understanding the thrust of Paul's reply. The missionary, in response to the jailer's question as to what religious act he needed to perform "in order to be saved," replies that there is no need for such an act. He needed only to trust in Jesus' power to save. Thus there is no merit on the part of one who believes. In fact this is in line with what Scripture says when it tells us that Abraham believed and it was credited to him as righteousness. What can be credited is that which does not qualify as credit, otherwise it would be offered directly as a credit. Therefore it is a serious mistake to consider the call to believe here as a condition to be fulfilled in order to attain salvation, though the imperative lends itself to that usage.[26] It is proper to all religions that their practitioners are expected to perform certain acts or rituals to ward off evils spirits or to mitigate the anger or ire of the gods. It is not surprising that quite a few scholars see this imperative as setting the condition or the requirement to obtain salvation. However in the present case, it seems to me that the imperative fits best with the category Request or Entreaty.[27] Rather than giving a command, Paul is presenting the jailer with the perfect offer of free grace: "You don't have to do anything, just trust Him (the Lord Jesus), and everything is going to be alright." Trust does not accomplish the saving, Jesus does. Trust means allowing Him to do what He is capable to do when we cannot. We do not have any further description of how the jailer believed. Trust in a person does not have to take on some magical or consecrated formulae. We can only imagine that in the ensuing exposition by Paul, the jailer assented to the message and thus was baptized. All we know is that he rejoiced with all his family that he had believed in the Lord. One could

[26]Wallace describes the conditional imperative thus, "This use of the imperative is always or almost always found in the construction imperative + καί + future indicative. The idea is 'If X, then Y will happen.'" *Greek Grammar*, 489.

[27] Wallace remarks that in this case the imperative is "almost always in the aorist tense," *Greek Grammar*, 488.

surmise that it was the administration of baptism that sealed, in the jailer's view, his faith in the Lord. It seems superfluous and even dangerous to insist upon consecrated formulae as the right way of believing. In a superstitious culture, this can easily become a sort of magical incantation to effect salvation. The idea of trust is more helpful and paves the way for a relationship of trust between the new believer and God, who now becomes his God.

An important question that needs also be addressed is whether the jailer believed only for himself as modern thinkers would have us believe. As a corollary to corporate responsibility, ancient people also embraced what Polhill labels "proxy faith,"[28] or what Richardson more accurately terms "representative faith." For Richardson,

> [T]he solidarity of the family, or more accurately the household, would mean, in baptism as in all other matters, that when the head of the household took a decisive step, he committed every member of his 'house' (οικος); he was a 'representative man', a kind of inclusive personality, and what happened to him happened to all . . . The NT principle of representative faith is established . . . There is no place for our modern individualism in biblical thinking; we do not live unto ourselves; the faith of one is available for those who are unable as yet to express their own faith.[29]

It is not only the principle of "representative faith" that is established, but the kind of personality first century people were. The people at that time and in that area defined who they were in relation to the social network to which they belonged. It is remarkable that Richardson illustrates his assertion, not only by referencing the Philippian Jailer narrative (Acts 16:25–34), but also the Epileptic Boy (Mark 9:14–29), and the Paralytic (Mark 2:1–12). Thus we can see that throughout the NT the faith of one is available to those who cannot express it themselves. This seems also to be the case in the OT. It was the faith of Rahab the prostitute that led to the salvation of her entire family (Josh. 2). It was Abigail's pious attitude towards David and his

[28] Polhill, *Acts*, 356.

[29] Richardson, *Introduction*, 358.

companions that resulted in the salvation of her household, including the selfish Nabal who finally succumbs to his own impiety (1 Sam. 25). The exodus itself is the story of Moses' faith in Yahweh, as he was given the responsibility to lead the people out of Egypt, and in the Promised Land. Why then have we come to such individualistic readings today? For Richardson, the origin of modern individualism is to be located in the Renaissance. Richardson explains at the same time why insistence upon personal faith became necessary at that point,

> Since the rise of post-renaissance individualism, when men no longer profess their creed by family or region, and are aware of themselves as atomic, isolated self-existents, it is understandable that insistence should have been laid upon personal faith and upon the responsibility of the baptized for their own decision. Furthermore, in ages when baptism had become a mere social convention and everyone was automatically baptized in infancy by order of the State, or at least as a result of strong social pressure, a protest was necessary on behalf of personal faith and decision.[30]

Besides the gracious invitation to do nothing but trust, Paul is basically telling the man, "Jesus only does the saving."

An Offer of a Solution to a Troubled Soul: ἐπὶ τὸν κύριον Ἰησοῦν

Paul does not invite the man to trust in his own capability, nor in the missionaries, but "onto the Lord Jesus." Here again Fitzmyer asserts that it is the "classical answer" to the seekers of the Kingdom. But one must remember that the answer is not the same in all cases. To the Jewish audience the answer almost always involves a call to repentance, while with Gentiles the response usually does not contain such a call, except for the Aeropagus address. Even in this case the call is rather impersonal, and can be explained by the idolatry Paul had observed in the city. The general thrust of Paul's answer is that salvation is in Jesus. Jesus is the one who saves, not anything a man or woman could do. Paul is not giving the jailer a different condition to fulfill

[30] Richardson, *Introduction*, 361.

than the one he is expecting; he is offering no condition at all, but asking that he surrender completely to Jesus Christ. Why is Jesus worthy of trust? The invitation to enter the house gives the missionaries the opportunity to expand on Jesus' substitutionary death on the cross, and his carrying of the judgment our wanderings deserved. Thus here, as elsewhere in the Lukan corpus, salvation remains solely the work of God. "Divine monergism" finds its full expression here. Most scholars are agreed that in Luke the initiative of salvation belongs to God. In this regard Ben Witherington writes,

> Salvation in the Lukan sense of the term is something that comes from and properly belongs to God. From the early Semitic chapters of the Gospel where Simeon claims to have seen 'your σωτηρία' (Luke 2:30) to the very end of Acts where we hear that God's salvation (το σωτήριον του θεου) has been sent to the Gentiles (Acts 28:28) it is clear what the ultimate source of salvation is. Salvation is something humans can only receive, not achieve. It must be sent to them by God.[31]

Despite Witherington's debatable assertion of an evolution in Luke's understanding of salvation, he is in a great company in recognizing that salvation in Luke-Acts is of God's doing. Powell affirms exactly the same, "In Luke-Acts, salvation is "of God" (Luke 3:6; Acts 28:28). God is Savior (Luke 1:46) . . . salvation in Luke-Acts is frequently based simply on the inexplicable and unmotivated initiative of God."[32]

The Meaning of Believing: Trust in; The Hand that Receives the Gift

That to believe is not a religious act or rite on the part of the believer which serves as a condition to some spiritual benefit is not evident to many. Fernando for example contradicts himself in his assessment of Paul's response to the jailer. On the one hand, Fernando rightly

[31] Ben Witherington III, "Salvation and Health in Christian Antiquity: the Soteriology of Luke-Acts in its First Century Setting," *Witness to the Gospel: the Theology of Acts*, ed. I Howard Marshall and David Peterson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 157.

[32] Powell, "Salvation," 8.

affirms, “He wanted to know what he had to ‘do’ to be saved, but actually there was nothing that he needed to do, for everything had already been done for him by Christ.”[33] But oddly he had, “The first part of verse 31, ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved,’ presents the condition for salvation.”[34] If the jailer need not do anything, then why turn around and say this only he must do. Either he must do something, or it is all done and he has nothing to do. To trust in someone is the actual opposite of doing something. Thus if the doing is the condition, the opposite of it must be not doing something, that is, trusting. That faith is not the condition in Luke is established abundantly through other events in the corpus. As Powell so rightly stated, salvation in Luke benefits sometimes even people who show no explicit evidence of personal faith, and sometimes by proxy faith.[35] Thus Luke wants to clearly stress that the initiative of salvation belongs entirely to God.

καὶ σωθήσῃ: And You Will Be Saved

Defining Salvation from Paul’s Perspective

Σωθήσῃ: second person passive future indicative. The construction καὶ +future following an imperative constitutes, in Wallace’s view, the apodosis of a conditional clause the protasis of which is in the imperative.[36] Thus salvation here is the result of the jailer’s faith. Yet grammatical analysis here is misleading in that the passive of the verb clearly indicates that the saving is accomplished by another, not by the act of believing itself. But as noted in chapter one above, with Frieberg I believe the clause “And you will be saved” is a result clause. As a

[33] Fernando, *Acts*, 445.

[34] Fernando, *Acts*, 446.

[35] Powell, “Salvation,” 10.

[36] Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 489.

consequence of trusting in Jesus, the jailer will be saved. It must be stated again that the believing does not produce the saving, the saving is solely the work of Christ on the cross. Faith only secures that salvation to the one who trusts. One could not even with confidence declare that the one who has not shown evidence of faith is not saved. It is unbelief, that is, the refusal to trust, that seals the damnation of a person, not the lack of proof of faith.[37] As we have observed earlier, if salvation is the result of the jailer's faith, it can no longer be good news to him. The good news for this man is that the threat he faced was immediately removed because of Jesus, the Lord in whom now he is exhorted to trust. We are given no further explanation of how the believing happened.

I stated above what I believe the jailer meant when he asked what he must do in order to be saved. I suggested that he most likely meant escape from the wrath of the gods. It is also important to ask whether it is this connotation that is on the mind of Paul. Many tend to think that Paul is talking about the salvation of the soul, or spiritual salvation only.[38] As noted above, Luke's understanding of salvation rejects that sort of dichotomy. If the response must fit the request, then Paul is saying that trusting in Jesus will spare the man the wrath of God, and the consequences his offense should bring on him. Thus salvation as Paul is offering must be both now and eschatological. Powell rightly defines salvation in Luke as "participation in the reign of God." He writes, "In presenting salvation as participation in the reign of God, Luke makes no distinction between what we might describe as physical, spiritual, or social aspects of salvation

[37] Hermann Otto Erich Sasse, *We Confess the Sacraments*, transl. Norman Nagel (St Louis: Concordia, 1945), 44–45

[38] Ernst Haenchen for one affirms, "While he is leading them out, he asks immediately, addressing them as 'κύριοι', about his eternal salvation." *The Acts of the Apostles A Commentary* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1971), 497. See also, William J. Larkin, who bluntly asserts that "temporal salvation is not the issue" *Acts* IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 242.

(cf. Luke 5:23). God is concerned with all aspects of human life and relationships, and, so, salvation may involve the putting right of any aspect that is not as it should be."[39]

Future or Immediate?

Again many a theologian sees salvation essentially in its eschatological connotation, and downplays the importance of the earthly benefits of salvation. Thus the response loses its relevancy, because it is an answer to a question never raised. But as it is, Paul's answer fits the question the jailer asked. Peace with God is obtained now by grace through faith. Again Powell is right when he asserts, "The reign of God in Luke-Acts is both a present (Luke 11:20; 17:21) and a future (Acts 22:18, 29–30) reality. Therefore, salvation has both present and future dimensions."[40] To conceive of anything less is to present a truncated view of salvation.

σὺ καὶ ὁ οἶκός σου: You together with Your Family

Why does Paul include the family in the saving? For many theologians, Paul extends the offer of salvation (not salvation itself, but the offer), to all in his house, provided they too believe. Of course this is a logical outcome if one considers faith as the condition for salvation. Luther is right in hesitating to embark on such a view. But how then is the family saved together with the jailer? To answer this question we need first a working definition of the family in the NT.

Defining ὁ οἶκός

Οἶκός: there are three basic meanings to *οἶκός*; house, that is the building; household, that is the people living in a house; and possessions or belongings. These three basic meanings are

[39] Powell, "Salvation," 7–8.

[40] Powell, "Salvation," 6.

attested since the time of Homer, according to Balz and Schneider.[41] The term occurs 115 times in the New Testament. Its close derivative οικία is found 94 times. The meaning household or family is relatively uncommon in the N.T, according to Balz and Schneider.[42] Aristotle says about it, "A complete house consists of both slaves and free," and is therefore more specifically defined as consisting of husband, wife, children, and slaves (*Pol.* 1253b.4–7). Luke uses the two meanings of building and family or household, or descendants; the third usage or meaning is not established with certainty but can be inferred from such texts as Luke 16:27 and Acts 7:20. In this study we will retain the household or family meaning of the word, the reason being simply that the jailer's concern was with his person, not his possessions; and Paul's response is for his 'salvation' (the person) together with his family, that is, the people in his house. οἶκός has its counterpart in the OT as בית The word has five basic meanings: house, dwelling, building, family, dynasty. Here we are interested with the meaning family. This meaning can refer to the immediate family (Deut. 25:9) as well as the extended and far removed relationships, thus the rendering descendant (Amos 7:16; 1 Sam. 3:14). The immediate family size varies with the prominence of its head. A well-off man may have in his house his wife and children, his parents, his brothers, nephews and nieces, aunts, servants and slaves, etc. Thus in Gen.14:14 Abraham's family is made up of more than 300 people; Jacob's family that went to Egypt had 70 people (Gen. 46:27).

In the text of Acts 16:31-35, οἶκός or οἰκίᾳ refers to the "people of the house" as Just so rightly says when he writes, "οικω designates the people of his household."[43] Thus it is not everything in the house that receives salvation, nor the house as a structure, but the people, the

[41] Balz and Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionnary of the New Testament Vol. 2* (Eerdmans, 1994), 500.

[42] Balz and Schneider *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament Vol.* 2, 502.

[43] Just, *Luke*, 716.

human beings in it. As a Roman official, the jailer may have had several servants, other adult dependents, a wife, and possibly children.

The Head of the Household as Representative and Spokesperson

Grammatically, what does the construction "you and your household" imply? Wallace asserts unconvincingly that in "instances of a compound subject with a singular verb the second nominative was still subject of the verb." So far the argument is plausible. But then he adds, "applied here, since the two verbs are linked by Kai, there is no reason to treat them differently: *Pistis* is required of the jailer's family if they are to receive *soteria*. The reason for the singular each time is evidently that the jailer is present while his family is not."[44] Here the reasoning becomes a bit shaky. For one, the argument is an assumption since the text is silent on whether the family had come out or not. But one can infer from the jailer's asking for light (v.29), that some members, especially servants, were close at hand. At least the one who brought light would likely remain with the master for further assistance. Moreover, the sequence of verses 32 to 34 seems to indicate that the expansion of the kerygma, the baptism and the washing of the wounds all took place outside before they were taken in for refreshments. Besides, there seems to be plenty of reasons to treat the subjects differently since two verbs mean two clauses, and there is no reason that the compound subject should apply to the first clause, which already contains its own subject. The explanation to this oddity is provided by Blass & Debrunner. They observe, "Regarding agreement with two or more subjects connected by και, the same loose rules are valid for the NT as for classical usage." And the rule is given, "when the subject consists of singular + singular or of singular + plural, the verb agrees with the first subject if the verb stands

[44] Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 402.

before it, except when the subject-group is basically conceived as a whole."[45] One could argue that Blass & Debrunner's argument actually reinforces the view that belief is expected of all in the compound subject. When one examines the reason why the verb agrees with the first member of the compound subject, one discovers that the first member has preeminence over the other(s). In this case, the preeminence is not simply connected to his status as a public servant, but rests upon his status as the householder, that is, the spokesperson of this household. Thus whatever he does, all in his house do, and whatever happens to him happens to all, by proxy.

As to content, that one can be saved on account of another's faith is well established in Luke (see Acts 16:14; Luke 7:1–10; 8:40), but also in the rest of Scripture. In the OT we have several passages that speak of the "salvation" of many, on account of the faithfulness of one or some. The exodus of the Israelites from Egypt is such an example. Even though all Israel left Egypt, not all had a personal faith in God. In fact their continued unbelief would lead to their demise in the wilderness. But that does not change the fact that they exited Egypt with the faithful. The Prostitute Rahab saved her family by acting kindly with the spies of Israel who had gone into Jericho to check the place out (Josh. 2). Abigail the wife of Nabal also saves her family, including her wicked husband, by acting kindly with David, and thus diverting the anger which was burning within him against the household of Nabal.

Some have suggested that the reason Paul addressed the Philippian jailer alone in verse 31 is because the other members were simply not there. The fact of the matter is that scholars bring assumptions to the text or explain away its silences because we need to fill in the blanks in order to make sense of its message. In this case, though it is possible to assume that the rest of the

[45] F. Blass & A. Debrunner *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago:University of Chicago Press), 74

family was not present in the prison prescient, it seems more plausible to argue the other way. The earthquake which woke the jailer from sleep, must also have awaken other members of the household, especially that he is said to have asked for light. It is likely that whoever brought light stayed with him rather than return inside. If the earthquake woke the jailer up from sleep, it would not be surprising that others who awoke with him panicked enough to waken up everyone else, including children. Yet for all the possibility of other people being outside when Paul was speaking to the jailer, and inside the home when the missionaries were invited, it remains that none of those could speak anything other than what the head of the household would have said. He was their spokesperson, and in charge of the spiritual direction of all under his roof. For this reason, all in the home might be welcome to hear the message of the gospel, but neither Paul nor the jailer would expect any member to speak something different from what the head would say. They could only express ascent, or as the text says, "rejoice with him that he had believed in the Lord Jesus," (v. 34). The insistence that every member must hear and believe only betrays an anachronistic reading into the text. As we have established, in Luke salvation is granted even to people who have not expressly made known their faith. Their helplessness alone draws the compassion of Him who gave his life that his sheep may have life in abundance. Moreover, the faith of those in charge of a sick person is enough to secure their healing. Thus the jailer, just like the Roman Centurion for his servant (Luke 7:1–10), or Jairus for his daughter (Luke 8:40–56), is seen as standing together as one with his household. Anything good that happens to him, happens to his family. And if there should be the slightest shade of doubt, Paul wants to make sure he knows, so he can rejoice all the more. John Chrysostom confirms that this is the way people of old understood the passage to mean salvation for all, "This specially draws men, that

their household too will be saved."[46] The words here are loaded. Chrysostom is not simply referring to people, but to "men" as the householders, the *paterfamiliae*. Against Wallace I contend that the imperative already contains it subject, and the verb that comes after the first καὶ belongs to a different clause, so that the subject of the new clause cannot serve again as the subject of the first clause.

In accordance with the *Sitz im Leben* of the period, Malina and Neyrey cast light on the issue of family interactions in these terms,

> Adult parents know the code of their society and understand the rights and duties of specific roles and statuses. And they constantly socialize their children to these under the rubric of "discipline." They are bad parents if they do not do this; and their children are bad children if they do not learn this discipline and obey. Furthermore, from our knowledge of the symbolic world of Luke-Acts, we have a sense that every role and status was quite clearly defined in Luke's world. A place for everyone, and everyone in his place. It belongs to parents to pass on the code of social relations.[47]

A few years later Ferguson affirms, "The family consisted of the entire household, including husband, wife, children, sometimes other relatives, and slaves. It was the basic unit of society in all of the cultures that provide the background for early Christianity. The family was united by common religious observances as well as by economic interdependence."[48]

How was religion carried out, and who was involved or to whom religious practices were applied? Again Ferguson lights our lanterns,

> The corporate nature or social side of religion was not lost in the Hellenistic-Roman periods. That religion is a private matter of one's own belief and practice would not have been advocated in antiquity. The meaning of the traditional civic religion in Hellenistic times has been undervalued. Religion without cult was still unthinkable, except in certain philosophical circles, and cult required an organized expression… So new groupings in addition to those based on family, state, or nationality added a

[46] Francis Martin, ed., *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Acts* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 208.

[47] Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1993), 94.

[48] Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 65.

> new dimension to the social aspect of religion and made easier an acceptance of new cults.[49]

Thus, it is reasonable to expect that in such context, on the one hand the head of a household feels responsible for the welfare, religious and otherwise, of all who are under his roof, so that any decision he makes is intended for the benefit of all. On the other hand, all such as are under his responsibility would be expected to show allegiance to him and to adhere wholeheartedly to his choices. And no outsiders would be allowed to step in and oppose the opinion of the head of the family. He will be considered an intruder of the worst species, for he would be guilty of the crime of dishonoring[50] the householder.

Were such values present only in the Greco-Roman world? Is there evidence that a similar view of the family was also found in the Semitic world, and their Sumerian and Akkadian predecessors? In the book titled *The Jewish Family in Antiquity* that he edited, Cohen and the collective of writers come to the conclusion that "the Jewish values and expectations governing parent-child relationships were entirely consonant with, and almost indistinguishable from, those of Greco-Roman society."[51] And those expectations, Suzanne Dixon,[52] Geoffrey S. Nathan,[53]

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[49] Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 165.

[50] For Neyrey, understanding honor and shame is key to understanding the world of Luke Acts. He writes, "It is truly an understatement to say that the whole of Luke's Gospel, almost every piece of social interaction, should be viewed through the lens of honor and shame," and, "Knowledge of honor and shame, both as value and as behavior, are essential elements of an adequate scenario for interpreting Luke-Acts," in *The Social World of Luke-Acts*, 64–65.

[51] Shaye J. D. Cohen ed., *The Jewish Family in Antiquity* (Atlanta GA: Scholars Press 1993), 3.

[52] Suzanne Dixon writes, "The *paterfamilias* had wide-ranging theoretical powers over children and grandchildren (children of sons)," in *The Roman Family* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1992), 117.

[53] Geoffrey S. Nathan, "As in the Classical World, Sons and Daughters were Subject to the Will of Their Father and More Generally to Their Mother and Elders," in *The family in Late Antiquity* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 144.

Beryl Rawson,[54] and Odd Magne Bakke[55] all affirm that it consisted in total submission of the *filii* and all other members to the *paterfamilias*, because the *patria potestas* gave the latter right of life and death on the former.

Objections are raised against such a view on the ground that Ezekiel 18 ushers in the end of corporate responsibility. It is argued that God sets in this passage the new principle of personal responsibility. But upon close examination, and keeping in mind that women, children, and slaves do not have a voice in legal or religious matters, one notes that the text is directed to the adult males of the community. Thus the passage is dealing with adults who refuse to take personal responsibility, and would rather pass the buck to their forebears for their spiritual condition. The passage is then speaking against eschewing one's responsibility in Israel. But when it comes to children, women, and slaves, their spiritual welfare is entrusted to the householder and any failure will be blamed on him as well. It does not address the issue of how women and children and slaves act religiously.

Another objection is that in Luke 12:51–53 Jesus seems to do away with family solidarity. However, the text is about the disharmony that the person, mission, and message of Jesus will cause in the family. Jesus is saying that he will not be received unanimously in a home. He is not condemning any family that would unanimously embrace his message. It is remarkable that the setting of the scandal posed by Jesus is still the home, or house.

[54] Beryl A. Rawson writes, "The wide powers of a family head (i.e. the oldest surviving male ascendant) have provoked surprise, even disbelief, in modern readers. But there is no denying the formal situation," in *The Family in Ancient Rome: New perspectives* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), 16.

[55] O. M. Bakke, *When Children Became People: The Birth of Childhood in Early Christianity*, trans. Brian McNeil (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2005), 38.

Obedience and Trust as the Responsibility of the Other Members of the Family

A corollary to the *patria potestas* is the total submission of other members in the Roman household, especially the wife, children, and slaves. Though the head of the household did not always exercised his *potestas*, Bakke argues that he remained "the definitive authority in the household, and […] children–like the other members of the household–were expected to submit to his will."[56] Though Bakke is specifically writing about the Roman context, his description can be extended to Philippi, a Roman colony founded by Philip II, the father of Alexander, and recolonized by Augustus in 42 BC. Thus the official in charge of the prison in this city is likely to be Roman rather than Greek. In any case, a number of hints let us in on the role of the other members in the jailer's home; he dispatches commands at will, and is obeyed without objection: (1) He asks for light (v. 29). (2) The text is silent on this, but one can reasonably imagine that he is the one who calls out every one to come and listen to the missionaries. (3) He is baptized with all who belong to him. (4) Though the text speaks of him washing their wounds, it is likely that he gave orders to his servants to do so. (5) He sets table before them, certainly through the women of the house. In all this we hear no objections from anyone. The other members of the household play well their own roles, showing thus that the man has control over his household.

Again Malina and Neyrey enlighten us regarding the role of those under a householder,

> For example, as father of a family, his honor is defined in terms of gender (male, father) and position (head of the household). When he commands his children and they obey him, his power is evident. In this situation of command and obedience, his claim to honor as father and head of the household is acknowledged; his children treat him honorably and onlookers acknowledge that he is an honorable father (see 1 Tim 3:4–5). Were his children to disobey him, he would be dishonored or shamed, for his claim would not be acknowledged, either by family or village. He would suffer shame, that is, loss of honor, reputation, and respect.[57]

[56] Bakke, *When Children Became People*, 39.

[57] Neyrey, *Social World*, 26.

Thus all members in the household are summoned by the householder to come and listen to the missionaries. Then the jailer makes profession of faith in behalf of his entire household. Though it may repulse modern people, this would have been the norm in ancient times. The question to be raised is whether that obedience was seen more than simple obedience, as a profession of faith on the part of those other members of the household.

The Concretization of the Answer: The Household as the Locus and Beneficiary of Salvation

The climax of the Philippian jailer pericope is the salvation of the whole household. This salvation is sealed with the administration of the sacrament of baptism. Some even suggest that the meal they share afterwards carries sacramental overtones.[58] Thus the house here functions as a full "church" where "the gospel is purely taught, and the Sacraments are correctly administered."[59]

The Home as "Church"

Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus, goes the saying attributed to Cyprian of Carthage, and which has become a key missiological doctrine in the Roman Catholic Church. Many take this to mean that the seeker of salvation must go to the church, in a geographical sense, to find salvation. Thus we see a number of mission agencies building church structures in places where they have no single convert, and they have as yet sent in evangelists to proclaim the Good News. The hope is that people will come in to hear the Word and thus convert to Christ. This is a wrong-headed strategy that runs counter to the model Christ the Head left his body, the Church. There are at

[58] Smith writes, "The common meal in which the newly baptized "rejoiced" together before God may have been sacramental (9:18–19). It should be remembered that the sacramental meal was less formal and liturgical than ours, and every meal was more sacramental and religious than ours," *Acts*, 250.

[59] AC VII.

least two connotations of the term church in usage: church as a locus, a geographical place where people meet, and church as the people gathered. In the first connotation, the saying "outside the church there is no salvation" would indicate that the responsibility falls on the seeker to find the right place that distills salvation. Such an understanding is in contradiction to the concept of *missio* (Mt 20:18–20). In the second meaning, the church is the gathered people, the members of the body of Christ. The Augsburg Confession rightly defines the church as the congregation of saints in which the Gospel is purely taught and the Sacraments are correctly administered." (AC VII). The preposition "in" here could be misleading, as though the emphasis is once again on a place, but it is clear from the context that the emphasis is on two things: the gathered, not simply each individual in and of himself, and the saints, that is, the baptized faithful. These gathered saints are on mission. They are the members of the body of Christ, who is the *Missio Dei*, going into the world. Thus the church is not the place, but the agent of salvation. The saying would simply be restating the biblical truth that salvation is in Christ.

How then is the household of the jailer a church, where salvation is found? It is clear that before the people at his house heard the Good News about Jesus, they were not the church, nor an emanation of the church. But as soon as the jailer invited the missionaries under his roof, the gathered people became the church, where the Gospel is taught and the sacraments administered. Enumerating the functions the house or home fulfills in Luke-Acts, Elliot Writes,

> Houses, homes, and households provide in Luke-Acts the setting for a wide range of events in the life of Jesus and his followers:
> the proclamation of the gospel, the experience of forgiveness of sins, salvation and the presence of the Spirit: Luke 1:39–56; 5:17–26; 7:36–50; 8:38–39,49–56; 9:4; 10:5–7; 12:3; 15:11–32; 18:14; 19:1–10; Acts 2:1–42; 5:42; 10:148; 11:14–15; 16:25–34; 18:7–8; 22:16
> teaching: Luke 7:36–50; 10:38–42; 11:37–52; 14:1–24; 22:24–38; Acts 2:42; 5:42; 18:11; 20:7–12, 20; 28:30–31.
> healing: Luke 4:38–41; 5:18–26; 7:1–10; 8:4–5; Acts 9:10–19, 32–35, 36–43; 20:7–12; 28:7–10.

prophecy: Acts 2:1–21; 21:8–14.
revelations and visions: Luke 1:26–38; 24:28–35; Acts 1:13–26; 9:10–19; 10:1–8, 9–23; 11:13–14; 13:2; 18:7–10.
redefining the family of Jesus: Luke 8:19–21.
hospitality and lodging: Luke 19:1–10; Acts 9:10–19, 43; 10:6; 12:12–17; 16:15, 34; 17:5; 18:7; 21:8, 16; (27:3); 28:7–10, 13–14.
hospitality of meals and table fellowship': Luke 5:29–39; 7:36–50; 10:38–42; 11:37–52; 14:1–24, cf. 15:2; 22:7–38; 24:28–32, 36–49; Acts 9:19; 10:1–11:18; 16:34.
worship (prayer, praise, fasting, Passover meal, baptism, Lord's Supper r): Luke 1:39–56; 22:7–38; 24:28–35; Acts 1:14; 2:46–47; 4:23–31; 9:10–19; 10:1- . 8; 12:12; 13:2; 16:33; 20:7–10.
sharing property and distribution of goods to the needy: Luke 19:1–10; Acts 2:44–45; 4:34–37; 6:1–6; 9:36–42; 10:1–2; cf. 20:34–35.[60]

His enumeration references Acts 16:25–34 with regards to the proclamation of the gospel, the experience of forgiveness of sins, salvation and the presence of the Spirit; hospitality of meals and table fellowship; worship (Baptism and Lord's Supper).

The Proclamation of the Gospel and Administration of the Sacraments Take Place Here

The Apostles speak the Word not only to the jailer, but to the group gathered, certainly in the courtyard of the compound. And one can imagine each of them hanging onto every word coming from their mouth. The fear caused by the earthquake has done the work of the law, now the group is ready for some good news. The missionaries did not need coaxing; they readily expounded on the good news of Jesus Christ, including the fact that the jailer's family would also benefit from this salvation. Considering what we now know of the corporate mentality of the time, it would be a surprise that Paul should insist on personal individual faith. Paul knew that the jailer was the *paterfamilias*, and with the authority conferred by the *patria potestas*, no member of the family would say anything contrary to what he would say. Thus with no further ado the missionaries are taken in and proceed to baptize all in the home.

[60] John H. Elliott, "Temple Versus Household in Luke-Acts: A Contrast in Social Institutions" *The Social World of Luke Acts*, 225–26.

That the home should function as a venue for the kerygma should not surprise anyone at all who is familiar with the religious practice of the time. Both in Israel and in the surrounding cultures, family cult or religious activity is well established. For Israel, one of the sacrifices established perpetually, is the Passover. Unlike other sacrifices, the Passover takes place in private homes, not in the Temple or the synagogue. Besides, family cult is also well-established in the OT.

As for Paul, aware of his calling to be the Apostle to the Gentiles, and in the absence of the Temple or the synagogue, the house became the choice venue for his pioneer missionary activity (cf. Acts 20:20). In fact Paul is not inventing a new method; as his custom, he seizes on the opportunity that family cult or religion affords for his kerygma. The practice of house or family cult is a ubiquitous phenomenon in the ancient Near Eastern World, as well as in the Greco-Roman World.[61] . Paul will turn this opportunity into a methodology, and with great success, for the expansion of Christianity. Much has been written regarding the importance of the house in the spread of Christianity in the first century.[62] If one considers Matson's argument that the sending of the Twelve and the Seventy-two in Luke 9 and 10 respectively is setting the Modus Operandi of the Jesus movement,[63] then one can argue that Paul here is simply following the method already established by the Master of the Harvest himself. Elliott asserts that "houses and

[61] See for example, Martin P. Nilsson, *Geschichte der griechischen Religion*, 2: 359–63; Karel van der Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria and Israel: Continuity and Change in the Forms of Religious Life* Studies in the History and Culture of the Ancient Near East VII (Leiden: Brill, 1996), and Rainer Albertz and Rudiger Schmitt, *Family and Household Religion in Ancient Israel and the Levant* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2012).

[62] See Edward Adams, *The Earliest Christian Meetings Places: Almost Exclusively Houses?* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013); Carolyn Osiek, Margaret Y. MacDonald and Janet H. Tulloch, *A Woman's Place: House Churches in Earliest Christianity* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2005); Carolyn Osiek and David L. Balch, *Families in the New Testament World: Households and house Churches* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997); Robert Banks, *Paul's Idea of Community: the Early House Churches in their Historical Setting* (Homebush West, Australia: The Paternoster Press, 1980; Jean-Noel Aletti, S.J., *Essai sur l'Ecclesiologie des Lettres de Saint-Paul* (Pende, France: J. Gabalda et Cie, 2009).

[63] Matson, *Household Conversion Narratives in Acts*, 15.

households constitute not only the settings for the reception of the good news in Luke-Acts. As house churches, they also represent the basic social organization through which the gospel advances from Palestine to Rome. Literally, the church spread '*from house to house*'."[64]

The Spokesperson Confesses and the Whole Family Receives the Sacraments and Their Benefit

καὶ παραλαβὼν αὐτοὺς ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ὥρᾳ τῆς νυκτὸς ἔλουσεν ἀπὸ τῶν πληγῶν, καὶ ἐβαπτίσθη αὐτὸς καὶ οἱ αὐτοῦ πάντες παραχρῆμα (Act 16:33); "And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, and all his." What response did Paul's preaching elicit from his audience? The text is silent. Or rather it gives us an unexpected version of response, hospitality. Unlike our modern panting for certainty and verbal communication, the protagonists in our text communicate in a non-verbal way, sometimes innuendoes suffice to express their thoughts. Thus rather than making a public confession that he is embracing the message, the jailer simply had their wounds cleaned and bandaged. In return, he and all in his house are baptized. Malina and Pilch assert, "True to the nature of collectivistic culture, the jailer and his entire family were baptized (see Acts 16:15), following Paul's advice."[65] Earlier they had written regarding the conversion of Lydia's household, "The fact that Lydia's entire household submits to baptism is typical of collectivistic societies (see Josh. 24:l4–15; Acts 16:33). Everyone acts with a view toward harmony and promoting the common good. Individual choices and preferences simply do not factor into consideration."[66] Interestingly, all this is still happening outside, a clear indication then that the whole family was by now outside

[64] Elliott, "Temple Versus Household in Luke-Acts," 226.

[65] Malina and Pilch, *Book of Acts*, 120–21.

[66] Malina and Pilch, *Book of Acts*, 117.

and witnessing everything. One can picture the women holding or nursing the small ones, for no one in their right mind would let children indoors while running out because of an earthquake. Though we can only conjecture about the presence of children, this conjecture can only be justified on the assumption that the jailer or any of his slaves or sons did not have any children, which is much more far-fetched than the proposition that children were also present. Thus I disagree with Malina and Pilch's conclusion when the write that "it would seem that those baptized had to be capable of attentively listening to and understanding Paul's instruction. Scholars think this would exclude children. On the other hand, while individuals were baptized, in collectivistic societies children were part and parcel of their parents and the whole collectivistic ingroup–hence the baptism of a family's adults sufficed for the ingroup children as well."[67] It could be argued with Cullman that baptism would follow the practice encountered with proselyte baptism into Judaism "where children of proselytes were baptized along with their parents, while the children born to such parents after their reception into Judaism did not need to be baptized.[68] But, as Richardson argues, "clearly the postapostolic Church did not share Cullmann's view of St Paul's teaching: the children of believing parents were, as a matter of historical fact, always baptized."[69] Besides, if religious rituals can be broadly defined as "any repetitive social practice composed of a sequence of symbolic activities, set off from the social routines of everyday life, recognizable by members of the society as a ritual, and closely connected to a specific set of ideas that are often encoded in myth,"[70] then baptism is a rite that

[67] Malina and Pilch, *Book of Acts*, 121.

[68] O. Cullmann, *Baptism in the New Testament* pp. 26, 44f, cited in Richardson, *Introduction*, 359.

[69] O. Cullmann, *Baptism in the New Testament* pp. 26, 44f, cited in Richardson, *Introduction*, 359.

[70] Robert H. Lavenda and Emily A. Schultz, *Core Concepts in Cultural Anthropology* (Mountain View, CA: Mayfield, 2000), 70.

belongs to this category. In fact Paul G. Hiebert classifies baptism among the rites of passage. And practically speaking, one does not accomplish a rite of passage, rather one undergoes the rite. For this reason, all stages of life are marked with a rite of passage, whether the passenger is an adult or a baby. Thus it cannot be simply affirmed that because the society was collectivistic, the baptism of adults would suffice for children. I contend, *contra* Malina and Pilch, that the faith of the householder, not his baptism or that of the adults, is sufficient to serve as the basis of the baptism of all, including the children in the household. For if there were any children at all in the household, by now none is left inside, all are outside with the adults, which corroborates the text's affirmation that the jailer was baptized with all in his house. To give the full force of the Greek here, one needs to translate, "and all who belong to him." This rendering is in line with what we know about the power the head of a household had over all those under his roof.

The hospitality of the jailer is rightly understood by Paul and his companion as meaning acceptance of the message. Thus they do not hesitate to baptize the whole family. This attitude accords with Jesus's own instructions to the Twelve and the Seventy-two when he sent them out on mission (Luke 9 and 10). He formally forbade them to take provision, and made hospitality the mark of the reception of his message of peace. Then the company is invited in the house, where a meal is served to the missionaries.

The Whole Family Rejoices: ἠγαλλιάσατο πανοικεὶ πεπιστευκὼς τῷ θεῷ. (Acts 16:34)

Only after the family was baptized and the missionaries' wounds were washed that they were invited inside the house for a meal. The meal gives the family the opportunity to rejoice with the head of the household, "that he had trusted God." The Greek construction here is complex and lends itself to two possible renderings: *πανοικεί* is either modifying *ἠγαλλιάσατο*, thus producing "he rejoiced with his family that he had trusted God;" or it is modifying rather the

participle *πεπιστευκὼς*, and will be translated "he rejoiced that he had believed together with his family." Though grammatically these renderings are both correct, it must be said that Greek can be very helpful in clarifying ambiguities. In this case, the rules regarding emphasis come into play. The emphasis here is on the believing, not on the "believing together." Wallace rightly identifies the function of the adverbial clause as causal.[71] Though he maintains that as a general rule, the participle precedes the verb it modifies, he recognizes that Act 16:34 is an exception, "Although not frequent, causal participles can follow their controlling verbs, as here."[72] Thus I concur with Wallace who prefers the rendering "and he rejoiced with his whole family because he had believed in God." In light of the cultural map of the time, this is the most plausible reading, for as Dixon confirms, "The *paterfamilias* was, in a sense, the public representative of the family unit, interacting between its members and the law or the state,"[73] and we may add, or the gods. In fact the members of his family were his possession. But this must not be taken to mean that no other member of the family believed. It indicates simply that what the householder did, all under his roof followed suit, and there is no need to specify that they also believed. The specification would become necessary only if there were discordant voices in the family.

This is most intriguing, if not repugnant to modern western ears, that the householder would speak for all, and impose his will to all. My goal here is not to make an apology of patriarchal society. Nor is it to say that all readings must follow what happened in first century Palestine or Greco-Roman world. What I want to put forward is the assertion that the bearers of the Gospel did not attempt to change the culture before they offered the good news. They offered the good news, which when received, carried the power to transform, and to conform to the one

[71] Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 632.

[72] Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 632.

[73] Dixon, *Roman Family*, 138.

who is "the founder and perfecter" of their faith (see Heb. 12:2 ESV). And it is doubtful that family solidarity is actually a wrong value in contrast to individualism. There certainly are historical abuses both towards women and children in patriarchal societies. But these can be combatted without rejecting the whole solidarity or collectivistic understanding of society. In fact Suzanne Dixon asserts that for all the extent of their powers, fathers seldom exercised it to its fullest. The rights of the *patria potestas* "were in practice tempered by custom and gradually by law,"[74] she says.

Partial Conclusion

At the end of this analysis, let me now rephrase the initial paraphrase of the pericope in Vignette Three.

> Joboyang was a prison guard. Two missionaries were preaching in town, but the authorities arrested them and put them in jail after they had them beaten by the prison guard and the soldiers. Joboyang himself secured the fetters on the prisoners' feet. At night the missionaries were singing and praying. Joboyang could not keep the wake and went in for some rest. All of a sudden there was an earthquake, the prison doors flung open, and the shackles broke from the feet of the prisoners. Joboyang, who had gone to his house to rest, came out running. He found the doors wide open so he wanted to fall on the sword he had in hand, and thus kill himself. For he thought of what the authorities would do to him and his family. At best he would be publicly dealt a hundred blows, thus humiliated and dishonored in the sight of all. His own family would lose face and not dare to come out in public again. Or worse, he and his family could be sold into slavery. How could he bear that? But the famous prisoners, who understood that God was going to do something magnificent, shouted, "Do no harm to yourself. We are all here. No one has escaped." The man asked one of his servants to bring light. Trembling, he came in and checked on the prisoners. All were there. Then, a new fear gripped him. He said to himself, "These men, who were preaching a new religion– their God is really powerful, and I have become guilty of flogging and chastening his servants. How will I escape his wrath? I am doomed. So he threw himself at their feet and begged, "What must I do to escape the wrath of your God?" One of the missionaries answered him, "Believe in Jesus whom we were preaching, and nothing will happen to you, nor to your family. You will be reconciled with God, because Jesus already bore this wrath against you when he suffered and died on the cross. He was offered as the guilt offering for our offenses. You do not

[74] Dixon, *Roman Family*, 138.

> need to offer any other sacrifice." By this time all in his family had come out, the women and servant girls holding the small ones, some sleeping on their shoulders. Joboyang invited the men into his compound, and ordered his servants to heat water and clean the wounds of the men. He ordered also that food be served to them. In their turn the missionaries baptized him and all his family that very hour of the night. Then Joboyang invited then inside for a meal, and he celebrated joyfully with his family that he had become a Christian and had escaped the wrath of both men and God.

Notice the changes that take place, for emphasis purposes. The jailer now has a name, the missionaries lose their names; explanations are added here and there to clarify the meaning, and certain details are overlooked. But anyone acquainted with the Philippian Jailer narrative will be able to recognize the story right away. The essential message is preserved, and the story can be repeated to any first hearers to proclaim salvation in Christ Jesus. Thus its importance in pioneer evangelism and mission in the *oiko-centric* approach I am propounding in this research.

Speaking of Mission and Evangelism, Fernando claims he can identify four "principles for reaching the unreached"[75] in the pericope of Acts 16:11–40, of which the first three are key to the discussion of verses 25 to 34: (1) "Paul looked for what church planters sometimes refer to as a bridgehead . . . the place of prayer." (2) "The interplay between human initiative in witnessing and divine quickening in the evangelistic process." (3) "The conversion of all members of a social unit (a household)." My own analysis of Acts 16:25–34 leads me to expand on these principles in this way: first, the earthquake is not only the bridgehead, but the evidence God is already at work where Paul is now going to proclaim the good news of salvation in Jesus. God is already at work ahead of the missionary in at least two ways: through natural revelation (cf. Rom. 1:18–23), and through "special revelations," dreams and theophany. Terrence Tiessen identifies at least four modes of God's natural universal revelation: (1) Creation (Job 36:24–

[75] Fernando, *Acts*, 447–48.

37:24; 38:1–39:30; Ps 19:1–6; 104; 148; Rom. 1:18–21); (2) Moral consciousness (Rom. 2:14–15); 3) religious consciousness (cf. Acts 17:22–31); (4) Providence (Col. 1:17; Matt. 5:45; Acts 14:17; 17:26–27).[76] The jailer's question is not a fortuitous and egotistic inquiry, but a concern larger than his own need for safety or protection, a deep need to set things right with God, both for himself and his family. Paul picks up the opportunity right away and responds accordingly. Rather than fleeing and encouraging his co-detainees to do the same, he looks for what God is doing next. Thus he is able to spot the jailer as the man is about to harm himself and prevents him from doing so. This means that Paul discerned that God was going to do something unexpected and important with this earthquake. We noted that earthquakes in those days were considered to be divine manifestations. Rather than shunning the pagan superstition, Paul was attuned to divine interventions and sized up the occasion. As M. A. C. Warren warns, "Our first task in approaching another people, another culture, another religion, is to take off our shoes, for the place we are approaching is holy. Else we may find ourselves treading on [people's] dreams. More serious still, we may forget that God was here before our arrival."[77] God is always ahead of the bearers of the Gospel, not only in miraculous ways, but also through natural revelation. What is a dim revelation of God through nature, and culture is part of that natural environment, the preachers of the Gospel will simply make known in a much clearer way.

A corollary to finding bridgehead is contextualization. Just as one discovers that God was ahead of us in the mission field, one must also be ready to follow in his steps in communicating the good news to the people. God uses the ordinary tools humans use in order to communicate with them, not some heavenly language. In fact, as Paul so rightly instructs, when such a

[76] Tiessen, *Who Can Be Saved?*, 106–11.

[77] M. A. C. Warren, "General Introduction," in *The Primal Vision: Christian Presence and African Religion*, ed. John Taylor (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1963), 10.

heavenly language is given to a person to express the mysteries of God in the public worship, there must be an interpreter, otherwise let the person be quiet and keep it to himself (see 1 Cor. 14:27–28). Contextualization is not an attempt to please the culture or the people of a particular culture by inserting elements of their religious beliefs or practices in the Christian message or praxis. Contextualization is rather aimed at finding ways to speak the good news to a particular people group in an engaging and relevant manner, so that they are able to appropriate the message for themselves in their own context. Hiebert distinguishes three types of contextualization: uncritical rejection of contextualization, which simply denies any value to old ways; uncritical contextualization, which on the contrary unreservedly accepts old ways, and critical contextualization which seek to examine a practice in light of Scripture in order to determine whether it is acceptable or not.[78] But this method fits better with issues of praxis, not necessarily with cross-cultural communication of the Gospel. Thus it is crucial to look at other models of contextualization as well.[79] As was demonstrated in this chapter, Paul was a keen observer of the culture. Thus he contextualized his message to fit the need of the jailer and his family, despite Fitzmyer's assessment that the question was "classic" as was the response. Critical contextualization will be given greater consideration in Chapter Four as I attempt an application of the *oiko-centric* model of mission in West Africa.

Fernando's second principle, the interplay between divine and human agency is also at play here; God causes the earthquake, and Paul does the remaining work of expanding on what it means and what the way out is. Modern missions, especially from liberal church bodies, have

[78] Paul G. Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 184–87.

[79] Stephen Bevans; David J. Hesselgrave and Edward Rommen propose an "authentic and relevant contextualization" in *Contextualization: Meanings, Methods, and Models* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), 199–203; Dean Flemming speaks of "authentic contextualization," in *Contextualization in the New Testament: Patterns for Theology and Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 305.

become some sort of humanitarian agencies providing relief or developmental work with "no strings attached," meaning they will not engage in "proselytizing" through the humanitarian work. Such an approach is laudable in that it wants the gospel to stand on its own as its message pierces through the thickness of the human heart. Nevertheless, somebody has to speak as people who benefit these efforts would ask at some point the reason for this benevolence. At that point the missionary had better be prepared with the true message of the Gospel, else he will be falling into some form of the theology of glory. He will either glorify himself as a man or woman of big heart, or the agency or country that sent him. Jesus and his gospel will have no place.

The third principle Fernando speaks about is the conversion of the jailer's whole house. I prefer to speak of the salvation of his household. To the distraught jailer Paul answers, "believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." And after the man attends to their wounds from the beatings, Paul baptizes him and all in his house. The solution he offers provides the way out for the jailer and his family as well. It is a formulation that truly reflects the gospel. It is good news to the man, who most certainly knew that the wrath of God or of the gods was not directed at him alone, but that his family too would suffer the consequences. Thus Chrysostom's insightful line, "This specially draws men, that their household too will be saved." Fernando thinks that this is distinct from mass conversion where, according to him, "individuals do not have a will of their own." But this is exactly what is happening here: the members of the jailer's household do not have a will of their own; the householder's will is their will, what he says is what they say. No one in fact asks for their opinion, for everyone knows every good member of a household obeys the head thereof. It is not impossible that if there were other adult members or freedmen in the household, the jailer would consult with them. But he would not need to consult his wife or children in order to engage his household in the new religion. Thus,

whether there were children in the jailer's household or not, there was a group of people in that household that did not have much to say in terms of decision on religious or any other matter. Their role was to obey. Both the culture of the jailer and that of Paul, made this plausible to both. The language of the text indicates beyond reasonable doubt that the prominent figure in this episode was the jailer, and that the others were simply following his lead. Third, though they had no decision or say in this, all in his house were baptized with him, and rejoiced with him that he had believed in God. Thus we see unfolding an evangelism that takes place with the whole household as a unit. The gathered group functions fully as church, where the Gospel is proclaimed and the Sacraments rightly administered. This episode is not random. With Luke it follows a pattern well established by Jesus himself in the gospel. Twice Jesus sends his disciples in mission, and twice the indicated destination is the οικια, the household (Luke 9:4; 10:5). This method or approach, Luke witnessed its implementation first hand as he accompanied Paul on some of his missionary journeys. In this regard Mike Breen writes, "Paul usually began in the public space and allowed the message to penetrate the social space. But with the public space of the synagogue removed, he had to find another way. Now he had οικος as his principal location for mission."[80] This takes us back full circle to principle number one, finding bridgeheads. If at the beginning of the chapter Paul and his companions find the bridgehead in the place of prayer, the house is readily available as the locus of pioneer mission work. The history of Christianity in Europe, according to Bevans and Schroeder, is filled with episodes of mass conversion,

> This period of church history was marked by many mass conversions. The common pattern for this involved a converted king or prince making the choice for Christianity on behalf of his people. While this would often provoke some negative reactions and reversals, eventually masses of people would be baptized and these nominal Christians would then wait for the arrival of bishops, priests, monks and nuns to offer them a further understanding and witness of this new faith. It is important to

[80] Mike Breen, *Leading Kingdom Movements*, (Pawley Island, SC: 3Dimension Ministries, 2013), 130.

> remember that for a society that more highly values the communal aspect, rather than the individual, such a group choice for a new religion is quite natural. Religion is an integrated part of a holistic cultural system with the ultimate aim of sustaining the well-being of the group–marked, for example, by abundance in fertility, success in war and protection from disaster. In this way, Christianity did over time reach the depth of tribal societies. Such a process was quite common throughout northern Europe, and it had at least begun quite significantly by the end of the tenth century also in Bohemia, Poland, Hungary and Scandinavia. This dynamic link between society and religion lay the groundwork for the emerging concept and identity of a *Christian nation* or *Christendom*–emerging from the tribal appropriation of the Christian faith and determining the future shape of Christianity.[81]

It can be argued that Bevans and Schroeder are speaking of a different topic, namely mass conversion. However I believe the same principles are at work in both household salvation and mass conversion: a social unit under the responsibility of a leader who speak for them, and decides for everyone. Individual members of the unit can still disagree with the leader, but such a disagreement is seen as an act of rebellion against the leader. In any case the point remains the same, in communal societies, the leader of the group is the spokesperson of that group, and what happens to him happens to all. God, it seems, reckons with the situation, as salvation throughout Scripture is proclaimed both to individuals and to a whole unit.

In the next chapter I will turn to the study of the West African context in order to lay the foundation for the application of the oiko-centric model of mission and evangelism.

[81] Bevans & Schroeder, *Constants in Context*, 125–26.

CHAPTER THREE:

AFRICAN CULTURE COMPARED WITH FIRST CENTURY PALESTINIAN AND GRECO-ROMAN CULTURES

> Our first task in approaching another people, another culture, another religion, is to take off our shoes, for the place we are approaching is holy. Else we may find ourselves treading on [people's] dreams. More serious still, we may forget that God was here before our arrival.[1]

As I begin the comparative study of some aspects of West African culture and that of the New Testament World, I am mindful of Warren's warning above. This is a crucial step. As a matter of fact, in my experience many Lutherans seem to understand the position of Luther and the Lutheran confessional documents on culture to mean that nothing positive can be gained from culture. I posit that it is necessary to make a distinction between a magisterial use of culture, that is, in an attempt to find in it a valid formulae of justification or salvation, and a ministerial use of culture as the vehicle of the phenomenology and epistemology of a particular society. Thus the description of the Tupuri culture here will essentially follow a phenomenological methodology, though without espousing all the presuppositions of the method. The scathing critiques[2] levelled against phenomenology as a method for the study of

[1] M. A. C. Warren, "General Introduction," in *The Primal Vision: Christian Presence and African Religion*, ed. John Taylor (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1963), 10.

[2] One such critique, in Cox's view, is brought by Gavin Flood who asserts that phenomenology's claim to go from particular to general "turns the study of religion into a study of the structure of the religious 'consciousness' because it is wed to the idea it imported from Husserl that 'assumes the universality of the rational subject … who can, through objectification, have access to a truth external to any particular historical and cultural standpoint." The other charge is brought by Robert Segal and Paul-Francois Tremlet. They argue that phenomenologists, by insisting that religion exists as an entity in itself, and the study of which requires specific methodological tools, have moved from a social study of religion to theology, for they become endorsers of the religious beliefs and practices they study. See James L. Cox, "Methodological Views on African Religions" *The Wiley-Blackwell Comppanion to African Religions*, ed. Elias Kifon Bongmba (Maden, MD: Blackwell, 2012), 30–33.

religion notwithstanding, James L. Cox has successfully restored it as a viable tool for the study of African religion.[3]

The aim of this chapter is to offer a bird's eye view of the religious and cultural landscape of a West African people, namely the Tupuri, in order on the one hand to establish similarities with first century Palestinian and Greco-Roman worlds, and on the other, to see how God has been at work here ahead of the bearers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Following Neyrey's outline,[4] it is subdivided in three sections: the social psychology section addresses the crucial issue of honor and shame, the African personality, and the codes of conduct. Section two deals with social institutions, especially politico-religious institutions, religious beliefs, and ways of

[3] Cox notes three important concepts that makes phenomenology still a viable tool for the study of African religions: *epoché*, a term first used by Edmund Husserl to "suspend all judgments associated with what he called the natural attitude." The use of *epoché* requires that the scholar "suspend *personal beliefs* and withhold judgments on *academic theories* about religion. This means the analysis will be conducted in a "value-neutrality" position. This is certainly appealing compared to some of the caricatures and plainly derogatory analyses of some anthropologists and missionaries of the African religious practices. For the simple reason that the phenomenologist tries to put himself in the shoes of those whose religion he is studying makes the method palatable as opposed to approaches that aim rather at debasing the other.

The second concept is "sympathetic interpolation," defined as the "persistent and strenuous application of intense sympathy" or empathy. This concept is probably the most difficult for a confessing Christian, for it means participating in rites and practices that are morally or ethically objectionable, even as an outside observer, though this does not entail necessarily that sympathetic interpolation is wrong. The Apostle Paul affirmed that he became "all things to all people, so that by all means I might save some." (1 Cor 9:22). Of course the phenomenologist is against such an approach, but what one does with the outcome of a religious study of a group should not be the concern of the scholar of religion in the first place. To empathetically analyze a religion is all that he desires, and if the theologian or missionary can accomplish that, the phenomenologist should be satisfied. What is done with the result of such a study lies beyond his sphere of competence. Cox admits that much too, "This method does not dictate to other disciplines in the social sciences what interpretations are permitted or feasible."(34)

The third key concept is the *eidetic intuition*. By this, according to Cox, is meant "that the observer is able to apprehend not just particular entities or even universal classes of entities but their essential meanings as entities and classes of entities," in "Methodological Views on African Religions" 26–28. Cox then concludes, "It should now be evident from my description of the key elements in the phenomenology of religion that, as a method, it aims to promote understanding of religions in particular and of religion in general."(30) Such an approach leads to a mapping of religious consciousness, providing a sort of religious matrix from which all specificities arise. But this is where the theologian finds the method too presumptuous, for it reduces special revelation to the level of a humanly designed religion. One can imagine that the response of the scholar of religion will be something of the sort of response that Peter Berger gives to Christians, namely that it is incumbent upon them to prove that their faith is different from a social construction of reality. At any rate I think the method can be profitably used to paint a less biased picture of the Tupuri culture under consideration.

[4] Neyrey, *Social World* Table of Content, iii and iv.

resolving conflicts. The final section studies social dynamics, how rituals and ceremonies are interwoven in the daily life of the Tupuri.

Social Psychology of the Tupuri

Honor and Shame in West Africa

Malina defines honor as "the positive value of a person in his or her own eyes plus the positive appreciation of that person in the eyes of his or her social group," while shame is the "loss of honor, reputation, and respect."[5]

Honor can be ascribed or acquired. First, ascribed honor happens to a person passively through birth, family connections, or endowment by notable persons of power. In this, honor is like wealth: ascribed honor resembles inherited wealth. Second, acquired honor is honor actively sought and achieved, most often at the expense of one's equals in the social contest of challenge and riposte. Acquired honor is like wealth obtained through one's efforts, honorable or dishonorable.[6]

Ascribed honor among many West African peoples is linked to one's ancestry: thus *Waŋkabraw* or *Waŋkluu*, among the Tupuri of northern Cameroon and southern Chad designates the spiritual supreme leader. Because this leader's role is hereditary, the children of the *Waŋkluu* are known as *Maybiŋni* for the daughters, and *Welbiŋni*, for the sons. Men and women born to a parent of good repute also benefit ascribed honor. They are usually identified as "jar ni mo…," the progeny of so… The simple evocation of the name of their illustrious ascendant suffices to grant them respect. However, misconduct on their part will lead people to deny them the

[5] Malina, "Honor and Shame in Luke-Acts: Pivotal Values of the Mediterranean World," *The Social World of Luke-Acts*, 25–26.

[6] Malina, "Honor and Shame," 27–28.

consideration they would normally receive from the ascendant. They will be considered a dishonor to that name.

Acquired honor happens as a result of one's outstanding actions in the community. The champion of *goomu*, wrestling, or of *weiŋla* , a sort of cricket or golf tournament,[7] known as the *bloom*, receives much honor: every parent is ready to betroth their daughter to him. This is the greatest recognition a man can receive from the community. He can marry any girl he wants, and with voluntary dowry, unlike a regular man who will be expected to pay a certain dowry before he could marry. The same is true for the hunter who never returns empty handed from a hunting party. The soldier who is invincible in war, or proves his prowess by defeating dreadful enemies is also covered with the highest honors: generally the *Waŋklu* will give him in marriage his most beautiful daughter. Other honors may include a gift of a piece of land, a cow for the *gurna* season. A habit of kindness and generosity also brings honor to the person reckoned as such. The diviner who gives the most accurate prognosis gains good reputation and is covered with much honor. In any case, acquired honor is dependent upon rigorous observation of the code of conduct of the community. This code, though not written, is passed on by fathers to their sons, and mothers to their daughters. A failure to observe these codes will result in physical punishment inflicted by the head of the household upon the breaker, except the adult males.

Though the individual garners much glory from his accomplishment, he is not the only one to benefit, and he must make sure to make his family, clan, tribe, and village, to be proud as well. Selfishness and egotism are frown upon. Conversely shame, the opposite or the loss of honor bears on the whole family, clan, and village. Thus public offenses that bring shame are

[7] S. Ruelland calls it "mi golf, mi baseball," in "Through the Looking-Glass. L'espace Aquatique chez les Tupuri," *Journal des Africanistes* 79, no. 1 (2009): 132.

denounced in derogatory songs aimed at shaming the offender, and sometimes leading to his exile from the community. This happens when the offender is an adult male, a minor or woman whose householder refused or was unable to chastise properly. The song signals to the surrounding villages that this village did not condone the abhorrent behavior, thus cleansing itself from the opprobrium of the deviant action.

The importance of studying the issue of honor and shame is thus laid out by Malina, "The perspective of honor and shame helps us to appreciate the agonistic quality of that world, and it offers us a literary and social form (challenge-riposte) to interpret the conflicts."[8] And the conclusion both Malina and Neyrey arrive at regarding the first century world can equally apply to the Tupuri traditional society: "In our estimation, first-century Mediterranean personality cannot be understood without a detailed understanding of the pivotal value of honor and shame."[9] The tandem honor-shame also regulates the daily life of the Tupuri, as has been demonstrated.

Personality Type

The Tupuri, though he is expected to be an accomplished individual who enjoys much personal freedom, must also abide by a tightly framed code of acceptable conduct so that personal self-actualizing is always a matter of group action. For all their success, an individual will always be identified as the son or daughter of such and such. If the parents are not well-known, grandparents or other more important siblings of the ascendant will be referenced. Tapiwa Mucherera argues that the African's self-understanding of his personality can be

[8] Ruelland, "Through the Looking-Glass," 64.

[9] Ruelland, "Through the Looking-Glass," 76.

expressed in the saying "I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am."[10] Mucherera gives other sayings that express how the African understands himself in relation to his community, "One tree does not make a forest," or "a charcoal or coal gets its burning energy from being in the fire of others." Mucherera concludes that "humans get their vitality, their physical, social, psychological and spiritual security and their identity from being in healthy relationships with others."[11] Mucherera is almost right, except that the identity is not developed in healthy relationships with just anyone, but primarily with the immediate extended family. Thus fathers enjoy recounting the genealogies of the kinship within the community, making sure that their children know who their siblings are, both near and far.

Moreover, the Tupuri, like most of Africans, is a very religious person. Religion permeates his daily life through rites and ceremonies. Mbiti rightly sums up the African identity in this regard,

> To be human is to belong to the whole community, and to do so involves participating in the beliefs, ceremonies, rituals and festivals of that community. A person cannot detach himself from the religion of his group, for to do so is to be severed from his roots, his foundation, his context of security, his kinships and the entire group of those who make him aware of his own existence. To be without one of these corporate elements of life is to be out of the whole picture. Therefore, to be without religion amounts to a self-excommunication from the entire life of society, and African peoples do not know how to exist without religion.[12]

Labelling and Deviance

The social system of the Tupuri is saturated with stated and unstated acceptable and unacceptable behaviors. People who become guilty of not fitting in the acceptable norms are considered deviants. There is a code for boys and girls, for women and men, for the young and

[10] Tapiwa N. Mucherera, *Pastoral Care from a Third World Perspective* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001), 55.

[11] Mucherera, *Pastoral Care*, 55.

[12] John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, Anchor Books (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970), 3.

the old. The young girl is expected to stay in the kitchen with her mother and do other home chores; boys are trained by their father to do the manly chores: hunting, tilting the ground, shepherding, building a house, etc. Girls must not associate with boys, except when they are old enough to go to the dances. Boys cannot do women's chores; if they do they are scolded by their father, or they suffer banter from their peers. In any case repeated disobedience of a child could in the past lead to him or her being sold or even handed over to be killed by the elders of the community. Nowadays parents can no longer discipline their children beyond corporal punishment.

A wife is expected to bear children, especially male children, in order to secure a lineage for her husband. Barrenness is generally seen as the women fault. To vindicate herself, some women end up getting pregnant outside the marriage, usually within the kinship of her husband. In this case, the husband cannot blame her, because that was her only way to show she was not the problem, though she must still go through the proper cleansing rite for adultery. That is to say adultery is not a *defacto* cause of divorce. Adultery is remedied according to a dreadful rite of purification,[13] and the man involved in the adultery is charged with penalties to pay to the offended husband. According to Tibo,

> Selon la conception tupuri, l'adultère péché est le fait qu'une femme aille avec un autre homme. Seule la femme est considérée comme souillée et cela nécessite une purification, parce qu'il apporte dans le foyer le mesew c'est-à-dire la souillure d'adultère dont les conséquences sont la maladie du mari ou des enfants, voire leur mort. Ce péché (l'acte avec la femme d'autrui donc) est grave et est sévèrement puni : la femme adultère est souvent bastonnée et peut être répudiée. Quant à l'homme adultère, il paye une forte amende et est vu comme un élément dangereux de la société. Cela peut causer sa mort car le mari de la femme peut se venger.[14]

[13] See Tibo dje Didi, "La Notion du Péché chez le Peuple Tupuri," (Masters Thesis, Bangui School of Theology, 2010), 55.

[14] Tibo, "Notion du Péché," 46–47, says, "According to Tupuri understanding, sinful adultery is the fact for a wife to sleep with another man than her husband. Only the woman is considered defiled and it will necessitate a purification rite–for it (the adultery) brings in the family the *mesew*, that is, the curse of adultery the consequences of

An adult male is expected to start a family and bring up children to enlarge the size of the extended family. Here like in the OT, “Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth. How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them.” (Ps. 127:4–5 NAU). Barrenness is one justification of the practice of polygamy. Because it was thought that barrenness could only happen with women, a man is entitled to take another wife when he is not having children with his first. The husband is also expected to provide for his family. Usually his obligation is to produce enough grains of cereal for the year. Failure to fulfill this responsibility is ground for the wife to go to her parents to find relief, which is a gesture that bring shame to the husband. A repeated failure to provide can lead to divorce. The father is expected to bring his children up as models of obedience; it is a shame for a father to have disobedient children. A daughter who becomes pregnant out of wedlock, or a son who is a thief or drunkard are a shame to their father and mother. The shame is so unbearable that people commit suicide or sell their recalcitrant progeny. The adult male who is head of a household is obligated not only toward his wife or wives and children, but also to the departed ascendants. Thus he is expected to make offerings of food and wine to his ancestors to the second or third generation. Failure to do so leads to sickness and ill fate in the family. The ancestors are the protectors of the family.

Social Institutions: Politico-Religious Institutions

Here I will address invisible or divine institutions and the visible ones.

which are the sickness of the husband or the children, even their death. This sin (sexual intercourse with another person’s wife) is grievous and severely punished: the adulterous wife will be beaten and can be repudiated. As for the adulterous man, he must pay a heavy fine, and is considered a dangerous element in society. This (his adultery) could lead to his death, because the husband of the woman could seek vengeance.” (Translation mine).

Divine or Invisible Beings

Baa

Baa or the Supreme divine being, is so far removed in the Tupuri cosmogony that one needs intermediaries to reach him. Fr. Capelle summarizes his findings from interviews of Tupuri peoples thus, "1) Il existe quelqu'un qui est le chef de toutes les choses mais on ne le connait guère, puisque personne ne l'a vu. 2) Si la plupart (des gens) pensent qu'il n'a pas commencé, d'autres disent qu'il a pu commencer, mais que personne ne sait quand. Ici encore c'est l'inconnu. 'Naa bay de koge be ga a tii wer wa.'3) Mais tous estiment qu'il ne finira pas. »[15] This supreme being is known as *Baa* or *Waŋkluu*. The major question here is whether for the Tupuri God is unique, or there are many gods. Fr. Cappelle surmised that there are many gods because the people acknowledge (1) an individual god, as hinted in the followings sayings, "Baa naa boŋ yawla?" (Do we have the same god?) which occurs often in disputes or quarrelling, "Baa bi no," (my God) which is the formula by which prayers begin; (2) a god who manifests himself to people in different ways, which manifestations call for a particular sacrifice; (3) the god of rain or fertility.[16] He acknowledges however, that the people affirm that God is one. An explanation of this ambiguity he claims was given him is that "De même que les enfants d'un même père l'appelle 'pan bi,' de même qu'à sa mort chacun des enfants lui font (fait) le sacrifice du poulet en l'appelant 'pan bi,' de même nous faisons tous le sacrifice au Dieu unique tout en l'appelant 'pan bi.' »[17] Tibo, on his part claims that, « Le tupuri n'est ni athée ni panthéiste. Il

[15] Fr. Guy Cappelle "1) There exists one who is the ruler of all things but no one knows him, since nobody has seen him; 2) If most people think that he has no beginning, some do however think he may have had a beginning, but no one knows when. Here again, it is the unknown, 'whether he had a beginning we do not know.' 3) But all claim that he will have no end." (Translation mine), in "Culture et Traditions Toupouri," (Sere 1970), 9.

[16] Cappelle, "Culture et Traditions Toupouri," 10.

[17] Cappelle, "Culture et Traditions Toupouri," 10. "Just as the children of the same man will call him 'my father,' just as each one of his sons will after his death offer him the sacrifice by calling him 'my father' so we all

croit qu'il y a un dieu (Baa) créateur de toute chose et qui régit la vie des hommes. Cette croyance en l'existence d'un dieu est exprimée par les noms donnés aux enfants tels que Baayaŋ, MayBaayaŋ, Baakone, NenBaa, Baayaŋmbe, Baaboŋ, Baayawla, DaŋBaayawla, Baa ou MayBaa, MbereBaa, Baakaywe, Baabiŋne, Baadawe, GraŋBaa, etc.[18] To the question of the unicity of god, Tibo asserts, "A vrai dire, le Tupuri ne peut être taxé foncièrement de polythéiste. Le qualificatif hénothéisme–'association de plusieurs dieux à un Dieu unique'–que Moucarry attribue aux Arabes préislamiques conviendrait mieux pour le Tupuri.»[19] Kwame Bediako is of the same view; he claims on his part that the African is essentially monotheist, for the name of god is always singular and is attributed to no other being. My own conclusion is that the Tupuri is a fervent deist. Though god is far removed since the offense of *Maimuŋguri*, his experience with the divine is so intimate that God becomes a personal god, albeit through intermediaries. Thus one can say that the Tupuri conceives of his experience with god as uniquely personal, almost like R. Bellah's "Sheilaism."[20] However Capelle reports that Kemay, the first *Waŋ Dawa*, the king of Dawa, called upon *Baa* during a drought that threatened not only livestock, but the people also. Though it was dry season, heavy clouds appeared after his prayer, and it rained bucketsful. All creeks, and ponds, and lakes, and rivers were filled with water. The people drank and were satisfied, and had reserves for the remainder of the dry season. Thus they were saved from extinction. The following night Baa appeared to Kemay in a dream and told him he was

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offer the sacrifice to God and each one calls him 'my God.' (translation mine)

[18] Tibo "Notion du Péché," 26, says, "The tupuri is neither atheist nor pantheist. He believe there is a god (Baa) creator of all things who directs the affairs of humans. This belief in the existence of a god is expressed through the names given to children such as Baayaŋ, MayBaayaŋ, Baakone, NenBaa, Baayaŋmbe, Baaboŋ, Baayawla, DaŋBaayawla, Baa or MayBaa, MbereBaa, Baakaywe, Baabiŋne, Baadawe, GraŋBaa, etc."

[19] Tibo, "Notion du Péché," 26–27, says, "To speak truthfully, the Tupuri cannot be really labeled as a polytheist. The qualifier 'henotheism–'asssociation of many gods to the Unique God'–that Mouccary attributes to pre-Islamic Arabs, corresponds better to the Tupuri."

[20] Bellah, *Habits of the Heart*, 221.

Lim, the God who brought about this great deliverance. Lim ordered Kemay to annually commemorate this act of mercy with a sacrifice. Thus Kemay begun the *Co'o Lim*. Twice a year at the beginning of the rainy season, and at the end, he offers a ram to Lim. To this day, the Wang Dawa continues to offer this sacrifice. According to oral tradition, certain years, when there was drought during the previous season, the seer or diviner would suggest human sacrifice. Thus it is usually vagabonds or a spoil of war who was sacrificed. Human sacrifice has been outlawed since colonial times.

Manhuuli and Sooŋre wo

Known as *Manhuuli*, (the mother of death) the devil is the agent who brings afflictions to the family or the community. He gives bad dreams, scares people in the night, and brings misfortune. No one knows where he lives, but he can be encountered anywhere, in thick bushes, in whirlwinds, or even in the plain. Thus the devil must be warded off by sacrifices. According to Tibo, "le diable est l'esprit mauvais le plus redouté du Tupuri. Le nom que lui donne le Tupuri est significatif : Manhuli, la mère de la mort. Il est vu comme mangeur des enfants. Aucun sacrifice d'action de grâce ne lui est offert: uniquement de sacrifice d'apaisement. »[21] And yet there is no sense of prohibited service to the devil. Man is essentially in charge in religious matters. He is responsible for offering the necessary sacrifices to secure peace and wellbeing for his household. Thus we will see that the Tupuri, though he knows that his life is in God's hands, sends his male children to *Manhuli* in order to be initiated into adulthood. According to Fr. Capelle, in Tupuri cosmogony the devil comes from the tree.

[21] Tibo, "Notion du Péché," 30, says, "The devil is the evil spirit most feared by the Tupuri. The name given him by the Tupuri is significant in that regard: Manhuli, i.e. the mother of death. He is believed to feed on children. No thanksgiving sacrifice is offered him, only appeasement offerings."

Besides the devil, there are countless spirits, *soonre wo*, which are mostly ill-intentioned towards the people. The *Barkage* is the water spirit that swallows up people in rivers or lakes. The *sewna* is the spirit that possesses only women. *Hoinna* is the demon of fight and rage.

The Living Dead

"The dead are not dead," the Senegalese poet Birago Diop once famously wrote. [22] This saying can be extended to most of Africa without misrepresenting many people groups. This is certainly the case for the Tupuri people. The dead are not dead in the sense that though the body of the departed lay in the tomb, their ghost, *Manmbuyuri*, remains in his house for a few days, or until the mourning is properly organized; then it exits the house to enter the invisible world. It will haunt the family members in dreams or visions, until the funeral is properly conducted. Even then *manmbuyuri* does not go away, but is involved in the daily life of the family members, guiding decision-making, inspiring the members in their endeavors, leading people home when they are lost in the bush. Thus ascendants whose funerals were conducted become the ancestors. Tibo describes the place of the living-dead in these terms,

[22] The entire poem goes thus,

« Ceux qui sont morts ne sont jamais partis :
Ils sont dans l'ombre qui s'éclaire
Et dans l'ombre qui s'épaissit.
Les morts ne sont pas sous la terre :
Ils sont dans l'arbre qui frémit,
Ils sont dans le bois qui gémit,
Ils sont dans l'eau qui coule,
Ils sont dans l'eau qui dort,
Ils sont dans la case, ils sont dans la foule :
Les morts ne sont pas morts. » Birago Diop, « Les Souffles », in *Les Contes d'Amadou Koumba* (Paris : Présence Africaine, 1961 ; 1ere édition 1947).

> Les Tupuri manifestent un grand respect pour les morts-vivants (*manmbuyuri wo)* comme faisant partie de la famille et les vénèrent deux fois par an en leur offrant des sacrifices. Les pères deviennent objet de vénération après leur décès. Pour le Tupuri, il s'établit entre les morts-vivants et les descendants une solidarité réelle. Ils sont en contact avec les vivants et exercent leur influence sur eux : ils les protègent contre les mauvais esprits mais les punissent quand ils sont négligés. Ils sont des médiateurs entre Dieu et les vivants, chacun pour ceux de son clan ou de sa famille.[23]

The ghost of a father can decide to inhabit one of the wives of the son, generally the first wife; in this case the wife will be treated like the father when he was alive. But not all living-dead become ancestors, thus objects of veneration. Women and the young who died without leaving a progeny never become ancestors. However the ghosts of the young are also around. They are cared for on the other side by the ancestors, and can accomplish for them the same chores the living children do to their parents. But if they are not happy on the other side, they can trouble their mother or father in dreams or visions, thus forcing them to offer some provisions.

Institutions in the Visible Realm

The Waŋ Dore or Waŋkluu

The *Waŋ Dore* is the highest religio-political figure in the world of the living. Also known as the *Waŋkluu* he is the high priest of the Tupuri. Unlike the head of the household, his sacrifices and prayers have national thrust. He sacrifices to his ancestors, but his sacrifice opens the way for all other heads of families in his immediate kingdom, *Dore*, but also for all the other Tupuri villages. He prays for the whole of the Tupuri land and people, as expressed in the following prayer,

[23] Tibo, "Notion du Péché," 31, says, "The tupuri show great respect to the living-dead (*manmbuyuri wo*) as being members of the family, and twice a year venerate them by offering sacrifices to them. Fathers become subjects of veneration after their death. For the Tupuri, a real solidarity is established between the living-dead and their descendants. The living-dead are in contact with the living and influence their life. They protect them against evil spirits, but punish them when they feel neglected. They are the mediators between God and the living, each one for those of his in-group or family."

Mon bosquet sacré, voici votre bouc.

Acceptez-le avec bienveillance de mes mains.

Que mes gens puissent rester en paix.

Que le mil que je planterai plus tard ici, pousse bien.

Que la mort ne s'attarde pas sur mes terres.

Etend tes mains sur mes gens.[24]

Tibo assesses his function thus,

> Le peuple tupuri, malgré les deux nationalités, vit sous l'autorité d'un chef suprême, *Wang Dore* (résidant au Tchad) qui lance les festivités traditionnelles. C'est lui qui sacre tous les chefs de terre en pays tupuri en mettant sur leur front le kaolin jaune (*barɗage*). En septembre, il envoie ses émissaires dans tous les villages tupuri du Cameroun et du Tchad pour prendre un animal-dîme dans n'importe quel troupeau d'ovins ou de caprins : c'est le *kalkaw*, c'est-à-dire « période (de visite) des parents.». Au Tchad, tous ceux qui cultivent dans le terroir appelé *mbulum* lui donnent la dîme de leur récolte. Bouimon Tchago, ancien doyen de la faculté de lettres et des sciences humaines à l'université de N'Djaména, donne à Wang-Doré les titres de « chef politique et chef religieux », Wang-Sôn-Kulu ou « grand chef des prières ou chef spirituel suprême,» « pape des Toupouri».[25]

Mbiti asserts that "Traditional religions are not primarily for the individual, but for his community of which he is part. Chapters of African religions are written everywhere in the life of the community, and in traditional society there are no irreligious people."[26] My contention is

[24] "My sacred wood, behold your goat. Accept it with kindness from my hands. Let my people live in peace. Let the sorghum that I will plant here sprout well. Let death not tarry in my land. Stretch your hands over my people,"Suzanne Ruelland, "Through the Looking-Glass. L'espace Aquatique chez les Tupuri," *Journal des Africanistes* 79, no. 1 (2009): 126.

[25] Tibo, "Notion du Péché," 21, notes, "The Tupuri people, the two nations in which they are divided up notwithstanding, live under the authority of one supreme ruler, *Wang Dore* (who resides in Chad) who is the one that inaugurates the traditional festivities. It is him who enthrones all the landlords in Tupuriland, by rubbing the yellow kaolin clay (*barɗage*) on their foreheads. In September he sends his emissaries in all Tupuri villages of Cameroon and Chad to levy an animal tax in every flock of cattle or sheep: this is the *kalkaw*, that is, 'the season for visit to kin.' In Chad, those who farm in the land called *mbulum* give him a tax of their harvest. Bouimon Tchago, the former dean of the department of literature and social sciences at the university of Ndjamena gives to Wang-Doré the titles of 'political and religious ruler,' *Wang-Sôn-Kulu* or 'the great leader of prayers or the supreme spiritual leader,' 'the pope of the Tupuri."

[26] Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 3.

that the *Waŋ Dore* is essentially the head of a household that has grown too big, and spread wide and large. And the heads of households who continue the sacrifice after the *Waŋ Dore* are really just imitating him in every way, praying for the extended family spread all over the land. All the other ceremonies he performs are thus family-centered.

The Waŋ Soo or the Local Politico-religious Ruler

The *Waŋ Soo* also called *Waŋsiri*, is the local ruler of a Tupuri village, or community. He is consecrated to his rule by the Wang-Dore. He is in principle a member of the family that first settled in a locality. Though he is not really a vassal ruler, the Wand-Dore has preeminence over him, and can edict certain instructions that all *Waŋsoo or Waŋsiri* are obligated to implement. Clare Ignatowski accurately summarizes the political and religious interplay between the *Waŋ Dore*, *Waŋsiri* and the heads of Tupuri families thus:

> Although there was no political chieftaincy in Tupuri society during the pre-colonial era, the ritual power of the *wang-siri* was considerable. He regulated the village through his performance of propitiatory rites to *baa* (Supreme Deity) and the ancestors and by determining the timing of the agricultural tasks, such as seeding and harvesting. He even called "weekend' days of rest. Conflicts that eluded the powers of family patriarchs were resolved at the *wang-siri*'s compound, and he presided over village wide ceremonies of atonement. Each village *wang-siri* was accountable to the high priest recognized by all Tupuri, the *Wang-Dore* who resided (and continues to reside) in a mystical state, nude and in isolation, at Mount Dore, Chad. This hierarchy was symbolized by his power to periodically collect taxes (*kal-kaw*) in the form of goats, which were forcefully seized by his officials as they passed through Tupuri villages in Cameroon and Chad. The power of *Wang-kulu* was also represented during the annual sacrifice (*few kage*) of the Dore clans. Each village *wang-siri* was required to wait for the drum signal from Chad that the sacrifice had been successfully conducted there before he could conduct his own. In turn, on the village level, each family head waited for the signal of *wang-siri* before he could perform his. Therefore, clans and lineages across the Tupuri region were loosely brought together under the ritual regulation of the *wang-siri* institution.[27]

[27] Clare A. Ignatowski, "Journey of Song: Public Life and Morality in Cameroon" (Thesis, Indiana University, 2006), 19.

In the same way, the *Waŋ Soo*, though he settles cases that are brought before him, is never an autocratic monarch. In fact the Tupuri people shun a heavy-handed ruler.

The Jag Sir or Sacred Wood

When a family settles in a new place, the leader of the settlers will designate a thicket as the sacred place. There he will offer the sacrifices for cleansing. There also people who want to escape a pursuant will take refuge. In this case he will have to offer sacrifice in order to reintegrate his family, because in normal circumstances, it is prohibited to enter the sacred wood. Anyone who violates the prohibition must pay a fine or they will suffer the consequences in terms of disease and death in their family. The *Jag Sir* could be thought of in terms of temple, but there is no public celebration that takes place here. Religion for the Tupuri is essentially a private, family affair. Dancing is what constitutes a public and collective manifestation. Sharing of food is also another aspect of collective attitudes, but it involves only immediate neighbors, not the whole community, except for the communion meal at the ruler's house following the chicken sacrifice.

The Jehalge

The *Jehalge* is the seer of the community. It seems that the aptitude to see what normal people cannot see is a hereditary gift, not that all children of a diviner will become diviners, but the diviner sees who amongst his sons is interested in his trade, and listens to him and attends the divination services he conducts. Thus the diviner will communicate to such a son the secrets of the trade. The diviner not only sees the cause of illnesses in the community or in a family, he also predicts success or failure in all human endeavors (wars, hunting parties, a trip, etc.). People go to him from all over, not only from the Tupuri people. All spiritual issues are solved by

consulting the seer, and accomplishing the course of action he prescribes.

The Tiŋ or Household

The house, or more exactly the compound of the Tupuri is a whole institution in itself. The *tiŋ* is established when a young man takes wife. As a youth, he moves out of his father's compound and build his own hut or room. After he marries, he must build a hut for his wife around the time she has her first child. The reason is that the husband cannot be intimate with his wife until she has weaned the child. Now the man can fence in the compound, and plant a post from the *hoon* (a sort of fig tree) branch. This is sealed by the shedding of animal blood. The post, the *jagjiŋ,* becomes the guardian of the man's household, keeping especially an eye on his wife's sexual activity. According to Fr. Cappelle, the head of the house, in this case the *Waŋsiri*, after he has driven the *hoon* post into the ground at the entrance of his compound, takes a rooster and sacrifices it near the post. When it is dressed, he throws a piece of the liver to the ground; the rest of the meat is cooked and all can eat of it, except the wives he married after the first for polygamous households. In the same vein, Tibo asserts concerning this matter, « tout homme tupuri qui fonde un foyer place à l'entrée de sa maison un bois sacré '*jagjiŋ*' qui est le dieu de la famille chargé de surveiller le comportement sexuel de sa ou ses femmes… C'est à *jagjiŋ*, en cas d'adultère de la femme, que le sacrifice d'expiation est offert. »[28] This would contradict the claim that the Tupuri believe in one God. It seems to me that the *jagjiŋ* is more the symbol of God, than God himself. Symbolism is important in this culture, and usually the symbol shares the same attributes of the think or being it symbolizes. For the Tupuri, it is *Baa* who has established

[28] Tibo, "Notion du Péché," 30, says, "Every man who starts a family places at the entrance of his compound a post of the sacred wood '*jagjiŋ*' which is the family's god in charge of monitoring the sexual behavior of his wife or wives. It is to '*jagjiŋ*' that the purification sacrifice is offered in case of adultery of the wife."

his household, and the same Baa will watch over it. Thus the man of the house is the owner of the house, and all under his roof belong to him. Roles and statuses are defined and must be scrupulously observed.

Thus a man becomes a *pantiŋ*, a "house father" after he has planted the *jagjiŋ*. He has total power over those in his house, except that all family matters of importance are decided in consultation with one's father or the other *pantiŋ* in the same household. Under the *pantiŋ* the next authority figure will be the *mankom*, the first wife. She holds a special place in the house as the mother of the first ancestor of the Tupuri. The legend has it that the Tupuri come from a boy who was abandoned and was raised by a chimpanzee, called *kombe* in the Tupuri language. Every evening the chimpanzee will sneak in the kitchen of the first wife of the *Wang Dore* and steal food. Every day the woman would complaint, asking who it was that steals her food is. No one would acknowledge. Tired of her complaints, the husband devices a strategy to discover the culprit. He goes in the bush and brings back the bark of the *tiktika* tree, and orders his wife to make soup with it for that night. Then he instructs everybody to stay indoors overnight. All the utensils in the kitchen that night were perforated at the bottom, and the compound court was swept of all footprints. Thus that night when the chimpanzee came, it took a ball of sorghum bread, and the *tiktika* soup. Early in the morning, the chief comes out and checks the court. He notices some large footprint and the drops from the *tiktika* sauce. The footprints lead into the mound of Ili. The village follows the footprint until they reach the hideout of the chimpanzee. We discover with great stupor a boy a few years old, but who couldn't speak. Then they look in the branches and see a chimpanzee observing the scene. As it realizes that it was discovered, it disappeared from sight. Thus the child was brought back home and give to the first wife to raise. This child became the favored child of the chief and succeeds to the throne after his death. But

before he dies, the chief establishes the sacrifice of the rooster with the sauce of *tiktika* as a perpetual annual sacrifice to the God of his ancestor who revealed the child to him. Thus all first wives stand in this honorable position as the "mother of the chimpanzee."

The first son, the *jag wel*, holds also a privileged status in the family. He is the administrator of the family estate after his father's death. He will also be responsible to look after all his siblings, and for offering the annual offerings to the departed ones. Thus he benefits a particular relationship with his father. At times the father is very harsh with him, in an effort to prepare him to the challenges of life; at times he shows him considerable affection and esteem, especially when he has extra reason to be proud of him.

Religious Beliefs and Practices

Divine-Human Interaction

Tibo gives a succinct but accurate account of the Tupuri conception of pristine universe:

> La mythologie tupuri enseigne que Baa a créé à l'origine toute chose bonne. Il a créé les hommes à la fois par clans, par tribus et les a placés chacun dans son village et sa région. Les êtres humains n'éprouvaient aucune peine. Ce qu'on désirait, on le recevait. Pour piler, on se servait de courts pilons car Dieu était tout proche au-dessus des hommes. Il y avait une parfaite harmonie dans l'humanité et Baa écoutait et exauçait les prières. Pendant ce temps, les hommes ne mouraient pas, ils avaient toutes les provisions dont ils avaient besoin et vivaient le bonheur. 'C'était, comme le dit Mbiti, une sorte de relation familiale où Dieu était l'adulte et les hommes les enfants. Il les gratifiait de sa présence et toutes choses dérivaient de cette relation, aussi longtemps que cela dura . . . Il n'y avait dès lors aucune nécessité de travailler pour subvenir aux besoins de l'existence.' Mais les hommes n'ont pas maintenu cette relation avec Baa, il y eut une rupture entre lui et l'humanité et il s'est retiré au ciel . . . La cause du retrait de Baa au ciel est qu'un jour, une fille de la famille des forgerons, appelée *Maymunguri ma de feglew*, souleva si haut son pilon qui toucha la poitrine de Baa. C'est ainsi que fâché, Baa se retira très haut dans le ciel et l'état du monde et des hommes changea.[29]

[29] Tibo, "Notion du Péché," 41 notes, "The Tupuri mythology teaches that Baa created everything good in the beginning. He created men at once by in-groups, and tribes, and placed them each one in their own village and region. There was no pain involved in man's work. Whatever one desired, one received it effortlessly. In order to pound thee millet, the women used short drumsticks, for God was near in the sky above men. There was perfect

From the above quote one surmises that for the Tupuri, there was a time when creator and creature lived in harmony, then because of humans' fault, that harmony was broken. Now God is far removed from them, though he still continues to control the affairs of this world. In fact the Tupuri staunchly believes that his life is in God's hand; if he has not put an end to his days, no one can take his life away. At the same time though, he thinks that sorcerers can counter God's plans and cause someone's untimely death. Thus for the Tupuri, no one dies for no reason, unless they die in old age. In this case, people say he or she has gone home.

The Tupuri also maintains a certain relation with the devil and the many spirits. We will see below that the initiation rite takes place in the hands of *Manhuli*, the devil or literaly *the Mother of Death*. The relation with the spirits is essentially through appeasing sacrifices, for they seek only to harm humans. If they would live them alone, the Tupuri would have nothing to do with the evil spirits.

Human Interactions

Interpersonal relations are very cordial with Tupuri people. In fact hospitality is one highly esteemed value. Traditionally, all visitors to a Tupuri house were welcome by a meal of chicken and corn bread, which is not the everyday menu. Because of this hospitality, many people from other ethnic groups were absorbed in Tupuri communities. According to certain sources, the clan known as Marhayn are originally Moundang, Guisia are actually Guiziga people, Baigare are

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harmony amongst men, and Baa listened to peoples' prayers and answered them. In those days people did not die, they were provided in every way, and lived a happy life. 'Life was, as Mbiti says, a sort of family life where God was the adult and men the children. God gratified them with his presence, and all things proceeded from this relationship, as long as it lasted . . . Therefore there was no need to work in order to meet the amenities of life.' But people were unable to keep this relationship with Baa going. There was severance of the tie and Baa left men and withdrew far in the skies. . . . The reason of Baa's withdrawal is that on one fateful day a girl from the blacksmith family, called *Maymunguri ma de feglew*, while pounding the millet, lifted her drumstick so high it hit Baa to the chest. Angered by this action Baa withdrew high in the sky and the condition of the world and of men changed since."

Massa from Begue Yagoua, the Munguri are Mouzouk or Sara, etc. Cordiality is expressed also through daily life by communal activities such as *Yii pay* (a person who needs help in his farm brews the local beer and calls on the village to come help), *Torla,* (a more elaborate call to help, where not only beer, but food will also be provided); other group activities include the *Gurna,* which is not only a dance, but a spring retreat to just enjoy life and learn new songs and dances, and funerals. If anyone eschews these social gatherings, they will be considered selfish or egocentric, and no one will come to his aid the day he finds himself in need of assistance, not even hired hands will avail themselves to him.

There is a category of people that the Tupuri dread a great deal: the sorcerer and the witch or vampire. The sorcerer known as the *dje sa'a*, is dreaded for his capability to capture and enslave people's souls. Thus it is believed that through witchcraft they can cause the apparent death of a person. If the people are not vigilant, they will bury the person. That way the sorcerer would have achieved his goal: the soul of that person will remain forever his slave. All who show a sign of rapid enrichment are most of the time suspected of this practice. It seems however that a distinction must be made between an accusation stemming from jealousy, and a genuine case of *sa'a* where the culprit readily admits he is responsible for the sickness or death of the person. Most cases of alleged *sa'a* belong to the first type. Thus I surmise the accusation is a sort of strategy to quell private entrepreneurship, especially when people have the feeling that the person charged with *sa'a* is selfish in his success. This is in fact a serious obstacle to local development. When a person becomes sick, and claims that they were troubled in their sleep by so or so, the family will go after this person; they will bring him to the sick person and force him to give her the indicated concoction in order for them to recover.

The other category of evil persons is the *je kreŋ* or *waynkreŋ*, a person born with a craving

for the soul or vital energy of others. It is believed that the *kreŋ* feeds on the liver or the blood of others, especially the little ones. Both male and female can inherit this disposition from their vampire parent. A person recognized to have this problem is ostracized; it will be very difficult for them to find a wife or a husband. Sometimes the disposition does not become manifest until they are married. The sign of it manifestation is that when the *kreŋ* is hungry, at night they will emit flashes of flames as they go out hunting. In order to identify who they are, people will cover the flashing flames with thorn bushes until day break. Then they will go back to see what was held under the thorn bushes. If it is a lizard, that will indicate it is a male; if a toad, it is said to be a woman. Once the animal freed, it will run to and reenter the person who appears to be in deep sleep, unable to wake up until the animal returns to them. If the toad or lizard is killed, the person will die in their sleep. Many believe that the *kreŋ* is actually an immoderate craving for meat. Thus they suggest that if the person with *kreŋ* is fed enough meat all the time, their craving will disappear in due course. In order to prevent the *je kreŋ* from attacking children, people tie some amulets around their waste or their neck.

The Afterlife

As we said earlier, the Tuppuri believe that the dead are not dead, in the sense that they are not reduced to nothingness or far removed from the world of the living. On the contrary, those who have died, have only transferred from the visible into the invisible world. The condition they were in in the visible world, they carry into the invisible one. Thus, if they were poor, they will still be needy in the invisible world; if they were well off, they do not need much assistance from the living. The ascendants who have gone into the invisible world have an important role to play in the life of the living. They become their intermediaries before God, and their protectors, each one for their descendants. Though all ascendants play this role Fr. Cappelle thinks that the

ascendants whom the Tupuri call their ancestors are the ones the *Waŋdore* recognizes as the first founders of the Tupuri tribe. Thus *Waŋdore* alone can offer to them and pray to them on behalf of all the Tupuri of the *Dore* in-group.

The Tupuri believe that when a person dies, their *manmuyuri* (ghost or soul of the deceased) lingers in his hut for a few days. If his funeral is immediately organized after the burial, the family will conduct a service to call on the deceased in late the evening of the second day. He will give a sign that he has exited the house. Thus people mourn all the more, because now he is gone for good. They will sacrifice at the tomb, in a sort of farewell to him for his transfer into the invisible world. Around 10:00 a.m. the next day, they will destroy his hut, sign that he no longer belongs to the world of the visible. A space is thus freed up for someone else in the family to take his spot. But if the mourning is postponed the deceased is still around and continues to interact with his family members through dreams and visions. After a few months to two years the mourning or *yii huuli* is be organized, in order to let him go to his forefathers and find some rest. It is believed that the one whose mourning has not been organized is restlessly wandering about. That is why he taunts the family in dreams and visions until his mourning ceremonies are accomplished. After the funeral, the *manmuyuri* of the deceased goes home to his forefathers, where he keeps watch over the family he left behind. In order to keep his ancestor fed, the head of the household must always throw to the ground the first bite of food, and the first drop of drink. The ancestor can visit him in dreams to give him advice concerning the serious issues of the household. But sometimes the living must consult him to get his guidance. The *mamuyuri* can also come back when he is in need, which means that the living have failed to provide the necessary offerings to keep him satisfied. In this case his manifestation will be through sickness in the family. In other cases, the ghost sizes one of his son's wives, and she

becomes very sick. The seer will be consulted to identify the cause of the sickness, and when it is established that it is the ghost of his father who wants to inhabit her, then a ceremony is conducted to let him enter her. This is very inconvenient to the husband, for he will no longer see her as his wife, but as his father. And whatever she asks in terms of offering, she must be given, because that is what the father is asking.

Thus there is a dialectical relationship between the Tupuri man and his departed father. If it is a source of comfort that the departed father has now become the protector of the family and the intermediary before the divinity, he can also be seen as a real burden when his demands are frequent and costly.

There is no clear concept of resurrection;[30] though there is an understanding of some form of judgment in the afterlife. The land of the ancestors will either welcome the deceased or reject him, depending on how he conducted his life while in the visible world. Restlessness is the equivalent of Hades in the Tupuri context. Tibo suggests that there is a second chance for anyone who finds himself or herself in this predicament. The sacrifices the living offer in their behalf can propitiate for their sins. There exists in his view a sort of "purgatoire" for the dead who die in their sins.[31] Thus the eschatology of the Tupuri is one in which all the sons and daughters of the land live continuously in that land, whether in the visible or the invisible one. To abandon one's ancestral land is a grievous offense, and to have one's lineage cut off from that land is the ultimate condemnation, for no memory of the living-dead will be kept alive without descendants carrying it on in the world of the visible.

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[30] Tibo "Notion du Péché," 30–31, affirms in this connection, "Après la mort, chaque être humain devient *manmbuyuri* et rejoint ceux de son clan dans l'outre-tombe appelé *liŋ* ou la maison. La pensée tupuri n'inclut pas l'idée d'une résurrection," (After death every human being become *manmbuyuri* and goes to those of his in-group to the netherworld to a place called *liŋ* or "home."

[31] Tibo, "Notion du Péché," 31.

Conflict Resolutions

Like any other society, the Tupuri society is plagued with conflicts. Conflicts arise between families over border limits, or rivalry about the same woman both parties want to marry, or murder, robbery, etc. These conflicts are generally settled by the elders of the families who will meet to discuss the matter, and decide the appropriate fine. Their decision can be appealed before the *Waŋsiri* or *Waŋsoon*. But sometimes the offending party will brag about their offense to the other camp, and this calls for retaliation, and ultimately to open strife between the two families or villages. Conflicts also happen within the family. This kind of offense is settled differently as described below.

Fadge

Fadge is the curse a father or a mother pronounces against a recalcitrant child. When a child, a wife, or a brother challenges the head of the household, he or she breaks thus the code of honor. If he or she does not recant his or her action and plead for forgiveness, the head of the household will pronounce a curse against him or her. This is usually followed by disownment. In this case, rehabilitation will take place only through a formal ceremony to remove the curse. It is believed that the curse of a child against his parents cannot hold, because by having recourse to curse against his own parents, the child is committing a taboo, a sacred prohibition called *ngidjaggo*.

Loŋge Soo

In the case of an unproven accusation, the parties will bite a branch of the *tomoore* tree, in a sort of oath, in which the party who is lying will become sick, and die if they do not confess. The practice can be solicited by one party, or it can be imposed by the *waŋsiri* when none of the

parties is admitting wrongdoing. There is no cure for a sickness as a result of perjury, and the offended party will seek no supplemental punishment.

Porge

Porge is the method used to cleanse or purify from *mesew*, *yoo*, *togware*. *Mesew* is the adultery of the wife as noted above, while *yoo* is an ignominious sexual act involving kin, a child, same sex partners, or an animal. *Togware* is the curse that is brought by the shedding of blood. Any violent death, whether the perpetrator is found or not, brings a curse on the land that absorbed the blood. The *waŋsiri* of the locality where the violent death occurred will conduct a ceremony to cleanse the land from the curse. If there are cleansing ceremonies for adultery, incest, and murder, it is not clear whether there is any ceremony for homosexuality, zoophilia, and the like. They are subjected to public denunciation, and sometimes even execution by the elders of the community if the behavior becomes habitual.

Fugge

Fugge is a sacrifice of good will; it belongs to the same category as *co'oge*, but with lesser importance both with regard to its cause or the kind of animal for sacrifice, generally a chick or a bone, or sesame. This sacrifice is done in order to cleanse oneself from impurity, like having sexual intercourse before a gaming day, in order to remove bad luck. *Fuggi* is usually a sacrifice done with a chick or a bone. The animal is killed and taken together with ashes in a broken piece of calabash to a road intersection.

Social Dynamics

The Social Calendar in Terms of Space

Time among the Tupuri is conceived of in term of space. The movement of the sun and the

moon, and sometimes the stars, preside over their determination.

The Hours of the Day

The movement of the sun determines the spaces of the day, *daymblah* (dawn), *wuur de tong* or *ngel de tong* (morning), *mboday* (9–10 a.m.), *wuur deger* (noon), *wuur de howsole* (1–2 p.m.), *de law* (afternoon), *wuur jag kore* (sunset), and *ngel swedswed* (early evening). Night time is determined by the activity of the night: *jag hole* is dinner time; *wuur bilginene* (visiting time); *ngar laagetigma* (sleep time): this is the first period of the day to have serious conversation with a person. It is at this time that a father will call his son in his hut to educate him, or a mother will give advice to her daughter; *kisidgi suŋ* (midnight), and *tikakroo* or *tirookak* is the time when the cock crows (this is the second most appropriate time to engage a serious conversation with somebody.

The Months of the Year

The calendar in tupuriland is lunar. The month presides over the time of a particular festival. The twelve months of the year are: *Few Duugi*, *Few Baare, Few Ceere, Few Darge, Few Ka'araŋ* or *Few Mene, Few Burgi, Few Jo'ge, Few Mbiri waygara, Few Gemugi, Few Jonfensoorewa, Few Waŋ Dore, Few Kage*. (From October à November). The *Waŋ Dore* initiates the celebration of the New Year (Few Kage) in the month of *Waŋ Dore* which coincides generally with the end of August or beginning of September. Then the rest of the Tupuri people will organize their own celebration the following month. Before these two festivities are over, it is very hard to bring a tupuri to make a major decision. Immediately after is the best time for evangelism, for the man knows he has secured the New Year with the required sacrifices. He is disposed to venture on unchartered grounds. The *Few Darge, Ka'araŋ,* and *Mene* are probably

the more propitious to have a man commit to something new. These are the months when he affords himself some ludic activities such as hunting, the dance *gourna*, the games *ngeinla* and *gmu*. This is also the season for *nowmay*, when young men can experiment sexually by inviting a girl for *naw*. This is done with the consent of the parents.

The Seasons

There are a number of seasons determined both by the movement of the stars, human activities, or atmospheric activities. *Jagtob* is the beginning of the rainy season; *Yaale* the raining season; *Ancoo* indicates harvest season. *Ti ceere* is the winter. *Tihissi* is summer.

The Family as a Religious Entity

We have noted above that the house or home of the Tupuri is in itself a whole institution. It is important here to unpack the interaction within the family. The family is the locus where all religious ceremonies take place, except the *co'oge jagsiri* (the sacrifice to the sacred wood, which takes place at the wood). Though it is essentially the householder who performs all the religious rituals, he can be assisted at times by his first wife, at others by his prepubescent daughter

The Head of the Household as Priest and Spokesperson of his Household

The head of the household accumulates in his person the functions of priest ad king and at times of prophet.

As priest he is in charge of accomplishing all the rituals. There are the regular yearly rituals (*Soon Baa*, *jagsiri*, *jakbii or co'kage*, *few mene*, *duugi*, etc.), and there are the prescribed rituals, which are ordered by the seer for deceases, bad dreams, evil encounters, good luck in war or hunting. Every circumstance in life can be the occasion for a ritual sacrifice. In his prayers, he

orders off the evil spirits, even his ancestral ghosts after he has offered the required sacrifices. “Take this fattened ram, and feed on it, you the things in my house. And now leave my family alone; may there never be sickness or bad luck in my family this year. May we find prosperity, and success,” would he pray.

The head of the household is also the ruler and spokesperson of his family. All members of the family must obey him. When his wife feels that she can no longer tolerate the treatment her husband inflicts on her, her recourse is first to run away to one of his relatives, generally the father if he is still alive, or an elder brother, an uncle. She will expose to him her grievances, and the latter will, after consulting with his peers, send her back with the young men in his house to accompany her. If not, he himself will take her back. They are likely bearers of a message that the in-laws need to see him. In this case it is always certain that remonstrance will be served the husband, accompanied with words of advice.

As the spokesperson of his household, he is always the one who speaks to visitors. Others can show hospitality to the visitor by serving him refreshments, but they must defer to him for any further action, if he is not present at the time. Thus if he is out in the farms or at a neighbor’s, the wife will send for him. If he is away on a journey, the wife will inquire whether the visitor is a friend of the husband, a relative, or just a traveler, then she will appreciate what level of hospitality she needs to exercise. If the visitor has come with a complaint, or a serious issue to discuss, it is the householder who takes him to his hut to discuss the matter. A person with a complaint is never allowed to make a scene at his offender’s place, except when the head of the household shows ill-will. The head of the household seats as the judge between the member of his household suspected of misconduct and the accuser. If he finds the member of his family responsible, he will ask what the other party wants as compensation. If he feels the case is

not established he will defend his family member. But he will be diplomatic so as not to unnecessarily confront the accuser. He will speak in general terms of how children misbehave or how difficult it is when you were not there to ascertain who the guilty party is.

Women and Children as Passive Participants

Women have little role in the religious life of the family. They are essentially passive participants. They must remain faithful wives, and particularly chaste like the husband during festival periods when sacrifices will be offered. However, the first wife has a more active role in that she is the one who cooks the meal. This is why it is difficult for a man who refuses to convert to Christianity to let go of his first wife. He will say, "the children and the other wives can go to church, but me and my first wife, we will stay. We need to carry on the religion of my ancestors." Thus it is not uncommon to hear women who are approached with the gospel answer, "Why are you talking to me, you should go see the father of the house, do I have a say in this matter. Where he says we go, we will go."

The Special Place of the First Wife and the Prepubescent girl

As noted above, the first wife, known as the *mankom,* is the husband's helper in all the sacrifices and rituals. Unlike the other wives she can sometimes eat of the sacrifice, some other times she can't. In some cases the first wife cannot even approach the place where the sacrifice is being carried out (*Co'o kage*); she needs an intermediary to accomplish her duty. Usually it is the young prepubescent girl who receives the meat of the sacrifice from her father's hand, and takes it to the first wife for cooking. She also takes part in the sacrifice to *jagbii* (the mouth of water) celebrated by the *waŋbii* (the chief of water).[32] In the Tupuri understanding, a woman is

[32] Cf. Suzanne Ruelland, "Through the Looking-Glass,"130.

religiously defiled because of her periods. She does not have to be in her menstrual cycle.[33] The girl becomes impure as soon as she reaches the age of having her periods. Even though at the time of the festival she is not having her period, she is still defiled.

Kinship

Kinship among the Tupuri is agnatic. The son or the eldest son when there are many, is the administrator of his father's estate after the death of the latter. But if there are surviving brothers of the deceased, they will decide the fate of the man's estate. The adult son will have a voice in the deliberations, especially with a view to protect his siblings in making sure they have the means to pay the dowry for their wives. For a father's responsibility is to make sure he establishes a home for his son. For this reason, it is important both for a man and his wife or wives to have sons. Otherwise at the man's death, all his estate will be the inheritance of his brothers. If they are not considerate, his wife or wives will receive no share of the estate, even when they become the wife of one of the surviving brothers. Girls do not receive an inheritance from their father. They do have the right to come back to their parents when their own husband fails to provide for their needs. The other sons besides the eldest can claim that their father or the eldest son after the father's death, the number of cows needed to pay the dowry of their wife. Beyond that, they have no more claim to any head count. They can ask for a piece of land for their housing and farming needs. But in no case can they impose on the eldest son.

Rituals

The *Gonokaye* or *Goni*

This is the rite of passage from childhood to adulthood. It concerns only boys age six and

[33] On the notion of defilement amongst the Tupuri, see Fr. Cappelle, 13.

older, and men who have not had the chance to participate. Women and girls do not have an equivalent of the male rite of passage.[34] It is a rite of foreign origin. According to Laurent L. Feckoua, the rite was introduced to the Tupuri in 1855, from the neighboring Massa or Musey people of Gisey or Guere in Cameroon.[35] From an interview with an older person in the Tupuri community, I learned that the rite originally came from the Sara people of Southern Chad. It started when a deranged member of a Sara village was killed after he had raped his brother's wife while all people were in the farms. The furious brother did not even give him proper burial, but disposed of the body in the bush. Now the spirit of the dead began to haunt the young boys and girls who ventured in the wood to shepherd their flocks. These children will act like the deranged man. Thus the people went to the seer to find a solution. This was the ritual prescribed to them. The young boys and girls were to go in the bush, and undergo some rite of rebirth that no one is able to fully describe. In any case, after spending a few days in the bush, the ones who would have survived will return to the village. There will be a big celebration and the children no longer showed symptoms of the dementia. Thus it became a recurrent rite of rebirth. Neighboring people copied that rite and so it spread all the way to the Tupuri people. Whatever the case, the Tupuri have embraced the rite to the point that they never want to reveal its secrets. The claim the initiates make is that whoever reveals the secret *Maagay* will strike him to death. In reality, because of the oath to secrecy each of them made in the process, they know that anyone who betrays the secrecy can be put to death by the others. Thus they are a deterrent to one another.

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[34] However Tibo "Notion du Péché," 24, notes that once such a rite was organized for females, "Il n'y a pas d'initiation pour les jeunes filles en milieu tupuri comme chez d'autres peuples du Tchad où des filles passent par un rite initiatique au cours de laquelle l'excision a lieu. Toutefois, en 1956, il y eut une sorte d'initiation féminine de deux jours appelée *cirmoda*. D'après notre mère qui y était passée, les jeunes filles ont passé une nuit en brousse sans maitresse d'initiation. Elles ont dansé toute la nuit et puis elles sont rentrées le matin. Toutes celles qui étaient à cette veillée, étaient appelées *may-yeye*.»

[35] Laurent Laoukissam Feckoua, *Les Hommes et leurs Activités en Pays Toupouri du Tchad*, thèse de doctorat de 3ème cycle, Paris, Novembre 1977), 161, http://www.tupuri.org/initiation.html, accessed 11/13/14.

Feckoua summarizes the ceremonial thus,

> Une légende dit qu'un jour, un homme en se promenant dans la brousse y rencontra le diable. Le diable lui dit : « donne-moi tes enfants mâles, j'en ferai des hommes ». Quand les enfants revinrent chez leur père, ils étaient initiés. Ainsi commença l'initiation en pays massa et par la suite gagna tout le pays Toupouri. Il y a donc une offrande des enfants au diable, ils sont sacrifiés au diable. C'est au diable que l'on va demander aide et protection. Ce diable s'appelle *Magaï* qui veut dire en Toupouri *Manhuli*, mère de la mort. Ce mot représente chez les Toupouri tous les esprits mauvais, tout ce qui est mal. Toute l'initiation se résume donc en ceci ; offrir les enfants à *Magaï*, donc au diable, qui va les tuer, puis leur donner une nouvelle vie, les faire devenir *Paï*, c'est-à-dire des hommes.[36]

Thus, in some ironic way, by fearing the death of their children, the people send their children to the "mother of death for rebirth and true entrance in the world of men.

The *Nawmay*

Another rite, a sort of sex education, is the *Nawmay*. A young man who reaches the age to start a family, is allowed to experiment sexually. Tibo defines the *Nawmay* thus,

> C'est le rituel qui consiste à faire venir une fille non mariée chez un jeune homme de 18–21ans pour deux à trois jours, généralement à l'approche du nouvel an (*few kage*), « moyennant le versement d'une somme symbolique dont le taux varie d'année en année». Ce rite, selon le Professeur Feckoua, met fin à l'adolescence et fait éviter aux hommes de commettre «l'adultère,» entendons par là, le fait de connaître la femme d'autrui un moyen pour espacer les naissances. En effet, après l'accouchement d'un enfant, l'homme tupuri doit s'abstenir de partager le lit avec son épouse jusqu'à deux ans au moins. Pendant cette période, l'homme trouve donc sa satisfaction sexuelle par le *nagemay*.[37]

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[36] Feckoua, "A myth has it that one day, a man hiking in the bush met the devil (literally the mother of death). The devil told him, "give me your sons, and I will make of them accomplished men. Upon return from the ritual, they were made now initiated. Thus began the initiation rite among the *Massa* people, and later it expanded to the whole Tupuriland. It appears that the children are offered to the devil, they are so to speak sacrificed to the devil. It is to the devil that people turn to ask for help. The devil is called *Magaï*, which is *Manhuuli* in Tupuri and means 'the mother of death. This word represents among the Tupuri all evil spirits, the epitome of evil. Thus the initiation is summed up in this: to offer the boys to *Magaï*, the devil, who will kill them, then will return them to life in a sort of rebirth that makes them *Paï*, accomplished men," *Les Hommes et leurs Activités en Pays Toupouri du Tchad*, 161.

[37] Tibo, "Notion du Péché," 24–25 says, "It is the ritual that consists in a young man aged 18–21 bringing home an unmarried girl, for two to three days, at the close of the new year festival (*few kage*), 'after he had paid a symbolical price which varies from year to year.' According to professor Feckoua, this rite puts an end to adolescence, but also helps men avoid 'adultery,' i.e. the fact for a man to sleep with a married woman, and it constitutes a tool for family planning. For after a baby is born to a woman, it is prohibited for a man to share his

Besides being sex experimentation for the young, the *Nawmay* appears to be also an outlet for married men to relieve their biological need without being accused of adultery, for the adultery of men occurs only when they sleep with another man's wife. It also frames sexual activity within a formal setting. Whether the young man or the adult, it is known that they are sleeping with this girl. And if pregnancy follows, then everyone knows who the author is, and he needs to marry her, or pay the dowry in full if he chooses not to take her as a wife.

Funerals

As stated above (see the paragraph about the afterlife), death is understood among the Tupuri as the transition from the visible world to the world of the spirits, or the invisible world. Though death ends the sojourn on this face of life, it does not entail the transition to the other side. That, the living must organize this transition on behalf of the deceased, otherwise he will wander aimlessly around, causing trouble to the living. Thus funerals constitute a true rite of passage for the Tupuri. It takes place in two phases, the burial and the mourning, or *yii huuli*.

Burial procedures

The rite is carried out differently according to the status of the deceased. When it is a baby or still-born baby, « Seules l'enterrent des femmes âgées et expérimentées. On couvre le bébé avec le filtre de la bière '*haw.*' Une fois la tombe creusée à une petite profondeur, on dépose l'enfant sur le dos bien calé par des morceaux de *bourma*, car si jamais il se retournait, sa mère ne pourrait plus avoir d'enfants. Puis on bouche le trou. Ensuite, prenant la mère par la main, les femmes lui font enjamber la petite tombe. »[38] There is not much wailing, generally it's only the

wife's intimacy for at least two years. Thus men find through the *nawmay* a licit way to satisfy their sexual urges."

[38] "Only elderly and experienced women will bury it. The body is wrapped in the traditional beer filter called '*haw*'. When the shallow grave is dug, the small body is laid on its back and firmly wedged in with pieces of the

mother who is weeping. In reality the father weeps out loud immediately when he observes that the child has breaded his last. This gives signal to others to echo the cry, thus alerting the community that the family is afflicted. But the wailing doesn't last more than five minutes. After burial the group returns to the compound, the mother to her room, and the women remain with her to comfort her. The men spend some time with the husband, encouraging him one way or the other. Then one by one everyone will leave.

If the deceased is a pregnant woman, "Avant de l'enterrer, on opère une incision pour voir si le bébé était mâle ou femelle ou même si elle avait des jumeaux, puis on l'enterre. Dans le cas où il y aurait des jumeaux, le mari de la défunte doit faire le sacrifice requis pour les jumeaux. »[39] Twins are buried without any wailing; it is believed that anyone who wails will also die.

In general the standard burial and funeral procedure is as follows: the corpse is cleaned, and disposed in a way that all who want to visit it for the last time will be able to see his face. Then wailing will begin. The women of the household and relatives who came to assist will be by the corpse, blowing fans to prevent heating and decomposition. A messenger is sent to the *Wang Siri*, who will order to play the *titir*. All who hear the sound of the *titir* will know that there is death in town. And the wailing will tell where exactly. However, messengers are sent on foot or on horse to inform family members who live far away, especially kin members, in-laws and the friends of the deceased. The elders of the family will come together to decide the best place for burial. Then the son of the deceased will take a hoe and with three strokes will open

wood *bourma*, so that it cannot turn. Should ever turn the mother will never bear child again. Then the grave is filled in. afterwards the women take the mother by the hand and they compact the small mound with their feet," http://tupuri.org/obseques.html.

[39] "Before burying her, she will be opened to see whether she was carrying a boy or a girl, or twins. Then she is buried. In the event that she was carrying twins, the husband of the deceased wife is required to offer the appropriate sacrifice for twins." http://tupuri.org/obseques.html.

digging of the tomb. After that he can return to the house while others continue to dig. In the meantime, women of the neighborhood begin the process of beer brewing. The burial takes place the same day of death when death has occurred early in the morning. If death occurred in the afternoon, burial will take place the next day. Nowadays, with family members scattered as far as a thousand miles, and will the appearance of morgues, burial can be postponed for two weeks or more. All the delegations formed by sons-in-law will arrived with a cow as contribution to the funeral. If the group is strong in number, it will sing the *mbaga,* the funeral song and dance, and will go full circle around the compound before they can enter it.

When the tomb is ready, the body is prepared for burial following this ritual: the fingers are bound together, and both hands are brought to cover the face. The legs are tied together at the knee level. Then the body is entirely wrapped in white cloths, then wrapped again in a mat made of palm tree leaves. Nowadays the mat is replaced by a coffin. Here the nephews on the maternal side will intervene to claim the fine to authorize burial, called *fray*. When the *fray* is offered, the body is taken to the tomb with much wailing. The body is lowered in the tomb, and placed on his left side for men, and the right side for women. The body is protected with pieces of wood or broken pieces of pottery, so that dirt would not directly fall on the body. The son who opened the digging of the tomb will be the first to throw dirt with the left hand to cover up the body. All other members of the family will follow suit, in great wailing. Then the tomb is filled up with dirt, and a mound to the dimension of the tomb will be formed to materialize it. Water in a calabash is set besides the tomb; branches of the tree *hoon* are added in it. Those who have touched the dirt of the tomb will purify themselves by washing hands with that water. From my own observations, when the deceased was a *pay*, a man who had been initiated through the *goni*, the rite of passage to adulthood, his burial is strictly carried out by fellow initiates; no women or

lugud (non-initiates) are allowed near the burial site.

After the tomb is filled up the family returns to the house, while the different groups find rest under some tree shade or at an acquaintance's home. A delegation of the sons of the deceased will tour all the groups to thank them for their assistance, and provide them with jars of beer. There is no obligation to feed people, but generally the sons-in-laws and their delegations will be taken care of by the wife. Others will be invited for a meal by their friends, or friends of the family in distress. In any case the rules of solidarity and reciprocity play very well here. That evening a goat is slaughtered by the son who opened the grave. The meat is cooked, and children are served; however the head is preserved until the next day.

The next day is the day of *laa jaanre* or *maŋ jaanre*; at nine o'clock, the elders of the family will take a chick and thatch from the roof of the deceased's room. They go to an intersection of the road and there will burn the chick. After that the son who opened the grave slaughters a chicken at the tomb if the deceased is a woman, or a rooster for a man. A young girl will cook the meat together with the goat meat. The son throws a piece of liver to the ground, then distribute the goat meat, especially the head amongst the children. He takes the jaw and the bowel of the goat with a little of dirt from the grave, makes a complete round of the tomb with great wailing, then he goes to set all this at the intersection where the chick was burned. Thus the burial process is closed, the mourning proper or *yii huuli*, will be organized immediately or postponed, depending on the decision of the family council.

The Mourning

Depending on the capability of the family, the mourning follows the burial immediately, or is postponed a few months, sometime a year or more. It is the family council which is convened after the burial that decides the matter. The mourning can be costly, for it assembles large

crowds. Thus the family needs time to gather all necessary resources for it. Part of the preparation is the germination of grains of sorghum for brewing the beer. There must be enough time for the grains to germinate, at least three days; then the germinated grain must be dried before it can be milled.

The mourning ceremonies cover three days. But the day before the women will begin the brewing process. The first day is the day for calling the dead. It is also arrival day for family members who reside far away. The tomb is built with lasting material, and painted. The evening of that day, a man holding a flute enters the room of the deceased together with a woman. Everyone is silent while the man calls the name of the deceased several times and then all listen attentively. If there is any noise in the room, the man will play his flute while the woman hurls strident cries. Then everyone joins in with great wailings. This will last ten to fifteen minutes. Then people will keep wake for some time, those who are tired may go to bed.

The second day early in the morning, people continue to arrive from neighboring villages and from afar. Some bring jars of local beer, others an oxen or a goat. Young people execute dances. In the afternoon, a nephew of the deceased removes the *jagjiŋ* and takes it to an intersection where he leaves it. Upon his return beer it distributed to all. Many animals can be slaughtered to feed the guests. This is a farewell, and the indication that the deceased no longer inhabit his compound.

The third day, the family gathers. All creditors will come and claim what the deceased owe them. Any creditor who fails to show at this meeting will no longer be allowed to make a claim. Then the personal belongings of the deceased are gathered and distributed to those entitled to. If the deceased is a man, his wife or wives are given one to this brother, one to another, and so on. The first wife, if she is advanced in age, will be asked whether she wants to rejoin a husband or

remain widow. Generally when she has a son she is likely to choose to remain widow. She will move close to her son's compound, but not inside his *jagjiŋ*.

Ceremonies

The Sacrifices and Offerings

There are countless sacrifices and offerings that take place in a Tupuri's life time. I will only mention the major ones.

The *Few Kage* or *Co'o Kage* is the main ceremony a head of a household conducts. It is the celebration of the new year for the Tupuri community. The *co'o kage* starts in Dore, the capital city of the Tupuri land. There the high priest, the *Wang Dore*, conducts the ceremony at the end of the rainy season (September/October), following a lunar calendar. The festivities begin with the reclusion of the priest, the *kaltiŋma*. At this time, there are no celebrations, no long trips, no conflicts, and sexual abstinence is required. Thus it is some sort of lent period. In the meantime, the women germinate and dry the grains that will be used to brew the local beer, the *bilbil*. If fact the *bilbil* is a ubiquitous element in all celebrations. Two days before the celebration day, the women boil the flour from the germinated grain; they let it cool off, then add the right amount of yeast. The liquid is covered to left to ferment. The third day, the day of celebration, the women will filter the beer so it is ready. Around nine o'clock the *Waŋ Dore* or *Waŋsiri* for villages that are far from the capital city, gathers all the families and admonishes them as to a peaceful celebration. Then a number of roosters are brought to the leader, who says a prayer to the ancestors and cuts the necks of the chicken and let them go. As they jerk around their blood sprinkles the area, and it is hoped that they will fall on the right side as they die, thus auguring a favorable new year. Then beer is served to all and they are dismissed, each one to their house. There each head of household will also fetch their rooster and offer it. The men can go to their

businesses while the first wife is cooking the meal. After eating and drinking until around three o'clock, the young men will begin the dance of *Waywa*, which will last way into the night, and the following days.

The *Few Kage* is followed by a ceremony called *Duugi*. A chicken is killed, the blood, the feathers, and the entrails are taken out to the crossroads in a piece of broken calabash. Then at the signal cry by the local leader, everyone comes out shouting, "Away from here, away from here." This is supposed to scare off the evil spirits and even the ancestors, so that the people will enjoy a peaceful year. This operation is repeated from village to village until the whole of the Tupuri land is purified from all evil for the year.

The *Soo Baa* or *Tosge Baa* is a sacrifice offered directly to God. It is preceded by a period of abstinence from sexual activity. In the morning or evening, the head of the household takes a ram, says a prayer to God in these terms, "My God, and all spirits of the sun, the moon, you messengers of God and my ancestors, please receive from my hand this ram, and let no decease occur in my family and may the season be prosperous." With the help of a man who has been chaste also, he binds the ram's legs, and strangles it. Then he dresses it with his knife. He takes out the guts, especially the lungs and the liver to be roasted immediately. Then in two pieces of a broken calabash he puts some blood from the animal, a piece of the liver and of the lungs. He goes to the east with one calabash, and his wife goes to the west. They set those at the first crossroad they find.

Then they return to the compound, where the householder takes the reminder of the liver, throws some pieces of it to the grounds as he formulates this prayer, "To all the things in my house, I offer you a piece of liver from this ram, please receive it from me, and do not allow sickness to strike in my house." Then shares the remaining pieces with his first wife and his

children.

The first wife cooks most of the meat. When the meal is ready she calls her husband to come and share the food. The man takes a few pieces that he throws to the ground, eats a piece himself, and then orders his wife to distribute the rest to the children. She can also eat some of it. Whatever remains of the fresh meat is cooked for the next meal, and the same sharing procedure is followed again.

Marriage

Marriage among the Tupuri is always exogamic. Marriage is prohibited between relatives on both sides, at a certain degree. But it seems that the level at which kinship is no longer a hindrance is left to each family to determine. Arranged marriages used to be the norm, and marrying into certain people groups was frowned upon. But nowadays the rules are relaxed, and the young people can determine who they want to marry. Marriage for the Tupuri is conceived of as an alliance between two families, and bride does not marry her husband exclusively, she marries into his family. Behind this conception lies the idea that the wife becomes a property of her husband, and since private ownership is not encouraged, she is simply part of the estate of the extended family, given to her husband's enjoyment during his lifetime. . After his death, she will be given to a brother or cousin of the deceased. Polygyny is accepted extensively practiced in this society. There are no limits to the number of wives a man can take. There exists several forms of marriage: the regular form is called *Bo'oge wayn ti bii*, the "sending of a women to fetch water," or *yage way*. This terminology indicates that marriage is conceived as finding a helper for oneself or for one's son. According to role definitions, there are tasks that a man cannot do, fetching water is among those. If the young man can fetch water for himself, or has his sister do it for him, there comes a point in time that he can no longer do so without causing

the sarcastic comments of people. Thus he must find a helper to fetch water for him. So when the young man has found a girl that pleases him, or his father suggests a girl to him, he will begin to visit her parents, and befriend her. When he is ready to get married, he will send his father to ask her hand. The father of the girl will either ascent to the request or deny it. But a considerate father will always ask his daughter whether she agrees to this proposal. All parties agreeing, the father of the bride will ask that the groom party find an intermediary to discuss marriage arrangements, including the dowry and the time they want to come for their wife. The groom may be asked to pay twelve cows, seven goats and a lump sum of money (nowadays $300 to 400); the total expense for dowry can easily reach $10,000. He may bargain, and get the dowry reduced, or he may discus payment installments. But the dowry notwithstanding, marriage is not conceived of on the part of the girl's family as a sale, nor for the family of the groom for that matter. The retort to anyone suggesting this is selling the person goes like this: "where have you seen the market for wives? If you want a slave, why don't you go buy yourself one on the slave market?" This line of thought will be regularly used by women who are abused by their husbands.

When all matters are settled, the groom will send a close friend in the evening, generally a childhood friend, with other young men to go to his in-laws to bring his wife. There will be a modest celebration. All the guests are served plenty of local beer, but not food, for the groom or his party cannot eat at his in-laws. The envoys of the groom share tobacco with the adults and give candies to the children. The bride is adorned with all the jewelries her parents can afford, and is sent on her way. An unmarried teenage girl is sent along with her to keep her company for a couple of days and ease her adaptation into her new family.

When the party arrives back at the groom's home, the bride is taken inside her mother-in-

law's house. The friends of the groom and the children of the village will assemble for the festivities. The next morning the bride is literally sent with her companion to fetch water, while a young goat is slaughtered at the house of the *moobe*, the eldest ascendant alive, if not, the eldest brother. After a few days the companion of the bride returns to the bride's family, and brings reports about how she behaved. At this time the bride is now sleeping in the groom's room.

After a few months, the newlywed is allowed to visit her family. She is accompanied by a young girl of the husband's family. She carries with her a chicken; this visit is called *bo'oge liŋ*. A week later, the wife takes her companion back to her husband's village. She can stay with her husband for a few days, but is still free to return to her parents. When she goes back to her family, she can stay as long as she wants, or until her parents advise her to return to her husband. During this time, if she doesn't like her husband, she can decide not to return. In this case her family will have to return the dowry paid by the groom. But if she agrees to return, she is sent off with a spatula, a hoe and a farm hatchet to help her husband in the fields. Two brothers accompany her in order to claim the spear from the family of the groom. They will be handed a spear and a war hatchet. This ceremony is called *maŋge jaw*, "the taking of the spear." This symbolizes the sealing of the alliance and the promise that there will never be a battle between the two families and in-groups.

After the wife's return, there will be the ceremony of *Laa Swee*, to introduce her to her own kitchen, for thus far she was cooking only in her mother-in-law's kitchen. Now she can claim the full status of a wife.

Other forms of marriage are the *Maŋge wayn*, in which the man whom the girl is in love with is not accepted by the parents, or has come late while dowry was already paid by another suitor. The lovers will agree on a plan to escape together. In this case the young man will send a

word to the girl's parents to inform them that he has their daughter. This opens the way for negotiations of the fine and the dowry to be paid. Usually the dowry will be expensive, for the young man proved by "kidnapping" the girl that he was capable to handle the situation. No mercy will be shown him, for he has embarrassed his in-laws and the other family as well, thus straining their friendship relationship. The form *Haage way*, "giving" is practiced for the benefit of certain categories that have difficulty finding a wife either because of physical handicap or advanced age. A sympathetic father will convince one of his daughters to marry such a person, with the engagement that he will supply the failure of the man. Such marriages are usually a Cinderella story because the man who had benefited such generosity will do everything in his power to make his wife happy.

The last form is the *hooge way*, which is the Tupuri form of levirate. When a husband dies, on the day of *Maŋjaanre*, when the man's estate is settled, the family council decides which wife goes to which brother or cousin of the deceased. Usually it is the young people who are struggling to gather the necessary dowry to marry their own wife. Such marriages are almost always problematic because the wife is generally older than the husband, and she will usually mock him for not being able to take a wife of his own; thus the man ends up being polygamous to stop the mockery.

Thus marriage is an expensive and protracted experience among the Tupuri. In this regard it becomes really an investment on the part of the husband's family. That is why the wife does not belong to her husband alone, but to his whole family. Perhaps this is also the reason why divorce is minimal, and happens only when a grievous offense has been committed, such as the inability of the wife to assume her role as a wife, or the man's inability to perform sexually. Modern causes of divorce such as irreconcilable differences, violence, abandonment of the

marital home, adultery are not necessarily valid in that culture; these causes can always be dealt with in the family council.

Partial Conclusion

The above analysis intentionally attempted to portray the culture of the Tupuri people as closely as possible to what it was at the beginning of the twentieth century. However I must agree with Duane Mehl that "Africa is in a state of upheaval. In the past few decades a definite breakdown in African social structure has occurred. Everywhere over the continent, the impact of Western civilization has been felt. Even in the remotest villages in the jungle or in the bush, the African can no longer live out his life in the exact pattern of his ancestors."[40] Mehl is describing the situation in the late 1950s. Today the change is drastic. A few incidents will suffice to illustrate the point: (1) until the late 1970s parents prohibited their children to let anyone take their pictures or record their voices, let alone be shown on television, because it was thought that their soul will be taken away. Today even the *Waŋ Dore* does not mind the crepitation of camera flashes as people take pictures of him on occasions. Cellphones are found in the remotest places where there is no electricity. (2) The dead used to be buried no later than the very next day of their death. Today with the advent of morgues, and the scattering of family members due to job displacement, a body can be kept for weeks if not months, forcing the Tupuri to alter their practice of not eating food as long as burial had not taken place. Yet those surface changes do not affect the basic matrix of the Tupuri people. In fact there is a general renaissance of traditional practices today all over Africa. Heads of States, cabinet members and

[40] Duane Mehl, "A Study of the Effects of Christianization upon the Religious Structure of primitive Society as Reflected Among the Ibo People of Southeastern Nigeria West Africa," Bachelor of Divinity Theses vol. 22.9 (Concordia Seminnary, St. Louis, 1957), 8.

other CEOs return to their villages to undergo traditional initiation rites, and to offer the sacrifices to ancestors that even their parents who converted to Christianity had abandoned. Each year hundreds of civil servants return to their villages to organize the ritual mourning of their departed ascendants. These facts alone raise the question of whether Christianity was sufficiently contextualized so as to permeate the life of the people and validly give answer to their existential questions.

At the close of this chapter on the study of one people group in West Africa, in this case the Tupuri of northeastern Cameroon and southwestern Chad, it is time to summarize the findings. First, the study demonstrated that the family, not the Western nuclear family, but the extended, multigenerational family, is at the center of the Tupuri religious life, like its first century Greco-Roman and Palestinian counterparts.[41] The eldest living ascendant is the head of such a family. He is in charge of all religious rituals and ceremonies. Women and children are not totally excluded from the religious life. They are passive participants for the most part. However women, particularly, the first wife and the virgin prepubescent girl, do take an active role as helpers to cook all sacred meals, or as intermediary between the householder and the women, for the prepubescent girl. Thus a household salvation scenario is fitting in such a context.

Individuals derive their personality from the dyad, like first century people. Parents recount their genealogies to children so they know exactly who the members of their kin are. Young men undergo initiation into adulthood, and become active only when they start a family, or become the eldest living kin. The house with its rich religious life, from the planting of the *jagjiŋ* to its

[41] Suzanne Dixon, *The Roman Family*, 1992; and Beryl Rawson, *The Roman Family in Recent Research: State of the Question*, 2003, have abundantly treated the subject of household religion in the Greco-Roman world. Shaye J. D. Cohen ed. *The Jewish Family in Antiquity* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1993), on his part addressed family religion in the Palestinian setting. Cf. Jan Willem Van Henten and Athalya Brenner, eds. *Family and Family Relations as Represented in Early Judaism and Early Christianities* (Leiden: Deo, 2000).

removal and the destruction of the compound at the death of the householder, predisposes it as the locus of gospel proclamation, especially in pioneer mission. The household is established by God, and ends with the death of its head. This head is the only person in the family who is religiously responsible: he is responsible not only for his own sins, but also of every other member. He must atone for all offenses by conducting the appropriate ceremonial. His prayers follow about the same line as Jesus or Stephen when they prayed, “Forgive them for they know not what they do.” (Luke 23:34) He would offer himself as the one to be blamed for their errors, because he failed to keep them in the right path. In this context, how best can the bearer of the gospel witness to this family and elicit the most appropriate answer? It certainly did not help the situation to promote individualistic responses to the gospel, nor to insist upon monogamy as the condition for acceptance in the church. On the contrary, the social fabric suffered a great deal from the breakdown of the family.

A unique problem a missionary will encounter in the conception of the household here is the place of the ancestor in the scheme of the Christian salvation. Here ancestors are integral part of the household, they continue to interact with the living, providing protection and welfare to the living, and receiving in turn all they need to be happy in the invisible world. The eschatology of the Tupuri is thus built around the concern for keeping this reciprocal service going on forever. Outsiders will have a difficulty to understand the dreadful dilemma the Tupuri faces when he must decide to ignore his departed relatives, leaving them to starve and opening thus the floodgates of their anger against his family. How does the message of the gospel address this issue? I will return to this in the next chapter.

Third, the study also revealed that the Tupturi is a very religious person. He believes in an intimate experience of relationship with the Divine, which he calls “Baa bi no” (my God) or

Pantway (Lord of the land). He believes this god is unique and inaccessible to mortal man. Thus the living must always call upon intermediaries to reach him with their sacrifices. Is this God the same as the Christian God? Or is it some idol or evil spirit that is blinding them to the knowledge of the true God? This raises the question of the relationship between Christianity and culture. My contention is that since the Tupuri distinguishes between God and the devil whom he calls "the mother of death," this God is the God of the Christian, the Triune God, and Creator of all things. The Tupuri's knowledge may not be an exact correspondence, but he shows that through natural revelation he has at least a dim understanding of the Creator God.

Fourth, besides God, the Tupuri also believes in the devil and a plethora of spirits, which he is convinced, all seek to do him harm. Thus he must constantly be offering sacrifices to ward them off. Demon possession is not unfamiliar to this people. Like the people of the NT, the experience demon manifestation on a daily basis. In fact they have a ceremony to consecrate spirit-possessed people. This consecration aims at empowering the possessed person so they can control the spirit, unlike in the NT where demon possession leaves the possessed at the mercy of the evil spirit. Yet many Tupuri people have turned to the Gospel because they wanted to escape the troubles incurred at the "hands" of demons. Thus the Christ that is to be presented to them must have the power to overcome the spirits,[42] and exorcism must not only succeed in casting out evil spirit, but it must also leave the freedman equipped to repel any subsequent attempt by the

[42] Kwame Bediako discusses the Christology that transpires in the "grassroots" theology. Here are a sample of the affirmations about Jesus: "Jesus is the grinding stone on which we sharpen our cutlasses, before we perform manly deeds. We have risen at dawn to take up our weapons of war, and join the battle. *Nkrante brafo,* You are the Sword Carrier *Okatakyi Birempon*: Hero Incomparable by the time we reach the edge of the battle the war has already ended. We tum back, singing praises." "If you go with Jesus to war, no need for a sword or gun. The word of his mouth is the weapon which makes enemies tum and run." "If we walk with Him and we meet with trouble we are not afraid. Should the devil himself become a lion and chase us as his prey, we shall have no fear Lamb of God! Satan says he is a wolf–Jesus stretches forth His hand, and look: Satan is a mouse! Holy One!" in *Jesus and the Gospel in Africa: History and Experience* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004), 8–15.

evil spirit to return. It seems that mainline churches have miserably failed at this point considering the massive return of Christians to traditional practices to protect themselves against evil spirits and witchcraft.

Fifth, the Tupuri believes, as was the case for the Hebrews at some point in time, that eschatology is abiding forever in the land the Lord had given their forefathers. Thus the Tupuri is very much attached to his homeland. Paradise or eternal life is to live happy before God in the land he has given the ancestors. Thus a man is fulfilled when he has gotten married, had children some of which are sons, and he is able to provide each one of them with a wife. He knows the chain between the living and the living-dead is not broken, thus the land will still bear the name of his ancestors. When life is lived in harmony with the dead, and the evil spirits and demons can be warded off, there is nothing else to desire in life. Here there is no concept of the end of the world, or rather the end of the world is conceived of as the disappearance of one's lineage from the fatherland. Thus the Tupuri, however far he may go away, must always return to his homeland with his progeny.

Therefore the missionary must show an acute sense of cultural sensitivity. The faulty conception of the simple minded African has done much damage to the Christian message and compromised the salvation of many Africans. The religious experience of the Tupuri can be superficially considered as superstitious from a westerner's standpoint, but it is engrained in the very subconscious of the people. Anthropologists have now taught us that culture or worldview determines how a person perceives reality, and makes sense of his environment. Care must therefore be taken to understand that worldview and thus to frame the message in a way that is relevant to the people. Because this author thinks it is not necessary for the culture to be transformed prior to the preaching of the gospel, but rather that it is the gospel that will transform

it, he deems it not useful to attempt a systematic and value-judgment evaluation of the Tupuri culture. The goal of the anthropological description provided here is to help the missionary understand the people, and to frame the Christian message in a way that engages these people. As tedious as the task may appears, the good news is that the Holy Spirit still accomplishes his purpose in spite of human failures to rightly communicate the message.

At this point if the reader should reconsider the stories of Vignette One and Two, I hope a new light shines on the story, giving it a new clarity. I hope also it allows the missionary or future missionary to see the shortcomings of certain gospel formulations. Mehl offers what he considers the positive of Christian missions in West Africa,

> "They have attacked the African's belief in divinities who controlled the ethics of his tribe. They have preached against the worship of ancestral spirits who gave sanction and continuity to tribal existence. They have fought against the sacrifices, the taboos, the magic and divination, by which the African attempted to ward off the dangers of life and preserve his community intact. They have preached against the use of amulets and charms which have their raison'd'etre in the African's consciousness of the spiritual force which inhabits the world and again gives sanctity to his communal existence…It is largely at the instigation of Christian missionaries that the uglier aspects of African social life have disappeared. There are virtually no more human sacrifices carried on today. The criminal and civil laws have been so developed in Nigeria that no one segment of society has control over the lives of the rest. The dreadful pall which once rested over the fortunes of newborn children has been lifted in Christian areas. Twins are no longer put to death. Christian people have been freed, to a great extent, from their fears of unknown forces, spirits, witches, and the like. They have greater freedom in their thinking and in the area of human relationships. The fears and hostilities which once were a very potent force among villages and clans and tribes have been greatly alleviated. A man may now travel from village to village without fear of losing his life or being sold into slavery. In these, and in many other aspects of African life, the Gospel has truly brought peace and joy to countless African people.[43]

That applies to the Tupuri people as well. But I am not convinced that all the changes were due to Christian missions; granted there were a lot of positive changes. Especially the

[43] Mehl, "Christianity and Primitive Society," 67–68.

disappearance of fear of witchcraft and evil spirits can be readily ascribed to Christianity. But many of the other abuses were actually abandoned because of the civil and criminal laws, and the presence of police forces, unless one admits that the colonial power was also part and parcel of the missionary enterprise. At any rate a keen observer of the African scene will observe that less than a century later, those advances are almost gone due to modernization. The African elite, after abandoning black magic and witchcraft from their villages, now delve into esoteric sects like the Free Mason, the Rose Croix, having learned them from the kin of the missionaries who brought the gospel earlier. Human sacrifices have returned in the inner-city, violence and crime are ever present in the street of most major cities. Highway robbers rage on the major and smaller roads of Cameroon; kidnapping for ransom has never been this lucrative. And the basic social unit, the family, is in disarray. Tribal and religious wars spring in many countries and religions: Soudan, Somalia, Rwanda, Congo, Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Libya, Egypt, Mali; the new demons seem to be seven times stronger than the former. Corruption in government is endemic. As I write, the Transparency International's 2014 Corruption Perception Index has been released, and the best African nation, Botswana, ranks at 31/175 countries. All the rest of the continent ranks 60 and above. The combined forces of modernity and Christianity has become for Africa a Molotov cocktail that threatens to blow the whole social structure up. Mehl is right that what Africa had was taken away, without it being prepared to replace what was taken away with a new thing. There is no solace in thinking this is a global phenomenon. In this connection does the old formulation of the Christian message still hold the answer to this dismal portrait? What contours will the re-evangelization of Africa take?

In the next chapter I will begin to formulate some answers to these concerns.

CHAPTER FOUR:

IMPLICATIONS OF THE SALVATION OF HOUSEHOLD MODEL FOR MISSION AND EVANGELISM IN WEST AFRICA

The conclusions drawn in the previous chapters can be summarized thus: (1) the salvation of the household is a major theme in Lukan theology of missions as can be seen on the occasion when Jesus sends the twelve and the seventy-two; he sends them to the houses, towns or villages (Luke 10:8; cf. Matt. 10:11) and instructs them thus, "Whatever house you enter" (Luke 9:4; 10:5); (2) the proclamation of salvation is made to the entire household, usually on account of the profession of faith of the householder (Luke 19:10; Acts 10:33, 48; 16:14–15; 31–34). These passages, set within their initial Greco-Roman and Palestinian world where the personality is dyadic, indicate clearly that (3) what happens to the head of the household, happens to all under his care, and when he makes a decision, it applies to all under his roof; (4) in West Africa as in first century Palestine and Rome, corporate personality and its corollary corporate responsibility lie beneath the worldview of the people and undergird their being and actions. Thus an approach similar to that of Luke-Acts could yield unexpected results.

The question to be asked in this chapter is: How can the salvation of the household model be effective in mission and evangelism in West Africa? How can the concept of salvation of the household affect the way mission and evangelism are carried out in West Africa? The missionary Linn Haitz will serve as the prime example of Lutheran Mission in the area, as well as the sample against which the alternative I am proposing will be compared. In *Juju Gods of West Africa*, Haitz relates his own experience as a missionary in Nigeria. Seemingly, the worldview he encounters on the mission field is altogether different from his own that however he tries his best

to offer a relevant Gospel message to the people, he can sense bewilderment in his hearers as he proclaims a God that is near, yet he cannot produce him to his listeners. He is too abstract to his audience. Meanwhile he himself is puzzled by attitudes that are difficult to fathom from his own perspective, such as hoping that a dead bird's feathers will carry the prayers of the village to the god far removed in the sky above. He is pulled between the temptation of dismissal of these attitudes as childish or superstitious, and the rightful respect and understanding he must show to a different culture.

The inner turmoil of this missionary raises the issues of the contextualization of the Christian message and of cultural sensitivity in missions. As we attempt to apply the conclusions gleaned from the analysis of Acts 16:25–34 to the West African context, the issue of method must be necessarily[1] addressed. Contextualization of the Christian message being a major concern in this chapter, a corollary is the relationship between Christianity and culture with specific reference to the relationship between Christianity and other religions. Beyond the necessity of the right mind or culture to receive the gospel lies the unyielding need to have the right attitude towards a different culture. In this regard therefore, this chapter will examine a few contextualization models prior to any suggestion of what would be a constructive working model. Carl Braaten being one of the Lutheran voices in the debate, his perspective in his book

[1] Both linguists, communication specialists and anthropologists, especially epistemologists agree on the unavoidability of context in how we make sense of our environment. Charles H. Kraft in his *Communication Theory for Cross-cultural Communication* argued that the receptor is the locale of meaning in communication. Thus he stressed the importance of the receptor's context and worldview which constitute the grid through which he or she perceives reality. David J. Hesselgrave, on his part asserts, "From a communication point of view it is imperative that we analyze the world views of our respondent cultures. It is in the context of these world views that our message will be decoded and evaluated," *Communicating Christ Cross-culturally* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 130. Arguing from the "translatability" of the gospel standpoint, Walls affirms, "The fact remains that Jesus Christ fulfilled the different statements, and answered the different questions; or rather, he convinced his Jewish and his Gentile followers, as he convinces his followers today, that the answer to their deepest questions lay with him, even when the question and the answer did not seem to fit," *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996), 17. It is then incumbent on the messenger to present this message in a relevant way.

entitled, *No Other Gospel!* will be useful in reaching a conclusive argument as pertains to the relationship between Christianity and culture.

At the end of these sections, attention will be given the application of the salvation of the household model in West Africa. This application will raise the particular issues related to the worldview of the Tupuri people, as illustrated by the recurrent topic of the living-dead in African theological debates. The reader who is acquainted with works of African theologians will notice that the topic of the living-dead is ubiquitous[2] among them for two main reasons: (1) the living-dead in most African thought, is the interface between the visible world and the netherworld, or the world beyond the grave. They link the present to the past and to the future. (2) The *telos* of all history for most African people (thus the Tupuri) is that the living-dead's name remain forever present in the land, through their descendants or lineage, for the living-dead live in a mysterious place in the land with their survivors. Without a survivor to provide them with the amenities of life, the *liŋ*, the home[3] of the departed ones, becomes inhospitable, for it is the living who will make the stay in the netherworld worth living. Thus "paradise" for the Tupuri is the symbiotic life of the living and the departed ancestors in the ancestral land. Consequently, a Christian eschatological salvation will have no relevance if it does not address the condition or fate of the living-dead. A heaven or paradise that has no place for the ancestors of the African is not worth longing for in the view point of a Tupuri man. Thus eschatology becomes central in formulating a relevant gospel message to the Tupuri, and in this connection the topic of the living-dead plays a key role in the process. If the African, particularly the Tupuri must come to

[2] See for example, John Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (London: Heinemann, 1969); E. B. Idowu, *African Traditional Religion: A Definition* (London: SCM, 1976); Kwame Gyekye, *An Essay on African Philosophical Thought: The Akan Conceptual Scheme* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); J. O. Awolalu, "What is African Traditional Religion?" *Studies in Comparative Religion* 10, no 2 (1976): 1–10.

[3] Tibo, "Notion du Péché," 30–31.

terms with the Christian message, the process must begin with the status and fate of the living-dead. In a nutshell the ancestors are the umbilical cord that connects him with the universe. If broken, his whole world is in disarray.

The contextualization of the concept of the salvation of the household has yielded the two major contributions to missiology in West Africa. First, the house becomes the locus of mission, and this has weight, especially in pioneer mission where the missionary cannot count on a church structure as a meeting place. Second, the whole family is the beneficiary of the gospel proclamation, even though the householder may be the only spokesperson. This is important considering that whether in ancient culture or in today's world, there are always in a family or household those who cannot speak for themselves.

Overview of Models of Contextualization

The scholarly community is virtually unanimous on the necessity of contextualization in Christian theology and missions.[4] But what it is and what it is supposed to accomplish is essentially the guess work of every theoretician. Contextualization has been used in doing theology, in missions, in history, and in praxis. With regard to theologizing, I believe the saying "all theology is contextual theology" to be true; for this reason every specific culture should be allowed to do their theologizing, even if that means they must be challenged by worldwide Christianity. In fact missionaries generally come from a society that has a long history with Christianity. They have a heritage to guide their theological formulations. However**,** Christianity

[4] A. Scott Moreau asserts, "Without contextualization, people will not connect to Christ in a way that moves their hearts. Faith will feel foreign, and people will lose what they have grown up cherishing. Churches will never feel rooted in their own culture, and people will not see the true winsomeness of the gospel. They will never understand the fullest intent of the incarnation," in *Contextualization in World Missions: Mapping and Assessing Evangelical Models* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2012), 18–19. One discordant voice is Ralph Winter, who estimated that contextualization was a dangerous word. However his concern was with the difficulty of defining what it was that people called contextualization.

is of recent implementation in West Africa. Often the temptation is to supply them with readymade theological formulations that are not always intelligible to the people in that region. It must be conceded that in pioneer missions, contextualization necessary to make the gospel intelligible to those who hear it for the first time escapes the capability of the hearers. That first contextualization, I believe, is incumbent upon the messenger to do, or more precisely on the missionary to do. This review of contextualization models aims at providing the reader with emic anthropological insights and the suggestion of a working model for the missionary.

Translation Model

The categorization is not how this approach self-identifies; rather it is Bevans' classification. Hesselgrave identified this model as "Authentic and Relevant Contextualization." The author asserts that "in its historical meaning, *contextualization* has to do with making a message (such as the biblical gospel) *meaningful* to people who are "foreign" in the ethno-cultural sense or to those who subscribe to a "foreign" worldview. *Decontextualization* has to do with freeing a message (e.g., the gospel) as much as possible from elements of the contextualizer's culture, so that the intended meaning comes through with a minimum of interference."[5] In a nutshell, Hesselgrave and Rommen define the authentic and relevant contextualization thus,

> The adequacy of an attempted contextualization must be measured by the degree to which it faithfully reflects the meaning of the biblical text. Thus, the contextualizer's initial task is an interpretive one: to determine not only what the text says but also the meaning of what has been said. It may be useful to think of contextualization as a process with three distinct elements, revelation, interpretation, and application, throughout which a continuity of meaning can be traced . . . The second element is the reader's or hearer's perception of the intended meaning. The formation of this perceived meaning is affected by the two horizons of the interpretive task—the horizon of the interpreter's own culture and that of the text . . . The third element

[5] Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict*, 245–46.

> involves two steps. First, the interpreter formulates the logical implications of his understanding of the biblical text for the culture in which it is to be lived out. Second, the interpreter consciously decides to accept the validity of the text's implications or to reject it (or some part of it) and superimpose his own meaning.[6]

The concern is laudable enough; whether it can be attained is another question. Oftentimes missionaries are oblivious of the impact of their culture on their own understanding of Scripture. However it is not at all plausible that one can be a neutral analyst of one's own culture, since one is part of it, imbued in it, forms one with it. Hesselgrave and Rommen continue, "[A]cceptable contextualization is a direct result of ascertaining the meaning of the biblical text, consciously submitting to its authority, and applying or appropriating that meaning to a given situation. The results of this process may vary in form and intensity, but they will always remain within the scope of meaning prescribed by the biblical text."[7] In *Paradigms in Conflict* Hesselgrave surrounds the contextualization process with a protective fence constituted of principles or presuppositions drawn from the ICBC (1978b) Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy and the Chicago Statement on Hermeneutics (ICBC 1978a). The first principle is the affirmation of the centrality of Christ, "We affirm that God has inspired Holy Scripture to reveal Himself through Jesus Christ as Creator and Lord, Redeemer and Judge."[8] The second principle deals with the authority of Scripture: "We affirm that the Bible expresses God's truth in propositional statements, and we declare that Biblical truth is both objective and absolute."[9] The third principle: "We affirm the necessity of interpreting the Bible according to its literal, or normal, sense. The literal sense is the grammatical-historical sense, that is, the meaning which the writer

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[6] David J. Hesselgrave and Edward Rommen, *Contextualization: Meanings, Methods, and Models* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), 201–2.

[7] Hesselgrave and Rommen, *Contextualization*, 202.

[8] Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict*, 267.

[9] Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict*, 268.

expressed. Interpretation according to the literal sense will take account of all figures of speech and literary forms found in the text."[10] This principle affirms the literal meaning of the Sacred Text in interpretation, and the necessity to depend on the illumination of the Holy Spirit. The fourth and last principle, orthodoxy/orthopraxy: "We affirm that true Christian unity must be based on a doctrinal foundation that includes historic Christian doctrine as revealed in the inerrant Scriptures and expressed in the Apostles' Creed."[11] An African theologian who endorses this approach is undoubtedly Byang H. Kato.

In his evaluation of the translation model, Kraft is not tender with Hesselgrave and the Evangelicals. In a broad generalization he affirms, "A Western focus on knowledge as information combined with the underlying fear of subjectivity (see Allen 1956) and the desire to know absolutely (be like God?) lock many evangelicals into totally static models of revelation."[12] As we will see below, Kraft objects not particularly to Hesselgrave, but to the Evangelicals' premises about revelation, inspiration, and the authority of Scripture, and redesigns the grammatico-historical hermeneutic.

Bevans on his part is optimistic about the translation model; in his view, this model is one of the only two with the countercultural model that "take seriously the message of Christianity as recorded in the scriptures and handed down in tradition."[13] A second positive point is that the model "recognizes the ambivalence of contextual reality, whether that be a person's or a society's experience, a culture's or a religion's system of values, a person's social location or the

[10] Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict*, 269–70.

[11] Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict*, 272.

[12] Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict*, 143.

[13] Stephen B. Bevans, *Faith and Cultures: Models of Contextual Theology*, rev. & exp. ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2002), 42.

movements of change in the world."[14]

Finally, in Bevans' estimation, "the translation model is one that is able to be used by any person committed to a particular culture or situation, nonparticipant or participant…Especially when doing primary evangelization, this model of translating the message is absolutely essential. If no effort of translation is made, there is hardly any way people of another culture can come to know the life that Christianity holds out.[15] Yet Bevans agrees with Kraft in pointing out deficiencies of the model. Besides the view held by proponents of the translation model that sees revelation as essentially propositional, Bevans notes that the model also has a defective view of culture, "The presupposition is that every culture is roughly similar to every other culture and that what is important in one will be important in another. As Robert Schreiter observes, 'questions are rarely asked as to whether there really are such parallels, whether the parallels have the same significance in the new culture, or whether other more significant patterns might be drawn upon.'"[16] The epistemological question remains one difficult issue to handle. On the one hand, one cannot say that there are no parallels between the culture of the Acts of the Apostles without running the risk of becoming unintelligible or irrelevant in trying to communicate its message. On the other one must also guard against the equal danger of assuming the world views are similar, therefore one can indiscriminately use the local language and concepts. This would lead to serious misunderstandings and miscommunications.[17] Bevans also takes issue with the core concept of the "supracultural" or "supracontextual" nature of the

[14] Bevans, *Faith and Cultures*, 42.

[15] Bevans, *Faith and Cultures*, 43.

[16] Bevans, *Faith and Cultures*, 43.

[17] We have mentioned Don Richardson's account of the encounter of the people of Papua New Guinea with the gospel as an illustration of this risk in his book *Lords of the Earth.*

Christian message; he retorts to the proponents of this model,

> It is very improbable that there can exist such a thing as a 'naked gospel.' It is certainly important not to throw out the baby (doctrine) with the bathwater (context), and this is something that the translation model strongly affirms. The problem, however, is to know the exact difference between the two, because 'we cannot have access to the gospel apart from some kind of human formulation.' A more naïve, positivistic notion of culture, for instance, might allow for a supracultural content, but much more common today is a notion of culture that is all-embracing, the matrix of every human attitude and linguistic expression. Rather than the image of culture as a husk that covers a kernel, Krikor Haleblian suggests that culture is like an onion, with various layers.[18]

However**,** Bevans seems to conflate together the translation model, and the dynamic equivalence model, which is actually a good thing. It is possible to speak of the two as variants of the same model, though this might overshadow the fundamental disagreements between Kraft and Nida on the one hand, and Hesselgrave and others.

Dynamic-Equivalence Model

As a communication theorist, Kraft developed a variation of the Translation model of contextualization he named "Dynamic-equivalence" model. He is bolstered in developing this method by Ramm whom he quotes as saying,

> When . . . an immense amount of sober research has gone into the nature of language theory and communication, we might have to develop a whole new theory of inspiration and revelation. I am always haunted with the suspicion that our theories of inspiration and revelation are severely culturally conditioned by our culture and not, as we hope and think, by the Scriptures themselves. It may well turn out that when modern theory of communications is developed, we will find that Holy Scripture is far more in harmony with that than it is with the kinds of concepts of language and communication we have worked with in the past few centuries in developing an evangelical view of revelation and inspiration,[19]

Convinced of his own communication principles, Kraft develops his method of

[18] Richardson, *Lords of the Earth*.

[19] Charles H. Kraft, *Christianity in Culture: a Study in Biblical Theologizing in Cross-Cultural Perspective*, rev. 25th ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2005), 133.

contextualization by reassessing the Evangelicals' most important tenets: (1) verbal inerrancy;[20] (2) the inspiration of Scripture;[21] in this regard Kraft sees no difference between the inspiration of the biblical writers and that of faithful expositors of Scripture today.[22] He thus joins rank with E. Nida who first elaborated the concept of dynamic equivalence in Bible translation; and (3) grammatico-historical interpretation.[23] One can say that Kraft sees his approach as a corrective to the translation model, which in fact takes its source in the translation principles developed by Nida.[24] Among African theologians, Lamine Saneh and Kwame Bediako are two scholars who endorse this method. Though Sanneh speaks of translating the message,[25] he is very much in tune with the dynamic equivalence approach, and defends in the same vein the continuity between Christianity and general revelation, or more precisely between Christianity and culture or for that matter African Traditional Religion.

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[20] Kraft writes, "Revelation from this point of view is dynamic, continuing communicational process, rather than something that started and stopped in the past and has now become static," *Christianity in Culture*, 140. By the same token he denounces the static nature of the Evangelicals' understanding of divine revelation, "Current evangelical Protestant models, except for those of Pentecostalism, seem to assume that revelation is primarily a matter of knowledge and information (Fuller 1969, ix-20). Even worse, evangelical attempts to support "intellectually" their views on the authenticity of Scripture often devolve into complete trivializing," 142.

[21] Kraft asserts, "The problem with attempting to understand Scripture in terms of the inerrantists' analogy is that any contention that anything in language is inerrant flies in the face of what we know about human communication . . . The position advocated here concerning how the Bible is inspired sees no difficulty in maintaining that the totality of the Bible (forms as well as meanings) is inspired. The Bible, though fully human as well as fully divine, is all inspired Word. God has inspired and still inspires (some prefer to say "illumines") the whole Bible," 160.

[22] Kraft, *Christianity in Culture*, 161, writes, "*The inspiring activity of God is understood to be dynamic–an example of the continual leading activity of God rather than static–an example of a method God once used but has since abandoned*" (italics in the original).

[23] Kraft appears to endorse grammatico-historical hermeneutic when he writes, "We are attempting, by means of the application of anthropological, linguistic, and communicational insights, to increase our ability to maximize the strengths of an approach to biblical interpretation such as the grammatico-historical approach while minimizing the deficiencies of approaches such as the plain-meaning approach," 112. Yet the outcome of such concern seems to lead counter-current to the direction of Evangelicals. Kraft affirms with R. Padilla, "The aim is that the horizon of the receptor culture is merged with the horizon of the text in such a way that the message proclaimed in the receptor culture may be a dynamic equivalent6 of the message proclaimed in the original context," 112.

[24] Cf. Bevans, *Faith and Culture*, 46.

[25] This is a reference to his book actually bearing the same title.

Hesselgrave takes aim at both E. Nida and C. H. Kraft for advocating a model that denies the divine origin of the Bible, its inspiration, and its authority. He informs us that

> Nida studied anthropology, in addition to linguistics, communications, and lexicography, because 'words only have meanings in terms of the culture of which they are a part' (Neff 2002, 46). In the article from which the above quotation is drawn, Nida doesn't explain his understanding of revelation and the inspiration of Scripture. We can assume that he has a high view of Scripture, but it seems obvious that he doesn't subscribe to the verbal-plenary view espoused by Warfield and founders of the Evangelical Theological Society.[26]

Thus for Hesselgrave, Nida's principle of dynamic equivalence smacks of rejection of divine inspiration of Scripture. "Definite limits," he claims, "are imposed naturally by a belief in the divine inspiration of the *very words* of Scripture. Those who do not recognize those limitations sometimes lead us astray."[27] As for Kraft, "in his approach, the God-breathed words of Scripture are scarcely more important than the special insights of their modern interpreters–*perhaps no more important*. If his understanding of biblical revelation and inspiration is not the same as a Hindu understanding of the Vedas, it is close enough to be scary."[28] All these remarks led him to assert in concluding that,

> Missionary contextualization that is authentically and effectively Christian and evangelical does not begin with knowledge of linguistics, communications theory, and cultural anthropology. It begins with a commitment to an inerrant and authoritative Word of God in the autographs of Old Testament and New Testament Scripture. From the starting point of a commitment to the authority of that Word and its truth and dissemination, tools afforded by relevant sciences are necessary additions to enable us to understand Scripture and communicate it meaningfully and effectively across cultures (Hesselgrave 1984, 3–13). But apart from that commitment, using the tools will not enhance understanding. In fact, it may take away from knowledge of truth.[29]

These rejoinders among evangelicals betray the difficulty to maintain the traditional

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[26] Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict*, 260–61.

[27] Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict*, 261.

[28] Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict*, 262.

[29] Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict*, 274.

positions Evangelicals have held hitherto, in light of new understandings ushered in by communication theorists, linguists, and anthropologists. It is no longer tenable to ignore these findings, or to simply brush them aside as emanating from the wrongful use of science in a magisterial way rather than ministerial, especially when the original monographs on which Evangelicals built their stand are no longer extant. Can the characteristics ascribed to the monographs be attributed to the copies without alteration? For Kraft and Nida it seems that even if we had those monographs, the formulation of the doctrines of inerrancy and inspiration do not reflect how communication happens, whether among humans, or between humans and the Divine. At least for Kraft God in his revelation has chosen to use human communication to disclose himself, so that humans can know something about him, and that communication is not something of the past and static. It is dynamic and continuous.

Both the translational and the dynamic-equivalence models have elements that serve as correctives to the cultural hermeneutic this author embraced in the first chapter. Their high view of Scripture reminds cultural hermeneutists that they must guard against the temptation to put Scripture on equal part with cultural or religious beliefs of a local culture. The principle of continuity of the Christian tradition is also important for the missionary to check his contextualized message to the gospel. He will need to justify why his message tends to depart from the historical understanding, otherwise he will corrects his understanding and thus avoid erring.

Anthropological Model

The anthropological approach will, in Niebuhr's fivefold categorizations of the relation between Christ and culture, fit the Christ of the culture category. In this model, culture itself seems to be a source of theology and the encounter between Christianity and other religions

becomes a *Rendez-vous du Donner et du Recevoir*, as though the gospel needed to be complemented. Though Donovan did not specifically develop a contextualization method as such, one can derive from his well-known work *Christianity Rediscovered* the basic elements of his approach. Donovan challenges the old assumption that some people, and in this case, the Masai, are not ready for the Gospel. He formulates a new approach that includes a new purpose assigned to missions, achievable goals, and new approach to the unchurched people. The new purpose is to bring the Gospel and the gospel only, and now! The new approach is a keen sensitivity to the culture of the target people. He will not go to them on a pedestal, but will simply invite them to embark on a spiritual journey to discover the High God, what he calls the "nude gospel." As his new adventure unfolds, Donovan experiences as much conversion as the people he set out to Christianize. He discovers that his own God, like the tribal God of the Masai, was a tribal divinity, and that his own people, just like these pagans, needed the revelation of God to discover this "supracultural" deity. He is confronted with the realization that his whole theological baggage is unintelligible to his hearers. He has to learn to think like them, to gain an emic perspective on their worldview. In so doing he learns how God has been there with the Masai, long before he came, and that they needed only to realize that God is the lion who has been seeking them out, to give them the "spittle of forgiveness." And this is the part that God has given him in reaching to these religious people, the proclamation that in Jesus Christ, God has come to them with the word of forgiveness. Thus the basic elements of his approach are cultural humility, evangelism as a mutual journey to discover the supracultural God who forgives all people, the "nude Gospel" as he calls it, the use of local frame of reference and patterns of thought, all of this crowned with the belief that God was there ahead of him.

Donovan's approach is a good example of the magisterial use of culture. Whatever

bridgeheads he discovers with the Masai, those in his view are valid theological insights he needs to abide with. I concur with Gregory Klotz in his critique of this model, when he writes, "This concept of contextualization warrants no need for a distinction between the message and media, as the gospel message is not 'in-breaking' to people within that society because Christ is preexistent in the social structure although under media forms or signs."[30] A question to put to Donovan is what will prevail between an indigenous belief and the Christian teaching when these two clearly clash? In his endeavor to preach only the "naked gospel," Donovan rips it off of almost all content, because, as Bevans asserts, it is not evident to make the difference between the husk (the cultural wrapping) and the kernel (the gospel message). Moreover Donovan, as many anthropologists suggest nowadays, makes it a point of honor to let the Masai decide for themselves what the Gospel would mean to them, in other words, they will have to do their own theologizing. In so doing, he does not preoccupy himself with the concern for historicity and universality of the Christian faith. Again, what will happen if the gospel the indigenous people come up with is the opposite of the Christian Gospel, as Don Richardson has demonstrated with the people of Papua New Guinea?[31]There should be a variety of expression of the same faith, but if that expression is so different from other expressions of the same faith, it might as well be a different faith altogether. Of course one must guard against the other extreme of overemphasis on uniformity which stifles the vitality and diversity akin to the nature of Christianity.

The Countercultural Model

The model is best described in the words of Bevans,

[30] Gregory Klotz, "Dealing with Culture in Theological Formation: a Former Missionary in Latin America Reflects on Training Pastors and Communicating the Gospel," *Concordia Journal* 38, no. 3 (Summer 2012): 253.

[31] Don Richardson describes a tribe of Papua New Guinea as appreciative of cunning and betrayal, thus making Judas, not Jesus, the hero of the gospel message, in *Eternity in their Hearts*, and *Peace-Child*.

> A first thing to be said about the term *countercultural* model is that it is not *anti*cultural. . . .·The term, however, is intended to express the strong critical function that the model plays over against human context. It in no way regards the human context as something to be replaced with a purer religious one–as might, for example, some fundamentalist Christian or Islamic perspectives. Rather, while practitioners of the countercultural model recognize that if the gospel is to be adequately communicated, it has to be done "in the language of those to whom it is addressed and has to be clothed in symbols which are meaningful to them" and that "culture itself is not an evil," it needs to recognize nevertheless that, as a human product, "it bears the marks of the human propensity to resist and undercut the rule of the creator of the world." Contextual theology is best done, they say, by an analysis of the context and by respect for it, but by allowing the gospel to take the lead in the process so that the context is shaped and formed by the reality of the gospel and not vice-versa. Context is to be given, says Lamine Sanneh, a "penultimate status," since it is "both a natural ally as well as a natural foe of the gospel."[32] (Italics in the original)

Bevans lists five presuppositions proper to the model: (1) the radical ambiguity and insufficiency of human context, i.e. human context is not enough to "form a firm basis for an authentic acceptance of Christian truth"[33] (2) Revelation is not essentially the "disclosure of eternal truths" but the "total fact of Christ."[34] That is to say, revelation is about something that has been done, the incarnation and passion of Christ, thus the narrative character of revelation; a narrative "about Jesus" and "of Jesus."[35] (3) "Christianity in the West exists in a context that is very un-Christian in its basic spirit." (4) "The gospel encounters or engages the human context by its concretization or incarnation in the Christian community."[36] There is much to be said in favor of this model; it truly voices the paradox of the Christian message, at the same time using the medium of culture in order to be heard, and yet challenging and calling into question the very core of that culture. Bevans does however caution us against dangers of the countercultural

[32] Bevans, *Faith and Cultures*, 118–19.

[33] Bevans, *Faith and Cultures*, 120.

[34] Bevans, *Faith and Cultures*, 121.

[35] Bevans, *Faith and Cultures*, 121.

[36] Bevans, *Faith and Cultures*, 122.

model. First, there is the danger of the countercultural aspect becoming really anticultural. Another danger, linked to the previous, is that of sectarianism. Rather than engaging the culture as it promises, the model can lead to withdrawal, an inward-looking attitude driven by the desire to be the true "resident alien"[37] community. A third caution in Bevans' view, is the predominantly Western make-up of the practitioners of the model, which may indicate a monocultural perspective. Finally Bevans fears the danger of Christian exclusivism over against other religious ways, but that in my view is the very essence of Christianity, and no apology is needed here. The danger in my view is for one brand of Christianity to brandish itself as the only orthodox version. Evidently there is a need to point out errors, but that is no ground to seek uniformity in all aspects, doctrinal or otherwise.

What is not clear in my view is whether the countercultural model can be done from an etic perspective, or should it be done only from an emic perspective? A. Scott Moreau answers that "many of the proponents are from the West and look at their own cultures rather than other cultures. They recognize that contextualization is not only done "over there" but right here,"[38] that is, in the West. However, in pioneer missions it is the missionary who is likely to do the initial contextualization of the Christian message "over there." Moreover, as Moreau expressed it, the countercultural model posits that no context is seen as having completed its own contextualization. The process must be recurrent as culture always tends with time to adulterate the message of the gospel, and the prophetic voice of the Spirit. The model will suit well a contextualization engaged by a missionary with an emic perspective. Thus the necessity to send as much as possible missionaries who are native to the area, and if an outsider, they must first

[37] Bevans, *Faith and Cultures*, 125.

[38] Moreau *Contextualization in World Missions*, 41.

take time to learn the customs of the people before they can begin an intelligent critique of that culture with the Christian message. Otherwise they will only be attempting to transplant in West Africa a Christianity from a different place unable to take root in the local culture. As can be seen in many African churches today, the countercultural decisions that were done by missionaries on behalf of the indigenous people are being challenged by Africans on the ground that this approach threw the baby with the bath water. At the same time, other African Christians dub any effort at challenging the missionary status quo as liberals' attempt to pervert the truth. If done from an emic perspective, the model is prophetic in the sense that the Gospel is allowed to continue to challenge slumbering Christians who become complacent with the status quo and stop questioning their ways. But for many people, especially in Majority World, if this model is applied by Western missionaries or former missionaries, it smacks of colonialism, and western imperialism. Besides, such a Christianity tends to remain forever a foreign religion which the people embrace for expediency's sake, but they become syncretistic because they feel the need to secretly keep the religion of their ancestors. But insider missionaries will be reminded with this model that Christianity stands in paradox with the ambient culture.

The different models reviewed thus far both provide a needed corrective to the flaw in western cultural thought that tends to claim unbiased objectivity and to offer thoughts as universal truths. This corrective also sends a wake-up call to proponents of the cultural approach who tend to use culture as a source of theology. Proponents of these methods insist that everyone is biased, and one needs only to become aware of it. Thus the methods fulfill our suggestion that there should be a triple contextualization if genuine contextual theology should carry the day in the West African context: contextualization of the original message, contextualization of western theology or what Hesselgrave calls "decontextualization," and contextualization of the resulting

message in West Africa. The end product will be a byproduct of three different cultural contexts engaging in genuine dialogue. However, some essential practical questions remain to be asked: How will the outsider missionary contextualize the message without first gaining an insider perspective? How long will it take for the missionary to gain such a perspective if he so desire? Could the solution be to actually send missionaries of similar culture to the people of West Africa, though that too has its hurdles? For how will the locals engage in the contextualization process without proper training? And if they must be trained as Hiebert and Kraft suggest, the question is, how neutral can that training be? The training usually already directs the trainees as to what questions need to be raised, and provides the tools to analyze them. On the other hand the alternatives are still worse: for one, if the missionary must do the contextualization for the locals, it is clear that Christianity would remain forever a foreign religion to many people, particularly to the Tupuri. Second, a joint contextualization as Hesselgrave suggests could never put the indigenous people on equal footing with the missionary. If the missionary has introduced himself as “missié” (for the French “Monsieur”), Sir, or Father, how can he expect at some point that his pupils will turn around and begin to discuss with him the meaning of his message as equal partners? Besides, most missionaries have appeared to the indigenous as the rich ones, with their nice houses, and cars, and as the charitable people. The local will automatically align on his or her views, and malign the local leader who will oppose those views, no matter how plausible his arguments might be. How often missionaries have threatened to leave if the indigenous leaders would vote for this or that position!

Critical Contextualization

In his effort to contextualize the family, Dean Apel uses another model. Apel, defines contextualization as “· a three step process: (a) an exegesis of the present experience; (b) a

correlation of that experience with the Christian tradition; and (c) a resulting expression of faith.[39] Apel is using a model initially developed by Paul G. Hiebert which he labelled critical contextualization, as opposed to uncritical contextualization. For Hiebert, critical contextualization comports three steps: (1) Exegesis of the culture which involves a phenomenological study of the local culture, in order to understand the old way, not to judge it. (2) Exegesis of Scripture and the Hermeneutical Bridge; for Hiebert, "here the pastor or missionary plays a major role, for this is the area of his or her expertise." He must lead the local community in a study of the Scripture dealing with the issue at hand and be able to translate that biblical teaching into the cognitive, affective, and evaluative dimensions of another culture; (3) finally, the last step is the critical response, i.e. how the people evaluate and respond to the new found truth, in view of their old cultural practice.

There is in Hiebert a profound concern and desire to accompany the new community in the appropriation of Scripture, and to effect conformation to that Scripture. For each new Christian community must understand that they belong to a family larger than their own small group. But at the same time, this concern is also the weakness of the model. In all the biblical examples of contextualization, the Apostles were very careful not to verse into moralization. At the first church council in Acts 15 the Church was rather conservative in what they required of the new believers, stating clearly that they were not going to burden the Christians of Gentile background with requirements pertaining to the Jewish practices (vs. 19, 28–29). And Paul, writing to the Corinthians states, "when I came to you, brothers, I did not come proclaiming' to you 'the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. 'For I decided to know nothing among you

[39] Dean Apel, *Contextualizing the Family: the Theologies of Family of the New Testament, Luther, and the Samburu through the Lens of a Contextualization Model* (Chicago, May 2009), 27–28.

except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:1–2). From these two passages, it seems that the Church leaders of the time were more concerned about proclaiming Christ, the means of salvation for both the insiders and the outsiders. Missionaries would "save" themselves and their converts if they would focus on proclaiming Christ, and providing these converts with the Word of God, letting the Holy Spirit guide them and lead them in all truth. I will return to this issue later in the chapter.

Upon comparison, what transpires is that all these models share a common concern: the necessity in pioneer mission to contextualize the message of the gospel in order for it to meaningfully engage a particular people or culture. I believe Hesselgrave is right in suggesting that a preliminary step in this endeavor is the "decontextualization" of the message. As difficult as this may prove, it is crucial that the missionary is at least aware that the message he is the bearer of is already culturally colored at a double level: it is colored with the culture of the writer and first hearers; it is also tainted with the culture in which he, the bearer is a part. Thus he must realize that the expression of it that he holds has particular relevance to his own milieu, but it might not necessarily be the case for another culture. Then the missionary needs to acquaint himself with the target culture in order to formulate the gospel in a relevant manner to the people of that culture. As the NT depicts, it is not necessary to attend a particular formal school in contextualization before one can proclaim the message to the unenvangelized. However**,** it takes keen observation in order to meaningfully engage a particular people. But one must always remember that God is ahead already paving the way for the reception of the message. This is particularly true of the Tupuri.

A second level of contextualization happens when the new community begins to think through what it means to become followers of Christ, and what the message of the Bible means

to them. With regards to this second movement, Mogensen writes, "Since contextualization focuses on relevance to the context, Christian insiders in the culture must be the chief agents of contextualization. Only the local Christian congregation is fully qualified, guided by the Holy Spirit and the biblical casebook, to discern what the gospel says to them in their context and how they should respond in meaningful ways."[40] This second level of contextualization is of interest to this research only as it addresses what the first converts would retain as good news, which they in turn will spread around in their in-group or neighborhood. Whatever they would have perceived as good news is what will be passed on to others. As we conclude the discussion of different contextualization models, Bevans' conclusion is really what matters most, "The question of the best model of contextual theology is an appropriate one, but within today's world of radical plurality and ambiguity the best answer to the question can only be: "It depends on the context."[41]

The West African context requires that the missionary formulates a befitting model in order to meaningfully contextualize the Gospel in this area. The following suggestions are offered as insider insights to help the missionary formulate such method: (1) Take time to understand the local culture. If that seems to take too long, send missionaries of similar culture. (2) Show proper respect to the local culture. Remember Luzbetak's remark that God is ahead of you, speaking to the people. (3) Be aware of your own bias. You too are culturally conditioned. (4) Remember also that even the biblical text is culturally bound. And the culture is intricately woven with the message, so that it becomes treacherous to attempt to separate the kernel from the husk.

The sections devoted to the Tupuri culture further expand on these principles by way of

[40] Mogens S. Mogensen, *Fulbe Muslims Encounter Christ: Contextual Communication of the Gospel to Pastoral Fulbe in Northern Nigeria* (Jos, Nigeria: Intercultural Consultancy Services, 2002), 23.

[41] Bevans, *Faith and Cultures*, 140.

illustration. But before going any further it is necessary to address the question of the relation between Christianity and world religions or cultures in a little more detail.

Views on the Relation between Christianity and World Religions or Cultures

Different views on the relationship between Christianity and world religions oscillate between two poles, universalism on one end of the spectrum and exclusivism on the other.

Universalism

"Universalism asserts that every human being will finally be saved."[42] This is the view held by most liberal thinkers, but also some key conservative theologians. Universalism is subdivided into humanists on the one hand; these base their claim that salvation can be found in other religions on positivism, that is, that all human societies, and as a corollary, their religions, are genuinely seeking God. According to Carl E. Braaten, "Humanistic universalism in the deistic or Unitarian line denies the chief articles of the Christian faith concerning human bondage to sin and death as well as the divine act of redemption in the person and work of Jesus Christ."[43] Thus salvation is a meritorious accomplishment of humans. The African proponents of this approach are Charles Nyamiti,[44] and Fabien Eboussi Boulaga.[45] While Nyamiti still allows for a Christology, Eboussi on the other hand, without denying the claims of Christianity, rejects wholesale its current formulation on the grounds that it entails the denial of the personhood of

[42] Tiessen, *Who Can Be Saved*, 486.

[43] Carl E. Baarten, *No other Gospel! Christianity among the World'sReligions* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1992), 4.

[44] For more details on his view, see his book *Jesus Christ, the Ancestor of Humankind: Methodological and Trinitarian foundations* (Nairobi: CUEA Publications, 2005).

[45] For more on Eboussi's view see, *Christianity Without Fetishes: an African Critique and Recapture of Christianity (1984) with an Additional Comment by V. Y. Mudimbe and a New Poscript by the Author* (Munster: Lit, 2002).

the African. The other kind, "christocentric universalism," "extrapolates to the future from the biblical history of salvation and perceives that God's omnipotent love will somehow be victorious in the end, in spite of all destructive and demonic forces at work to the contrary."[46] Braaten cites Karl Rahner and Karl Barth as representatives of this school.[47] From this perspective there would be no need to attempt mission amongst and evangelization of the Tupuri of West Africa. Their religious beliefs answer their life deepest questions and quests. Though this approach may satisfy the ego of people whose culture, even whose personhood has been discarded or ignored. However as Braaten observed, universalism denies the chiefs articles of the Christian faith. But a question remains to be answered, "Is Christ bound to the Christian Church? or to the doctrine of salvation as formulated by the Christian Church in the West?"

Accessibilism or Inclucivism

According to Tiessen,

> Accessibilism asserts that Jesus Christ is exclusively God's means of salvation and that the covenantal relationships God established with Israel and the church, in working out his saving program, are unique and unparalleled. Accessibilists believe, however, that there is biblical reason to be hopeful (not simply agnostic) about the possibility of salvation for those who do not hear the gospel. So they do not restrict God's saving work to the boundaries of the church as ecclesiocentrists do. On the contrary, they posit that God makes salvation accessible to people who do not receive the gospel. Although they grant that non-Christians can be saved, they do not regard the religions as God's instrument in their salvation.[48]

Hesselgrave, who prefers the term inclusivism, affirms that according to this viewpoint, "Salvation is accessible apart from special evangelization."[49] Tiessen asserts that accessibilism is not a new idea. He claims it can be found in Scripture itself and in the early Church Fathers,

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[46] Eboussi, *Chrisitianity Wihtout Fetishes*.

[47] Eboussi, *Chrisitianity Wihtout Fetishes*, 5.

[48] Tiessen, *Who Can Be Saved?*, 33.

[49] Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict*, 56.

namely Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, and Irenaeus.

The hopeful perspective of accessibilism is attractive. It does seriously address and consider the fate of the living-dead of West Africa, thus making the Gospel worth listening to. It also accounts for the universal tone of the gospel, and the universal scope of God's salvation of mankind. Yet it preserves the uniqueness of Christ as the Savior of the world.

Particular Atonement or Redemption

This perspective is held by some Reformed Theologians. It contends that "Christ died and rose again with the intent of saving those whom the Father had elected for salvation. This does not mean that the death of Christ was insufficient for the salvation of everyone. In fact, one could believe in both limited atonement and universalism.[50] That is so say, Christ died and rose again for the salvation of all mankind granted they believe, but he died and rose again specifically and unconditionally for the elect. Thus no matter where one is spiritually, one will be saved one way or the other if one is among the elect.

Thus for this view, the Tupruri who died without being exposed to the Gospel will be saved if he was among the elect. Though no one knows whether they were among the elect, this view leaves room to hope for the Tupuri ancestors. However this position could have a crippling effect on missions since God will find the way to save those he wills to save.

Exclusivism

Also known as Restrictivism, exclusivism asserts that the unevangelized are lost.[51] Hesselgrave affirms that "most conservative missionaries of the modern era have at least tended

[50] Tiessen, *Who Can Be Saved?*, 485.

[51] Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict*, 55.

toward this restrictivist position."[52] For Byang H. Kato, "The most we can say of the African traditional worshipper is that there is a craving for a spiritual reality. This craving is turned into idolatry as man turns to worship creation rather than the Creator." Kato staunchly subscribes to the exclusivism of Jesus Christ as Savior of the world. However his stand on Africa and African traditional religion sounds like denial of general revelation. The apostle Paul seems to be more optimistic than Kato in this regard, who reckons the Gentiles' knowledge of God through their obedience to the law written in their hearts as pure superstition. In fact it is about this kind of nihilism of the African persona that Fabien Eboussi Boulaga is up in arms: Whether one admits it or not, for the African traditional religionist; the Creator God is the same God of revelation. He is at once judge, savior and redeemer, he would say.

In my view to draw too much of a wedge between the hidden God and the revealed God is taking the distinction too far, just like distinguishing between the God of judgment in the OT and the triune God of the NT becomes misleading if it asserts that the God of the OT is different from the God of the NT.

One could object, as G. C. Berkouwer does, that "When we speak of insufficiency, we certainly do not intend to cast any reflection on the divine act of revelation in this general revelation. On the contrary, it only points to human guilt and blindness. This insufficiency is not a deficiency of revelation, but it is a deficiency which is historically determined, i.e. in connection with the fall of man."[53] Yet despite Berkouwer's disclaimer, it remains that we are at the same time saying something about a God who cannot break through this blindness to reach the "heathen," but only feels sorry that they were born at the wrong time when missionaries had

[52] Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict*, 55.

[53] Berkouwer, *General Revelation*, 132.

not yet reached their shores or villages! That is not the God Paul is talking about. Kato, like Berkouwer, asserts, "General revelation does not, and cannot, bring salvation. This is not due to any limitation on the part of God, but rather to the historical fall of man . . . If the best that religious pluralism can do is demonstrate the thirst in the human soul, it stands to reason that God's special revelation in Jesus Christ alone can save."[54] It seems to me that a strict distinction between general and special revelation can be overstated at some point.

Any serious Christian thinker cannot dispute the uniqueness of Christ. The difficulty with Exclusivism is its formulation of the uniqueness of Christ or of Christianity. Exclusivism tends to espouse ecclesiocentrism also, which can be defended to some extent, but not in its Roman Catholic sense. The Church saves in that it is the bearer of the witness to Christ. It is now its body remaining in the world. But the Church was not crucified, did not die on the cross, nor rise from the dead. Thus the biblical teaching that the Church is the body of Christ is true, but not necessarily the reverse. Moreover, exclusivists tend to think of Jesus Christ in terms of his incarnation only. But the very passages that teach the incarnation of Christ do speaks at the same time of his existence besides the Father before all creation.

Braaten is right in affirming that the hidden God in general revelation is the same God who revealed himself in special revelation. He is therefore justified in asserting that a discussion of the relationship of Christianity with the religions of the world must begin with a Trinitarian framework. The Apostle Paul declared that the Rock from which the Israelites drank was the Christ (1 Cor 10:4). Therefore one can say that it was the same triune God the Ninivites turned to in repentance when Jonah proclaimed the impending judgment against the city. It is the same

[54] Byang H. Kato, *Biblical Christianity in Africa: a Collection of Papers and Addresses* (Achimota, Ghana: African Christian Press, 1985), 19.

triune God who confronted Nebuchadnezzar, and the same who gave a hint of himself to the ancestors of the Tupuri. Furthermore one can say with Tiessen that when God meets man, it is not primarily for judgment, but for salvation.[55] Judgment and damnation are the result of man's refusal to repent. Redemption, unlike damnation, was predetermined before the foundation of the world.

The above sections helped us to decide on the method of contextualization that a missionary could use in primary or pioneer mission or evangelism. It is essential to give due authority to Scripture (which is one of the premises of the translation and countercultural methods); it is also as important to recognize the cultural coloration of any given message, the Bible not being an exception (the concern of the dynamic equivalence and anthropological methods). In terms of the role of culture, accessibillism seems to offer a fresh and relevant approach to the question of the value of culture with regard to the fate of those who died without hearing the gospel. Positing a certain continuity between general and special revelations, accessibilism gives hope to people who hear the gospel and worry about their ancestors who did not have the opportunity. The three levels of contextualization suggested by Hesselggraves as well as Kraft and Apel are important to keep in mind if one is to do proper contextualization.

How will these principles or concerns impact the proclamation of Acts 16:25–34 in a pioneer setting, that of the Tupuri of West Africa (Chad and Cameroon)? The sections that follow constitute an attempt to apply those principles and concerns.

[55] Tiessen asserts that "God does not make himself known only in order to compound people's guilt; he makes himself known in this universally accessible manner so that people would search for him and 'perhaps grope for him and find him' since 'he is not far from each one of us' (Acts 17:27)," *Who Can Be Saved*, 150.

The Household as the Locus of Mission and Evangelism

The *Jagsir*: A Possible Sanctuary?

In examining the role the house can play as the locus of mission and evangelism, it is important begin wwith the *jagsir*. One needs to remember that the *jagsir* (the sacred wood) plays also an important religious function as a place of worship. This sacred wood is where the first settler of the community comes to offer sacrifice to the divinity who has led him to the new settlement. Here also people who want to escape punishment or vengeance from an offended party take refuge. It is here too that a number of conflicts find resolution as a last resort. This is really a holy place for the people of the community. Thus it could remarkably be redeemed to take on the status of "house of God." The difficulty is that among the Tupuri, the leader does not hold much power over the families. Therefore in the event that the *waŋsir* (the Chief of the land or First settler) should embrace the Christian faith, it is likely that one of his siblings (a brother, a cousin, or a son, sometime even a nephew) would take over his function in order to continue the service to the sacred wood and thus to the community. His conversion has no effect on the religious practice of the whole community. Thus it appears impossible for the *jagsir* to ever become the Christian meeting place, as long as there are members of the *waŋsir'*s family willing to continue in traditional religion.

The Compound as the "Church" in Pioneer Mission

"Since household and family are universal norms in cultures everywhere, missionaries who maximize a 'family of God' household consciousness in planting church structures are most congruent with the apostolic missional ideal."[56]

The house from the inception of the church has functioned as the meeting place of the

[56] Del Birbey, "The House Church: A Missiological Model," *Missiology: An International Review* 19, no. 1, (January 1991).

nascent church. For one the orphaned disciples of Christ, afraid of coming out in the public, were gathering together for fellowship in homes (John 21:2–3; Acts 2:1–2). As soon as the Holy Spirit came on the disciples, the house became the choice place for the Sacrament of Holy Communion, "Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple area and to breaking bread in their homes. They ate their meals with exultation and sincerity of heart (Acts 2:46 NAB). Abundant literature has been devoted to house churches in apostolic times.[57] How can the house of the Tupuri be used as the locus of mission and evangelism? Rogers W. Geehring evaluates the use of the household in Pauline mission and evangelism in these telling terms,

> The *oikos* formula confirms therefore that it was typical of the Pauline missional approach in any given city to initially target individuals from higher social levels. In this way Paul was able to win homeowners, along with their entire households, for the gospel and to set up a base of operations in their house for local and regional mission. The baptism of entire households surely accelerated the spread of the gospel. Another positive aspect of this phenomenon is the corporative solidarity effective as a result of the conversion of an entire household at once. From the very beginning of one's spiritual journey, each individual experienced the built-in support of his or her decision for Christ in the rest of the newly converted household. Each new Christian was immediately integrated in a community of faith that provided significant assistance for further growth as a believer.[58]

The "decision" language notwithstanding, Gehring encapsulates quite accurately the benefits of the household use in mission and evangelism. It is true that all converts constitute mutual support but I would argue that the nurturing of the faith fell naturally on the leader of the house, the householder, certainly with the support of other adults in the home. Gehring adds, "an

[57] See e.g. Thomas Knieps et al. *The Household of God and Local Households: Revisiting the Domestic Church* (Leuven: Peters, 2013); Carolyn Osiek and Margaret Y. MacDonald *A Woman's Place: House Churches in Earliest Christianity* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2006); Roger W. Gehring *House Church and Mission: the Importance of Household Structures in early Christianity* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004); Edward Adams *The Earliest Christian Meeting Places: Almost Exclusively Houses?* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013); and David L. Balch and Carolyn Osiek *Early Christian Families in Context: an Interdisciplinary Dialogue* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003). Also Birkey, "The House Church."

[58] Gehring, *House Church and Mission*, 187.

integral part of his center missional outreach usually consisted of a prolonged stay in someone's house at a given location. These houses played an important role in the context of Paul's evangelistic ministry by naturally opening the door to a whole network of relationships."[59] Gehring continues, "Paul used the house as a base of operations for missional outreach… the Christian house itself as a sociological entity became evangelistically active in a twofold manner. Whereas Paul and his coworkers place the main ministry emphasis on evangelistic proclamation, households had an evangelistic impact on others around them through their personal confession of faith and through the traction of their community life together."[60] What Gehring says about the households in Pauline mission can also be said of the Tupuri house. In the previous chapter I mentioned that the Tupuri house is actually a compound that regroups more than one nuclear family, and presents multiples generations of kin. Therefore if a man has as many as ten adult sons, and brothers living nearby, a summons for a serious matter could bring together more than a hundred people at once. Moreover the Tupuri are famous for their legendary hospitality. In fact historically many people from other tribes integrated the Tupuri tribe and become one with it because of that hospitality. Thus after the first contact with the missionary, it is likely that neighbors and friends will be invited to attend further meetings.

The Role of the *jagjiŋ* (the Guardian Post)

As we have seen, the typical house of the Tupuri is essentially a compound composed of several huts enclosed in a fence. The disposition of the huts leaves a court in the middle where all sorts of social and religious practices will take place. In pioneer mission and evangelism where there is no meeting place, the house is a ready venue to host the "gathered guests." In this

[59] Gehring, *House Church and Mission*, 188.

[60] Gehring, *House Church and Mission*, 188.

regard the *jagjiŋ* can be redeemed to play an important role. This post needs only a transversal piece of wood in order to become the cross where the sacrifice of God to take away the curse of all offenses was offered once and for all. Here all members of the family will find the confessional, and invoke the eternal blood of Christ the Lamb of God. The greatest challenge of this redemption flows from the traditional role attributed to it. The *jagjiŋ* is traditionally invested with the power to guard the householder's compound against trespassers, thieves and philanderers, though the protection is never preventive, but dissuasive and denunciatory. It would take a proper catechesis to replace the traditional content with the message and significance of the cross of Jesus.

The Householder (*Pantiŋ*) as Priest

Another positive aspect of the family as the locus of mission is that for follow-up or catechesis, the householder can readily fulfill the role of the catechist. The *pantiŋ* among the Tupuri fulfills the religious role of the priest, as indicated in the previous chapter. This traditional position makes him the fittest person to guide the family and instruct them in the faith. And his rich religious experience will certainly enrich the family's embrace of Christianity. Philip Jenkins writes, regarding the beliefs of nonwestern nations, "Believing as they do in the universal presence of spirits, it is not difficult for them to accept the doctrines of the spiritual nature of God. While these ideas seemed superstitious to the early missionaries, they could easily mesh with older Christian ideas, and with the thought-world of the Bible itself."[61] Luther's doctrine of vocation does in fact emphasize the responsibility of the head of the household.[62]

[61] Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 152.

[62] See Martin Luther, "The Estate of Marriage, 1522"; "An Exhortation to the Knights of the Teutonic Order That They Lay Aside False Chastity and Assume the True Chastity of Wedlock, 1523"; "Exposition of Psalm 127, for the Christians at Riga in Livonia, 1524"; "That Parents Should Neither Compel nor Hinder the Marriage of Their Children and That Children Should Not Become Engaged Without Their Parents' Consent, 1524" in *LW* vol.45.

Luther's catechisms were conceived and written for use in the church but particularly for the family setting.[63] In a society that looks more like a boat without a captain, it certainly would be a step in the right direction that heads of households regain a bit of their God-given responsibility[64] over their families.

Gehring describes another contribution of householders in Paul's evangelistic strategy thus,

> Householders were able to create an immediate audience for Paul by inviting their friends, relatives, and clientele. As the guest of the head of the household, Paul was automatically an insider and as such enjoyed the trust not only of the householder but of the entire household and everyone connected with it as well. Thus, within a very short time after becoming the guest in someone's home, Paul had a relatively large number of high-quality contacts for one-on-one conversations and his evangelistic meetings.[65]

Contextualizing the Good News for the Tupuri: the Question of Ancestors as Members of the Family

In view of the worldview we studied in the previous chapter, it is necessary to ask the question, what is the content of the good news for a people such as the Tupuri? What are they hearing when they are told, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household? The context of this proclamation in Acts 16 is the jailer's fear and anxious question, "What must I do in order to be saved?" As we have seen, the Tupuri, like the Jailer, leaves in fear of evil spirits and demons that impose on him a heavy toll in terms of sacrifices to ward them off. The existence of local rituals to deal with them notwithstanding, the Tupuri longs for deliverance from such harassing forces. In his own worldview, he learned that God was offended by a daughter of men, *Maymoungouri madefeglew*, and is therefore totally transcendent, so that it

[63] In the introduction to the preface to the Large Catechism Luther writes, "Therefore, it is the duty of every head of a household to examine his children and servants at least once a week and ascertain what they have learned of it, and if they do not know it, to keep them faithfully at it."

[64] Deut. 6:6–25; Cf. Eph. 6:4; Gen. 18:19; Pr. 22:6.

[65] Gehring, *House Church and Mission*, 188.

has become impossible to directly call upon Him. Men need intermediaries. He further knows that offenses to God or to ancestors is committed all the time either by him, or a member of his extended family. That is why God can be angry with man quite often. Thus, that man, the child of God, is in a predicament since the initial offense to God, and in need of repairing the damaged relationship with his creator is a message that will resonate with him quite easily, for a myth with similarity to the biblical narrative of the Fall exists among them. That a sacrifice is needed to repair the relationship will also make sense. It will actually be a marvel, a good news indeed, to learn that God himself has provided the sacrifice for such a propitiation. That Jesus is the propitiation and the mediator God has sent us in order to renew the relationship is also a relief, though it may raise some questions, especially the fact that he is not from the tribe, and therefore not a blood relative who practiced the ancestral religion.[66] It must be said that a representation of Jesus as a Caucasian little baby, or a white man with white disciples, as it appeared in many earlier Sunday school and catechesis material did not help erase the opinion that Jesus was the guru of the white people's religion that was being forced on indigenous people. Much has also been said regarding the negative impact of Western missions being viewed as associated with colonial powers, a perception that is still strongly held among the most educated. The sticking point is most certainly eschatological, and involves the pointed issue of the fate of the living-dead.

The question of the foreignness of Christianity hardly bothers the Western missionary. On the contrary he usually makes every effort to highlight the peculiarity of the new religion he is bringing. The consequences of the foreignness of Christianity have been the frequent accusations

[66] John S. Pobee, *Toward an African Theology*, 81, asks: "Why should an Akan relate to Jesus of Nazareth who does not belong to his clan, family, tribe and nation?"This question is also found on the lips of some Tupuri.

from the African elite that Christianity is only an instrument of western colonialism and imperialism. The solution to that kind of charge lies beyond the scope of this research. Byang H. Kato has offered more than a valid retort to this claim.[67] As for the foreignness of Christianity because of the lack of kinship between its founder and the Tupuri, I believe it can be easily solved. In fact the objection can become a golden opportunity to expand on the true nature of God, and how all of us are his offspring.[68] The Tupuri believes that God is the Creator of all things. Consequently, it requires no particular effort for him to accept that God is the God of all, and wants a relation with all; that is why he is not satisfied with the particular sacrificial system of any tribe, but has provided himself the sole and perfect mediator and sacrifice for dealing with the separation. That God in Christ has now come near man is also a point that will speak volume to the Tupuri. I remember vividly the joyous celebration of the Tupuri Bible in 2003 when it was announced to the crowd, "Today God speaks the Tupuri language to the Tupuri people." The objection will also provide the opportunity to lay the foundation of biblical Christology. The doctrine of the incarnation will here take on a special meaning, as it establishes in a real sense blood kinship with all humans, "Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people." (Heb 2:14–18 ESV) It is in an effort to appropriate the Christian message within this

[67] Kato, *Biblical Christianity in Africa*, 33–35.

[68] See Acts 17:28.

frame of reference that some African theologians propounded doctrines that either made the Father or the Son the ancestor.[69] Kwame Bediako develops a convincingly strong case of Jesus's kinship with humans, based on the epistle to the Hebrews which he reclaims as "OUR epistle (emphasis his)."[70] For Bediako, Jesus fulfills the three vital religious roles or functions in ATR: that of sacrifice, of priestly mediation, and of ancestor. As sacrifice, Bediako asserts,

> Hebrews gives us the fundamental insight that since it is human sin and wrong-doing that sacrifice seeks to purge and atone for, no animal or subhuman victim can stand in for human beings. Nor can a sinful human being stand in for fellow sinners. The action of Jesus Christ, himself divine and sinless, in taking on human nature so as to willingly lay down his life for all humanity, fulfills perfectly the end that all sacrifices seek to achieve (Hebrews 9:12). No number of animals or other victims offered at any number of shrines can equal the one, perfect sacrifice made by Jesus Christ of himself for all time and for all people everywhere.[71]

Regarding Jesus as the mediator, Bediako asserts,

> His priestly mediation surpasses all others. Jesus had no human hereditary claim to priesthood (Hebrews 7:14; 8:4), so the way is open for appreciating his priestly ministry for what it truly is. His taking of human nature enabled him to share the human predicament and so qualified him to act for humanity. His divine origin ensures that he is able to mediate between the human community and the divine realm in a way no human priest can. As himself God-man, Jesus bridges the gulf between the Holy God and sinful humanity, achieving for humanity the harmonious fellowship with God that all human priestly mediations only approximate.[72]

As for the ancestral function, "Jesus has done infinitely more. . . . He, reflecting the brightness of God's glory and the exact likeness of God's own being (Heb. 1:3), took our flesh

[69] Charles Nyamiti is one theologian who developed a doctrine of the Trinity where the Father is the Ancestor of the Son who is the Descendant. The Holy Spirit is the mutual Oblation of the two. For more detail on his view, see *Jesus Christ, the Ancestor of Humankind: Methodological and Trinitarian foundations* (Nairobi: CUEA Publications, 2005). But Nyamiti's formulation does not in any way reflect the Tupuri understanding of the ancestor or the divine. For if the ancestor is the Father, then he can no longer be the Mediator. And in this case one wonder whether there is a divinity in Nyamiti' scheme. Moreover the descendant in the Tupuri traditional religion, is the surviving son of the departed one. Jesus Christ, the Son Incarnate, died and was buried, rose again and is now seated at the right hand of the Father. The new developments in this area see the Son as the Ancestor, and thus the Mediator between the Father and the living. Cf. John Pobee (1979:94)

[70] Bediako, *Jesus and the Gospel in Africa*, 27.

[71] Bediako, *Jesus and the Gospel in Africa*, 29.

[72] Bediako, *Jesus and the Gospel in Africa*, 29.

and blood, shared our human nature and underwent death for us to set us free from the fear of death (Hebrews 2:14–15)."[73] "Jesus Christ . . . took on human nature without loss to his divine nature. Belonging to the eternal realm as Son of the Father (Hebrews 1:1, 48; 9:14), he has taken human nature into himself (Hebrews 10:19) and so, as God-man, he ensures an infinitely more effective ministry to human beings (Hebrews 7:25) than can be said of merely human ancestral spirits."[74]

Thus without spending much time in changing the worldview of the African, Bediako is able to formulate the gospel in a way that engages the African without unnecessarily putting him on the defense. Lynn Haitz, in his book, *Juju Gods of West Africa*, recounts his adventures as a missionary in Nigeria. His narrative confirms the incarnation as the best key to presenting the gospel to Africans, or any people who are so eager in their search for God. Haitz tells of a certain Akpan who, conscious that his prayers were not going too far in the sky to reach God, killed a bird and dried all its parts, and turned them into objects he prayed to, hoping that the spirit of the bird will fly high enough with his prayers to Abasie, God. Taking up the man's story, Haitz replies,

> This dead bird is not the way, but Abasie made a way. He came down from the above and lived on earth as a man. He did things no one had ever done. He walked on the water. He commanded the wind and the sea, and they obeyed Him. He healed all kinds of disease. He raised the dead. You don't have to find Him. He has found you. He knew you before you were born. He made you. He made all living things – the whole earth, the stars, sun, and moon. He is the great God. When He became man, His name was Jesus. He left many of His words in this Book. I have come because He sent me to you. He loves you.[75]

The complicating factor in contextualizing the gospel to the Tupuri audience is the

[73] Bediako, *Jesus and the Gospel in Africa*, 30.

[74] Bediako, *Jesus and the Gospel in Africa*, 31.

[75] Lynn Haitz, *Juju Gods of West Africa* (St Louis: Concordia, 1961), 46.

relationship this audience entertains with the living-dead, and precisely with the ancestors. Ancestors are considered the protectors and intermediaries between their living kin and the netherworld. But as living-dead they still need the commodities of life such as food. Therefore the Tupuri is obligated to offer his ancestors what they need. This belief affects his view of eschatology. For him there is no end to life as long as there are descendants to carry on the lineage and continue to keep the harmony with the departed ancestors through offerings. Through sacrifices and ritual ceremonies he is able to keep both divinities and adverse spirits in good terms with his immediate environment. His religion is essentially pragmatic and he does not desire to turn his world upside down with a religion of uncertain origin and precepts. A change of religion for the Tupuri is a violent act in that he must sever ties with the departed ones, thus unsettling the balance of his existence. This violence to himself becomes an open sore that quite often results in syncretism or simply lapses back in the old religion when things go bad. The message of the gospel must therefore be framed in such a way as to address these considerations. The Tupuri are hardly the first people to raise the question of the fate of ancestors. According to Tiessen, "This is obviously a particularly critical question in those cultures where ancestors are highly valued, which is true in much of the world, the exception perhaps being individualistic Western countries. It was raised, for instance, by Hawaiians who were converted in the nineteenth century when the gospel was carried from Boston to the mid-Pacific Sandwich Islands by Congregational missionaries.[76]

The propositions offered by western missionaries thus far have included a first step aimed at replacing the worldview of the indigenous people with one that is compatible with

[76] Tiessen, *Who Can Be Saved?*, 15.

Christianity.[77] Thus ancestor veneration was abhorred and prohibited. James N. Amanze writes, "Because of their key position in African societies, attacks on the ancestors by missionaries in the missionary field became one of the factors that gave rise to church independence. [78] This still is the view of many Evangelicals who believe some worldviews are not fit or ready for the Gospel yet, even when they admit the necessity of contextualization. As indicated above, D. J. Hesselgrave is one who still strongly advocates such an enterprise. The missionaries usually tried to teach the people that once people die, their fate is sealed. They said it was unfortunate that the ancestors died without the saving knowledge of Christ, but nothing can be done about it anymore. However, they would say, God is now reaching out to save you. It must be said that it is not only western missionaries who held such views. Byang Kato, though he affirms that the gospel comes into a specific context, proposes a *tabula raza* approach to African traditional religion. Kato is profoundly dedicated to the uniqueness of Christianity, so much so that he does not realize the other danger, namely that Christianity will be so unique it cannot connect with the people. And this has been the case of many generations of Christians. To become Christian to them meant to become a European or North American. Anything different was an adulteration of the pure gospel. And adopting such an attitude Kato has no answer to the question of the fate of the departed ones who never heard of the Gospel. Or rather he simply aligned with a certain understanding of the "Christ alone" thesis.

Kwame Bediako, in his book *Christianity in Africa: the Renewal of a Non-Western*

[77] Duane Mehl for example suggests this, "In the end analysis, all non-Christian religious beliefs must be either eradicated or completely transformed into that which partakes of the new being in Christ our Lord. There can be no compromise on these issues," though he admits that there are areas where there can be a rapprochement with the Christian point of view. "A Study of the Effects Christianization," 72. Though Mehl was writing in 1957, I doubt that that approach was ever abandoned.

[78] James N. Amanze, "Theology Already Cooked in an African Pot," in *Theology Cooked in an African Pot*, ed. Klaus Fielder, Paul Gundani and Hilary Mijoga (Zomba, Malawi: ATISCA, 1998), 71.

Religion, attempts valiantly to address the question of a theology of ancestors. He proposes that a solution might come from liturgical reforms with the doctrine of the Communion of Saints. He cites as illustration the Kenya Service of Holy Communion, which contains this prayer for the departed in Christ, "Gracious Father we heartily thank you for our faithful ancestors and all who have passed through death to the new life of joy in our heavenly home. We pray that surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, we may walk in their footsteps and be fully united with them in your everlasting kingdom."[79] The question remains though: How can ancestors become saints without a clear formulation of how they are saved? Did they make it into sainthood without salvation? In fact Bediako in 2004 still writes that "It is also important to realise that since ancestors do not originate from the transcendent realm, it is the myth-making imagination of the community itself that sacralises them, conferring upon them the sacred authority that they exercise through those in the community, like kings, who also expect to become ancestors."[80] Thus for him the ancestral function has no basis in fact. And yet most African theologians and African people hold the ancestors in high esteem not for the way they lived their earthly life, but for the function they accomplish in the world of the living-dead. If all of this veneration is based on myth, how then can he begin to speak of a theology of the ancestors? And like Kato, Bediako falls in the pitfall of attempting to straighten the African worldview in order to make it amenable for the gospel.

A gospel message with such a bleak perspective regarding the ancestors of the Tupuri, was a bitter-sweet pill. Some made peace with the new theology and converted, many made the "Pascal wager," local formula, allowing their children to join the church, while they remained

[79] Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: the Renewal of a Non-Western Religion* (Edinburg: Edinburg University Press, 1995), 229.

[80] Bediako, *Jesus and the Gospel in Africa*, 30.

with their ancestors. They thus controlled the breaking away from the old religion, releasing their children from the obligation to sacrifice to them, but yet making sure that they carried their own responsibility to the end, both towards their ascendants and towards their progeny. Many others could not come to terms with the idea of turning away from their ancestors. In fact they found it selfish to abandon their ancestors to their fate in order to save one's own life. They would say, "If following my father's religion will land me in hell, so be it. I will be there together with him, and will blame him for it." My contention is that one need not formulate a hopeless gospel for this people. In fact if we are bearers of good news, it must be really good news, not threats or depressing news. In recent years, even theologians in the West have begun to rethink the question of the salvation of those who did not hear of the gospel of Jesus Christ before they died. Terrence L. Tiessen, one of those theologians, formulates a hypothesis he calls "accessibilism." In his words, accessibilists "posit that God makes salvation accessible to people who do not receive the gospel. Although they grant that non-Christians can be saved, they do not regard the religions as God's instrument in their salvation." Accessibilists believe that Christ is the only Savior in the world, but also that unevangelized adults can be saved too.[81] At the same time he admits that it is unlikely that there are actually any people who live 'normal' lives in the world and are completely ignorant of any form of special revelation."[82] Thus one can say that salvation is ultimately based on special revelation; only special revelation is no longer limited to the content of the written Scripture. This view brings more hope than the traditional evangelical exclusivism.

My own proposition is that one must start with eschatology. The Tupuri believes that

[81]Tiessen, *Who Can Be Saved?,* 150.

[82] Tiessen, *Who Can Be Saved?,* 164.

people who die remain around for some time; but where they go after a generation or so, he is unable to tell. Somehow each descendant continues to wait on his ascendant in the netherworld; how exactly, since the intermediate and ultimate ancestors no longer receive any offering from their living descendants? That remains an open question. Some Tupuri suggest that the sacrifice the *Waŋ Dore* offers is to those first ancestors of the Tupuri. Therefore every other Tupuri man is responsible only for his direct ascendant. However that still leaves a lot of intermediate ascendants unattended. Besides, because the Tupuri has no concept of end-time, the missionary will need to correct his view on this issue. The Tupuri makes no claim to having a definite understanding of what happens after life. Therefore he will have no particular difficulty to accept that God the Creator, who is Father to all, does take care of all ancestors, and gives them rest after their earthly life, rather than leaving them wandering about in the village. The Tupuri will understand that wicked people do not benefit from God's favor. They themselves shun greedy and wicked people, and the transgressors of the social and religious code; they believe that misfortune and woes will be the lot of such people, both now and in the netherworld. Such a positive view of culture does not sit well with many Christian theologians; they will dither to endorse it, if they do not simply oppose it. However, the point here is not that all ancestors will be saved, but that they are not irrevocably damned because they died before the gospel could reach them. The Tupuri holds his ancestors in high esteem, and a gospel that declares them indiscriminately lost is indeed not a gospel at all. With no pretention to offer a definite answer to this delicate question, I believe there are enough Scripture passages that provide more hope than has transpired through missionary proclamation. Acts 17:30 tells us that "the time of ignorance God overlooked." What does that overlooking entails? Paul in Rom. 2:12–16 seems to provide an answer, God will judge each one according to the knowledge they had of the will of God. And

Paul is clear that some Gentiles, apart from a knowledge of Moses' law, do the work of the law that is written in their hearts.

When the issue of eschatology is settled, the message of the gospel becomes attractive to the Tupuri, for it is truly liberating to him. The next step is to take into consideration his most basic social unit, the family, as the audience of proclamation.

The Household as the Target of Mission and Evangelism

The Home as the "Gathered Guests"

The members of the household become the ἐκκλησία that hears the proclamation of the Word. If a missionary will follow the local customs of the Tupuri, he will come to the compound of a man right after supper time, and ask to speak with the head of the household. He will be seated, and given a cup of water and food. Through this hospitality the family begins already to evaluate the mood of the visitor. If he refuses to eat, this indicates that he is not too friendly, and trouble might be coming from his visit. When the head of the household shows up, he might take the visitor to his own room, or the porch thereof. The missionary will introduce himself and the object of his visit. It is likely that he will speak to the head of the household alone if he does not make an explicit request to speak to the whole house. The man might object saying that he will report to the rest of the family. The missionary must use tact to negotiate the presence of all without appearing to challenge the authority of the householder. If he succeed in convincing the man, he will find himself in the presence of a huge crowd. A crowd comprising relatives of at least three generation: the grandparents, the parents and the children. The parents will include the sons of the elderly, and perhaps visiting sisters; as many as five to ten nuclear families who depend on the leadership of one patriarch. The gospel proclamation will elicit a response.

The Householder Confesses Faith in Christ

After listening to the proclamation, the head of the household may say, "well, we have heard you; we will consider this as a family and will get back to you. But oftentimes, because God has been ahead of the missionary, the latter will be surprised by a positive response. The householder will relate the tribulations he has suffered in trying to follow the way of the ancestors or to ward off evil spirits. Then he will make the solemn engagement that he is done with the old ways, and will now follow Christ. If, as we suggested above, the message corrects the worldview with regard to eschatology, and solves the issue of the fate of ancestors, it is likely that the response will be positive.

Here only the head of the household will be the spokesperson of his household. He expects all other members to assent to his decision. Any divergence from a child or wife will be seen as stepping out of bound, and an affront to the head of the household. Such affront will result in the member being ostracized, and in some cases leads to disownment. In one episode of his experience as a missionary. Haitz recounts the horrendous conversion experience of a local youth named Atim. Atim secretly began attending services and eventually became a Christian. But when his family discovered, they forced him to recant; and as he would not, his own brother burned one of his eyes with a live coal.[83] Though the story ends on a positive note by the conversion of the rest of his family, it is heart-wrenching to realize that this persecution could have been avoided. It is true that the history of Christianity is filled with stories of martyrdom and suffering for the sake of the gospel. This the Lord himself warned his disciples to expect. But that one exposes himself or others unnecessarily to suffering because one lacks the sensitivity to abide by the social customs of a place is hardly martyrdom or endurance of

[83] Haitz, *Juju Gods*, 47–49.

persecution for the sake of the Way. Had the missionaries paid attention to Jesus' instructions to the twelve and the seventy, they would have understood that by entering a house, they were supposed to speak to the head of the household; if they are not received, they are not expected to force their way and bypass the man to address his family members; they were to dust off their feet and walk away.

The Whole Family is Baptized and Assured of Salvation

As with the Philippian jailer's household, here too all members will be baptized. It is unfortunate that church tradition has abandoned this practice of immediate baptism after confession of the faith of the new converts; or rather reversing the order from that of the gospels, or of the apostles (cf. Matt. 28:19–20; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:41; 8:36–38; 10:47–48; etc.). This is crucial because by delaying baptism, missionaries were able to introduce all kinds of prerequisites for baptism, while the NT model did not offer such an opportunity. Immediate baptism opened the way for catechizing, not the other way around. How many families would have escaped the agony of separation because they were in a polygamous relationship, and it was required as a condition for baptism that the man sent off all wives but one? Moreover a family approach would give time to a head of household to work on recalcitrant members to bring them to accepting the Way. Haitz again shares an episode where the individualistic approach reveals its weakness. The man Akpan who converted to Christianity turned out to be the local ruler. On a visit, the missionary discovers that the subjects of the ruler were making a new hut for the royal residence, according to their customs. The missionary, failing to understand the complexity of the situation, blames his friend for being double-minded. Still oblivious to the cultural matrix of the people of which Akpan is the most prominent member, the missionary does not give a second thought to the chief's suggestion that he could go live somewhere else. Haitz was in for a big

surprise the day Akapn died and was to be buried.[84] With a little effort towards understanding the culture of the people he was evangelizing Haitz would have anticipated the cultural pitfalls that Christians of this background would encounter. The people of Akpan's chiefdom who had not converted decided to bury this Christian man according to their ancestral customs. It is troubling that even contemporary mission practices perpetuate this approach, turning the missionary into an agent of social change, rather than a herald of good news.

Partial Conclusion

That God is already ahead of the missionary in Tupuriland is only a confirmation that they are, like any human, made in the image of God, and that despite the fall that image remains, and they are groping around, attempting to reconnect with their lost Creator. As Braaten so rightly wrote, "The God revealed in Jesus Christ is the same God hiddenly at work throughout the world in all the religions of humankind. God has not left himself without a witness anywhere in the world, and the Jesus they have heard about is the same Jesus in whose name we have received grace and truth."[85] And wherever they are, culturally and religiously, God is reaching out to them for their salvation, not only individually, but with their whole households. He has put in the householders of this people, a great sense of their responsibility for the welfare of all in their household, though blinded by sin, they usually turn this sense of responsibility into an exercise of power. That this head of household wants salvation not for himself only, but for his whole house, the response of God's messenger must be, "You will be saved, you and your household." Thus hundreds at a time will be added to the number of those who are being saved. The outsider missionary must not allow the strange cultural practices to bewilder him to the point of denying

[84] Haitz, *Juju Gods*, 65.

[85] Braaten, *No Other Name!*, 99.

the presence of their Creator in their midst. It is a high calling that God wants the missionary in his side to witness the marvelous thing he is doing with this people. God forbid that the missionary finds himself rather standing in the way. As I write these lines of my concluding thoughts, I can only marvel with the apostle Paul at God unsearchable wisdom,

> Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!
>
> How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!
>
> For who has known the mind of the Lord,
>
> Or who has been his counselor?
>
> Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?
>
> For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen! (Rom. 11:33–36)

In this chapter I endeavored to demonstrate how the salvation of the household model will work in the West African context of the Tupuri. The essential cultural ingredients of first century Palestinian and Greco-Roman world are present in the worldview of the Tupuri: collective personality, corporate responsibility, consciousness of the natural phenomena as divine manifestations, elevated positon of the householder. These must be taken into consideration by the missionary, for culture is what makes a people a people. This is the cry of many African thinkers, as they engage in the discussion of the African's encounter with the gospel. Their plea is for a recognition of their identity as creature of God made in his own image. And for that reason, they assert that God has not left them without witness. Though some want to push the claim as far as turning the traditional religion into another special revelation, the basic aspiration is for bridgeheads or *praeparatio evangelica*[86] as they are called sometimes to be reckoned for what they are. The kind of evangelism that made *tabula rasa* of the target culture sowed the seed

[86] Kato, *Theological Pitfalls in Africa* (Kisumu, Kenya: Evangelical, 1975), 71.

of all sorts of drawbacks, what some have called schizophrenic Christianity, whereby people act Christian in the daytime, and with the cover of the dark, go to their ancestral religious practices.

If the culture is taken into account and contextualization is done insofar as intelligibility of the message requires, then the result will be manifold:

1) Concerning the relation of traditional religion and Christianity, the Tupuri will see a continuity between his religion and Christianity, the later functioning as a reformation of his distorted worship of the one God who is Creator of all, and has removed himself from us because of sin. It will be impossible for the convert to practice split-Christianity, for he will have nothing to return too, since the same God he wants to seek in his ancestral religion is the same that is proclaimed to him through a sweeter message than what his father was able to bequeath to him.
2) In eschatology, in synch with continuity, the worldview of the Tupuri will be transformed with regard to eschatology. This is an important step. The traditional religion of the Tupuri is pragmatic; it provides him with answers to his most difficult questions in life, notably regarding his relation with the divine, the living-dead, the spirits, and the world of the living. If there is no imbalance in that worldview, there is no need for salvation for the Tupuri. His cyclical worldview needs to be replaced with the historical view of scripture.
3) With regard to soteriology, the good news here will have a more profound thrust than what has been the case in the west, for it will immediately affect the daily life of the Tupuri. The holistic nature of salvation will be brought out to address real life situations, notably the fear of evil spirits, and the relief from the constant offering of sacrifices to ward off ancestors and the many spirits that threaten the life of the family.

That Jesus Christ is the ultimate sacrifice will have a special meaning among people who all their life were bound to offering the same sacrifices over and over again. The already/not yet character of salvation also finds deep expression.

4) In the field of missiology, the household of the Tupuri will function both as the locus of mission an evangelism, and the target of the message. In this setting, the head of the household will readily become the local auxiliary of the missionary for the catechization of the new group. This is of paramount importance, especially in pioneer mission. The house itself, in the manner of first century houses, will become the meeting place for the nascent ἐκκλησία, a mission center where missionaries can find shelter, and neighbors can be invited to hear the good news of Jesus, as in the manner of first century houses.
5) In ecclesiology, there will be opportunity for redemption of traditional practices to enrich the liturgy and the ecclesiology of the church. One such practice is the implantation of a sacred post as guardian of the compound. What will it mean for the Tupuri that this post is replaced by a cross? The conception of the Church as the family of God will be reinforced with familial concepts such as the ancestors, and the elders (*moobe* was the term initially used in the Tupuri language for the elders of a congregation).

With these considerations in mind I will in the following chapter attempt to summarize what are the implications of the Salvation of the Household Model for mission and evangelism in West Africa. Beyond this narrow scope, I want to prospect whether this model could impact other areas of theology, and other parts of the world.

CHAPTER FIVE:

GENERAL CONCLUSION

Taber once wrote, "What is needed now is for Africans and Asians to start afresh, beginning with the direct interaction of their cultures with the Scriptures rather than tagging along at the tail end of the long history of western embroidery, and to restate the Christian faith in answer to Asian/African questions, with Asian/African methodologies and terminologies."[1]

Andrew Walls, on his part, puts forward a principle about theology, that it springs out of practical situations, and thus is "occasional and local"[2] in character. He then adds,

Because of this relation of theology to action, theology arises out of situations that actually happen, not from broad general principles…It is therefore important, when thinking of African theology, to remember that it will act on an African agenda. It is useless for us to determine what we think an African theology ought to be doing: it will concern itself with questions that worry Africans, and will leave blandly alone all sorts of questions which we think absolutely vital. We all do the same.[3]

It is from such a perspective that I have embarked on this research, because as an African the insistence upon individual faith and salvation, and the dismissal of communal response has always puzzled me. It seemed to me that there is enough Scripture passages pointing to a

[1] Charles R. Taber, cited by Andrew Walls in *Missionary Movement,* 10.

[2] Walls, *Missionary Movement,* 10.

[3] Andrew F. Walls, "The Gospel as Prisoner and Liberator of Culture: Is there a 'Historic Christian Faith'?" in *Landmark Essays in Mission and World Christianity*, ed. Robert L. Gallagher and Paul Hertig (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2009), 141. Also *Missionary Movement*, 11.

collective salvation. Just to stay within achievable goals, I have focused on Luke's narratives of the salvation of whole households, especially the text of Acts 16:25–34. The research was conceived as an essay in missiology aimed at providing the West African Church with a model of mission and evangelism that is both biblical and relevant to that context, the ultimate aim being that the kerygma will be more effective.

In the first chapter I raised the question whether Acts 16:25–34 is a case of salvation of the whole household? And if so, how should this affect mission and evangelism in West Africa? To answer this question I proceeded next to define the contours of the methods and direction in applying the principle drawn from the study of Acts 16:25–34. Because it was a project of practical theology, it was conceived as an interdisciplinary work, engaging at once an exegetical analysis, and anthropological description, and a missiological application. The biblical study was conducted following what is now known among African theologians as "intercultural hermeneutic." This method has the advantage of displacing any hermeneutic from the center of the interpretive exercise in order for it to take its proper place at the circle around the sacred text. Even the sacred text itself is not viewed as devoid of cultural texture. Interculturalists readily admit that their reading is biased because it is done through the lens of their worldview; they want to invite other hermeneutists to admit the same, so that a fruitful exchange can be engaged in. The anthropological description of the Tupuri culture and the comparison with first century worldview was to be done following a phenomenological approach, for it was attempting simply to establish similarities and contrasts, not to evaluate in terms of value judgment.

The result of the biblical analysis in chapter two was the formulation of the model of the salvation of the household. This model sets the household both as the locus and target of mission and evangelism. As the locus, the household of the Philippian jailer becomes for Paul and his

companion, the choice place for the proclamation of the gospel, just as many households would become in the apostles' missionary carrier among the Greeks and the Romans. The homes of believers became true mission centers in that the family members could invite friends and neighbors to come listen to the good news, and the apostles had a shelter where they could renew strength to go further still with the gospel. As the "gathered guests" the people of the house were the recipients of the proclamation. The head of the household appears to be eager for all the members of his household to join in to listen. A modern person might wonder why small children would be brought out at this late hour of the night. But if we take seriously the fact that an earthquake had just happened, it becomes plausible that whoever had a child in their care would run out with them in their arms. However when it comes to responding to the message the missionaries proclaimed, my contention is that it was likely the head only who responded, keeping in mind the authority of the *paterfamilias* in antique Rome. Thus it makes sense to translate the text of verse 34b, "And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God," as the ESV renders it. Does that mean he was the only person who believed? By no means. The baptism of the entire household tells us that what he believes, everyone believes. Or to be more accurate, good family members always follow the lead of the head of the household. But the essential argument of the household salvation model lays in the promise made to the jailer in 16:31: "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." Thus, the model rests on the promise of the gospel that one is saved not alone, but with all in one's care. That is how the Church Father John Chrysostom understood the text, when he exclaimed that it was particularly appealing to men that their family too is saved with them! Based on the same promise, the entire household is baptized. Will children be included in this baptism? The text is silent, but only because we cannot be certain that children were present, not

because children would be excluded as Malina claims. Anthropologists have shown the importance of ceremonies and rituals in religious practices. In my own experience, primal religions cherish the application of rituals on younger members of the community who cannot apply it to themselves. Acting in accordance with the culture and the Christian message, it would not be a surprise that the missionaries baptized all in the house, including children if there were any. It appeared also that obedience and hospitality could be considered as reception of the gospel. This certainly is in keeping with a family setting.

After the principle of the salvation of the household was established, I devoted chapter three to a phenomenological and comparative description of the Tupuri culture as a sample of the cultures one encounters in West Africa. The study revealed striking resemblance between Tupuri culture and that of first century Greco-Roman world, but also with the Palestinian worldview. Here like in first century worldview, the personality of the individual depends on a network of people, notably the family, upon which s/he heavily relies for her/his survival. The family is particularly large, constituted of multiple generations. The eldest living male ascendant or sibling is the leader, if not the patriarch of the family. He is in charge of all religious ceremonies and most rituals in the family. Some family members can be associated with him in his religious performances, notably the first wife and the pre-pubescent girl. Beliefs include the existence of the Supreme God, Creator of all things, who resides far away in the sky. The belief is undergirded by a myth of initial offense that resulted in the retreat of the divine in the faraway sky. Consequently, men are left to deal with intermediaries including ancestors and some lesser divinities, and evil spirits that only seek to harm them. Thus, men must constantly ward off the evil attacks visited on them by these spirits, or disappointed ancestors. This explains the numerous rituals and ceremonies that the Tupuri constantly perform. Fear of spirits predisposes

the Tupuri not unlike first century people, to see spiritual or divine manifestation in everything that falls out of the ordinary. The concept of house from its establishment to its dismantlement is founded on God. He is the one who establishes it through the sacred post, and it is he who ends it with the death of the householder. This understanding readily predisposes the house to become church. With their legendary hospitality experienced therein, the house of the Tupuri can quickly become a vibrant church in pioneer mission. In fact, the example of Pentecostal churches is there to speak to the use of the house as the venue for church. The concept of family also reflects first century Palestinian culture with the practice of polygamy and the presence of multiple generations within a household.

One divergent trait of this culture is the conception of the afterlife and consequently of eschatology. Unlike the people of Palestine, or their counterpart of the Greco-Roman world, the Tupuri believe that the dead remain in town, though invisible to the naked eye. They need to be attended to the same way they did when alive. But if their descendant who is to wait on them comes to pass on also, then the first generation of the departed ones goes home. Where exactly, the Tupuri cannot tell; but it will always be somewhere in the land of the ancestors. Thus, the Tupuri shuns burial away from the land of his forefathers. This last point still holds some similarity with the Hebrews of the OT. Jacob who died in Egypt gave special instructions before his death that his remains be taken back to the land of his forefathers Isaac and Abraham (Gen. 49:29–31). However, the Tupuri believes it is incumbent on him to continue to take care of the departed one, who otherwise may starve and thus become angry with him. This worldview will need to be reckoned with in mission and evangelism. Despite this difference though, there are numerous bridgeheads for the missionary to work with in bringing the gospel to the Tupuri.

In the fourth chapter I attempted an application of the salvation of the household model in

the African context of the Tupuri. From the beginning I wanted to establish the vital necessity of accepting some continuity between natural revelation as shown among the Tupuri, and special revelation, otherwise the foreignness of Christianity becomes an almost unsurmountable obstacle to its acceptance. This is a point that needs further consideration as debates among Lutherans revolve around the question whether the Lutheran confessional documents have a positive or negative view of culture. It seems to me that both epistemologically and theologically one must subscribe to some degree on continuity between Christianity and the cultures or religions of the world. This is not to say that religion saves, but that the God manifest in the Scripture is the same who throughout history has revealed himself through nature so that people who turn away from the creator to worship the creature are without excuse (Rom. 1:18–32).

Beyond this it seemed to me that like in Acts, the Tupuri house can function as the locale of the gospel proclamation, as well as the audience of that proclamation. The architecture of the family compound can be put to good use for the purpose of hosting a congregation. Its fenced-in court can accommodate a large gathering. A householder may want to exercise his authority as the leader of the household, so that he alone will listen to the messengers; but he can be quickly convinced to let everyone to listen in, especially if this is good news, as the gospel indeed is. In this regard, the missionary may encourage reflection on the redemption of the sacred post (that log placed at the entrance of the house as guardian). If the head of the household feels honored, he will like give an attentive ear to the message, especially if it addresses the most fundamental question of his relationship with the ancestors. For this question has immediate implication for his daily life. Thus, the good news for a Tupuri must address the issues of evils spirits and witchcraft, but also of the fate of the ancestors.

The head of the household, like in the first century, is the spokesperson of the whole

family. What he confesses, he confesses for all, and what he believes he believes for all in his household. Good members of his household will follow his lead. This is a double-edge sword in that if he accepts the message, then his entire household is won to Christ, but if he resists, then no other member will defy him, unless like many end up doing, he authorizes the children to go to church. Any child or wife who challenges the householder runs the risk of disownment and persecution. An aspect of the householder's response that deserves further reflection is hospitality as faith response to gospel proclamation. Suffice it here to say that Jesus in sending the twelve and the seventy-two seems to indicate that hospitality is the sign of reception also (Matt. 10:11–14; Luke 9:4–5; 10:5–11). In other passages, service to one another also indicates expression of faith. Thus, an exclusive focus on Rom. 10:8–13 to determine how people express faith will result in a rather truncated understanding of the manifestation of faith. There are also many other features of the Tupuri culture that provide matter for further examination: the attachment to the ancestors, the sacred wood of the village, and the sacred post at the entrance of a house.

The present research only scratched the surface of the concept of the salvation of the household as it appears in Lukan theology. My interest has been the missiological application of it in the specific context of West Africa. However, I believe even the Church in North America or in Europe will benefit by rediscovering the corporate character of salvation. Already a number of scholars have been exploring the concept in recent decades, as I indicated in chapter one. Suffice it here to mention few others.[4] More directions could be pursued in terms of application,

[4] Ben C. Dunson, "Faith in Romans: The Salvation of the Individual or Life in Community?" *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 34, no. 1 (2011): 19–46. In this article Dunson offers a good overview of the debate between proponents of a more corporate understanding of faith and salvation, and defenders of the traditional individualistic understanding of faith and salvation. Mark Allan Powell's article "Salvation in Luke-Acts" is an excellent study of Luke's understanding of salvation.

notably in the area of pastoral care and counseling. Family therapy methodologies[5] have attempted to tap into systems thinking, placing individuals into the context of the family itself, though I doubt the proponents of those methodologies work with the concept of the individual as held in first-century Palestine or Greco-Roman world. Minuchin and Fishman readily admit that "Indeed, it is difficult for anyone reared in Western culture to look beyond the individual"[6] though they suggested earlier that "a family therapist sees the total (family) that is greater than the sum of its parts (members).[7] The family as a whole seems almost like a colony animal—that entity composed of different life forms, each part doing its own thing, but the whole forming a multibodied organism which is itself a life form."[8]

Though I proceeded first by doing an exegesis of the appropriate text, I am convinced that more and deeper exegetical reflection will expand our understanding of Luke's concept of the salvation of the household. Powell has produced an insightful article on salvation in Luke. His work,[9] and that of Alan Richardson[10] laid the foundation for further investigation by biblical scholars.

I also hope to have stirred the interest of the systematic theologians. The consensus in modern soteriology thus far has been that salvation is a matter of the individual's salvation. There is certainly much to value in the insistence on the status of the individual in the sight of God. Collective societies tend to dilute the uniqueness of the individual in the sea of group or

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[5] See Salvador Minuchin, *Families & Family Therapy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974).

[6] Salvador Minuchin and H. Charles Fishman, *Family Therapy Techniques* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), 12.

[7] Parentheses mine.

[8] Minuchin and Fishman, *Family Therapy*, 12.

[9] Mark Allan Powell, "Salvation in Luke-Acts" (*upcit.*) is an excellent study of Luke's understanding of salvation.

[10] Richardson, *Introduction*.

family identity. However, the systematic theologian will discover a new depth to the grace of God, as the model of the salvation of the household claims that God desires to save not only each person every time, but entire families, tribes, nations. A systematic theologian could also find the new understanding of faith as a response to gospel proclamation a topic to elaborate further on. For we discovered in Acts 16:31–33 that faith can be derived from insignificant gestures such as hospitality,[11] or submission to baptism. Recent studies have shown the central role of fathers in bequeathing the Faith to their children.[12] In 1994 the Swiss carried out a survey. The question was asked to determine whether a person's religion carried through to the next generation, and if so, why, or if not, why not. Here is a summary of the finds, as given in the Touchstone article,

If both father and mother attend regularly, 33 percent of their children will end up as regular churchgoers, and 41 percent will end up attending irregularly. Only a quarter of their children will end up not practicing at all. If the father is irregular and mother regular, only 3 percent of the children will subsequently become regulars themselves, while a further 59 percent will become irregulars. Thirty-eight percent will be lost.

If the father is non-practicing and mother regular, only 2 percent of children will become regular worshippers, and 37 percent will attend irregularly. Over 60 percent of their children will be lost completely to the church.[13]

The survey may be a dead horse by now, but it still is significant in understanding the role

[11] In this regard David J. Bosch rightly observes, "In the gospel the hosting of Jesus was equivalent to the hosting of salvation [Lk 19:9] [cf LaVerdiere and Thompson 1976:592]. It is not essentially different in Acts, since salvation is in his name only" in *Transforming Mission*, 25th ed., 117. One could argue that even more so in Acts the hosting of Jesus or his missionaries is equivalent to the hosting of salvation, for hospitality becomes in Acts a sure sign of receiving salvation (Acts 10: 25, 34ff; 16:14f).

[12] http://www.touchstonemag.com/archives/article.php?id=16–05–024-v, accessed on October 12, 2017.

[13] Robbie Low, "The Truth about Men & Church" *Touchstone Journal* http://www.touchstonemag.com/archives/article.php?id=16–05–024-v, accessed on October 12 2017.

the householder plays in transmitting or keeping the faith in his household. It can simply not be ignored even in the most individualistic of all societies. There is a God-given responsibility, and a promise attached to it, to fathers to faithfully teach their offspring the ways of God, for they are rewarded by God extending his blessings to multiple generations.[14] Especially the Church in North America will do well to rethink its overemphasis on the individual, even within the family, to the detriment of the social unit's cohesion and sense of interconnectedness.

Furthermore, a liturgical application can be envisioned from the model of the salvation of the whole household. Already churches are moving in the direction of leaning on the concept of "baptismal community" in their explanation of the salvation and baptism of the child or the mentally incompetent. See appendix one for an illustration of how this liturgical application could take place as infant baptismal liturgy is explored as a case of communal or corporate salvation. Moreover, pastors and thinkers in the fields of practical Theology must ponder, and forcefully return to Luther's admonition to parents to instruct their children in the faith, as a preparation for their confirmation rather than turning the confirmation class entirely over to the church. The development within the Church in recent years of a new concept–the "Family ministry" concept–is in my view a move in the right direction. The research done by Steve Andrews entitled "Family Ministry Capstone Paper" gives a comprehensive overview of such a ministry in the local congregation. The reader will find it as appendix 4 at the end of this dissertation.

Historians also could beneficially revisit the history of dogma in order to ascertain where and when the Church in the West moved from a more corporate to an overemphasis on the individual in the economy of salvation, and the arguments developed to corroborate such a move.

[14] See Exod. 20:5

Already Richardson estimated that resistance to infant baptism in modern times arose "rather from the rationalistic and individualistic attitudes of renaissance humanism than from a right understanding of the NT teaching about faith and justification."[15] Bosch on his part suggests that the shift took place with the "individualization" of salvation through Augustine's "redemption of the soul," and carried on by Anselm. Bosch concludes, "The theology of Augustine could not but spawn a dualistic view of reality, which became second nature in Western Christianity– the tendency to regard salvation as a private matter and to ignore the world."[16]

[15] Richardson, *Introduction*, 358.

[16] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 216.

APPENDIX ONE

Infant Baptism Liturgy

The following article was initially written for the class S 811 Liturgical Theology in 2011. Later on as I developed my dissertation proposal and the main body, I realized it was illustrative of the liturgical implication of the Salvation of the Household Model. Encouraged by my Advisor, and after I reviewed and edited it to some extent, I inserted it here for the reader to see how the Salvation of the Household concept could have a bearing on baptismal liturgy, especially in the case of infant baptism. From the beginning, to the presentation of the child for baptism, to the renunciations to the confession of the faith, it is the parents and/or sponsors, or the whole congregation for that matter, who speak on behalf of the child to be baptized.

Infant Baptismal Liturgy as a Case of Communal or Corporate Salvation

By

Jean-Baptiste Mberebe

Revised 09/27/17

INTRODUCTION

Baptism, the rite through which people are received into God's family, has been practiced throughout the ages, with more or less elaborate ritual. Its liturgy emphasizes the community of faith: all the members play a role, from witnessing the event, confessing a common faith to welcoming the new member. In that regard Infant Baptism plays a major role in the life of the Church, as countless Christians, both in the Roman Catholic Church and the mainstream churches of the larger reformation tradition become members of those communities through the rite. This is most especially true of the Lutheran tradition, which upholds baptism as a sacrament; practically all who had parents or relatives connected with a Lutheran church were probably baptized as a child. Baptism is for those many believers the sole tangible indicator to them of their belonging to the Christian family. Yet infant baptism has come under assault from two segments of the Christian church, the Anabaptists, and the new Pentecostal movement. They generally dispute the teaching that baptism saves, and estimate that infant baptism in particular is unbiblical. Therefore many a Lutheran ends up questioning his or her own salvation and wondering whether “this thing of which they were not really a participant” is effective. The ambiguities in the ritual do not contribute to ease the anxiety; on the contrary. Especially the baptismal service appears to the profane and non accustomed eye like a circus, with questions directed to a baby which is totally unfit to answer. Our traditions do not help the situation, with the noted reluctance to fully assume the fact that the faith of parents and/or sponsors, and the community at large, actually secures the salvation of the little one. This paper is built on the thesis that infant baptism, at least from a liturgical standpoint, is a case of corporate salvation and is warranted by Scripture and tradition. That conviction grows out of a serious consideration of the biblical teaching about baptism, and a profound examination of the development of the

liturgy of this sacrament.

The Biblical Basis for Infant Baptism

The Pre-New Testament Origins

The inter-testamental period or what is sometimes called Second Temple Judaism is saturated with baptismal or purification rites. Beasley-Murray asserts that "ritual cleansings in water were practised [*sic*] from immemorial antiquity," and that though "their history has been largely forgotten, their associations have shown an extraordinary tenacity of life."[1] Thus he goes on to trace Israel's lustrations in primitive religion, though he recognizes that in the OT lustrations have become "integrated into a God-relationship of a different order."[2] But it is evident that OT ceremonial washings were not exactly seen as baptism, i.e. as initiation rite. That role was devolved to circumcision. Many see in the purification rituals of the Essenes and the Qumran Community, but also the proselyte baptisms described in Josephus and other early historians precursors of the Biblical baptismal rite. But the analogies are too broad to account for the specificity of each rite, especially the nature of the New Testament Baptism, or Christian Baptism to be more specific.

The Scriptural Foundation for Infant Baptism

In response to the question, "Why are babies to be baptized?," Luther's Small Catechism gives four answers,[3] (1) they are included in the words "all nations" (Matt. 28:19; Acts 2:38–39); (2) Jesus especially invites little children to come to Him (Luke 18:15–17); and (3) as sinners, babies need what Baptism offers (John 3:5–6; Eph. 2:3). In his book *Gathered Guests*, Maschke

[1] G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (Eugene, OR: Wipe & Stock, 1972), 1.

[2] Beasley-Murray, *Baptism*, 8.

[3] *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation* (St Louis: Concordia, 1986), 202–3.

expands these benefits, including, the washing away of sins (1 Cor. 6:11), liberation from sin, death, and the devil (1 Cor. 10:1–2; 12:13); new birth or birth from water and the Spirit (John 3:5); salvation (1 Peter 3:21); newness of life (Rom. 6:3–4); the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5–6); 4) Babies also are able to have faith (Matt. 18:6; Luke 1:15, 41–44).

From these biblical passages one gathers that infants are no different than the adults, except for their readiness to receive the Kingdom. An important question here is whether Jesus is making a general observation regarding children's propensity to trust, or is he specifically stating that the children present that day had faith? Or still, is he saying that all children believe in him? I am inclined to think that Jesus is making a general observation about children being inclined to trust, but also that the ones he was pointing to that day believed in him. However I do not think he was affirming that all children believe in him. Luther rightly say "babies also are able to have faith. This leads us to the next question, "How do we know a baby has faith in Jesus?" Unfortunately, Jesus did not give us specific clues about it. We can see that he was able to discern faith in a child though. So either we pray for the same discernment, so we can discriminate who is to be baptized and who is not, bearing in mind we will have to do some explaining to families whose children are denied baptism; or we simply trust that all children of believers or which come in contact with the Christian message all have faith, and therefore we baptize them. I believe this is what transpires through the baptismal liturgy, as we shall see below. The problem is that we ask them to confess knowing full well they are not able to speak.

If there is abundant biblical basis for baptism, including that of children, the data concerning the liturgy itself is scanty. The Gospels tell us of John the Baptist's baptismal activity by the Jordan River. His ritual is not described in detail; we only learn that he was preaching

repentance, and people were coming to him to receive the "baptism of repentance" in the river. John himself distinguishes his baptism from that of Jesus in these terms, "I baptize with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire," (Matt. 3:11 ESV). Matthew 28:19 gives the Trinitarian formula for baptism without further elaborating on the ritual. In the book of Acts we encounter a number of texts that speak of baptism: Acts 2:38 speaks of being "baptized in the name of Jesus Christ; Acts 8:26–40 speaks of Philip baptizing the Ethiopian eunuch "in water," Acts 10:27, where Peter says, "Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" From these passages we glean the information that people who repented, or believed in Jesus, were baptized in water, in the name of Jesus, and that baptism immediately followed confession. Thus the age old purification value attached to water is upheld. But there is no description of the rubrics of such baptismal rites. Is the silence due to the fact that baptism was nothing new in Israel, so that the innovation regarded only the name by which one was baptized? This is plausible, in regard to the testimony from history, as we shall see below.

The Theological Argument

Luther wrote a treatise on Baptism in 1519, *The Holy and Blessed Sacrament of Baptism* in which he defines Baptism as "an external sign or token, which so separates us from all men not baptized that we are thereby known as a people of Christ, our Leader"[4] His theological argument for infant baptism is no more than what transpires from the passages mentioned above. The following propositions form together the theological argument: (1) Baptism is a gift of God to

[4] *LW* 35: 29.

the sinner; (2) Baptism saves all who believe; (3) children are sinners, but also capable of faith; and (4) therefore they need baptism.

In describing the valid baptism Luther affirms that three important things are to be considered, the sign, the significance and the faith. Without telling us whether faith precedes or is given in baptism, Luther affirm that "this faith is of all things the most necessary, for it is the ground of all comfort,"[5] or "everything depends on faith."[6] But Luther is not affirming, like semi-Pelagians that faith is man's response. Luther's view, known as "divine monergism," is that salvation is the sole work of God, from the atonement to the faith that receives its benefit. Faith is not man's contribution to his salvation, it is the hand that receives the gift, it itself is also a gift. Rightly interpreting the words of Jesus, Luther refuses to affirm, like some circles do, that all children have faith because they have not actually sin, and therefore are not lost because of original sin. For him, children are born in sin, therefore under the judgment; but as the Lord taught and promised, they also are capable of faith. And faith comes from hearing the word, and from nothing else.

The treatise reveals that Luther is already taking on the false Catholic understanding of concupiscence or original sin, and of the effect of baptism. And we see emerging his doctrine of the two natures, thus justifying our constant return to our baptism as the means to cleanse us again. It remains ambiguous though whether all children who hear the word believe without exception. And this ambiguity transpires through the liturgy of baptism; in the absence of the infant's actual confession, our practice seems to indicate that all the infants of the church, i.e. those born of Christian parents or those who have some Christian contact, do necessarily believe.

[5] *LW* 35: 36.

[6] *LW* 35: 38.

Is such assumption grounded in Scripture? This is a difficult question to answer.

One of the best modern Lutheran treatments of this issue is found under the pen of German confessional Lutheran theologian Herman Otto Erich Sasse (1895–1976). In *We Confess the Sacraments* Sasse rightly expresses Luther's position,

> Just as in the Sacrament of the Altar only *he* [*sic*] receives forgiveness of sins and so also life and salvation who has faith in 'these word,' that is, in the promise: 'Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins,' so it is true of Baptism: 'It works forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil and gives eternal salvation to all who *believe* [*sic*] this, as the words and promises of God declare'.[7]

Sasse also explains what Luther understood the child's faith to be, "[F]or Luther the faith that is spoken of in connection with infant baptism is not the future faith of children to be reared as Christians nor is it, as many a Lutheran in the 19th century thought, a faith that is like a seed awakened to life by the act of baptism, but it is the faith with which the children come to baptism, just as with adults, except that this faith of children is not yet a conscious faith that they can confess themselves."[8] Then he goes on to quote Luther as saying that neither the faith of the adult, nor that of the infant is the foundation of Baptism.

But this still begs the question, how does the church or its officers distinguish who is to be baptized and who is not? We are not talking here of faith as a merit, but faith as the only thing that enables the church to bring a person to baptism. If that is not established, how do we baptize? It is important to stress the unmerited nature of baptism and faith, but the point is how do we know where there is faith and where there is not? Unless we are holding the assumption that all who come to baptism, or are brought to baptism have faith. In that case it becomes useless to even ask the probing questions. A small faith is big enough faith that can receive the

[7] Hermann Otto Erich Sasse, *We Confess the Sacraments*, trans. Norman Nagel (St Louis: Concordia, 1945), 44.

[8] Sasse, *We Confess the Sacraments*, 44–45.

greatest of all divine gifts. But does assumption of faith equal faith? I would surmise that it does not. It neither establishes nor denies faith. What gives it any weight is the Confession of the community and the confession of the parents and sponsors. Sasse's conclusion of his analysis of Luther gives us an impression of continual shift in the subject under discussion. That shift can be seen in the fifth paragraph, where he begins thus, “The question of whether adults or infants are to be baptized, then, has become theologically unimportant, although it remains important for church practice.”[9] His reason is that

> Baptism has always been done in the church 'as if' those to be baptized desire it themselves and believe what is confessed in the baptismal creed. This 'as if' belongs to the very essence of the matter and may not be explained away as liturgical traditionalism or ecclesiastical conservatism. We baptize children as if they were adults, just as we baptize adults as if they were children. Whatever the difference between adults and children may mean for us humans and our judgment of a person, it means nothing for God. Before Him a person is a person, either a child of Adam or a child of God, regardless of age. That is why all baptismal liturgies deal with the child 'as if' he were an adult.[10]

But the question is not whether the faith of the child is big or sure enough, the question is whether we have a confession of faith or not in the silence of the child. To say it doesn't matter is like running away from the seriousness of the matter, when he had just previously indicated how for Luther faith is essential to receiving the gift. And to say the difference does not matter before God is to cave in to the opposite argument, which is that God can save apart from faith. It seems to me that there is something to rethink in the direction of the Roman Catholic position that the faith of the community plays an important role in infant baptism.

[9] Sasse, *We Confess the Sacraments*, 46.

[10] Sasse, *We Confess the Sacraments*, 46.

Historical Development

Infant Baptism from the Early Church to the Late Middle Age

Apart from the meager data found in the New Testament, sources of knowledge about the baptismal rite of the early Church are scanty. However from the *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus one reads that children and infants were baptized first, then adults, then women, "And first baptize the little ones; if they can speak for themselves, they shall do so; if not their parents or other relatives shall speak for them."[11] Augustine of Hippo also makes the point when he writes in the fifth century (On Baptism, Against the Donatists), "What the Universal Church holds, not as instituted [invented] by councils but as something always held, is most correctly believed to have been handed down by apostolic authority. Since others respond for children, so that the celebration of the Sacrament may be complete for them, it is certainly availing to them for their consecration, because they themselves are not able to respond."[12] John the Deacon (ca AD 500), is the main source of information regarding baptismal rite in the fourth and fifth centuries. Later developments are recorded in the *Ordo Romanus XI* a work composed according to Fisher in the late sixth Century and the *Hadrianum*, a version of the Gregorain Sacramentary Hadrianus sent to Charlemagne between 784 and 791.[13] According to Fisher, while John the Deacon's liturgy indicated that the subjects of baptism were still adults predominantly, the *Gelasianum*, the source of information about the liturgy of Baptism in the early Middle Ages clearly indicates that children were the main focus of the rite.[14] There is little change in the liturgy over the next six to seven centuries, except that the candidates were becoming

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[11] Hippolytus of Rome, *Apostolic Tradition* transl. Burton Scott Easton, (AD 215) 21:16

[12] Augustine, On Baptism, Against the Donatists 4: 24: 31 [AD 400]

13 J. D. C Fisher, *Christian Initiation: Baptism in the Medieval West A Study in the Disintegration of the Primitive Rite of Initiation* (London: SPCK, 1965), 2.

[14] Fisher, *Christian Initiation: Baptism in the Medieval West*, 4–9.

predominantly infants, thus causing a shortening of the catechesis period, and the transformation of the scrutinies into an occasion for exorcisms. These changes do in fact tell us that the Church throughout its history has adjusted its praxis to suit changing demographics, without compromising the core of its message.

Infant Baptism since Luther's Reformation

Luther began to reform the baptismal liturgy in 1519 with his treatise on Baptism. He underscores three things to pay attention to in baptism: the sign, the significance of it, and the faith. The latter two elements are of immediate importance to us as we attempt to formulate his understanding of Baptism in general and infant baptism in particular. For Luther, Baptism signifies "a blessed dying unto sin and a resurrection in the grace of God, so that the old man, conceived and born in sin, is there drowned, and a new man, born in grace, comes forth and rises."[15] Though the physical or outward act of baptism, that is the sign, is quickly over, "the spiritual baptism, the drowning of sin, which it signifies, lasts as long as we live and is completed only in death. Then it is that a person is completely sunk in baptism, and that which baptism signifies comes to pass."[16] As for the faith, Sasse summarizes well Luther's take, "As was often the case, Luther's way was the lonely way between Rome and the Enthusiasts. Over against the Enthusiasts, among whom he lumped Zwingli and his followers, as he would also have done with the Calvinists had they been part of his experience, he firmly held to the Sacrament of Baptism and everything that belongs with it: infant baptism, necessity for salvation, and regeneration. Over against Rome he firmly held to the *sola fide:* Forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation are given only to faith. This by no means indicates unanimity in the

[15] *LW* 35: 30.

[16] *LW* 35: 30.

Lutheran camp. In fact Sasse records Bucer's introduction of the "un-Lutheran" element that the church is an "'association' or a 'religious society' that one joined by a voluntary decision."[17] It must be noted that initially Luther limited innovations in his first translation of the liturgy into the vernacular, not wanting to cause a stir among the folks. But he was open to the possibility of further reforming the mass.

In his summary of the subsequent historical development of baptismal liturgy among Lutherans, Burreson concludes, "In the end, Lutheran baptismal rites of the 16th century often looked different, sometimes very different, from medieval rites. Yet, even if ceremonies were omitted or changed, the texts continued to emphasize many of the same realities found in the medieval texts: the realities of sin, Satan and hell and the need for rebirth and deliverance from those realities."[18] The changes made at this time can be grouped under three types: (1) the abandonment of superfluous practices, like the numerous exorcisms or oil anointing, which tended to over-shadow the essence of Baptism; (2) the abandonment of unbiblical practices, like the reception of salt or the water consecration prayers; there was no precedence of them in Scripture and no express command to do it; and (3) the addition of texts that contributed to make explicit the Lutheran understanding of baptismal theology and its implication for the theology of faith and ecclesiology.

There are still modifications that take place until the present time, but these changes do not in general affect the essence of baptismal theology as understood by Luther in the sixteenth century. As illustration of these changes, the rubrics of the liturgy of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America include presentation of the candidates; the renunciation questions are

[17] Sasse, *We Confess the Sacraments*, 44.

[18] Kent J. Burreson, "The Saving Flood: The Medieval Origins, Historical Development, and Theological Import of the Sixteenth Century, Lutheran Baptismal Rites," (PhD Diss. University of Notre Dame, 2002), 468.

addressed to the adult candidates and parents/sponsors of the infants; and creedal questions are addressed to the whole congregation. This is in fact a return to the practice of the early Church as witnessed to by Hippolytus and Augustine. This is an example of the adjustment that needs to take place in order to do away with the theatrical questioning of infants.

Liturgy of Infant Baptism and the Expression of Communal Faith

Sponsors and Parents as Mouthpiece of the Child Candidate

It is important to take note at the outset of Burreson's important remark about pre-baptismal preparation, “Luther follows the late ritual tradition in providing no form of preparatory rites or scrutinies . . . In fact, the entire pre-baptismal rite is focused around those who are prepared for baptism, the *competentes*.”[19] It is the parents or sponsors who request and bring the child to baptism. When the pastor asks the name of the candidate, it is the parents or sponsors who answer, sometimes surprised themselves that the question is even addressed to the tender infant. In the Medieval period, when there were three exorcisms before the actual baptism, it was also the sponsors and/or parents who answered for the child. When the child is asked whether he/she wants to be baptized, once again it is the parents and/or sponsors who respond on his behalf. Still it is the parents or sponsors who receive the white garment and the baptismal candle. All of this shows that the parents or sponsors do all the active parts of the child and for him. An important question needs to be raised here, “whose faith then is it, the infant's or the parent/sponsor's? Analyzing Luther's position, Burreson observes, “Infants, by virtue of the Word that they have heard in the womb, are not catechumens but those enrolled for baptism. . . . In addition, Luther retained in both baptismal rites the part of the second catechumenal prayer which indicated that

[19] Burreson, “The Saving Flood,” 123.

the infant candidate, 'prays for the gift of your baptism.' Such a statement presumes faith, presumes that these infants are actually *competentes*, making the final preparation for baptism."[20]

The key element here is that candidates to baptism are asked prior to being baptized whether they believe. From the standpoint of liturgy as theology, it appears evident that faith precedes baptism, and that this faith is confessed by a person other than the child. And the church receives that confession as valid. Yet can we affirm that it is actually the child answering through his or her parents or sponsors? It would seem theatrical, if not delusional to see parents speak and think that it is the child who is actually speaking. The point is that it is upon the confession of the parents or sponsors, not his own, that the child is baptized. Some may object that this writer is advocating "faith-baptism;" my answer is double. First, I discover with you that the liturgy is "sending" this message; the way the rite is carried out gives the impression that faith is expected and expressed before baptism is offered. Imagine for a moment that an answer to one of the questions is a nay; there cannot be baptism offered at this point. For the questions asked are not just formalities, they are intended to probe whether and what a candidate believes, thus their proper appellation as *scrutinies*. In fact it is true that we do not go about baptizing indiscriminately and invite all on the streets to come and receive baptism. As a matter of fact, adult candidates are catechized for a period prior to baptism, a catechesis during which the instructor ascertains that they understand what they believe. This reinforces the sentiment that faith is expected prior to baptism, though Luther never made explicit this point.

Secondly, however we understand the function of the series of questions and the response offered by the parents or sponsors, it remains that "that is all we have gotten." The child at no point is responding to the probing questions; all is done upon the request and confession of the

[20] Burreson, "Saving Flood," 124.

parents and/or sponsors. Take these away from the scene, and we are running the risk of indiscriminate baptism, and the proposition that "the gifts are given to faith" loses its weight. Thus I maintain that the salvation of the child is here secured by the faith of the parents/sponsors. Luther is not clear also as to when and how the infant believes. But he affirms that the lack of faith does not nullify baptism; his argumentation becomes a little bit difficult to follow since elsewhere he affirms that everything in baptism depends on faith, but here he suggests that it is bound rather to the word.[21] Luther recognizes the role of parents or sponsors, and the church at large, in the baptism of the child, though he falls short of affirming their faith as the receiving hand on behalf of the infant. Drawing a parallel from our attitude in coming to Holy Communion, where "I come here in my faith and in that of others," Luther say, "So we do likewise in infant Baptism. We bring the child in the conviction and hope that it believes, and we pray that God may grant it faith [Luke 17:2; Ephesians 2:8]. But we do not baptize it for that reason, but solely because of God's command. Why? Because we know that God does not lie [Titus 1:2]. I and my neighbor and, in short, all people may err and deceive. But God's Word cannot err."[22] We may say the faith of the child, but also that of the whole congregation. Given this openness, it appears that an adjustment of the liturgy here would not be un-Lutheran after all.

Sponsors and Parents as Guarantors of the Christian Upbringing of the Child

The enrollment of sponsors highlights another important aspect of the corporate salvation. The pastor explains the tradition behind the enrollment of the sponsors and their role and responsibility in the Christian upbringing of the child: (1) they confess the faith expressed in the Apostles' Creed, or one of the two other Universal Creeds; (2) They witness the Baptism of those

[21] Martin Luther, *Large Catechism* #52–53.

[22] LC 57.

they sponsor; (3) they pray for them, support them and nurture them in Christian faith; 4) they encourage them toward the faithful reception of the Lord's Supper; and 5) they are at all times to be examples. By committing themselves to this calling the sponsors become the vectors through which the faith instilled in the tender child will be kept alive and grow to maturity. But Luther does not assent to this understanding. For him godfathers or sponsors and parents bring the child. He rightly asserts that baptism is not nullified for lack of faith, for it depends not on the faith, but on God's Word. But then how can baptism which saves, not save at the same time? Or is Luther asserting that the validity of baptism imply that the person is saved even without faith from their part, so long as they have received it or even used it wrongly as he would say?

The Baptizing Community

The acolyte sometimes responds to the renunciation question on behalf of the child being baptized, en lieu of the parents/sponsors. The congregation welcomes the baptized and prays for them and their parents and sponsors. In the Roman Catholic rite, presbyters deliver the Creed; Fisher informs us that "The *redditio symboli* is . . . performed by a presbyter who, with his hand placed upon the infant's head, recites the creed, this representing the best that can be done to create the appearance that the candidate is personally confessing his faith."[23]Though this indicates how the community at large is implicated in the baptism of an infant, it also reveals the uneasiness that is felt when a third party is answering on behalf of another while we yet maintain that it is the silent party speaking.

More importantly the baptizing community plays a normative role in infant baptism. Here is a case of the *lex credendi* determining *lex orandi*, or of liturgy because of theology. Scripture

[23] Fisher, *Christian Initiation*, 12.

indicates that children are capable of faith, as Luther's biblical references establish so clearly. But that is a general affirmation; in a specific case we do not know whether this child believes or not. We assume that they do, better yet, we believe they so do, and so we teach; on that teaching, the parents/sponsors then believe that the infant believes, and upon this faith they request that he/she be baptized, unless we subscribe to the policy of indiscriminate baptism, a practice which is problematic in itself, as Willimon rightly points out,

> One of the worst defenses of infant baptism is that which speaks of infant baptism as a sign of God's indiscriminate, utterly gratuitous graciousness. The use of baptism in theological apologetics as a sign of God's complete gratuity in the giving of himself must not serve as the basis for a policy of indiscriminate baptism. Such policy is simply at odds with the New Testament and the church's traditional doctrine of justification by faith in Christ dead and risen. Baptism always involves discernment and discrimination.[24]

Apart from faith, faith as doctrine and faith as believing unto salvation, there is no other ground on which we bring an infant to baptism; since the faith of the infant can at best be presumed, it appears that the parents or sponsors, and the whole community of faith at large provides the faith that receives the gift of Baptism. This would be in line with what Scripture teaches about the promise made to the fathers and mothers (Acts 16: 31, Luke 19:9–10). Kilmartin, a Roman Catholic theologian insists upon the role of the baptizing community when he writes,

> A faint analogy can be found between the inner-Trinitarian self-communication of God, God's self-communication in the incarnation, and infant baptism. In these three instances there is no active reception on the part of the term of the communication. However, it may be noted in passing that a response of faith is needed to the offer of grace of regeneration in the case of infant baptism. It is supplied by the Christian community, which presents the infant for baptism and which represents the whole Church. The traditional practice of infant baptism sheds light on the social dimension of the human person and the role of the Church as organ of grace.[25]

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[24] William H. Willimon, *Peculiar Speech: Preaching to the Baptized* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 61.

[25] Edward J. Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy: Theology and Practice I. Systematic Theology of Liturgy* (Kansas

But Luther sees this as suggesting baptism apart from faith as we indicated above. Yet it is also difficult for Luther to firmly affirm that the infant being baptized does in fact have faith. For him, “We bring the child in the conviction and hope that it believes, and we pray that God may grant it faith [Luke 17:2; Ephesians 2:8].” Yet he goes on to say that that is not the reason why we baptize, the reason is solely God's command. What then is different with adult baptism? For Luther there is none. We baptize adults ‘as if’ they were children, and children ‘as if’ they were adults. This is certainly true in terms of the validity of Baptism in it essence, but it equally certainly does not do away with the question of faith, which is the receiving hand, and raises again the question of indiscriminate baptism. I wish to maintain that there is a difference: that difference lies in that we have the actual confession of the adult. It may be possibly hypocritical, but we do have a positive confession - the pre-baptismal scrutinies,[26] in the Lutheran case, catechesis, have helped us establish that - upon which the adult is admitted to baptism. That personal expression of faith adds a degree of certainty, therefore no Confirmation is needed. The adult is communicated at once.

What alternative is there? It is my contention that we can still hold on everything we believe about baptism and infants' capability to believe, and make our rite to fit better with the language of Scripture and the cohesion of the order. As illustrations, the scrutiny questions, especially the ones about the renunciation would be skipped, since they will be asked of the candidate at confirmation, and those about the faith rephrased so that they are directed to the parents/sponsors or godfathers. Confirmation will then play its rightful role, that of probing the

City, MO: Sheed & Ward, 1988), 138.

[26] Fisher says that the initial purposes of scrutinies were instructions and probing, when the catechumens were essentially adult pagans converting to Christianity; but as children become increasingly the subject of baptism, the scrutinies became mostly an occasion for exorcism (8).

faith of the adolescent baptized as an infant. We need however to heed Luther's warning that Confirmation would suggest that this faith was hitherto not actual.

The Place of Confirmation in Relation to Baptism

When infants have reached the “age of consciousness” (which varies between twelve and fifteen) they go through confirmation. This is viewed as a normal growth in their Christian experience. Among other objectives, this tradition aims at giving the opportunity to the candidate to appropriate his or her faith and the blessings received in Baptism, and at admitting him or her to the Sacrament of Holy Communion. But intentionally or unintentionally, Confirmation becomes also a sort of reenactment of Baptism.

A semantic note needs to be inserted here. The candidate, who is a youth baptized as an infant, is now called catechumen. Yet while he or she was being baptized as a baby, was considered to be *comptetente*. The order seems to be inverted. The first question asked in the liturgy of Confirmation is, “Do you this day in the presence of God and of his congregation acknowledge the gifts that God gave you in your baptism?” This question sets the tone of this service: it is the occasion for the baptized to speak for himself or herself about his or her baptism as an infant. The other questions include the renunciation, the creedal questions, and commitment questions. These questions reveal this about Confirmation that it is more than a reaffirmation of Baptism, but a new stage in the life of the youth. Just as he or she is entering into physical adulthood, so too spiritually he or she is reaching a stage of consciousness that allow him or he to make personal choices. Thus it is fitting that at this time the candidates are given the opportunity to confess before God and his church to make public confession of faith.

If our suggestion holds, then here the creedal questions are asked to the catechumens who now are able to speak for themselves and we think they have a certain consciousness of what

they believe. Just as it was difficult at the time of their infant baptism to say when and how they believe, so also it is difficult even now to say when they began to believe. But that does not matter as long as now they are making public confession.

Through this study we have seen that the liturgy of Baptism as it relates to infant Baptism raises a number of questions that encapsulate the tension between *lex orandi* and *lex credendi*. Though the *lex credendi* is solidly established as regards the nature of Baptism, it leaves some ambiguities when it comes to infant Baptism. The *lex orandi*, in an attempt to translate the faith of the community and fill the vacuum, results in a sort of theatre that can endanger the seriousness of the Divine Service. Since throughout its history the Church has not dithered in reforming its worship when necessary, it seems to me that our Lutheran thinkers need to rethink the liturgy of Infant Baptism. Such a reformation should give serious consideration to corporate salvation as it transpires through the New Testament, and our liturgy by the implication of parents/sponsors or godfathers, and the whole community of faith.

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VITA

Jean-Baptiste Mberebe

10/26/1968

Datcheka

Collegiate Institutions Attended

Yaounde University 2, Bachelor's in Criminal Law, 1993

Graduate Institutions Attended

Lutheran Brethren Seminary, Fergus Falls MN, MDiv, 1999
International Theological Seminary, El Monte CA, ThM, 2008

Previous Theses and Publications

Exegesis of Acts 16:25-34, a Study in Lukan Understanding of Household Salvation

Current Memberships in Academic Societies

[Memberships]