

**Translating the term 'spirits' in 1 Peter 3:19  
into Sangu, a language of Tanzania**

by

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*The opinions expressed in this thesis do not necessarily reflect the views of the  
South African Theological Seminary.*

## Declaration

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted to any institution for a degree.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Huber', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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Andy Huber

17 July 2020

## **Dedicated to the Sangu people of Tanzania**

May you follow the Lord's calling into his wonderful light!

***“But you are [...] a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.”***

(1 Peter 2:9 – ESV)

***“Mwabagulwagwa kiija muve vakhomaaji va nsengo inofu isa Nguluvi.  
Wávashemeela kiija muhume mu nshiisi ya wunansi,  
baheene muve kunyaakwe mu wuvalafu uwunofu.”***

(1 Petulo 2:9b – Sangu NT)

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It is with a grateful heart that I thank the LORD who has given me the privilege of serving the Sangu people in the work of Bible translation. I am also thankful that he has helped me to write this thesis.

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Andy Huber

17 July 2020

## Summary

The identity of the 'spirits' in 1 Peter 3:19 has puzzled many Christians. When the Sangu Bible translation team got to this passage, the question arose as to how this challenging passage could be translated well for the Sangu audience, especially as they do not have a generic term for 'spirit'.

In order to show the process the translation team had to work through to get a good solution, in the first section, the translation style of the Sangu team will be defined and placed in the wider frame of what constitutes Bible translation. Along with this, the Sangu team is presented as part of the larger Mbeya Cluster Project which serves 13 different Bantu languages in Bible translation, a grouping which tries to make use of important synergies.

In the second section, the influence of the Swahili Union Version as the major Bible translation in Tanzania on translation choices will be described. It will be shown how this version impacts the translation, as it influences the Sangu translators in their understanding of a passage and the Sangu people group as the recipient audience, who compare the new translation in their vernacular with the translation in Swahili to see how well the Bible has been translated.

In a third section, the Sangu spirit worldview will be presented in the way it has been elicited during different interviews with the Sangu community. This will help to get an inventory of words that could be used for 'spirits'.

Exegesis makes up the fourth part of the thesis, in which the question asked is what interpretation of the 'spirits' could be the best for the purpose of the letter of 1 Peter, also giving insight into how different interpretations of 1 Peter 3:19 evolved.

The fifth and last section summarizes and weaves the previous chapters together and presents a translation model which the Sangu team could follow in translating the term 'spirits' in 1 Peter 3:19.

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## Abbreviations

ATR	African Traditional Religion
BHN	Biblia Habari Njema (a Swahili Bible)
ESV	English Standard Version
FOBAI	Forum of Bible Agencies International
FT	Front translation
ICTP	Introductory course to translation principles
LiFE	Literary Functional Equivalence
LIT/SE	Literacy and Scripture Engagement
LWC	Language of Wider Communication
MCP	Mbeya Cluster Project
NA28	Nestle-Aland's critical text of the Greek NT, edition 28
Ncl.	Noun class (indicating different Bantu noun classes)
Neno	Neno: Biblia Takatifu (a Swahili Bible)
NET	New English Translation
NIV	New International Version
NLT	New Living Translation
RT	Relevance Theory
SIL	Summer Institute of Linguistics; elsewhere also <i>SIL International</i>
SUV	Swahili Union Version (a Swahili Bible)
UBS	United Bible Society
UBS 4/5	Critical Greek text of the United Bible Societies, editions 4/5

# 1 Introduction

In order to orient the reader on the people group in this thesis, here are some brief explanations. Speakers of the Sangu language group live in the south-west of Tanzania (see Figure 1 below<sup>1</sup>). They became part of a Bible translation team of SIL International working in nearby Mbeya in 2003, at which time a cluster project was begun serving nine related Bantu languages.

Figure 1: Language groups of Tanzania (Sangu area highlighted)



<sup>1</sup> Map published by SIL International

## **1.1 Statement of the problem**

The identity of the ‘spirits’ in 1 Peter 3:19 has puzzled many Christians, from lay persons to experts. When the Sangu translation team, using a meaning-based translation approach got to this passage, the question arose as to how this passage with such a highly difficult and disputed meaning could be well translated.

With a seemingly ambiguous meaning, how could translators translate accurately? Furthermore, how would their translation be clear and natural? They could not leave the meaning ambiguous as many major translations do, since the Sangu do not have a generic term for ‘spirits’. How would their text be acceptable<sup>2</sup> to the language community, if the translators thought they had to deviate from the translation decision made in the language of wider communication (LWC)?

### **1.1.1 The main objective**

The main objective of this thesis is to suggest how the concept of ‘spirits’ could be translated into the Sangu language (further referred to as Kisangu) in such a way as to produce a translation of 1 Peter 3:19 that is accurate, natural, clear, and acceptable to the language community.

### **1.1.2 The key objectives**

#### **1.1.2.1 Translation approach and guiding decisions**

This objective serves to clarify and describe the translation approach and methodology that has been adopted for the production of the Kisangu Bible in the Mbeya Cluster Project (further referred to as MCP), how its quality is measured, and how these issues affect the broader question of translation of the verse under consideration.

#### **1.1.2.2 Terminology for the spiritual realm of the Sangu people**

This objective serves to discover what terms exist in Kisangu which could be identified as belonging to the semantic domain of the spirit world, and which of these might appropriately be used in translating 1 Peter 3:19.

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<sup>2</sup> The term ‘acceptability’ will be discussed later. This term is used for showing how the speakers of a language view the Bible translation. Depending on translation style and terminology used, they might either accept or refuse the translation. See Larsen (2001).

### ***1.1.2.3 Influence from the LWC translations***

This objective serves to evaluate how the existing Swahili translations of this passage are understood by Tanzanians and how this understanding might affect the Kisangu translation.

### ***1.1.2.4 Exegesis and interpretations***

This objective serves to discover the meaning of 'spirits' in the context of 1 Peter 3:19.

## **1.2 Elucidation of the problem**

### ***1.2.1 Delimitations of the study***

The main focus of this study is on the word πνεύμασιν (πνεῦμα) 'spirit/s' in 1 Peter 3:19, taking into consideration its surrounding context and the broader aim of the whole epistle.

Although baptism and other issues appear in verses 18-22, they will not be elaborated on unless they are crucial for the understanding of 'spirits'.

Even though for the purpose of this study it is good to get a general idea of how Africans might perceive the other side of the seen world, there will be no attempt to present a uniform system for the Sangu people group. The goal is to present their cosmological worldview as they explain it, even if this may contain some contradictory views.

### ***1.2.2 Definitions of key terms***

#### ***1.2.2.1 Acceptability***

This term is used to show how the speakers of a language view their Bible translation. Depending on translation style and terminology used, they will either accept or refuse the translation (see Andersen 1998; Larsen 2001). Target audiences might refuse, if they think for any reason that the translation is not close enough to the original biblical text.

### **1.2.2.2 Front translation**

This device is used by the MCP as a base translation in Swahili for all the languages of the project. Unlike many projects where an expat missionary prepares a model translation to adapt from (see Anderson 1985; Hughes 2000), the MCP front translation has been prepared by a team of indigenous translators and subsequently checked by a translation consultant.<sup>3</sup>

### **1.2.3 Presuppositions of the researcher**

Although research should be done in an as objective way as possible, I am quite aware of the fact that my rather conservative evangelical beliefs and own cultural background influence the way I research and present findings. It is therefore helpful for the reader to know what some of those important factors are:

First and foremost, for me, the Bible is the fully inspired, inerrant Word of God (2Ti 3:16-17<sup>4</sup>) in the autographs of the OT and NT. Deuterocanonical books are not believed to be authoritative, but they do give valuable insight into cultural matters of the time from which they originated.

Secondly, for the question of authorship of 1 Peter, the traditions of the early church are being followed.

Thirdly, the authors of the Bible intended to communicate in a relevant way. Therefore, bearing the cultural setting of the first recipients in mind, one has to interpret a biblical passage with one primary and logical meaning in its context.<sup>5</sup>

Lastly, based on 2 Corinthians 5:10 and Hebrews 9:27, there is no salvation for people after death if they have refused to believe in Jesus Christ during their lifetime.

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<sup>3</sup> For the qualifications of a translation consultant refer to the following document: "Statement on qualifications for translation consultants – Forum of Bible Agencies International" (<https://forum-intl.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/FOBAITranslationConsultantsQualifications2018.pdf>).

<sup>4</sup> For the abbreviations of Bible books I use the three letter codes used by SIL International and UBS in the Bible translation software 'Paratext'.

<sup>5</sup> "Context" in Bible translation includes seeing the different aspects involved which are necessary to understanding the message in its original setting, for example, the textual context of a concept as used in a verse, pericope, chapter, book, testament or the whole Bible. Apart from the text as such, the cultural setting of the time a text was written (background information) is seen as context needed.

#### **1.2.4 Literature review**

Many articles, theses and books have been written about Bible translation in general and about different exegetical and interpretational issues on the challenging passage of 1 Peter 3:18-22. More challenging is finding specific help in how to translate 1 Peter 3:19 into an African language when considering their spirit world background. There was virtually none to be found except for Wendland (2008:348-360), who treats problems of translating 1 Peter more generally, briefly mentioning 1 Peter 3:19 with an African spirit world setting in mind.

##### **1.2.4.1 On translation approach and guiding decisions**

The books of Wilt (2003) and Brunn (2013), both writing about different frames and styles of translation, help to clearly define the approach of the Kisangu Bible translation project and place it in perspective alongside other approaches.

Barnwell (1986, chap. 5), in her book for training mother tongue translators, lists three qualities of a good translation: accuracy, clarity and naturalness. Andersen (1998) and Larsen (2001) add a fourth criterion, which they call 'perceived authenticity' or 'acceptability' respectively.

Hill (2007), in her article on using local terms in mother tongue Scripture, raises awareness of how important it is to research the existing terms within the realm of spirit beings in a target language, before evaluating whether they can be used in Bible translation.

##### **1.2.4.2 On the spirit world in the Sangu and wider African contexts**

Very little has been written on the subject of the 'spirit world' among the Sangu people, or in particular on the terminology of Kisangu in this semantic domain. Hartung (2005:153) mentions in her research that Lutheran missionary Paul Heese, around 1908, when trying to translate the New Testament for the Sangu people, was given the words for 'God' and 'demons' by native speakers.

The geographically closest information about spirit beliefs can be found in Wendland (2007). Wendland, who has worked with people groups in Tanzania's neighbouring countries Zambia and Malawi, presents a detailed description of spirit beliefs for the Tonga people in *A traditional view of 'spiritual life' in Zambia*. He also compares the

Tonga beliefs with those of the Chewa people. Both people groups have some similar features to the Sangu spirit worldview. Wendland's research is very helpful as it gives valuable insight into the belief system of those two people groups.

Mbiti has written extensively on Africa and its religious beliefs (1969). Although generalizations may at times be dangerous, it is still helpful to consider what Africans broadly view to be their religious system and the worldview going along with it.

#### ***1.2.4.3 On the exegesis and interpretation of the passage***

Dubis (2006) provides an extensive and helpful list of authors who have dealt with 1 Peter in general, but also with the passage under discussion. He describes the position of each scholar on this issue within the history of research. He especially mentions Dalton's monograph (1989, first published in 1965) as being a good starting point in the discussion about interpretation (Dubis 2006:221).

Dalton sheds light on the history of interpretation and then presents three main lines of which he himself favours number three (1989:25-50):

- (1) Christ went to a place where the souls of Noah's contemporaries are being kept and made a proclamation.
- (2) Christ's spirit was preaching through Noah.
- (3) The spirits are fallen angels.

In his review of Goppelt's commentary (published in 1978), Dalton states that Goppelt sees the spirits to be the souls of the sinners who died in the flood. Christ goes and offers them salvation (Dalton 1979:453).

Grudem, in his articles (1986 and 1991) and his commentary on 1 Peter (1988), promotes the view of Christ's spirit talking through Noah. His book presents a short exegesis for verse 19 (1988:164-166), where he also raises three main questions: Who are the spirits in prison? What did Christ preach? When did he preach? The appendix on the interpretation of the passage (1988:211ff) is much more comprehensive and helps one understand the different positions and their reasoning.

Heiser has done extensive research in order to attempt to restore a biblical view of the unseen realm, trying to examine all the relevant biblical texts through the eyes of the

first recipients. He is convinced that the view he presents helps to understand the passage: “First Peter 3:14-22 is one of the more puzzling passages of the New Testament. Set against the backdrop of the divine council worldview, however, it’s actually quite comprehensible” (2015, loc. 6207).

Pierce provides a good résumé of the history of research on the topic. He himself favours a modified version of the fallen angels theory, extending it to Christ’s message having been one of victory over all sorts of evil, cosmic and human alike (2009:239). With his approach, Pierce might also be addressing something that is mentioned by Wendland (2004). In chapter 5 of his book Wendland describes the function of so called ‘archetypes’ as follows:

[T]he iconicity of archetypes features the creative dimension of familiarity, where a well-known image resonates with the many texts and social contexts in which it has been used in the past, thus stimulating a deeper reflection that is nourished by one’s memory (2004:100).

This could therefore mean that Peter was using a well-known event of Noah’s time in order to point to something much broader.

Finally, a more recent helpful commentary is the Research Commentary on 1 Peter by Himes (2017). In an objective way he compares the different approaches to the issues present in 1 Peter 3:18-20 by showing pros and cons of each position, and the various scholars taking position on this subject.

### **1.3 Value of the study**

Kisangu speakers are estimated to be 75,000 (language code: sbp<sup>6</sup>). Many of them still follow their traditional religion since neither Christianity nor Islam has had a real impact (www.thetask.net 2005: The Sangu).

This study will be of both theological as well as practical value for the Sangu people, the translation team and the translation advisors, both expat and Tanzanian.

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<sup>6</sup> *Ethnologue*, a publication by SIL International that lists all known languages of the world, uses these three letter codes for unique language identification.

### **1.3.1 Theological value**

A very important value to the researcher himself is to learn to be open to and aware of different interpretations of the passage, many of those written by people who share the same belief in Jesus Christ.

There might be some theological benefit in having an additional passage to show the Sangu audience that Jesus really has overcome all the evil spirits, if that was the interpretation to follow, and that a believer in Christ Jesus does not have to fear them anymore.

### **1.3.2 Practical value**

This research will help the Sangu translation team gain a clearer understanding of the passage and to make a well-informed decision about if and how the existing Kisangu text could be revised.

As a result of this research, the MCP front translation might be changed and explanatory notes could be placed in it in order to advise newer teams on how to deal with the passage.

The anthropological side of this research might inspire other translation teams to do similar research in support of their Bible translation projects.

## **1.4 Design and methodology**

For the essence of this research, a multi-faceted approach is needed. The research problem requires careful exegesis and a study of biblical terminology, as well as considerable anthropological research. Sociolinguistics and translation theory are also vital ingredients.

### **1.4.1 The qualities of a good translation applied to the Kisangu translation**

Here I define the translation approach and the methodology used in the Kisangu translation of the MCP, and explain the four qualities of a good translation used as criteria for measuring translation quality. This whole process clarifies what the stumbling blocks are in translating the verse under consideration.

### **1.4.2 Kisangu terminology for the spirit world**

This problem demands a qualitative approach aiming at a basic socio-anthropological analysis of Sangu religious culture. This is achieved through the medium of interviews with speakers of the language. These interviews have been designed in such a way as to elicit elements which help to understand the underlying worldview of the Sangu people.

### **1.4.3 The influence of existing Swahili translations**

This section will follow an anthropological approach. Here the aim is to discover how Tanzanians broadly understand the concept of '*roho*' ('spirit/s') and its connotations. A questionnaire has been sent to non-Sangu Tanzanians to determine more about their understanding of the Swahili versions of the passage being considered.

### **1.4.4 Who are the 'spirits' of 1 Peter 3:19?**

#### **1.4.4.1 Exegesis**

For the purpose of this section, I summarize the scholarly discussion on the authorship of Peter's letters, consider text-critical issues pertaining to verse 19, define the literary genre of the passage, and describe the cultural background of the writer and his audience.

A discourse analysis helps to decide whether 1 Peter 3:18-22 may be seen as a distinct pericope on its own, or whether it is part of a larger structure and how it relates to the rest of the letter.

Following those steps, the exegesis of the passage together with a linguistic semantic study of the word 'spirit/s' in the New Testament is presented.

#### **1.4.4.2 Lines of interpretation**

Here I present how early Christians have interpreted the passage, together with the viewpoints of the Apostolic Fathers. I also compare and evaluate different more recent scholarly views concerning the three main lines of interpretation, as mentioned by Dalton in section 1.2.4.3 above.

#### **1.4.5 *Suggestions on how to translate the passage***

In this section, informed by the previous four points, I show how the findings can be tied together with the practical example of a suggested translation of the term in the context of verse 19.

## 2 Bible Translation and the Sangu Translation on the MCP

During one of the first supervised consultant checks with a translation team, my mentor, having seen my meticulous efforts in how to try to improve the text, told me: “Andy, remember translation is not a science, it’s an art.” His comment stayed with me and I am reminded of it often. What he meant was that doing translation is not just going through a checklist and then the work is complete. One needs to be aware of much more, especially also the target language culture, in order to be able to produce a good translation. Wendland describes translation somewhat differently: “[...] Bible translation is at the same time a science, a technology and an art” (2008:XV). Indeed it is helpful to see all three of these components working together at the same time.

Even though Bible translation sometimes might appear to be more of an art than a science, one still needs to be able to talk in an objective way about what translation is. The many different translation theories, developed by secular authors and others working directly in Bible translation, show that translation is a challenge. It becomes clear very quickly that the field of translation is not a clear-cut science.

Explaining in only a few words what the basic task of a Bible translator is, Wendland and Wilt almost make it sound simple: “The basic task of the Bible translator is to communicate ancient Scriptures to a contemporary audience” (2008:1). But then they continue by admitting to the true complexity of the task:

To state that goal is easy. To accomplish it in a way appropriate for a particular audience, and appreciated by them, demands in-depth knowledge in many areas, considerable material and human resources, cooperation between people working closely together in an office or separated by continents, commitment, hard work, wisdom, creativity ... and patience (2008:1).

Instead of writing a comprehensive history of translation theories and approaches, this chapter will focus more on general ideas and will briefly mention a few theories. Broad overviews and explanations can be found in different articles, books and theses. For an overall view, see Smith 2000:9-99.

The aim of the short presentation of theories and approaches in the following sections is to show, where the MCP with its approach to translation can be placed, and how

this approach influences the translation style in the MCP, and specifically the style of the Sangu translation team.

## **2.1 Two theories**

Two well-known models that have influenced the translation style of the MCP shall be mentioned here: Eugene Nida with 'functional equivalence' (formerly 'dynamic equivalence') and Sperber and Wilson, with 'Relevance Theory' (RT). Ernst-August Gutt will also be mentioned as he was the one who put a lot of effort into applying RT, which actually aims to describe how spoken interactions work, for the field of Bible translation and therefore for written texts.

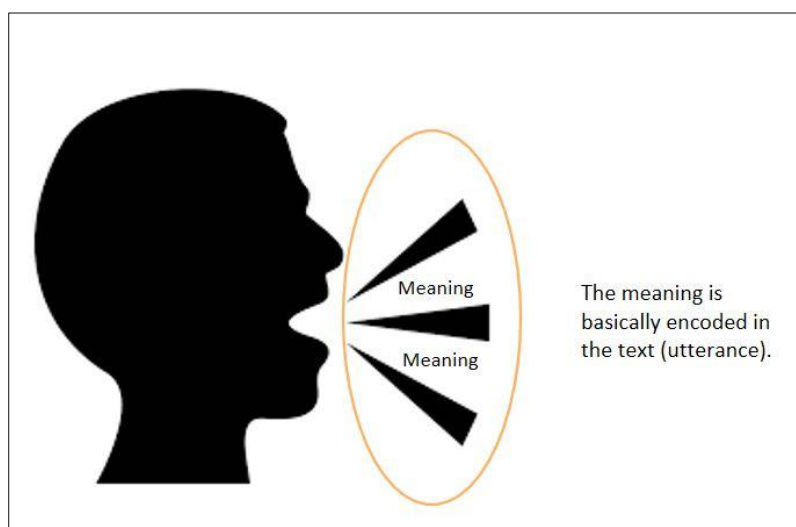
### **2.1.1 Nida and the 'code model'**

Nida, the father of 'functional equivalence', in 1964 explained translation based on a model of communication that nowadays is more broadly referred to as the 'code model'. Blackburn (2007:1) states that "the neologism [code model] seems to have originated with Sperber and Wilson (1986:2)", and therefore indicates that the term 'code model' came into existence later, although he does explain further that "the model itself, however, predates any of its names" (2007:27).

According to this model, language functions like a code, where meaning is transmitted across a channel from speaker to hearer. The speaker, having a thought or purpose in mind, encodes their meaning into a message, namely words that together build sentences, which are either spoken or written. Through the actual speech act, the whole message is communicated to the hearer, who needs to decode the words in order to find out what the intended meaning is that the speaker is aiming for.

Pattemore explains well how in this approach, text (or utterance) and meaning are thought to work together (see also Figure 2): "The meaning is essentially contained within the text" (2011:4).

Figure 2: Code Model: meaning is contained in the utterance or text



In explaining translation, Nida and Taber say that some kind of equivalence between languages A and B has to be reached for a translation to be considered valid. In their opinion, translation occurs when an equivalent word or phrase in the receptor language can be found for the meaning of the source language word or phrase (1969:12).

More recently, Brunn thinks that 'equivalence' is not the right term to use here. He would rather call a good translation of a word or a text an "approximation" (2013:130). His reasoning is as follows: "The evidence shows that most of the forms in Hebrew and Greek do not have a truly equivalent form in English. There is a certain amount of overlap, but in many cases, the overlap is limited at best" (2013:130). His comment about equivalent forms is certainly applicable between other languages as well.

Brunn might be factually correct in explaining what a translation is, namely a good approximation to the original in another language. The problem with this is that the general public may find such explanations unacceptable, especially when dealing with Bible translation. An 'equivalent' sounds like a closer representation of the original than an 'approximation'. Therefore, when choosing a term to explain Bible translation to the general public, it seems better to speak of 'equivalence'.

Nida also described how translation differs, depending on whether it is focusing on the source language or on the receptor language (as explained below in 2.1.1.1 and 2.1.1.2):

### 2.1.1.1 Formal equivalence

The model where a translator focuses on the source language form is called ‘formal equivalence’. Here the aim is to provide the reader with a close rendering of the source language and its form in a target language. The structure of the source language is mostly kept in the translation and many attempts are made to consistently match words, one-to-one in the receptor language.

### 2.1.1.2 Functional equivalence

A translation approach where the translator focuses on the receptor language is called ‘functional equivalence’. Here the basic assumption is that the translator sees the source language as being a vessel for meaning that has to be decoded in order for it to be encoded again into the receptor language. Smith explains how meaning and form work together in this approach: “...functional equivalence is meaning-centred in the sense that it is essentially concerned only with the meaning of the original; form is of secondary importance” (2000:25). Even though Smith mentions form and its secondary importance, it is technically speaking incorrect to say that in this approach, one ‘only’ is concerned with the meaning of the original. Nida and Taber formulated it as follows (emphasis added): “Translating consists in reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source-language message, *first* in terms of meaning and *secondly* in terms of style [i.e., form]” (1969:12).

Gentzler does not trust the freedom from the source language structure applied by Nida in this approach. He criticises: “He [Nida] does not trust the readers to make up their own minds; in order to achieve the intended response, he has license to change, streamline, and simplify” (2001:59).

Reading Gentzler’s critique leads me to think that he has most likely never worked with a minority language group in a Bible translation project. Because if he had, he would understand how challenging it is for them to “make up their own minds”. How and where should those readers get the additional information about the cultural setting of biblical times they need in order to be able to do that? He might have good intentions (to let people interpret by themselves), but this is more easily achieved by an audience with fast access to extra information.

Table 1 (see below), as shown by Smith (2000:26), gives a good overview of the most significant differences between formal and functional equivalence.

Table 1: Comparison of formal and functional equivalence

<b>Formal Equivalence</b>	<b>Functional Equivalence</b>
Focuses on form	Focuses on meaning
Emphasises source language	Emphasises receptor language
Translates what was said	Translates what was meant
Presumes original context	Presumes contemporary context
Retains ambiguities	Removes ambiguities
Minimises interpretative bias	Allows for interpretative bias
Valuable for serious Bible study	Valuable for missionary use
Awkward receptor language style	Natural receptor language style

Though Nida’s model does consider culture to be part of the translation process (Nida and Reyburn 1981:100, cited in Smith 2000:32), RT seems to underline this aspect in a more defined way.

### **2.1.2 Relevance Theory (RT)**

The aim of this section is to show *some main points* of what RT is, and how it has influenced Bible translators and their advisors.

Sperber and Wilson explain in RT that communication is much more inferential than it was considered until then. Wilt summarizes this development in communication theory as follows:

Communication theorists assume today that communication is vastly more inferential than it was ever thought to be a few decades ago. But the inferential capacity that makes mutual understanding of implicatures possible requires that the participants in a particular speech event share a large number of assumptions (2003:137).

RT assumes that if a speaker communicates, they want to convey something that is relevant either to them or the listener. The recipient of that message will then access mutually shared context and background knowledge (in RT terminology – ‘mutual cognitive environment’) in order to interpret the utterance and therefore to most likely

infer the right meaning. Basically, “The Principle of Relevance states that the hearer is justified in expecting to get adequate interpretive benefit for minimal processing effort” (Weber 2003, chap. 4.2).

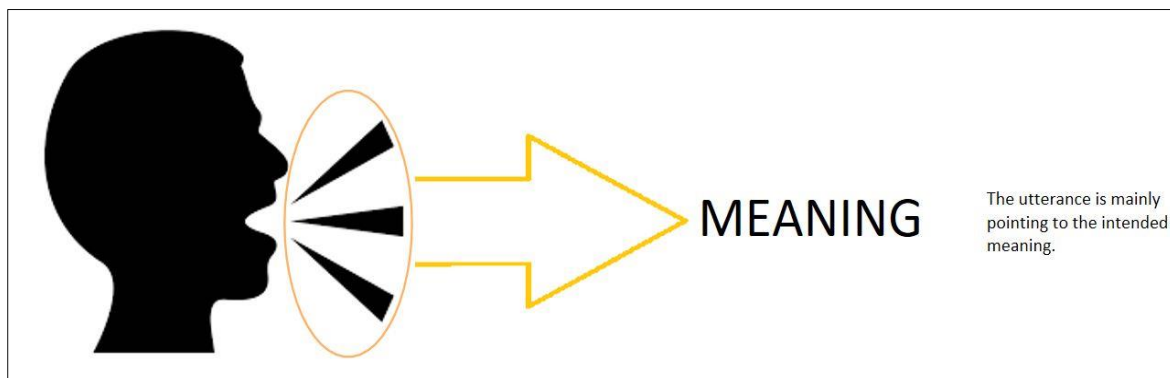
Wilt explains:

Behind the technical expression is a rather common-sense principle: speakers are generally expected to convey what they have to say in a way that is easiest for their hearers to understand (minimal processing effort), in order to achieve the desired communicative information, impact and appeal (adequate cognitive/emotive/volitional effects) (2003:21).

Pattemore summarizes relevance similarly to Wilt: “When we hear (or read) a token of communication that was clearly intentional (ostensive communication), we assume it is as relevant as possible, and search for contexts in our understanding which lead to results which are beneficial in some way” (2011:5).

Whereas with Nida and ‘functional equivalence’ the message was mostly in the text, with RT the utterance in spoken interaction became more like a sign pointing towards the intended meaning of the message (see Figure 3 below).

*Figure 3: Relevance Theory: Utterance seen as pointer towards meaning*



In Sperber and Wilson’s presentation of RT, the theory generally describes how short speech-acts between a speaker and a listener function and is not focusing on written communication or translation. In spite of that, Gutt applied their theory to the field of Bible translation (1992). But despite Gutt’s extensive writings, one critique of the model comes up regularly. RT is a highly theoretical approach to communication and does not provide practical steps for day-to-day application in a Bible translation project (see Smith 2002:114). However as Hefft notes, that even though “... some might argue that

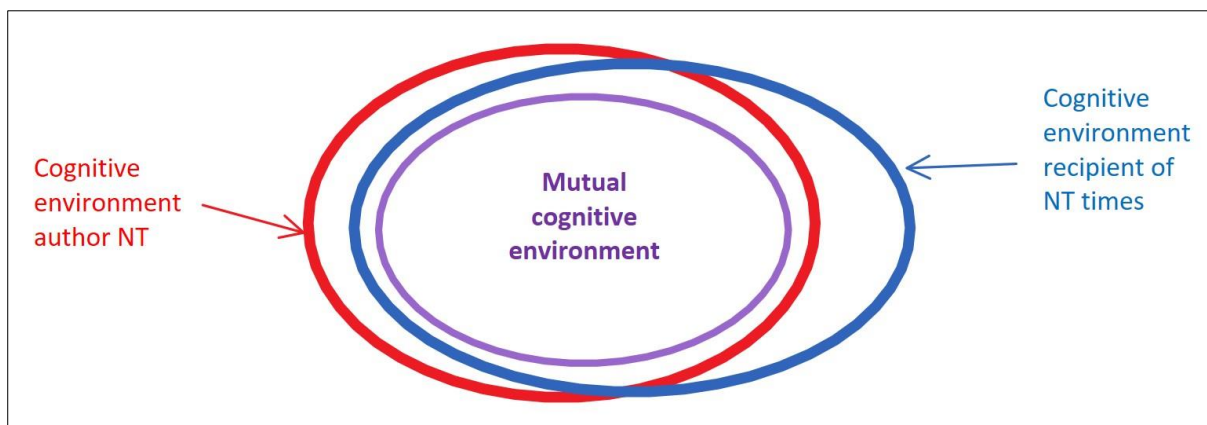
this theory has not had a practical impact on the field of translation [...]. At the very least it has raised awareness about the role of inference in communication and therefore also in translation” (2017, chap. 2.2).

It can therefore be said that one has to acknowledge that RT has helped to make translators and advisors/consultants aware that there is more to translation than only decoding source language words (Greek/Hebrew; or Swahili at the MCP<sup>7</sup>) and encoding them into receptor language words. The so called and much needed ‘mutual cognitive environment’ (shared worldview) that is needed to infer the right meaning of a biblical text is often not there. As Pattemore notes:

Biblical texts, then, are not simply packages of information waiting to be unwrapped, containing within themselves all that is necessary to understand them. Context is vital for understanding, but not context as a vague unbounded situation for the texts. Context which is relevant to understanding is specifically the assumptions about their world shared by the author and audience – and just sufficient of these to make sense (2011:269).

**Error! Reference source not found.** (see below) shows that when speaker/author and listener/reader are from the same time and culture, the cognitive environments of both have much overlap. Therefore, their cognitive environments are very similar and result in a large mutual cognitive environment. The likelihood that the message sent will be well understood is high.

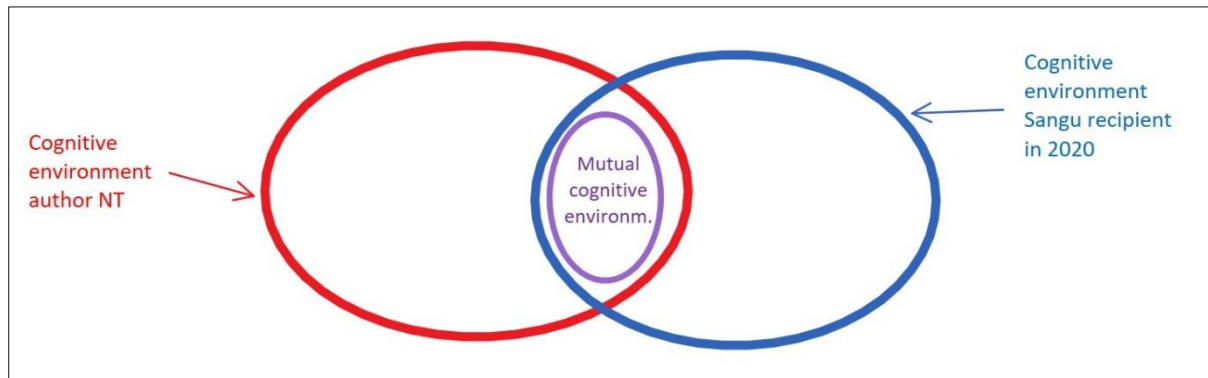
Figure 4: Mutual cognitive environment in same cultural period (great overlap)



<sup>7</sup> The reason for the usage of Swahili will be explained below in chapter 2.3.2.

However, when author and reader are not from the same time and culture, then their cognitive environments differ. This then leads to a much smaller mutually shared cognitive environment (see **Error! Reference source not found.** below) and makes clearly understandable communication more complicated.

Figure 5: Mutual cognitive environment in different periods (small overlap)

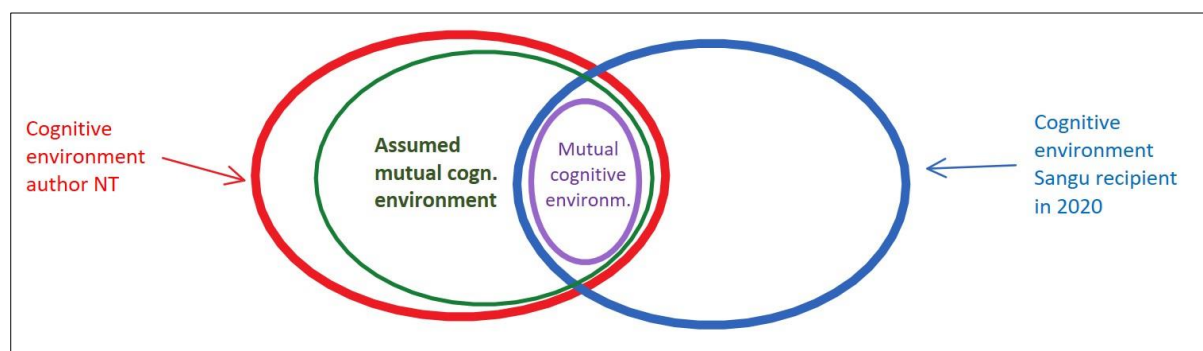


If both are living in the same time, but their culture is different, then the perceptive speaker/author will usually adjust their message to fit into the assumed mutually shared cognitive environment.

It cannot be emphasized enough that nowadays readers need to be aware of the fact, that the biblical text has to be interpreted in the historical setting in which it was written. Those helping indigenous translators to translate the Bible (advisors, consultants) need to make their teams aware of the following danger: “Present-day readers normally interpret the translation in the context available to them, and everything depends on whether it [the translation] turns out to be optimally relevant in this present-day context” (Gutt 1992, chap. 2.4).

The problem then arising in the case of 1 Peter 3:19 is that the part of the cognitive environment of the writer of the NT that is not shared by the recipient becomes either unimportant to them or is not at all understandable (see **Error! Reference source not found.** below). The author of the original message has assumed a mutual cognitive environment in which his message was sent to the reader or hearer. However, as nowadays this mutual area is much smaller than originally assumed, for the recipient the message will lack the hints for correct interpretation.

Figure 6: Mutual cognitive environment - dangers of interpretation



As already shown, the big challenge in Bible translation is not just to find corresponding terminology for a given word in a given language. There is also the problem of how the great time gap (including cultural aspects) can be bridged.

Matthews, Rountree and Nicolle emphasize: “Bible translation is inherently a process of communication of historical texts” (2011:22). Naude also comments on different factors playing into translation: “The translation of the Bible [...] requires profound factual knowledge in addition to cultural and linguistic knowledge” (2004:56).

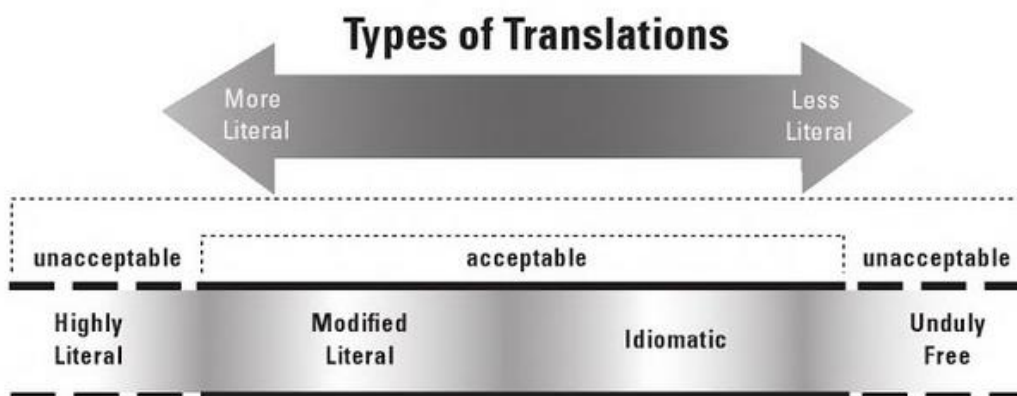
In the case of the Sangu translation, how can translators ensure that the text communicates meaning as accurately as possible to an audience living in East Africa in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? The insights from RT have helped to raise awareness for good paratextual helps and materials (e.g., section headings, footnotes, references and cultural notes, etc.) in order to make the gap of time and culture smaller. Helps of this kind can enable the readers to grasp more easily the intended meaning if they are taught how to properly use them.

## 2.2 Literal vs. meaning-based: different approaches

In order to present the translation approach of the MCP, the focus will now be shifted from theories to more simple definitions of translation style: literal (form-based, word-based, word-for-word) and meaning-based (thought-for-thought) translations. Although RT also divides translation styles into two basic sections, 'direct translation' (similar to 'literal', or 'formal equivalent' with Nida) and 'indirect translation' (similar to 'meaning-based', or 'functional equivalent' with Nida), only the terms 'literal' and 'meaning-based' will be used in this chapter.

There is quite a broad spectrum of translation styles, from overly literal translations to extremely free. In all types on both ends of the scale there are translations that Brunn considers not acceptable, that is those that are highly literal and those that are unduly free (see Figure 7 below).

Figure 7: Range of types of translations (Brunn 2013:63)



### 2.2.1 Literal approach

Literal Bible translations help the reader to see how the source language renders expressions, making the structure of Greek or Hebrew more accessible. This approach focuses heavily on the source language, its words and its discourse structure. Cultural issues are usually not a primary consideration, therefore understanding is limited.

This kind of approach is feasible for people who have good general education and who are able to access additional helps in a language they understand well (e.g., articles, books, Study Bibles, Greek or Hebrew lexica, internet, etc.). Wilt describes a possible target audience for such a translation as follows: "[T]he potential audience is

assumed to be wealthy, in terms of their time, study resources, etc., and ready to pay a high price to work through the texts” (2003:51).

A highly literal approach is only helpful for people who clearly understand the aim of this almost interlinear translation, the aim here being to show how the source language structure works. Even though such a text might not be clear at all, for that target group it can be of value for in depth studies that focus on specific words and how those are placed in a sentence. This approach can produce an acceptable translation when a target group desires and expects their translation to formally approximate a more literal version in a LWC that they are already familiar with.

However, Beekman and Callow summarize some of the challenges that can arise with this approach:

[...], in highly literal translations, not only are many grammatical features transferred literally, but there is also an attempt to match a single word in the original with a single word in the RL [receptor language], and to use the RL word in every context in which the original word is used. The result of this procedure is that words which never go together in the RL are often put together giving rise to either nonsense or wrong sense (2002:22).

Smith rightly comments on this style (Nida’s ‘formal equivalence’), and mentions a serious downside of this approach: “By far the most serious [drawback] is the enormous interpretative burden it places upon readers. This is due to its unnatural style, its many ambiguities, and its requirement that readers be familiar not only with the source context but also with the idiom of the source language” (2000:28).

Hill strongly advises against a literal translation approach for ‘first translations’ in a minority language group (see also Beekman and Callow 2002:24):

Word-for-word translations resemble the linguistic form of the original rather than the meaning. They express things in unusual ways, and this requires the audience to exert more effort to understand the meaning without adding any extra benefits. This decreases relevance and so they are to be avoided (2011:123).

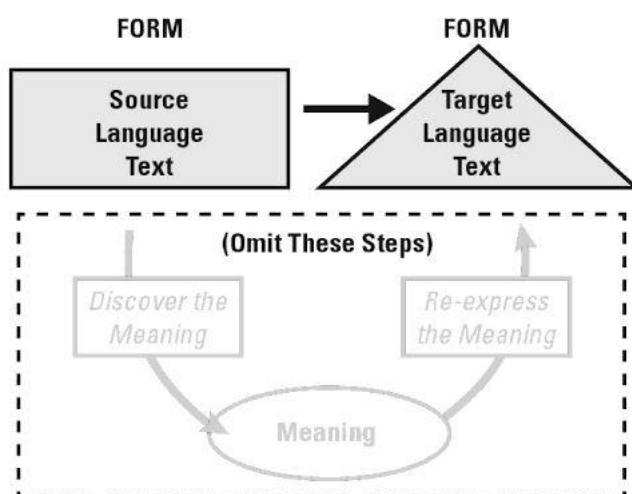
A danger that lies in translating literally is that the translators do not actually have to clearly understand what the meaning of a certain passage is as they focus on a word-for-word translation. Benn and Cahill note, that of both approaches, “A literal approach is easier since the translator does not have to consider the finer details of word

meaning, syntax, discourse structure, implied information, cultural interference, and other factors that affect how the reader will understand the translation” (2011:57). After finding words to fit, the translators then only make sure that the sentence flows and makes sense in the receptor language. However, merely finding word-for-word correspondences can be more challenging than it seems. “As anyone who speaks more than one language knows, there is obviously no word-for-word correspondence between languages” (Munger 1999:11).

In the world outside of Bible translation, an example of this process can often be seen in unsuccessful translations that are being made for electronics or other devices. Computer software might be used in order to translate instructions word by word into the language of a country where the device is bought. Many times, these overly literal translations come across as ‘wooden’ and are at times not at all understandable.

Though Brunn (2013:164) admits that “each translation has its strengths and limitations”, he illustrates the procedure of a literal translation (2013:40) with the following figure (Figure 8).<sup>8</sup> Here it becomes clear that, the omitted steps of discovering and re-expressing meaning, are actually very important steps in order for the result to be beneficial to the target audience of a minority language group.

Figure 8: Literal translation - Formal equivalence



<sup>8</sup> This actually is a reworking of Nida and Taber 1969:33 of Fig. 5 (for literal translation) and Fig. 6 (for meaning-based translation – as shown further below).

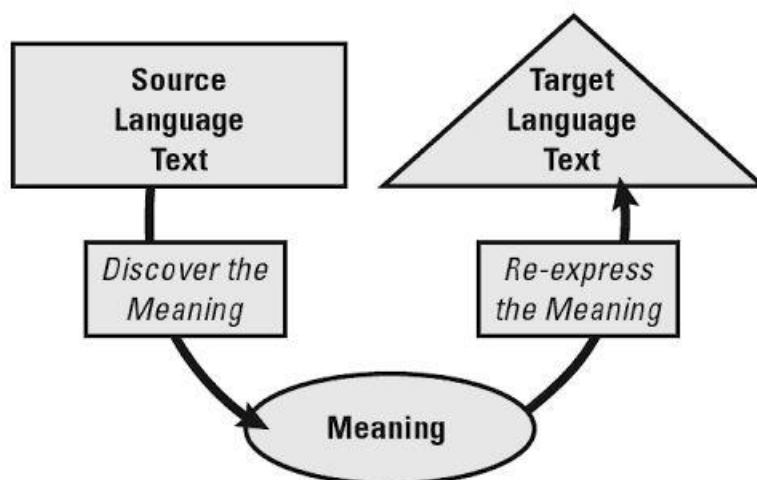
### 2.2.2 Meaning-based approach

The aim of a meaning-based Bible translation is for the original meaning (i.e., semantic content) of an author's message to be communicated to the receptor. The translator is therefore not too concerned about the form of the source text, but mostly concerned about the meaning of the original message (see Smith 2000:25) and trying to see how the meaning can be re-expressed well in the target language.

The goal of a meaning-based approach therefore is to give the recipient access to the essential meaning (i.e., content) of the original text by using the different devices (e.g., lexicon and grammar) of the target language. This approach focuses therefore mostly on receptor contexts. What happens here is that the translator wants to make the text easily accessible to their language group who will interpret the text in light of their own life experiences. Smith explains: "One of the problems Bible translators face is that people instinctively interpret what they read in light of their own worldview; that is, they read as if it were addressed to their own cultural context and use contemporary presuppositions to interpret an ancient text" (2000:29).

Brunn (2013:39) shows in Figure 9 (see below) how the process of the meaning-based approach works. The steps that are left out in a literal translation approach are now added. The translators analyse the source language text thoroughly to discover its meaning. Then they try to find words or syntactic structures to clearly express that meaning in their own language.

Figure 9: Meaning-based translation - Functional equivalence



In all these approaches and theories, teams have to decide what the aim for their specific project is. Wendland expresses well this important question:

Is the principal goal of your translation to bring the biblical text closer to today's readers in terms of style (domestication), to transport today's readers back to the biblical text (foreignization) - or does your policy lie (perhaps wavering) somewhere in-between these two poles of relative correspondence (2008:123)?

Along the same line, Naude presents pros and cons for these approaches as follows: "A source-oriented translation makes far greater demands on the reader, but is of enormous value to some of the readers. On the other hand, a target-oriented translation may be very helpful for first readers of the Bible or for children" (2004:64). With 'target-oriented', Naude means the idea that the translator is paying close attention to the correct understanding for the receptor of the text in the target language and its cultural context. In other words, the translator brings the text to the reader, a process known as 'domestication' (Wendland 2008:123).

Naude's comment about first readers of the Bible is what motivates a meaning-based approach to translation for minority language groups of the world (see also Beekman and Callow 2002:24). Many of these groups lack basic knowledge of the biblical cultures and customs of the time when the Bible was written. Meaning-based translation is an approach that aims to bridge this gap: "Freer translations communicate more of the meaning of the original to receptors [...]" (Gutt 1992, chap. 5.6).

Wendland correctly notes the challenges of a biblical text for recipients who have almost no background knowledge about its original setting:

A given target audience simply cannot completely or correctly perceive and understand what they have no experience or education about. Inadequate knowledge of the biblical background is undoubtedly the greatest conceptual barrier that people face as they read or hear the Scriptures; it is more of a barrier than a poor translation (2004:168).

### **2.2.3 LiFE – a literary meaning-based approach**

Another translation approach needs to be mentioned. It is the "Literary functional equivalence" (LiFE) approach advocated by Ernst Wendland. LiFE is also supported by Krüger of the Bible translation agency "The Word for the World" as their generally

preferred approach to Bible translation (Krüger 2009:18, 20). In LiFE Wendland stresses the relatively high literary quality of the biblical texts and suggests that one should do one's best to reach a similarly high quality in the translation (2017:254, 256).

At first glance one could think of LiFE as a middle way, a combination of the two approaches mentioned above. That is not the case. In LiFE, the translator follows a meaning-based approach while trying to use the literary structure of the receptor language that is the closest functional equivalent to the literary structure used in the source language text. If, for example, a Hebrew text is using a poetic structure, in LiFE this would mean that the translators need to research if their language has a similar feature or structure. This then conveys, along with the content of the biblical text, its functional and aesthetic appeal.

This is how Wendland sees the end product: "I have in mind a version that would make use of at least some of the literary resources of a language, where suitable – that is, in keeping with the style manifested in the original text, on the one hand, and appropriate for the intended audience, on the other" (2006:61).

Which of these approaches does the MCP follow? Some background information about the MCP and the development of its approach and methodology will be given in the following section.

### **2.3 The translation methodology used on the MCP**

The MCP officially started in July 2003 serving nine different but related languages. In 2004 a tenth language was added. All of these languages are part of the Bantu language family and some are closely related (e.g., similar to Italian, Spanish and Portuguese).

Right now (2020) the project is serving 13 languages, of which 11 have a translation underway or are even finishing the NT and continuing with some OT translation (see **Error! Reference source not found.** below). The latest additions to the MCP are the Kisi and Manda languages, where translation was officially started in early 2020.

Figure 10: Overview of MCP languages - translation progress

Mbeya Cluster - Languages	Stages			
	Beginning	Well underway	NT nearly done	Finished NT
	BENA			
	BUNGU			
	KINGA			
KISI				
	MALILA			
MANDA				
	NDALI			
	NYAKYUSA			
	NYIHA			
	PANGWA			
	SAFWA			
	SANGU			
	VWANJI			

### 2.3.1 The evolution of a translation methodology on the MCP<sup>9</sup>

In the early stages of the MCP, there was no central office for all the teams to work at. Translation was done through a workshop approach, whereby translators would travel from their respective language areas to Mbeya town and use the facilities of one of the churches there. All the teams met and worked together on one biblical book, mostly using the 'oral approach' (see Fry 2004). These workshops soon became a challenge as some teams were stronger and moved along much faster than others.

In a second step, a workshop was used to get each team started off into a new book, and then the translators would work from home or in a local language area office. This plan also did not work out too well as it demanded a lot of self-discipline from translators. Also, many of them did not have high educational levels, and most of them had difficulty accessing English helps. In addition, some very practical issues like, computers that did not work or the solar system (needed to charge the computers) that broke down, hindered translation progress.

The MCP then went back to the first approach of working through one-book workshops where the oral approach was again used. This was soon found to be rather tiresome, and translators preferred to work from written texts. It also became clear that this approach was not making much use of synergies, as should be the case in a cluster

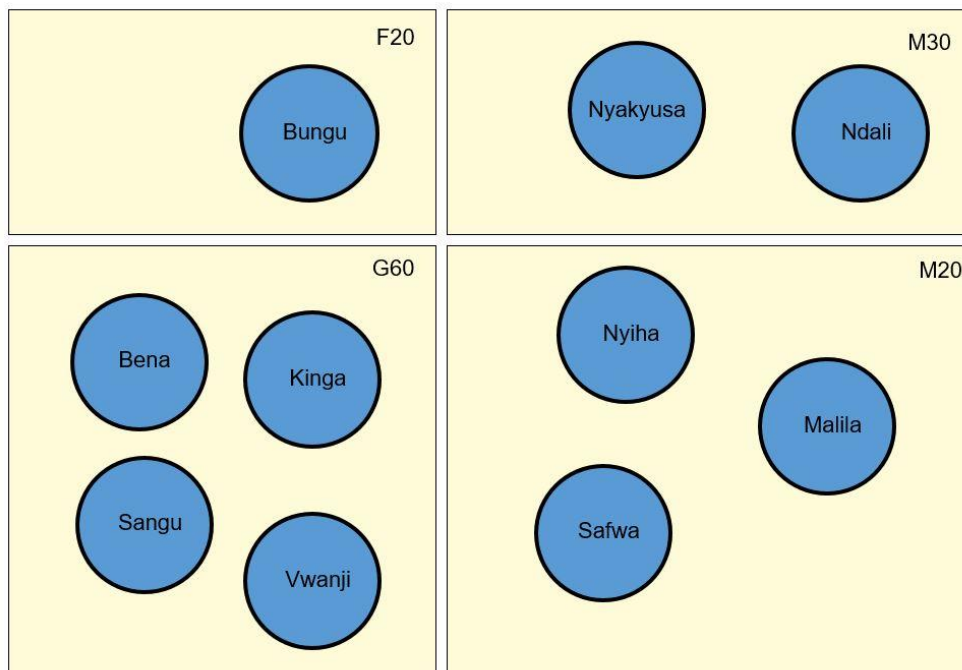
<sup>9</sup> This is a summarized and abbreviated form of the MCP history described in the following document: "Mbeya-Iringa Cluster Strategy Case Study"; internal document, January 2007.

project. Rather than being collaborative, this approach consisted of ten single language projects working at the same place, but not making use of what others were producing.

After some time, using shared resources was raised as a possibility. The idea of doing adaptation from an already existing Bible translation of one language related to one of the MCP languages was considered. The initial test went well, but due to copyright restrictions (of that one African language model) this idea had to be abandoned.

After that, a new idea emerged. Since these languages are all quite closely related (see Figure 11 below) the idea arose to use adaptation as a means of getting translations more quickly produced. Some of the MCP languages are more closely related to certain languages, but not to others. Therefore, the languages were divided into sub-groups by closeness of relation (e.g., all “G60-languages”<sup>10</sup> of the MCP are grouped together).

Figure 11: Initial ten MCP languages (in sub-groups)



At that same time, the MCP participated in a cluster project seminar in order to learn from other projects in the world who had worked or were planning to work in a cluster

<sup>10</sup> These letters and numbers follow Malcom Guthrie’s classification of Bantu languages according to regions (see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guthrie\\_classification\\_of\\_Bantu\\_languages](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guthrie_classification_of_Bantu_languages)).

approach (e.g., Cameroon, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea and West Timor). This sharing of ideas took place in Nairobi, Kenya in May 2007, with the following aim:

The purpose of the Cluster Strategy Seminar is to bring together individuals with an interest in a cluster strategy, those in the early stages of implementing a cluster strategy and those who have some experience in a cluster strategic approach in order to gain insights for optimal use of existing and developing (where needed): software, management tools, consultant procedures and translation & linguistic procedures uniquely designed for a cluster strategic approach (Higby 2007:1).

Inspired by the input from the Cluster Strategy Seminar, the MCP started to function and really work as a cluster. Four of the ten translation teams at the MCP were quite strong (better educationally equipped), and they started to prepare translations that would serve as a front translation for the other teams. These translations were mostly made as 'new translations', using the help of other Bantu language translations (e.g., Kifuliiru – Democratic Republic of Congo; Kidigo – Tanzania and Kenya).

A few years after the formation of the MCP, SIL started another cluster project in the north of Tanzania (2005). The Mara Cluster soon started using previous translation work from the MCP as a front translation. Later on, when they translated books that the MCP had not yet done, the Mara Cluster's translation was used (and still is used) as a front translation or as an additional helpful and guiding text.

### ***2.3.2 Front translation text in Swahili and adaptation method***

As for a front translation (sometimes also called a 'base text'), it became clear early on that a text in Swahili, the language of wider communication (LWC) in Tanzania, was needed. Some of the translators had only primary school education, while others with secondary school education still had insufficient knowledge and capability in English, let alone any knowledge of Greek or Hebrew. This meant that using an original text (in Greek or Hebrew) as the direct base text was not possible. A base text in English was also unworkable, because the language structure of English is too different from the structure of Bantu languages. In addition, the most commonly used Swahili Bible, the Union Version, is a fairly literal version. In many places the average person does not easily understand the meaning of this translation.

Nico Daams sums this process up by explaining that “some translation teams have had to produce their own source text, or front translation, to function as source text for a number of translations” (2015:4).

In its traditional understanding, a front translation (FT) is prepared by an outsider who has learned the local language: “A front translation is the non-mother-tongue exegete’s best guess as to what a good back translation of a passage by a native speaker would look like” (Anderson 1985). This understanding has also led to the conclusion that a FT could only be used for one specific language (see Hughes 2000). An exception Hughes gives is in the case of closely related languages, but still with the heavy involvement of an outsider: “It may be possible for a FT [front translation] to be used again for a closely related RL [receptor language], but the linguist-exegete for the second language would want to edit it with that language in mind” (2000:6).

How does this whole process work? The general procedure of the MCP is as follows. To start with, a team of indigenous translators (from the same language area) was chosen to prepare the first translation of a book in their mother tongue. After all the different checks (see overview of procedure below) were done and a translation consultant had approved the text, the back translation into Swahili served as the FT for the other languages.

The translation procedure that the teams on the MCP follow involves the following steps:

- **First draft** – The first draft is usually done with the Project Interlinearizer in *Paratext*.<sup>11</sup> The translation team preparing the MCP FT for the first time does this by using another good Bantu translation as a model to adapt from. The other teams of the MCP later on use this newly produced FT in Swahili.
- **Exegesis** – This step is shorter for the teams adapting from the FT since many exegetical decisions have already been dealt with. Teams still have to check if their text is understood correctly and if it fits their translation style. This results in a second draft – including the changes from exegesis; then they prepare a back translation for an advisor.

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<sup>11</sup> *Paratext* is a software program used to create Bible translations. Information about the program is available at: <https://paratext.org/features/>.

- **Translation advisor check** – This involves checking for accuracy, clarity and acceptability. Some translation advisors who have worked closely with one team and are very familiar with the target language, might also check for naturalness.
- **Community testing** – Here the translation teams go out into different villages of their language area with portions of the text for the people to read aloud. They check for clarity (by asking comprehension questions) and naturalness.
- **Consultant check** – This is a further check for accuracy, clarity and acceptability (looking for issues which might have been overlooked up until this point). Consultants who are good at Bantu languages might also ask questions about naturalness.
- **Reviewers’ committee meeting** – A group of eight to twelve mother tongue speakers meet in order to read the almost finished product. They pay close attention to the quality of the language (naturalness). Sometimes remaining comprehension questions will be addressed as well.
- **Finalize the book**

In the earlier stages of the MCP, the program *Adapt-It*<sup>12</sup> was used to develop the first draft of a book, rendering each Swahili word with a word in the target language. Later on, when *Paratext* had an interlinearizing tool integrated into their program (*Project Interlinearizer*), the teams switched to the *Project Interlinearizer* and *Adapt-It* was not used anymore.

How does the *Project Interlinearizer* work and what can it do? Riding and Van Steenberg explain that: “the Interlinearizer can [...] be used to create new translations on the basis of adaptations of closely related languages” (2011, chap. 3.2.3). The *Paratext* website goes into more detail: “A project interlinearizer displays the translation text for the current verse, together with statistically-guessed glosses in the language of a selected model text. It can also be used to adapt a text to a closely related language or to consistently apply orthographic changes” (pt8.paratext.org).

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<sup>12</sup> Information about the program is available at: [www.adapt-it.org](http://www.adapt-it.org) and at [www.lingtransoft.info/apps/adapt-it](http://www.lingtransoft.info/apps/adapt-it).

### **2.3.2.1 Advantages of adaptation**

One advantage of a FT in the adaptation process is that exegetical decisions have already been made, which is especially helpful for passages that are more complicated. Waters explains that: “Adaptation done from a good exemplar text lets the adaptation itself be done with less attention to exegetical review of the translation, and without endangering the intelligibility of the resulting translation” (2011).

However, this does not automatically mean that the text will be understood well. Each language team has to evaluate and often rework their translation of the FT for it to make sense to their audience.

Another advantage is that, even though the languages differ, the basic Bantu language structure is already there. One MCP team realized how beneficial this is when on one occasion they had to provide a consultant with a back translation in English, which was a big challenge due to the very different language structure.

An additional advantage is that teams can more easily follow a meaning-based approach. This would be rather complicated if they had to translate from a translation in the LWC that usually tends to be more literal. Anderson explains: “It is often easier to translate dynamically from a front translation than from a trade language translation. The printed, bound book of the trade language is so impressive, and it is hard to make radical departures from it without feeling guilty of changing the Scriptures” (1985, sec. Advantages of a front translation).

### **2.3.2.2 Disadvantages and challenges of adaptation**

There are obviously certain disadvantages to the adaptation approach. First, the MCP languages have different translation approaches, ranging from modified-literal to quite free. This though has to be seen as a more general tendency and not a strict rule, as Brunn explains: “There is no such thing as a purely modified literal translation or a purely idiomatic translation” (2013:65). Still, the teams have to pay attention to the style used in the FT and check that they reach at least a certain level of consistency in their own translation style.

In some of the MCP languages a New Testament previously existed but is no longer in use for various reasons (e.g., archaic language, old writing system, not available in print anymore). These languages usually face the challenge that their new translation

will be compared to the older, often mainly literal version (that people usually tend to see as better and more authentic than the new version). For that reason, it is hard for those teams to adjust certain word choices for key terminology and also the translation style as modelled by the FT.

The teams and their advisors have to be aware of these given boundaries and challenges. For the Sangu translation team, with no previously published Bible translation, this means that they can mostly follow a more meaning-based approach. Still, their translation approach could be called a 'hybrid approach'. As Sangu culture sometimes is closer to Jewish culture than to some European cultures, certain things do not need to be explained in detail, and therefore in these cases the text can be a bit more literally translated if the language allows it. Even so, sometimes the text needs to be transported closer to the Sangu readers and to their own culture in order to make it more understandable.

Larsen comments on the issue of mixed translation styles (hybrid approach): "[...] the key point is not how literal or non-literal the translation is, but whether the translation communicates what we consider to be the intended meaning in a clear and meaningful way to the average reader" (2010:2).

For the Sangu team, it is necessary to know that the FT of 1 Peter was done by the Malila team, who are usually less meaning-based than the Sangu team, as they are aiming towards a more literal modified version.

A danger in adaptation can arise when people think that the cultures of the cluster project are very similar, even to the point of thinking that the cultures are almost the same. Water notes: "Peoples in that zone think alike, they view the world in similar ways, they coin words for the context in which they live in similar ways because, for related languages, much of their vocabulary is inherited from a common parent language" (2011). That might be true for certain things but cannot be taken as a given in all situations. The cultural understanding of passages still has to be clarified.

To be clear, though cultures are similar, they are not the same! Therefore, when teams use an adaptation approach they still have to watch out for cultural differences. Nystrom, a SIL translation consultant for a cluster project in Papua New Guinea,

explains: “Translators routinely discover places where they absolutely cannot use the same expressions in the same context” (2011, para. Close enough).

Indeed, as Riding and Van Steenbergen note: “Issues of cultural appropriateness, acceptability and ownership, textual basis, exegesis, and others need to be considered very carefully” (2011, chap. 3.2.3).

### **2.3.2.3 From pure adaptation towards publication**

While doing an adaptation, teams realize that the first output of the *Project Interlinearizer* is not a perfectly smooth text in their language. Even though the languages are similar, some wording cannot be left the way it is after straight adaptation. Sentences might need to be restructured and vocabulary choices have to be reconsidered.

Gross explains correctly that an adaptation is a starting point and not a 95% finished product. “[...] we cannot assume that Adapt It will solve all our translation problems. The output of Adapt It should be seen as a first draft only, and must be subject to the usual processes of checking” (2011, chap. Summary).

This is similar to what the software website of SIL International explains about *Adapt-It* (also applicable to the *Project Interlinearizer*): “Its product is a rough draft that can then be smoothed out in a text editing program” ([lingtransoft.info/apps/adapt-it](http://lingtransoft.info/apps/adapt-it)).

## **2.4 Translation approaches used on the MCP**

### **2.4.1 MCP in general**

From the beginning of the MCP, new indigenous translators were trained in the ICTP (Introductory Course to Translation Principles). The Swahili version of this course<sup>13</sup> is based on Barnwell’s book *Bible Translation: An Introductory Course for Mother-Tongue Translators* (1986). The aim of that course is to teach a meaning-based approach to Bible translation.

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<sup>13</sup> *Utangulizi wa Kanuni za Ufasiri wa Biblia* (Matthews, Mtawali, and Barnwell 2002)

In the first chapter of the course, translation is defined as: “[...] re-telling, as exactly as possible, the meaning of the original message in a way that is natural in the language into which the translation is being made” (Barnwell 1986, chap. 1).

In order to ‘re-tell’ well the intended meaning of the original, the MCP team preparing the FT do a thorough exegesis of the source language text. This is in accordance with what Beekman and Callow state about the importance of exegesis: “Exegesis thus lies at the heart of all translation work, for if the translator does not know what the original means, then it is impossible for him to translate faithfully” (2002:34).

Whilst the MCP uses an adaptation approach, this does not mean that all of the project languages have exactly the same translation style. As already mentioned, it can generally be said that languages with an available earlier Bible translation tend to be more literal, while the ones without previous Scriptures usually produce a more meaning-based and more easily understood version. Also, to stick strictly to a single approach and to be thoroughly consistent is almost impossible. This is also what Brunn, who has analysed different English versions, points out nicely: “It appears that the one thing that is truly consistent in Bible translation is the fact that it is impossible to be truly consistent” (2013:132).

#### ***2.4.2 The translation approach of the Sangu team***

Even though Lutheran missionary Paul Heese (see chapter 3.1.2) had previously worked on the translation of the New Testament into Kisangu, his translation was either not published or not distributed (personal communication with the Lutheran archive, 19 April 2016).

For the Sangu team, their Bible translation project is therefore the first published translation of biblical texts that is available in their language. With no former published Bible translation, they hence feel more freedom to use a meaning-based translation style. This means that the translation team tries, as much as possible, to convey the intended meaning of the biblical text in the language and culture of the Sangu. Whenever they struggle to find understandable renderings that are not too long, they usually provide explanatory help in footnotes.

For reasons of acceptability, they sometimes also insert a footnote stating the more literal version, taken from the Union Version in Swahili (the LWC). This protects them from accusations that they were unaware of the challenges of a given passage. This also gives them the freedom to adopt a rendering that more likely conveys the correct meaning more naturally in their language.

The team thus aims for naturalness of the translated text using good Kisangu. There has not been any in-depth research on all Kisangu genres, and therefore the team is not actively following something like the LiFE approach as promoted by Wendland (as mentioned in 2.2.3 above).

### **2.4.3 Evaluation of the Sangu translation approach**

Bearing in mind that the Sangu never had a Bible translation before, it makes sense for them to have a Bible that uses a meaning-based approach (similarly promoted by Beekman and Callow 2002:24, Gutt 1992, chap. 5.6, Hill et al. 2011:123 and Naude 2004:64). Beyond this fact, it is also important to note that they are far removed from biblical (mostly Jewish) culture and belief. There is also the general problem that in villages far off the main road many people have not even heard about Christian or Jewish beliefs, let alone about the existence of a sacred text, the Bible.

A literal approach to translation would therefore not make sense because much of the meaning of the original text would remain hidden to them.

One practical challenge of the meaning-based approach is this. How much of the 'hidden' (implied) background knowledge that a recipient of Bible times had, needs to be stated explicitly for the Sangu reader today? Also, if a specific concept is used multiple times in a section or paragraph, does it always need to be rendered the same way or can the rendering be simplified after the concept has been introduced and explained for the first time?

On the stylistic features promoted by LiFE, though not followed actively, certain principles are being followed. What does this mean? Until now the team has not been able to do enough research about all the different genres and the discourse features that go along with them. This is something that Wendland sees happening in translation projects:

The available literary/oratorical resources of the TL [target language] are not often utilized, even partially, in most Bible translations. Nor are they, in many cases, even adequately researched to discover what is actually available in terms of stylistic features and rhetorical techniques (2006:74).

Even though the LiFE approach would certainly add to the artistry of the text, it includes certain very real challenges. Projects are often funded by outside organizations that are setting goals. These projects are given a certain time frame, with the expectation that they will be completed, or no more funds will be available to continue what has been started. This pressure is not always a positive thing, as it makes teams eager to work faster, but often at the cost of quality. Sometimes this can be seen with linguistic issues too, as texts are not carefully checked for linguistic consistency (e.g., the spelling rules are not followed). It can also be a challenge for the artistic beauty of a text as this feature is seen as only being of secondary importance (or even less). It is good to see that Wendland is also aware of this challenge to the LiFE approach: “The extent to which *LiFE* principles may be applied in a given translation project depends on a wide range of variables [...]. Not the least of these variables is the amount of resources allocated to the project – human, financial and technical” (2006:75).

## **2.5 Quality measures - the features of a good translation**

In the course taught to the translators about translation principles, three qualities of a good translation are mentioned (Barnwell 1986, chap. 5). A fourth quality was stressed later on by others (see 2.5.4 below), already briefly mentioned by Barnwell too, but not listed in the quality section of the book:

1. Accuracy
2. Clarity
3. Naturalness
4. Acceptability

### **2.5.1 Accuracy**

Accuracy means that the text most accurately reflects the meaning of what the author wanted to convey to the first audience. The Forum of Bible Agencies International (FOBAI) explains as follows: “Accuracy in Bible translation is the faithful

communication, as exactly as possible, of that meaning, determined according to sound principles of exegesis” (2006:1).

### **2.5.2 Clarity**

Clarity means that there is a well-structured text, of a coherent, smoothly flowing compositional style, which does not cause problems for the reader in understanding it (in matters of language). Barnwell explains: “... the important thing is that there is nothing in the wording of the translation that makes the message difficult to understand” (1986, chap. 5).

Margot emphasizes that the authors of the Bible wanted to be well understood by their audience. Therefore, they were clear in what they wanted to say, which is also the task for the translator nowadays:

The translator who [...] remains obscure in many places, may perhaps be appreciated by preachers who like to be able to say whatever they like about any text! But he will assuredly be unfaithful to the intention of the biblical authors who had an important message to communicate to their readers and who wanted to be understood for the good of those readers (1981:413).

When a text is clear then it also means what it is intended to mean to the readers, as Munger comments: “A translation ‘means’ what a consensus of unbiased readers understands it to mean, regardless of what a translator or pastor says it is ‘supposed’ to mean” (1999:22). A danger therefore lies in an unclear interpretation that is reflected in the translation. This shows how important it is to translate clearly so that the reader can access the intended meaning with ease.

Farrell explains the importance of clarity somewhat poetically: “An unambiguous text is an easy-to-understand text, sharp and crisp like a view from a mountain on a clear day. But an ambiguous text is like a fog in a jungle – you can get through it with a machete, but it’s hard work” (1996:26).

### **2.5.3 Naturalness**

Naturalness means that the message is being expressed well in the receptor language. This means that in most cases a reader will not realize that they are reading a translated text, except when the biblical content refers to events and objects outside

of their cultural experience. Wherever possible, expressions natural to the receptor language will be used (e.g., figurative language). Close attention will be given to the word order and discourse structures of the receptor language.

This is what already Martin Luther (cited in Munger) saw as important while doing his translation of the Bible into German: “Rather we must inquire about this of the mother in the home, the children on the street, the common man in the marketplace. We must be guided by their language, the way they speak, and do our translating accordingly” (1999:27).

There is no benefit in following the Greek structure in a translation aiming at Sangu readers. The text has to be written in a natural style for them which also sounds natural when the text is read aloud. For this purpose, the reviewers’ committee meetings are very important, as mother tongue speakers carefully check the translated text for naturalness. The Sangu reviewers are usually a bit reluctant to adopt loan words into the written text. They much prefer using pure Kisangu words, even though whenever they speak Kisangu, they frequently mix it with Swahili.

The original texts in Greek or Hebrew were also composed in naturally flowing language for the first receptor audience. Brunn claims: “When the original manuscripts were first written in Ancient Hebrew and *koine* Greek, I do not believe it was hard work for the original readers to read them. The Old and New Testaments in their original forms were no doubt very natural and easy to read” (2013:185).

#### **2.5.4 Acceptability**

More recently, a fourth criterion has been taught and stressed. Andersen (1998) and Larsen (2001) respectively brought up the issue of ‘perceived authenticity’ or ‘acceptability’. Here the translation teams are made aware of the fact that the readers of the language might reject a translation if they feel or think that the translation is not close enough to the original according to their evaluation of the text. In this case ‘original’ means either the Bible in the LWC or a previous translation that is available to the people in their own language. Larsen reflects on this by stating that: “In most cases such translations are of the literal type, and it is therefore natural for the local people to expect any translation to be of that same familiar type” (2001:2).

In a similar way, Hill notes that readers of a people group may not understand the challenges involved in translating the Bible: “Most audiences that are aware of the Bible in more than one language expect those Bibles to say similar things. If one translation seems very different than the others, they will feel something is not right, even if they do not understand the issues involved in translation” (2011:109).

These issues are very serious since it might mean that the whole work (e.g., a NT or whole Bible) may be rejected when the receptor audience for whatever reason thinks that the team did not do a good job.

The following comment from Daams brings this truth home: “A good quality translation of the Bible must be accurate, natural and clear. The translation must also be acceptable to the target audience. The first three criteria will get the Bible published, while the last criterion will get the Bible used” (2015:7).

## **2.6 How do these factors affect the text?**

As already shown, the Sangu translation team are mostly following a meaning-based approach, generally based on the MCP front translation. Since their worldview, culture and lexical choices often differ from the Bible, they will need to make sure that the text communicates well to the Sangu audience of today. If the team followed a literal approach, their work of translating would be much easier (see Smith 2000:62), but this would not be beneficial for the readers of the text who want to understand its actual meaning.

The preceding discussion can now be applied to the controversial passage of 1 Peter. If there is no generic term for ‘spirit’ available, what term should the translation team choose? They cannot leave this complicated passage ambiguous, or even render a literal translation, due to missing terminology in their language. With reference to the four criteria above, the team needs to work carefully through different questions in order to reach the following goals:

### **2.6.1 Goal one – Accuracy**

What does the text in 1 Peter 3:19 really mean in the Greek text, and how can the term ‘spirits’ be accurately translated into Kisangu?

### **2.6.2 Goal two – Clarity**

How can the translation be rendered sufficiently clear enough so that the Sangu reader and the ones listening can follow and understand what the text means?

### **2.6.3 Goal three – Naturalness**

Can a word or phrase that is original to Kisangu be found to express the concept of ‘spirits’ here?

### **2.6.4 Goal four – Acceptability**

Can the exegetical decision of the LWC (Swahili) in the much-used Union Version Bible be followed? If there is no Kisangu term available to translate ‘spirits’, how should the text be rendered so it is still clear to the reader what the text means? Can a Kisangu expression really be found to achieve this? If the translation team feels that the Union Version does not render the meaning well, will their ‘different’ translation of the literal form still be acceptable to the Sangu community?

## **2.7 Addressing the questions for each goal**

As mentioned, teams who adapt from a front translation (FT) still have to check to determine whether their translation is clear and understandable. In this case, the first Kisangu draft ended up being somewhere between the MCP FT and the Union Version Bible. Since the initial word choice for ‘spirit’ was not natural for this setting, the Translation Advisor (TA) asked for terms that are normally used. This brought the discussion underway. When the team realized that the available Kisangu terminology might not be close to the Swahili Union Version (SUV), they already started thinking about acceptability issues. Then the team dug deeper into possible options about what the text actually says. After that, the translation was altered and another version, one not following the front translation, was used.

In order to describe these steps and to see if there is still more potential for further research, the following chapters will observe this order of presentation: Chapter 3 - Kisangu terminology for spirits; chapter 4 - the influence of Swahili and acceptability issues, chapter 5 - exegesis and the meaning of the text, and finally, chapter 6 - how the obstacles can be tackled in order to come to a satisfying translation decision.

### 3 Kisangu terminology for ‘spirits’

The text of 1 Peter 3:19 has been a real challenge for the Sangu<sup>14</sup> translation team. If clarity of understanding, but also usage of a natural Kisangu<sup>15</sup> term is in focus, then what Kisangu term can be used in order to translate ‘spirits’? Having worked for over ten years with different members of the Sangu translation team, I have concluded that a generic term for ‘spirit’ is either non-existent or not in use. In order to explore my assumption and to find possible solutions, I did different interviews with all the indigenous translators and the most important group involved in the translation process, the reviewers’ committee. The reviewers are a group of Kisangu speakers (mother tongue speakers) who have been selected by the Sangu language committee because they are known for their ability as speakers of Kisangu and their interest in their own language. The team of reviewers normally read all the Scriptures that the MCP produces for the Sangu community and check the texts for good language quality. Their task therefore is to see if the translation team used natural, pure Kisangu.

It has been interesting to sit down with the different Sangu people and ask focused questions about their traditional spirit worldview. Even though some can well express what their traditional beliefs are, this does not mean that all of them consistently understand the spirit world in the same way.

The Sangu people in general seem to be very aware of a world next to our visible and tangible world. This is a parallel world, somehow interwoven with ours, but which is invisible. Many Sangu are still practising rites and ceremonies that are strongly connected with their view about a very real ‘other side’. This awareness is in accordance with what Mbiti generally explains about African Traditional Religion (ATR) when he states: “People are deeply aware of the spirit world, and this awareness affects their outlook and experiences in life for better and for worse” (2015:81).

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<sup>14</sup> How terms about the Sangu will be used: The Sangu = the Sangu people; Kisangu = the Sangu language; Usangu = the Sangu area.

<sup>15</sup> The orthography used for the Kisangu words is the one used by MCP (SIL International, internal document, 2017) for publications (orthography approved by the community in December 2017).

## 3.1 Data collection

### 3.1.1 Interviews

In order to encourage the other twelve teams at the MCP to do similar research, the number of interviews was kept to a manageable amount of work. This means that interviews were held with those who are directly involved in translating the Bible (indigenous full-time and part-time translators), the Literacy/Scripture Engagement Coordinator<sup>16</sup> who engages with the Sangu community daily, and the reviewers' committee.

The four employed members of the Sangu team were first interviewed one by one. They were also told to ask the community similar questions while going on community checks in order to see what the Sangu more broadly think about the spirit world. After that, there was a first group interview with the three translators. These interviews were all held at the MCP office in Mbeya town. Then the reviewers' committee was interviewed as a whole group in a Sangu village called Utengule, which is the heartland of Usangu, the seat of the chief. Those people come from different backgrounds (religiously and geographically). For more information on the interviewees and the interviews see Appendix A.

The number of interviews totals four semi-structured interviews and two focus-group interviews that were also semi-structured. All of these interviews were audio-recorded for transcription or to pertain information that had not been mentioned by others. Since the group interviews were not easy to transcribe (due to different people speaking at the same time), only additional information to what had been gathered before was written down. After the interview with the reviewers, the Sangu team met again at the MCP office to listen to the recording. This helped to clarify in places where many people spoke or where the interviewees switched into using Kisangu, instead of using Swahili. The fact that they often switched to discussing questions in Kisangu showed that it is much easier to speak about such a matter in the language of their respective culture.

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<sup>16</sup> The LIT/SE Coordinators are people of the respective language groups of the project who live in their language areas and run a local office. Some of their tasks are: teaching literacy classes, holding Bible studies or listening groups, selling literature, etc.

The information from the interviews was gathered in Swahili (and Kisangu) and written down separately per interview. Then a collated version was written in Swahili, from where the content was summarized in English according to the different areas of the questionnaire.

In order to honour the openness of the interviewees to talk about important and deep cultural issues their names are not mentioned (see also Barbour 2013:95-96). Instead, acronyms are used in order to be able to connect the audio recordings with the notes.

The format of the interviews generally followed the questionnaire concept of the *Bible Translation Basics Handbook* (Hill et al. 2011:165-166) in order to get a general overview of Sangu spirit cosmology (for the questionnaire in Swahili and English see Appendix B). During the interviews, the realization came that there would be potential to do further research. This became especially clear during the second group interview that was held with the reviewers' committee. They themselves said that it would be important for them to be even more aware of how they perceive the unseen world and how this influences their daily lives and thoughts about the Scriptures.

### **3.1.2 Literature about the Sangu**

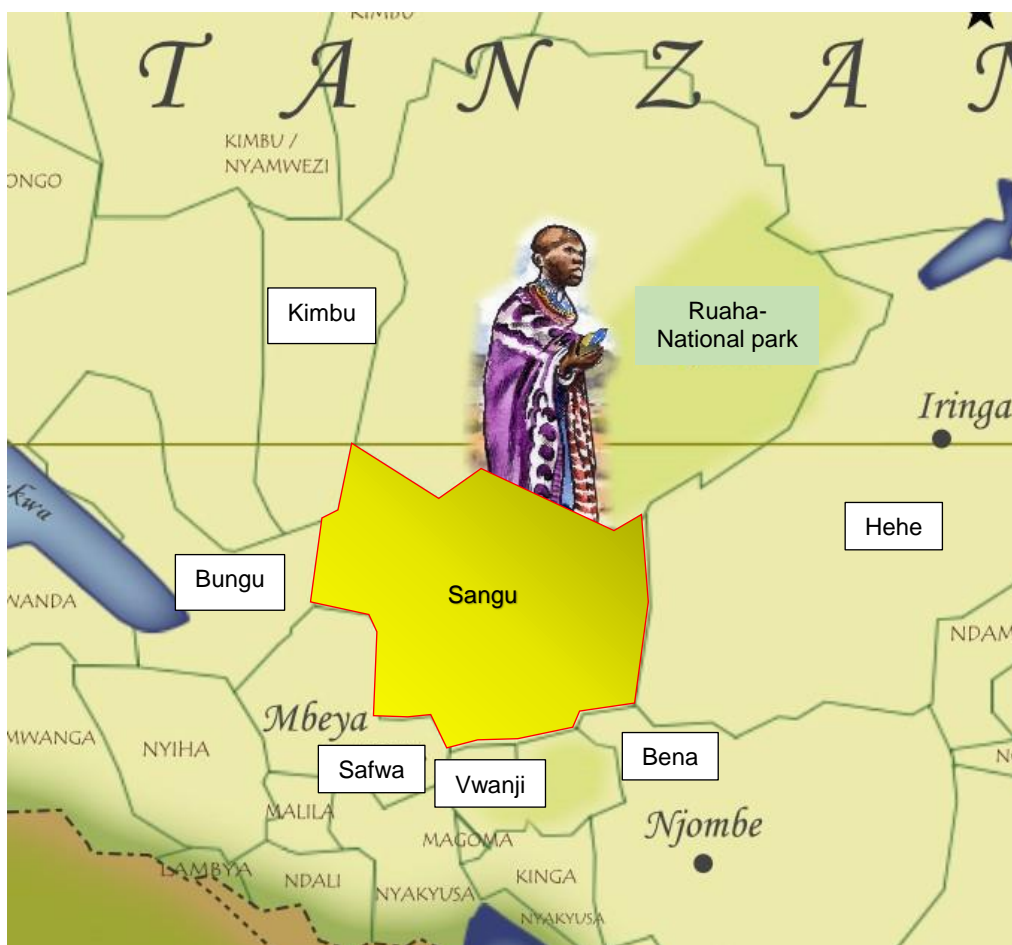
Apart from the interviews, I tried to get information about Sangu cosmology from other sources. There were people who had worked with the Sangu earlier, and it will be shown below how they described the Sangu spirit world.

Through a hint found in a book written by Hartung (2005:153), I contacted the archive of the Lutheran Mission in Germany and asked for help in locating a Kisangu New Testament, which had supposedly been translated by one of their missionaries, Paul Heese, in the early 1900s. This might have helped to see how he translated the passage in 1 Peter and what terminology he used in other passages for spirit beings or the word 'spirit' in general. However, this search did not bear much fruit because that New Testament is not available at the archive. According to the person in charge, Ms. Golz, it might have been printed in a very small edition and not even one copy made it back to Germany (personal communication, 19 April 2016). Other materials received by the archive (short reports, newsletters by Heese) provided some data, though Heese does not mention many language-related matters, and not much about cosmology. Even so, it would need to be treated critically since it seems that his

research has been influenced by Kibena, the language spoken in the neighbouring area where he lived first (for at least five years), before moving to Usangu.

Hartung's book (2005) however is a valuable resource for general ideas about the spirit beliefs of a few different people groups in south-west Tanzania. Her data on the Sangu,<sup>17</sup> and also her evaluation of missionary reports about neighbouring language groups (Safwa, Vwanji<sup>18</sup> and Bena) provides a good general idea about what to look out for. The map below (Figure 12, original map published by SIL International, highlighted areas added) shows the Sangu area and its surrounding language groups.

Figure 12: Sangu area with neighbouring language groups



Mumford wrote about different cultural aspects of the Hehe, Bena and Sangu peoples, only briefly referring to their view of God and the ancestral spirits (1934:121). Apart

<sup>17</sup> Hartung calls them 'Sango'. The Ethnologue entry is 'Sangu' (<https://www.ethnologue.com/language/sbp>).

<sup>18</sup> Hartung calls them 'Bwanji'. The Ethnologue entry is 'Vwanji' (<https://www.ethnologue.com/language/wbi>).

from this, Martin Walsh mentioned that Mumford's views are mostly influenced by Hehe and Bena background knowledge (personal communication, 18 April 2018).

Walsh did research on Sangu culture from 1979-1985 (fieldwork in Usangu from 1980-1981), but has not written an article specifically focusing on Sangu cosmology. In at least one of his shorter articles about pangolins, brief hints about spirit beings and their abode are made (1995:3). There is also a draft version of a Kisangu dictionary that was written by him (Walsh 1985). He mentions most terms that I also gathered from the interviews. Interestingly though, he sometimes comes up with a different interpretation of how a word is understood.

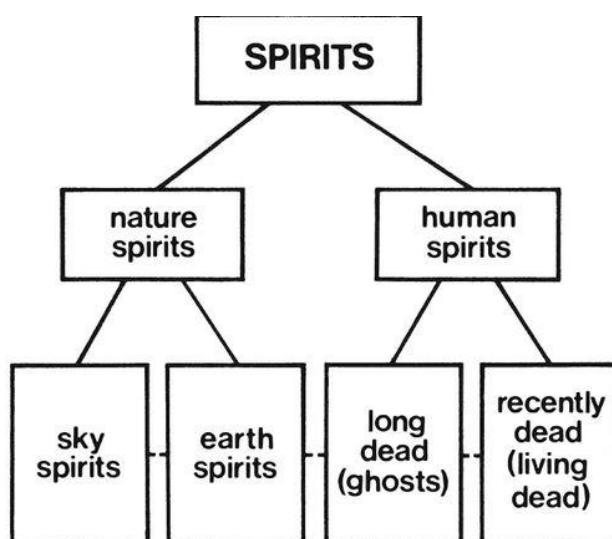
In his doctoral thesis, Walsh refers to another researcher, Jacques Bilodeau, who wrote about the Sangu, but I was not able to obtain a copy of his thesis. However, according to Walsh, Bilodeau does not include anything that would be relevant for this thesis (personal communication, 18 April 2018).

Martin Tlustos (2000, unpublished manuscript), who worked with SIL International among the Sangu for a few years, wrote about some aspects of Sangu culture, but does not mention much about their cosmology in a structured way.

### ***3.1.3 Help from the wider African context***

One other way to get a general idea of what to expect when asking about the Sangu cosmology was by the help of authors who describe African Traditional Religion (ATR) in general. Mbiti for example writes about the African aspect of the spirit world as follows: "Obviously there are local differences, but the pattern is fairly uniform throughout the traditional environment" (1969:77). His general ideas, as well as a more recent diagram (Mbiti 2015:70) have also been helpful (see Figure 13 below).

Figure 13: African Traditional Religion - Spirit world, general ideas



Even though a general overview is helpful, a careful evaluation of each local situation is still very important, as Gehman points out: “Care must be taken, however, when generalising the beliefs of a whole continent. All African peoples believe in the Supreme Being, the spirit world and mystical powers, but they differ in their emphases” (2005:214). As will be seen later, the Sangu for example do not believe in ‘nature spirits’. They believe that some spirits can be met at certain places, but not that the spirits themselves are trees, waterfalls, animals or the like.

### 3.2 Summary of the interviews on Sangu cosmology

In this section a summary of the data from the interviews will be given. This is supplemented and evaluated with information about viewpoints from other researchers about the Sangu. These will also be complemented with data from researchers who worked with neighbouring people groups. Here and there it will also be shown how the Sangu view fits into what authors have written about ATR in general.

#### 3.2.1 God – uNguluvi

What do the Sangu believe about God? The Sangu believe that there is a very high and important being whom they call *uNguluvi* (Ncl. 1 - for persons). For them, the word *Nguluvi* does not have any other meaning, it just means ‘God’.

This is in accordance with what Mbiti proposes about local names for God: “In every African language and people, there is at least one personal name for God. Because

these personal names are often very ancient, their meanings are no longer known” (2015:48).

Hartung also comments on this fact in a similar manner:

The uncertainty about the meaning of the names Nguluvi, Ngulube and Unguluve with the Bena, Sango [Sangu], Pangwa, Bwanji [Vwanji], Kinga and Safwa might be pointing towards an old, original term for God and would therefore support the statement, that the people know the one God from the beginning of time (2005:114).

*Nguluvi* is the one and only God of the Sangu, there is none like him. He is almighty and knows all things. He is an invisible spirit being and therefore he has no human form, no body. *Nguluvi* has created the world and all that is in it – and he is the one sustaining it too. He lives in a place, where no human being can ever reach, very far away from the people. It is a place of light. In contrast, the Sangu as a people are believed to live in darkness. On the matter of darkness and light, the question arises as to whether this really is an original view of the Sangu or if it has already been influenced by Christianity.

That place far away from the Sangu is called *kushaanya* which literally means ‘above’, understood in this context as ‘heaven’ and referring to the place where God lives. Despite this, the Sangu still believe that God is somehow omnipresent. Some Sangu think that God can be, in that sense, very near. There are certain places in nature that are believed to help a person to connect with God through prayer and sacrifices more easily, for example special high trees, waterfalls, or big ponds.

Mostly the Sangu seem to feel that God is distant and far away from them, but they still believe that he is a completely good and loving God. He is believed to be the one who gives people good things, for example rain. He can also get very angry when someone does something bad. Then he will send diseases and natural disasters in order to punish the one who has done wrong. In this sense God is also good and just, since he will punish a wrongdoer for the benefit of the one who has been wronged.

God therefore judges people when they do evil. He will be discontented with them, and they will be punished justly according to what they have done. It seems that his judgment or punishment is usually carried out through the ancestors (if that person is

from the same *lukholo* – ‘clan’). For punishment outside of one’s own clan, the Sangu believe that God personally will judge the wrongdoer.

*Nguluvi* is somehow revealing himself through the ancestors. The ancestors therefore play a crucial role in the daily lives of the Sangu people. The Sangu also believe that it is not possible to ask God for things directly. Their prayers always have to go through the channel of the ancestors. Even if a prayer is directly addressed to God, they still know that it has to pass by the ancestors.

The idea that people do not pray to God directly is also supported by Hartung who wrote that direct prayers to *Nguluvi* were not recorded by the missionaries (2005:86). She also refers to missionary Heese, who observed the mentioning of the name of God during ancestral rituals: No sacrifices are made for him [*Nguluvi*], but in the prayers to the ancestors his name is invoked (2005:86).

The Sangu think that God is so high and the people so low that they need intermediaries who are found somewhere in between. Since the ancestors have already crossed over into the ‘other world’, which the Sangu sometimes also refer to as *kwa Nguluvi* (‘at God’s place’), they are now closer to God and are able to pass on the requests of lowly humans. Indeed, as Ambrose Moyo notes in *Understanding contemporary Africa*: “The ancestor spirits are believed to be closest to both their living descendants and to the Supreme Being and are thus most qualified to function as intermediaries” (2001:304).

Another explanation for approaching God in this way could also be the felt need for protection, as Mbiti states: “The notion of intermediaries also helps people to feel protected from the greatness of God which might otherwise crush the individual” (2015:286).

One of the interviewees said that in her opinion, the traditional Sangu view is that God created the world and then left it to itself, leaving the work to the ancestors. The other interviewees did not share her opinion. Even so, Mumford would at least partially support her opinion, while describing a general feeling existing in the regions of the Bena, Hehe and Sangu peoples:

Their god, nguluve, is somewhat intangible and distant. He is a first cause rather than an ever present influence. He created the world, and maintains control over large events, but the affairs of individuals are more under the influence of the ancestral spirits who may, in important matters, intercede for their children on earth (1934:221).

Even though in the interviews, the Sangu mentioned *uNguluvi* as the highest being ('God'), it is still possible that in earlier times that view was not as close to a biblical view as it is now.

It is important to note that in 1980 when Walsh recorded words for his studies (unpublished dictionary draft, 1985), he does not mention the name *uNguluvi* (Ncl. 1) as it is used now in the translation of the New Testament. He mentions *inguluvi*, belonging to Ncl. 9 (and the plural in Ncl. 6), which would make *inguluvi* something like an impersonal being. The plural in Ncl. 6 is *manguluvi* and stands for 'ancestral spirits'. Therefore, even the singular noun *inguluvi* could be understood as being an 'ancestral spirit'.

This view comes close to what Heese (cited in Hartung) as a Lutheran missionary in Usangu in early 1900 saw in their worldview. He reports a talk with a Sangu man:

I then asked: What do you think when I talk about Nguluvi (= God)? He told me: The spirit of your grandfather. Whereupon I asked: Did it not come to your attention that my Nguluvi tells you the same as the Nguluvi of [missionary] Ruhmland? Then he said: When Ruhmland preached the first time we thought this Nguluvi is the one that our forefathers called 'the ancient of days' (2005:87).

The information from Walsh and Heese seems to point towards the idea, that *nguluvi* could have been like a superior ancestor for the Sangu in earlier times, who then took the place of 'the one and only God'. The shift of a word from an impersonal Ncl. for a being or a name for God into the personal Ncl. 1 has been reported in other places as well (Bunck 1914:174-175, referred to in Hartung 2005:88).

### **3.2.2 Other spirit beings – general overview**

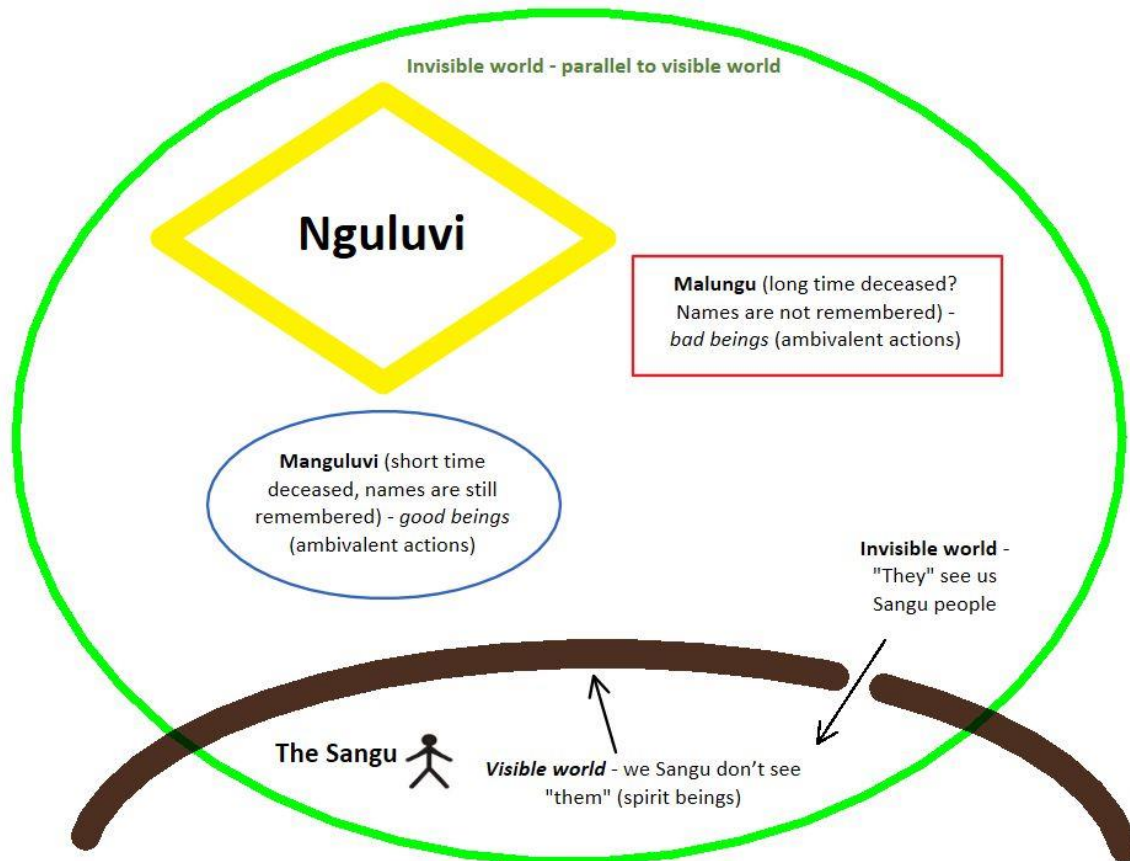
The Sangu people believe that apart from God there are other spirit beings. The terms that were usually mentioned first in the interviews were the *manguluvi*<sup>19</sup> ('ancestral

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<sup>19</sup> This noun belongs to Ncl. 5/6. In the text usually the plural form (Ncl. 6) will be used. The singular form (Ncl. 5) is *linguluvi*. The same rule applies to the other nouns starting with *ma-*.

spirits') and the *malungu* ('spirits'/'ghosts'). These two groups seem to represent the traditional belief of the Sangu, that is, before Christianity and some of its terminology started to spread in Usangu. For a visual overview see Figure 14 below.

Figure 14: Sangu cosmology sketch (traditional view)



When asked about further groups of beings or about what terms have been used in the translation of Bible books so far, people then mentioned the following terms:

- *vamalayikha* ('angels')
- *masokha* ('[appearances of] ancestral spirits')
- *Shetaani* ('Satan')
- *limudiimu*<sup>20</sup> ('a helper/angel of Satan')
- *mashetaani* ('evil spirits')
- *makinga* (ancestral spirits from the neighbouring Kinga people)

<sup>20</sup> This term has only been used in Ncl. 5 (singular form). Some Sangu also call it *Limudiimwa*.

An interesting observation can be made when looking at the terms for ‘angels’ (*vamalayikha*), ‘Satan’ (*Shetaani*) and ‘evil spirits’ (*mashetaani*). The words the Sangu people use here are loan words that came from Swahili, but they seem to have been established quite some time ago.

There used to be a Kisangu word for ‘angels’ that sounds much more Kisangu (*vanyamwanja*), but it is not in use anymore, as only a few older people still know the term. In Kibena, a neighbouring language to Kisangu, this term for angels (*vanyamwandza*) was used in the century-old version of their New Testament, but the Bena translators say that it is only understood by Christians. The term has been retained in the current Kibena translation of the NT, but now with supporting information in the glossary.

Two other terms were mentioned, but only during the interview with the reviewers’ committee. The term *masimu* (‘ancestral spirits’) comes in its form very close to ‘*mizimu*’ (‘ancestral spirits’) in Swahili and looks like a loan word. This term has not been used in the translation of the NT so far. The reviewers’ committee said that this term is just another word<sup>21</sup> for the same beings as the *manguluvi* (‘ancestral spirits’).

The last term mentioned is *makinga*. This term refers to ancestral spirits of the Kinga people group. These spirits want ‘payment’ for some evil that the Sangu did to them a long time ago. There are certain traditions connected to those spirits (e.g., offering of an animal, or money offerings at a tree), but these rituals are dying out more and more nowadays.

### **3.2.2.1 Ancestral spirits – Manguluvi**

Next to God, the *manguluvi*, another term in use is *masimu* (‘ancestral spirits’), seem to be the most important spirit beings for the Sangu people. Without their help, there cannot be interaction between God and human beings. The ancestors are mediators between the Sangu and God. As their name says, they have become more god-like (*ma-nguluvi*) and are therefore closer to God than the living.

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<sup>21</sup> This might be a dialectal issue, or an issue of personal vocabulary choice.

The ancestors are still part of the community of the living. They live in the invisible parallel world, where they cannot be seen by the living. However, the ancestors can see everything that the living are doing.

The *manguluvi* do not usually appear visually, but they can appear in dreams. There they may talk to someone and give them instructions. For very important occasions the *manguluvi* appeared to a 'prophet' (*mukuwamalago*) in order to warn the chief and to give him concrete instructions on what he had to do. These appearances are called *masokha*, and these beings are said to look like little persons with very long hair. Nowadays, there are no active Sangu 'prophets' (*vakuwamalago*) anymore, and there was only one special clan that brought forth 'prophets'. These were people who had access to the invisible world and were able to get instructions (i.e., in dreams / visions) for the living.

The *manguluvi* are located in the place that is called *kushaanya* ('heaven') or *kwa Nguluvi* ('at God's place').

The place mentioned for the ancestors is slightly different to what Walsh states in one of his articles (1995:2) where he says that the Sangu say that the *manguluvi* now live in *wulanga* ('the sky'). Even though *wulanga* ('the sky') is above, the Sangu translation team and the reviewers' committee differentiate between a visual 'sky' (*wulanga*) and the invisible 'heaven' where God dwells (*kushaanya*; *kwa Nguluvi*). It is, however, possible that the translation of the Bible has influenced their view on those matters even more than they think.

The *manguluvi* only have an influence on their own clan, so people of one clan are obliged to pray to ancestors of the same ancestral line in order to be helped.

All Sangu people who die become *manguluvi*. There is a discrepancy in understanding how this exactly works. Some say that it takes a while for a deceased person to turn into an active ancestral spirit. Others say that one becomes an ancestral spirit right after death, that is, after a special offering has been made to appease the spirits (*mafuuonyo*, '*tambiko*'), usually involving locally brewed beer. Until this ritual is completed, the recently deceased person will not be received into the group of ancestors and has to wander around (i.e., in the invisible parallel world). This spirit can

bring harm to his family (e.g., through diseases, or bad luck/an omen, or by holding back good things).

The Sangu have a term for the action of 'introducing' the recently deceased into their ancestral line. It is called *kimukhotola* ('to.introduce.him/her' [to the other ancestors]).

People who die young, who are not married and who are without children, will also become *manguluvi*. Even so, the living will not approach them for help as they had no offspring, and therefore there is no one in their direct lineage. This comes close to what Gehman writes about ATR: "Not every human being becomes 'an ancestor' to be remembered and 'feared'. Someone who dies before marriage is not remembered with libations or offerings, nor is a childless person" (2005:216). Even though for the Sangu these *manguluvi* are part of the ancestral group, they do not play a role in the sacrifice appeasement system.

The *manguluvi* are believed to generally be good beings, but the Sangu perceive them to be still quite ambivalent in their behaviour. If treated well and appeased by the right sacrifices, they will be benevolent and pass on requests addressed to God. If one does not treat them with respect, then they will become very angry and that person will get into trouble. They can also punish people by sending diseases.

This also seems to be a fairly standard feeling in ATR as Kopytoff describes: "In general, ancestral benevolence is assured through propitiation and sacrifice; neglect is believed to bring about punishment" (1971:129).

The Sangu pray to them and believe that, because the ancestors are on the 'other side', they have gone ahead and they can bring the requests of the people to God. Since the Sangu usually do not go directly to God, they have to be in a good relationship with and regularly appease these mediators.

For sacrifices (*mafuunyo*) to the *manguluvi*, there is a corner in the house that has been set apart for that purpose. It is also possible to go to special meeting places at crossroads (little shrine huts, which are called *malonjelo*) or to the graves where especially bigger and more important offerings are made to the ancestors.

The Sangu say that the *manguluvi* can 'possess' a person. By that, they mean that the *manguluvi* can audibly speak through a person. Apart from conveying messages, no other kind of 'possessing' was mentioned.

The way the ancestors are revered hints towards direct worship. It could be said that God is worshipped through them, but the Sangu interviewees said that it is more than that. For them, it can sometimes be viewed that the worship of the *manguluvi* is an end in itself and not a way to get through to *Nguluvi*.

This goes along with Maganda's perspective of ancestral worship in the Sukuma people group, who partially also live in Usangu: "These spirits are believed to have power to punish and reward the living people. With that note, the worship and care of the intermediary spirits becomes more important than seeking God" (2002:160).

Nürnberg made a similar observation about the tradition of the Sotho people in southern Africa: "There can be no doubt that the real addressees of prayers and sacrifices are the ancestors themselves and not a further authority beyond, to whom they have to forward the supplications" (1975:187).

The above mentioned observations makes one doubt the soundness of Turaki's statement who claims that: "There is a general agreement among scholars that the African ancestors are revered instead of being worshipped as divinities" (2008:63/253). Maybe this should more accurately be called a general debate rather than a general agreement, and certainly constitutes an area for further research.

### **3.2.2.2 Spirits/ghosts/demons - Malungu**

The Sangu people believe that the *malungu* are spirit beings with a negative connotation. The *malungu* might or might not have been ancestral spirits first (the Sangu are not very certain about their origin). Generally, they are believed to be inherently bad and evil. They cause bad things to happen to people and their bodies (e.g., diseases). A Sangu person can, with the help of a sorcerer, even use *malungu* to do harm to someone else.

People do not usually offer sacrifices to them, but it occasionally occurs. If they do this, it will be near a tall tree.

*Malungu* are said to be able to enter a person and enslave them. The Sangu translators say that the *malungu* enter a person by means of 'dark forces', meaning witchcraft (*wuhavi*). In the Sangu view, some *malungu* are very powerful (*malungu makhome* – lit. 'big spirits'), and others are less powerful spirits (*malungu manang'ana* – lit. 'small spirits'). Still, both types can possess and enslave a person.

There seems to be much uncertainty about this group of spiritual beings. It is possible, that these spirit beings are the long-time ancestral spirits, whose names have been forgotten (similarly mentioned by Mbiti 1990:83 and Wendland 1977:16). They still seem to be attached to a certain clan and to have influence on it. Some interviewees said that they believe them to be able to be active even across clan boundaries.

Wendland, researching mostly in Zambia, has written about the mystery surrounding the identity and behaviour of a group of spirits, possibly similar to the *malungu*. He mentions 'family spirits' whose names are not remembered anymore: "After this time of remembrance has passed [about four to five generations], the ancestral spirit seems to pass into a sort of limbo of spirits, whose function is somewhat obscure" (1977:16).

Hartung mentions another possible idea of the origin of spirits/ghosts. Studying many missionary reports for Usangu and neighbouring people groups, she finds the most prominent idea of their emergence as neglect: *neglected* ancestral spirits turn into ghosts (2005:153).

### **3.2.2.3 'Giant evil spirit' – *Limudiimu***

The *limudiimu* is a spirit being that sometimes can be seen. It is said to be an angel, or servant of the devil that people fear. The Sangu say it can appear as a horrible creature. It is said to be a huge, strong and scary giant that looks like the devil with long ears and one foot.

This creature is also said to be able to appear in a whirlwind or dust devil. Then it will be sitting right in the middle of it. Mention has also been made that this creature can be seen by hunters as a light or fire sparks wandering around in the dry savannah areas of Usangu during the early evening hours.

The interviewees said unanimously that a *limudiimu* is not the spirit of a dead person. It is interesting to see that the term might be cognate to a Swahili word. The *mudiimu*

part of the term is similar to '*mzimu*' (spirit of a deceased person). The *li-* prefix of Ncl. 5 can also have a derogative and augmentative meaning (special function of Ncl. 5/6 explained in: Duncan and Verhoeff 2017:48). Because the Sangu are clear about the fact that this being is not an ancestral spirit, maybe the meaning of the term could be 'huge and evil spirit'.

#### **3.2.2.4 Angels – *Vamalayikha***

Angels come from God and are his good servants and messengers. They are very powerful, morally good and live together with God in heaven. They cannot enter into someone and possess them.

The term *malayikha* can also be understood in a different way. Sangu people can also call a baby an angel. Then they are referring to the baby's pure and lovely state.

This category and term for angels seems to have come in use with Christianity. Nida comments on this fact and confirms that: "Angels' are quite foreign to most animistic cultures" (1947:216).

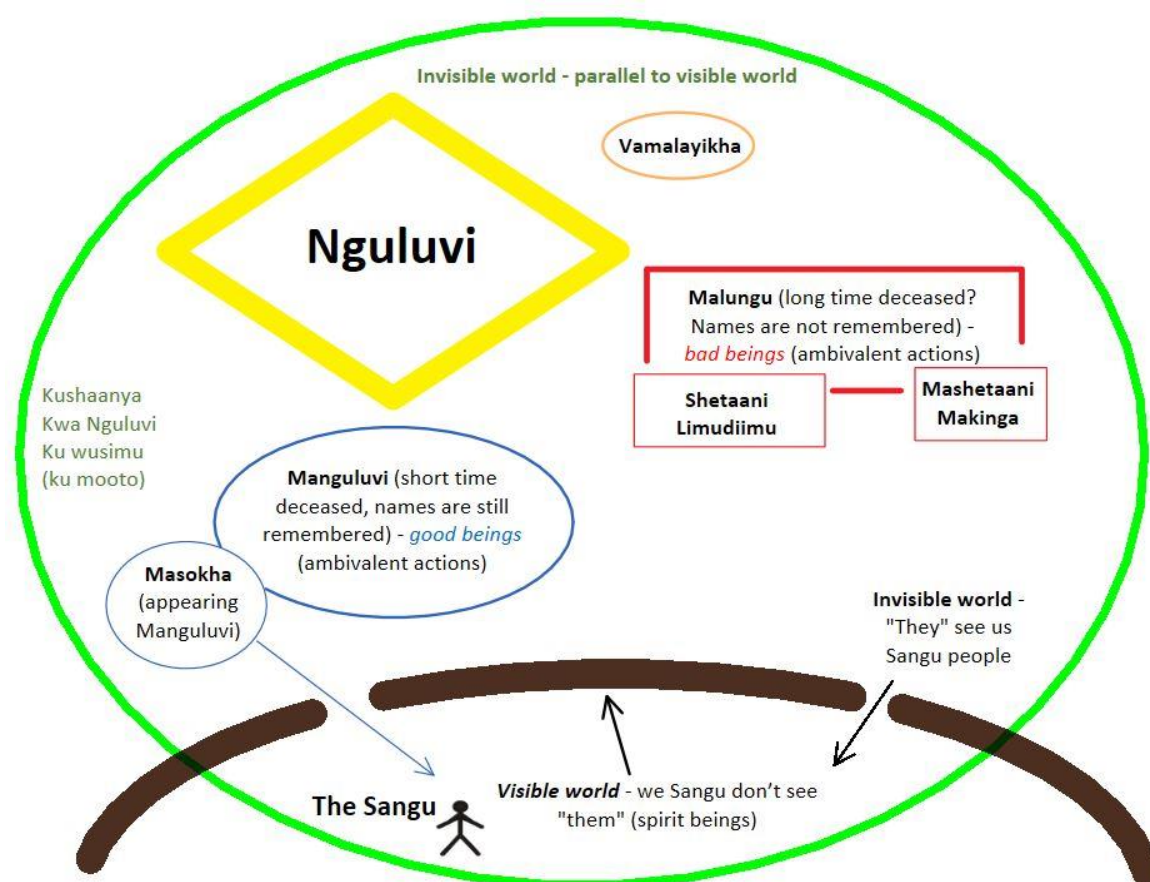
#### **3.2.2.5 Satan – *Shetaani***

*Shetaani* is an evil spirit, believed to be connected to the group of the *malungu*. This term usually only came after prompting, but not if the interviewee had to list all the spirit beings they traditionally know. Some interviewees thought that this term came along with Christianity and was traditionally non-existent in their cosmology.

This is in accordance with what others, for example Khathide, are saying: "There is no conclusive evidence that there was in Africa the devil or the idea thereof as Christians understand Satan to be according to scriptures" (2006:336).

The initial visual display (see Figure 14 above) has now been expanded to incorporate the above mentioned categories of spirit beings and to show how they are understood (see Figure 15 below):

Figure 15: Sangu cosmology sketch - expanded



### 3.2.2.6 Nature spirits – spirits of sky and earth

The Sangu do not believe in nature spirits. Even though the *malungu* might be offered a sacrifice near a tree, this does not mean that the *malungu* are tree spirits. Apart from being met at graves, houses and little shrines, ancestral spirits (*manguluvi*) can also be met at crossroads and ponds. The Sangu say that these are just the places where the spirits want to meet, but not that the ancestors are water-spirits.

Walsh reports an animal, the python as playing a very important role during a ceremony where a new chief has to be elected. Somehow spiritual powers then seem to be transferred from the snake to the new chief. However, Walsh himself also explained that the whole ceremony is “shrouded in mystery” (personal communication, 18 April 2018). Indeed, during the interviews, no one mentioned this snake or any other animal.

Another animal which Walsh mentions in relation to cultural and spiritual events, is the pangolin: “The appearance of a pangolin is treated as an event of considerable

significance, requiring a specific set of ritual actions which involve various members of the local community [...]” (1995:3). Those animals seem to be literally “falling from the sky” (1995:3) where, according to his informants, the ancestors live.

However, this does not imply that the snake or the pangolin by themselves are spirits, but rather are an instrument of spirit beings. The Sangu translators confirmed this assumption, noting that the ancestors are the ones who *send* these animals (personal communication, 15 May 2018). The appearance of a pangolin, for example, is seen as a sign of blessing.

### **3.2.3 The parts of a person**

When the Sangu were questioned about whether the body and soul of a person go anywhere at the point of death, they had no easy answers. The response given was: “We say he/she just went over there.”

For the Sangu, therefore, a person is not something they dissect into different parts (e.g., body and soul/spirit). Even though they know that when a person dies the body will be buried, they still treat that person as alive and do not separate the body from some invisible part. In ATR the term used for the recently deceased (as long as their names are remembered) is ‘living-dead’ (see Mbiti 1990:83; Gehman 2005:221).

Except for the body, the only other part of a person mentioned during the interviews was the *munsinsi munang’ana ga wuumi*, the ‘little shadow of life’, a notion that had not been mentioned before.

For the Sangu a person’s body casts two shadows. The big shadow (*munsinsi mukhome*) is easily visible and seems to not have any further importance, it is just there. The ‘little shadow of life’ though is very important. It seems to be seen with good daylight as a second, small shadow next to the big shadow. Once a person does not have this little shadow anymore the others know that this person is going to die soon. For them the ‘little shadow’ is therefore an indication of the life of a person, but seems to not have any other function (e.g., emotions, personality, or intellect). When someone dies they will say that their ‘little shadow of life’ went to be with God and has now become a *linguluvi* (‘ancestral spirit’).

Even though Hartung (2005:119) also mentions 'shadows' as being spirits/ancestors for neighbouring groups, they seem to make no differentiation between a bigger and a smaller shadow.

George Park, who lived among the neighbouring Kinga people, mentions two shadows of a person that are visible for the Kinga and even gives an explanation about how this happens (2001:389). However, he does not apply the same interpretation to the two shadows as the Sangu do. In his book he just calls ancestral spirits 'shadows'.

Another people group that shall be mentioned here are the Tonga. They mainly live in the neighbouring countries of Zambia and Zimbabwe. For them a "Tonga person is assumed to have three shadows while he or she is alive" (Wendland 2007:4). When a person dies those three shadows that together comprise a Tonga's soul disappear and turn into a spirit being. The Tonga view on this matter is different to the one of the Sangu, but uses a similar concept.

Another term, *numbula* (lit. 'heart'), that has been used in translation was never mentioned in the interviews as an 'inner part' of a person. *Numbula*, as used in the translation of the New Testament is the 'seat of emotions' (or 'soul'). This term is also used when the Sangu speak of someone having a 'good conscience' (*numbula mbalafu* – lit. 'white heart'). From the information gathered, it looks like the Sangu do not see *numbula* as being a separable part of a person. It seems to be an inherent part performing certain functions in the person.

#### **3.2.4 The invisible world – Place names**

For the Sangu, people who died have gone 'over there'. As said, it is not a faraway realm, but it is just a parallel world to ours. For them, it might even be more than that existentially. There might be just one existing world, but the ancestors will reside in its invisible part.

This is what Mbiti generally describes about the ATR worldview: "For the majority of peoples, however, the next world is in fact geographically 'here', being separated from this only by virtue of being invisible to human beings" (1969:159).

The Sangu have at least four different words that refer to areas in the invisible realm:

- *kushaanya* ('above' – i.e., 'heaven')
- *kwa Nguluvi* ('at God's place' – i.e., 'heaven')
- *ku wusimu* ('at the place of the dead')
- *ku mooto* ('at the place of fire' – i.e., 'hell')

The last two terms (*wusimu* and *mooto*) are said to have come in use after Christianity, and it can easily be seen that those are loan words from Swahili ('*kuzimu*' and '*moto*').

Somehow all these places seem to either be interwoven with each other, or to be different terms of the same realm. The Sangu do not know a place of final or eternal punishment as Christians do. They believe that people will be judged and punished before they die. But then, once they are dead, they will enjoy a good afterlife. The Christian term *ku mooto* ('at the place of fire'; i.e., 'hell') therefore does not have much meaning to the traditional Sangu.

Heese (cited in Hartung) mentions another place name for the world of the dead. He calls it *uvulungu* (2005:126). When the interviewees were asked what meaning this word carries, they said that they did not know this term. Some were guessing that it might be another pronunciation or dialectal variant of *malungu* ('spirits'/'ghosts').

In my opinion, it might be possible that this elicited term could be a combination of a place prefix together with the root for spirits,<sup>22</sup> therefore together meaning 'place of the spirits'. The other, more straightforward option is that Heese just took the word from Kibena, the neighbouring language, where he had worked before. In the most recent Kibena translation, on the MCP, the word '*wulungu*' is used for the 'world of the dead'.

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<sup>22</sup> In the most recent Kisangu grammar draft (Duncan and Verhoeff 2017:51) the prefix for Ncl. 14 is *wu-* (not *vu-* as mentioned by Heese, but this might have changed over time or might be a dialectal variant). When referring to the Sangu region, in Kisangu this is called [*ku*] *Wusangu* ('[at the] Sangu region'). Without the locative *ku* ('at') the augment is not swallowed and then it would be *uWusangu*; but there might still be occasions where the *u-* augment will drop off anyway.

### 3.3 Overview of possible terms for 1 Peter 3:19

As the interviews have shown, the Sangu do not have a generic term for 'spirit', which would be needed if one wanted to translate πνεῦμα / πνεύμασιν ('spirit/s') broadly, as some English and German Bible versions do. One Swahili translation (Neno Bible) renders the term with '*roho*' ('spirit') in the impersonal Ncl. 9/10, which theoretically leaves the meaning more open than the SUV. With this more general term, all those translations can therefore leave the interpretative work of who those spirits are to the reader.

Walsh mentions a term in his Kisangu dictionary draft (1985:53) that he thinks could be understood in a broader and more generic sense (*imepo* – 'cold wind' or 'spirit'). However, the Sangu interviewees did not confirm his interpretation of *imepo*. They said that these are spirits that went out of their area into the neighbouring Vwanji region (see the map showing neighbouring language groups, Figure 12 above). Therefore, they do not ascribe a generic meaning to the term. To date the term has not been used in the translation with any other meaning other than 'cold wind'.

The Swahili Bible version most in use, the SUV, renders the term in a way that refers to the spirits of deceased people. These people had been disobedient to God's commands in the time of Noah (1PE 3:20). Even this interpretation is not easy to render in Kisangu, as the two words used for the 'inner parts of a person', the *numbula* ('soul'/'heart') and *munsinsi munang'ana* ('little shadow') cannot be used for this.

The *numbula* is not an entity in itself that can move around between the visual and invisible world, it is more like the personality of a person.

The term *munsinsi munang'ana* is only in use while a person is alive, but after death it will turn into a *linguluvi* ('ancestral spirit'). Since the Sangu use different terminology for people who are alive and for the dead, this makes the issue more complicated.

Another possibility could be a broader rendering that would not even involve the mentioning of 'spirit'. If they said *vina vafwile* (lit. 'people who are dead') then the issue could possibly be solved.

But is this an interpretation which is helpful for the reader in the context of Peter's letter? Is this accurately, clearly and naturally representing the original meaning?

Possibly another interpretation is needed. The majority of scholars nowadays lean towards the interpretation that the 'spirits' are 'fallen angels'. Some see it more broadly and refer to them as 'evil spirits' (as used in the Nyakyusa NT, published in 2019; see also Pierce 2009:218).

Here therefore the words of *malungu* ('spirits'/'ghosts') or *malayikha avavi* ('evil angels') could be used. The latter term might be a shocking concept to the Sangu as *malayikha* are believed to only be good, and not evil. Beekman comments on the usage of local terminology and some of its challenges as follows: "Frequently vernacular terms chosen to refer to supernatural beings may not possess all of the desired components of meaning. In these situations, dependence on context often corrects or minimizes the inadequacy" (1980:80). The discussion of suitable terms will be continued in chapter 6.1.2 where a translation for the Sangu will be proposed, paying attention to all the factors involved.

In the following chapter the semantic range of Swahili terminology for πνεύμασιν ('*roho*', 'spirits') as used in Swahili Bibles will be presented and different terms will be compared.

## 4 The influence of Swahili translations

Bible translation teams and the community tend to often compare a new translation in their local language with a Bible translation in the LWC. Therefore, the Sangu translation team might look at the terminology used in Swahili in order to understand the meaning of the passage so they can choose a term that fits in Kisangu. Whenever they do that they are influenced by words and concepts of Swahili which may not always reflect well the original meaning (of Greek or Hebrew). The Sangu community on their part tend to compare the Bible translation of their language to Swahili. Whenever they feel that the translation is somehow different, they could start to question the competence of the translation team and this may lead them to not accept the translation.

This chapter will therefore address how Tanzanians understand the verse under discussion through the lens of the available Bible translations in Swahili. First, the concept of '*roho*' ('spirit/s'), the term used in the Swahili Bibles and its connotations will be looked at through feedback from a questionnaire. Secondly, some word choices made in different Swahili Bibles will be compared in order to give background on the whole range of factors playing into the decision. Thirdly, this study will address the issue of the general acceptability of a local language translation that uses a much more meaning-based approach than the translation in the LWC.

In order to get a broader view on the topic of this chapter, a questionnaire (see Appendix C) was prepared and sent out to Bible translators working with SIL International in Tanzania (SIL TZ) representing about 20 different local language groups. Responses from 26 translators of 15 different language groups were received and evaluated.

When asked about how long they had been working with SIL TZ as translators, most of them indicated six years or more of experience. Many of them have even worked with SIL close to ten years or even more. This shows a very experienced group of translators who have learned to think through issues relating to translation.

The complete list of responses is as follows (see Figure 16 below): 20 (more than six years – 76.9%); 1 (5-6 years – 3.8%); 3 (3-4 years – 11.5%); 2 (1-2 years – 7.7%).

Figure 16: Duration of service as translator with SIL Tanzania



Geographically the language groups represented by these translators are spread out in five large districts of Tanzania – see Figure 17 below (Mbeya/Iringa – South-West; Dodoma – Central; Mara/Mwanza – North).

Figure 17: Districts of Tanzania (areas of respondents) - www.nationsonline.org



The questionnaire showed itself to be a more practical tool for gathering broader information on the understanding of 'spirits' and acceptability issues than doing interviews (as initially planned). Interviews would have involved either extensive travelling or would have been restricted to a much smaller area. Therefore, the many responses from the questionnaire have been beneficial. This is what Smith, quoting Leedy, explains: "A commonplace instrument for observing data beyond the physical reach of the observer is the questionnaire (Leedy 1993:187)" (2008:233).

Relevant information from the questionnaire will be presented below and in the section about acceptability.

#### **4.1 Questionnaire responses on the word 'roho' ('spirit')**

It is interesting to see how speakers of Swahili in Tanzania use their national language and how they understand the word 'roho' and its connotations. Even though one can consult dictionaries and see with what kind of variety 'roho' has been used in actual texts, it is very important to get that direct input from the speakers of a language, bearing in mind the large geographical area covered (involving different dialects of Swahili).

The first two questions from the questionnaire were about the perception of what the word 'roho' ('spirit') means to the respondents, without having any context to it.

##### **4.1.1 Listing of meanings for the word 'roho' ('spirit') without context given**

The first question asked:

*When you hear the word 'roho' ('spirit'), what does it mean?*

The list below shows all the responses that were given by more than one person (they were allowed to list as many items as they could think of):

- *the life that is in a person and that leaves them at the point of death (9)*
- *the inner being of a person that is not visible (8)*
- *heart / soul (6)*
- *evil spirit (spirit of a person, demon) (4)*
- *Spirit of God / Holy Spirit (4)*
- *someone has a good (or bad) spirit (personality) (3)*
- *a thing / a being without a body (2)*

- *a soul that is alive after having passed away (2)*
- *breath (2)*
- *something that is neither visible to human eyes nor touchable with human hands (2)*
- *conscience (2)*

The attribute that was mentioned the most was that *'roho'* ('spirit') is understood to be something separable from a body, an immaterial part of a person.

#### **4.1.2 Meanings for the word *'roho'* ('spirit') that come to mind first**

The second question then got more specific and asked:

*When you hear the word 'roho' ('spirit'), what comes to mind first (from your list)?*

The responses listed are the ones that were given by more than one person:

- *heart / soul (8)*
- *the life that is in a person and that leaves them at the point of death (4)*
- *a real thing that is invisible to the human eye with more than mere human strength (4)*
- *God (the triune) (2)*
- *a force that lets good or bad things happen (2)*
- *conscience (2)*

The attribute, which was mentioned the most in this section, was also the immaterial part of a person.

#### **4.1.3 Meanings for the word *'roho'* ('spirit') in the context of a sentence**

The third question asked about the term 'spirits' in the context of 1 Peter 3:19 without informing the translators where this sentence was taken from. This verse was taken out of the Neno version as this version applies normal Swahili Ncl. usage. Since most of the translators already have translated 1 Peter, it is still possible that they remember having discussed this passage while translating it.

This is what was asked:

*When you read the following sentence what does the word 'roho' ('spirit') mean for you? Don't think in theological terms, but in terms of meaning. "... [Yesu] alikwenda na kuzihubiria roho zilizokuwa kifungoni." (English translation: "[Jesus] He went and preached to the spirits who were in prison.")*

All responses that were given are listed below:

- *people who have died* (15)
- *souls of people* (4)
- *people in the slavery of Satan / who don't know God* (3)
- *invisible beings* (2)
- *souls of people that cannot do what they want*
- *people*

It becomes clear that most of the translators see the '*roho*' to be humans or their immaterial souls.

## 4.2 Swahili Bible Translations and word choices

In this section, first, the three more easily available Swahili Bibles will be introduced. Secondly, the Swahili noun class system will be explained in order to understand discussion in the third part which elaborates on the word choices made for πνεῦμα by these three translations in general, but also specifically points out the decisions made for 1 Peter 3:19.

### 4.2.1 Three Swahili translations – SUV, BHN and Neno

In Tanzania the most important translation is the mainly literal *Swahili Union Version* (SUV, see Hefft 2017, chap. 4.3). Actually, it would be more correct to speak of the influence of *the* major Swahili translation in singular form as other translations like the *Biblia Habari Njema* (BHN) and *Neno: Biblia Takatifu* (Neno) are no real competition to the SUV. This assumption is also maintained by Firsching: “Since its publication, the Union Version has become the most popular Bible among Swahili speakers [...]” (2017:81).

While Chesworth notes: “[...] it [the BHN] has taken time to gain a wide acceptance, due in part to the differences in language, and readers’ reluctance to change from the *Union Version*” (2007:141), this statement is rather questionable, at least in the south-west of Tanzania where it seems that the BHN is hardly ever used in church.

The table below (Table 2) shows information on the three Swahili Bible versions that are used the most by the translators of the MCP. Information on dates, translation teams, translation approaches and language use was taken from Firsching 2017 and

the website of the Bible Society.<sup>23</sup> Comprehensive information on the history of Bible translation into Swahili can be found in Firsching 2017:76ff and Dube and Wafula 2017:36ff.

Table 2: Overview of three Swahili Bible translations in Tanzania

	<b>Swahili Union Version (SUV)</b>	<b>Biblia Habari Njema (BHN)</b>	<b>Neno: Biblia takatifu (Neno)</b>
Publication	1952 2006 revised	1996	2009
Translation team	Missionaries (consulting mother-tongue speakers)	Swahili speakers from East Africa	Swahili speakers from East Africa
Translation approach	Literal; formal equivalence	Meaning-based; functional equivalence	Meaning-based; functional equivalence
Language style	Old-fashioned Swahili combining two dialects: Mombasa (KEN) and Zanzibar (TZ)	Contemporary Swahili	Contemporary Swahili
Comparison	Comparable to the <i>King James Version</i>	Comparable to the <i>Good News Bible</i>	Comparable to the <i>Living Bible</i>
Other	Rather literal rendering of idioms; use of foreign and archaic words <sup>24</sup>		

An interesting point to note from this table is that the most popular Swahili Bible version, the SUV, was translated by missionaries and not by people who spoke Swahili as their first language. Another point is to see that the SUV follows a literal translation style whereas the two later translations that were made by Swahili speakers from East Africa were trying to follow a more meaning-based approach.

#### **4.2.2 The Swahili noun class system**

The examples and explanations of Swahili Bible texts given later on in this chapter presuppose some knowledge of the reader about the noun class (Ncl.) system that Swahili uses (i.e. all Bantu languages). In this section therefore a short, general overview about noun classes will be given for readers who are unfamiliar with it.

<sup>23</sup> [https://www.biblesociety.org.uk/products/filters/Swahili%20\(Swahili\)/](https://www.biblesociety.org.uk/products/filters/Swahili%20(Swahili)/)

<sup>24</sup> (Firsching 2017:82)

Comparable to English which groups words on the basis of ‘gender’ (male, female, neuter), all Bantu and many other African languages, cluster nouns into certain groups which affect various grammatical categories, including singular-plural, pronoun forms, and agreement within both the noun and verb phrase. In Bantu languages such as Swahili nouns are grouped according to their prefixes and also on the concordant prefixes found on verbs, pronouns and adjectives (Contini-Morava 2019, chap. 2.1). The concordant prefixes on words accompanying a noun become especially important when the noun belongs to a Ncl. without prefixes.

The table below (Table 3) shows a simplified list of the most common classes of nouns used in Swahili and the agreements that are used in sentence contexts. Singular and plural nouns are paired but placed in different classes.

Table 3: Swahili noun class overview (shortened, simplified version)

Ncl.	Example words	Meaning	Agreement-affixes	Example phrase (Translation)
1	<b>mtu</b>	person	a-	<b>Mtu</b> huyu <b>alienda</b> sokoni. (This person went to the market.)
2	<b>watu</b>	people	wa-	<b>Watu</b> hawa <b>walienda</b> sokoni. (These people went to the market.)
3	<b>mti</b>	tree	u-	<b>Mti</b> ule <b>umeanguka</b> . (That tree has fallen.)
4	<b>miti</b>	trees	i-	<b>Miti</b> ile <b>imeanguka</b> . (Those trees have fallen.)
5	<b>jiwe</b>	stone	li-	<b>Jiwe</b> lile <b>liko</b> kubwa. (That stone is big.)
6	<b>mawe</b>	stones	ya-	<b>Mawe</b> yale <b>yako</b> kubwa. (Those stones are big.)
7	<b>kiti</b>	chair	ki-/ch-	<b>Kiti</b> hiki ni <b>changu</b> . (This chair is mine.)
8	<b>viti</b>	chairs	vi-/vy-	<b>Viti</b> hivi ni <b>vyangu</b> . (These chairs are mine.)
9	<b>nyumba</b>	house	i-/y-	<b>Nyumba</b> ile ni <b>yake</b> . (That house is his.)
	<b>nguruwe</b>	pig	a- [Ncl. 1]	<b>Nguruwe</b> <b>amekufa</b> tayari. (The pig has already died.)
10	<b>nyumba</b>	houses	zi-	<b>Nyumba</b> zile ni <b>zake</b> . (Those houses are his.)
	<b>nguruwe</b>	pigs	wa- [Ncl. 2]	<b>Nguruwe</b> <b>wamekufa</b> tayari. (The pigs have already died.)

As can be seen in Ncl. 9/10 with the example of ‘nguruwe’ (‘pigs’), there can be words that on the surface seem to belong to a certain Ncl., but in the context of a sentence the true, underlying class becomes visible. The example of the word ‘pigs’ shows that

animated nouns actually belong to Ncl. 1/2 in Swahili. This is also stated by Mpiranya: “Importantly, the animate status overrides the form of the noun prefix” (2014:22).

An understanding of which nouns belong to Ncl. 1/2 is important to this chapter. Katamba explains that: “[...] noteworthy cases of semantic coherence are class 1/2 which hold human nouns [...]” (2006:114). Whereas the other Ncl. seem to mix and match different items randomly, Ncl. 1/2 are consistently used for humans and animals – more broadly summarized as animate nouns (see also Mpiranya 2014:21). Katamba (2006:115) lists the semantic contents of these classes as follows (Table 4 below):

Table 4: Semantic content of noun class 1/2 according to Katamba

Class	Semantic content
1	Human beings
1a	Proper names Kinship terms Personifications
2	Regular plural of class 1
2b	Regular plural of class 1a

Ncl. 1a mentions personification. This is something that has to be kept in mind when thinking about the words that Swahili Bibles use for the word ‘*roho*’ (‘spirit/s’). Even though personification of ‘fire’, for example, is a completely different thing from talking about personification of ‘spirit’, it is still helpful to see that the Swahili Bibles apply different Ncl. on the word ‘*roho*’ (‘spirit’). Maybe one cannot speak about ‘personification’ of a ‘spirit’ when ‘*roho*’ (‘spirit’) is placed in Ncl. 1/2, but the practice makes the noun more personal, like being a personality.

### 4.2.3 Swahili word choices for πνεῦμα in the New Testament

#### 4.2.3.1 Spirit

According to the SUV and the other two translations (BHN and Neno) πνεῦμα is often rendered as ‘*roho*’ (‘spirit’). This term is rather broad in meaning but usually points towards a human being as will be shown later on.

Example verses:

- Matthew 27:50: “*Naye Yesu akiisha kupaza sauti tena kwa nguvu, akaitoa roho yake.*”  
(“And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit.” - ESV<sup>25</sup>)
- Hebrews 12:23c: “*na roho za watu wenye haki waliokamilika*”  
(“and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect”)

Noun class use: The Ncl. 9/10 are used as expected. ‘*Roho*’ (spirit) here is most likely understood as a separate entity that exists within the body of a person.

#### 4.2.3.2 Holy Spirit

In the case of πνεῦμα having an addition, like in πνεῦμα ἅγιον or πνεῦμα [τοῦ] θεοῦ the rendering in Swahili is extended as expected. In this case it is ‘*Roho Mtakatifu*’ (‘Holy Spirit’) or ‘*Roho wa Mungu*’ (‘Spirit of God’) respectively.

Example verses:

- Luke 3:22a: “***Roho Mtakatifu*** *akashuka juu yake...*”  
(“the Holy Spirit descended on him...”)
- 1 Corinthians 3:16b: “... ***Roho wa Mungu*** *anakaa ndani yenu?*”  
(“God’s Spirit dwells in you?”)

Noun class use: The Ncl. 1 is used. This deviates from the more ‘normal’ usage in Ncl. 9. The idea behind it is understandable, as placing ‘*roho*’ in Ncl. 1 makes it more personal, more being a personality than being just a part of a person.

#### 4.2.3.3 Demons, unclean or evil spirits

In the case of πνεῦμα ἀκαθαρτος and πνεῦμα πονηρόν the term ‘*roho*’ (‘spirit’) is changed to ‘*pepo*’ (‘demon’), which is a more natural word choice used for evil spirits or demons and it then gets the extension of either ‘*chafu*’ (‘unclean’) or ‘*baya*’ (‘evil’).

Example verses:

- Mark 9:25b: “... *akamkemea yule pepo mchafu, akamwambia, ...*”  
(“he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it”)

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<sup>25</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from the *English Standard Version* (ESV).

- Acts 19:12c: “... **pepo wachafu wakawatoka.**”  
 (“the evil spirits came out of them.”)

Noun class use: The Ncl. 1/2 are used. It seems to be unclear in which Ncl. the ‘pepo’ (‘evil spirits’/‘demons’) are used in daily language, outside of a biblical or Christian (church) context. The TUKI (2014) dictionary<sup>26</sup> has two entries for ‘pepo’ (entry 1 – ‘demon, spirit’; entry 2 – ‘paradise’). Both entries show the word ‘pepo’ without any prefixes even when used in plural. The plural aspect therefore only becomes clear with additional words like the adjective ‘wachafu’ (‘unclean’) in the example above. Another dictionary (The Kamusi Project<sup>27</sup>) shows ‘pepo’ (‘spirit’) as being in Ncl. 9/10, but using agreements for adjectives that show similarity to Ncl. 1/2. Influenced from the use of local languages, people in the Mbeya region also tend to use the word ‘pepo’ (‘spirit’) in Ncl. 5/6 (‘pepo’ and the plural ‘mapepo’).

#### 4.2.3.4 Deceitful spirits

In 1 Timothy 4:1 Paul talks about ‘deceitful spirits and teachings of demons’. All three translations render that kind of spirit or these spirits as ‘**roho zidanganyazo**’ (SUV and Neno) and ‘**wataziti roho danganyifu**’ (BHN). This is an interesting decision since many translations translate ‘spirits’ here as demonic.

Noun class use: In all cases the decision was made to have the word ‘spirits’ in Ncl. 10, possibly to keep it more impersonal in connotation.

#### 4.2.3.5 Wind – breath

In places like John 3:8 where πνεῦμα clearly refers to ‘air’/‘breath’ the Swahili uses ‘upepo’ (‘wind’) or ‘pumzi’ (‘breath’) as expected.

Example verses:

- John 3:8a: “**Upepo** huvuma upendako...”  
 (“The wind blows where it wishes”)
- Revelation 13:15: “**Akapewa kutia pumzi katika ile sanamu ya mnyama...**”  
 (“it was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast”)

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.elimuyetu.co.tz/subjects/arts/swa-eng/index.html>

<sup>27</sup> The Kamusi project, non-published document, received from a co-worker in SIL International.

Noun class use: The words ‘*upepo*’ (wind) and ‘*pumzi*’ (breath) are used in their usual Ncl. 11/10 or 9/10 respectively.

#### 4.2.3.6 Summary - overview of word choices

Table 5 below summarizes the different Swahili uses for πνεῦμα (with or without additions) according to their respective noun classes:

Table 5: Swahili word choices for πνεῦμα

	πνεῦμα	πνεῦμα ἅγιον πνεῦμα [τοῦ] θεοῦ	πνευμα ἀκαθαροσ πνευμα πονηρόν	πνεῦμα
Rendering in Swahili	<i>Roho</i>	<i>Roho Mtakatifu</i> <i>Roho wa Mungu</i>	<i>Pepo –chafu</i> <i>Pepo –baya</i>	<i>Upepo</i> <i>Pumzi</i>
Meaning	Spirit/s	Holy Spirit Spirit of God	Unclean spirit/s Evil spirit/s	Wind Breath
Ncl.	9 + 10	1	1 + 2	11 + 10 9 + 10

#### 4.2.4 Deviating word choices

In a few places the Swahili translations go in different directions. They vary either in the term itself or in the Ncl. in which a term is used.

##### 4.2.4.1 Luke 24:37 – seeing a ‘ghost’

In Luke 24:37 the SUV renders πνεῦμα as ‘*roho*’ (‘spirit’), whereas the other two translations use terms that might better represent the intended meaning in the given context. BHN uses ‘*mzimu*’ (‘ghost’/‘ancestral.spirit’) and the Neno uses ‘*mzuka*’ (‘ghost’/‘spirit’/‘apparition’).

- SUV: “*Wakashituka, wakaogopa sana, wakidhani ya kwamba wanaona roho.*”
- BHN: “*Wakashtuka na kushikwa na hofu wakidhani wameona mzimu.*”
- Neno: “*Wakashtuka na kuogopa wakidhani kwamba wameona mzuka.*”
- ESV: “*they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit.*” (NLT07, NET08 and NIV11 translate ‘*ghost*’.)

Taking the context of the passage into account (in v. 39) it becomes clear that the SUV uses ‘*roho*’ (‘spirit’) in Ncl. 9 as part of a person and not a person as a whole or a spirit being like a demon. If they wanted to use it as a spirit being or demon, it would be more likely used in Ncl. 1. The other two renderings use Ncl. 3/4 (‘*mzimu*’) or 11/10 (‘*mzuka*’) in a normal way.

#### 4.2.4.2 Revelation 16:13-14 – three unclean and demonic spirits

In Revelation 16:13-14 one would think that the rendering of the πνεύματα τρία ἀκάθαρτα would be the same as the SUV uses elsewhere for πνεύματα ἀκάθαρτα (*‘pepo chafu’* – ‘unclean spirits’), which would be *‘pepo’* (‘demon’). But this is not the case. All three versions either use a different word or put the same word in another Ncl. (in v. 13 shown below).

- SUV: “Nikaona **roho** <sup>[spirits]</sup> tatu za uchafu zilizofanana <sup>[z = agreement for Ncl. 10]</sup> na vyura, zikitoka...”
- BHN: “Kisha, nikaona **pepo** <sup>[demons/evil spirits]</sup> wabaya watatu walio <sup>[w = ag. for Ncl. 2]</sup> kama vyura, wakitoka...”
- Neno: “Kisha nikaona **roho** <sup>[spirits]</sup> wachafu watatu waliofanana <sup>[w = ag. for Ncl. 2]</sup> na vyura wakitoka...”
- ESV: “And I saw [...] three unclean spirits like frogs.”

The BHN is the only translation using the rendering usually applied for ‘evil spirits’ (πνεύματα ἀκάθαρτα). Both the SUV and Neno go in different directions. While the actual noun is the same on the surface, its Ncl. differs. For the SUV Ncl. 10 is used, and for the Neno, Ncl. 2 is used. It can only be speculated why the SUV and Neno decided to translate πνεῦμα here differently from their normal usage.

It gets more interesting as the passage continues in verse 14. Here the words ‘spirit’ (πνεῦμα) and ‘demon’ (δαίμονιον) are mentioned back to back. The SUV renders πνεῦμα with *‘pepo’* and δαίμονιον with *‘mashetani’* (‘devils’) – *‘pepo’* (‘spirits’) here is used in Ncl. 10.

It is interesting to observe that the SUV from 1 Corinthians onwards stops rendering δαίμονιον with *‘pepo’* and always renders it as *‘mashetani’* (‘devils’/‘demons’). In the Gospels, the SUV usually renders δαίμονιον with *‘pepo’* (‘demon’/‘evil spirit’). In Acts 17:18 in a special setting, it is logically rendered in its context as *‘miungu migeni’* (‘foreign gods’).

#### 4.2.5 Usage of ‘roho’ in 1 Peter 3:19 – different possibilities

The passage of 1 Peter 3:19 has not been listed in the examples mentioned above as it will be treated separately below with special interest.

#### 4.2.5.1 Swahili Union Version – one option

In 1 Peter 3:19 the SUV clearly refers to the ‘spirits’ in prison as people, who are dead now. This becomes clear right away when verse 20 is read together with verse 19, as by using the term ‘*watu*’ (‘people’), it explicitly connects the spirits to people from the times of Noah. Even though there is no extension in Greek giving further explanation on πνεῦμα, the SUV has decided that this term has to refer to people and therefore has made it explicit, even adding the word ‘*watu*’ (‘people’) in verse 20. This is something neither the BHN nor the Neno have done.

#### 4.2.5.2 Biblia Habari Njema – one option open to interpretation

The BHN is not as clear as the SUV because it does not exactly define who the spirits are. It is likely that the readers will be thinking of humans, but also the option of angels could be possible. In Hebrews 1:14 where an explanation about ‘*malaika*’ (‘angels’) is given, the BHN translates: “***Malaika*** <sup>[angels]</sup> *ni nini ila roho* <sup>[spirits]</sup> ***wanaomtumikia*** <sup>[w = ag. for Ncl. 2]</sup> *Mungu...?*” (lit.: “What are angels if not spirits who serve God...?”).

Even the option of demons would theoretically be possible, but this is not very likely as the BHN usually renders evil spirits with ‘*pepo*’ (‘demons’) and not with ‘*roho*’ (‘spirits’). According to Relevance Theory, it is therefore more likely that the option of ‘people’ would always come first, and only after much consideration the options of angels or even demons could be considered.

#### 4.2.5.3 Neno – one option

The Neno is the one version which translated ‘*roho*’ differently by changing the Ncl. Since it uses agreements for Ncl. 9/10, the most likely interpretation is that the ‘spirits’ are separate entities of a person (vis-à-vis the body). The idea that maybe also something other than human spirits could be meant is not very likely since they then would use Ncl. 1/2 (in REV 16:13-14).

#### 4.2.5.4 Summary of noun class choices

An overview of all three translations and their decisions are shown in Table 6:

Table 6: Swahili translations of 1 Peter 3:19

	SUV	BHN	NENO
V. 19	ambayo kwa hiyo ali <b>w</b> aendea <i>roho</i> waliokaa kifungoni, akaw <b>w</b> ahubiri;	na kwa maisha yake ya kiroho alikwenda ku <b>w</b> ahubiria wale <i>roho</i> waliokuwa kifungoni.	Baada ya kufanywa hai, alikwenda na kuzi <b>h</b> ubiria <i>roho</i> zilizokuwa kifungoni:
V. 20a	<b>w</b> atu [people] wasiotii hapo zamani, uvumilivu wa Mungu ulipokuwa ukingoja, siku za Nuhu,	<b>H</b> ao ndio wale waliokataa kumtii Mungu alipowangoja kwa saburi wakati Noa	roho hizo ambazo zamani hazikutii, wakati ule uvumilivu wa Mungu ulipokuwa ukingoja katika siku za Noa,
Interpretation	One option only: People, now dead (their spirits?) – explicitly stated in v. 20a	One option plus others: People, now dead (their spirits?) or angels	One option: Spirits (most likely human), as the invisible part of a person
Ncl.	2	2	10

#### 4.2.6 The noun class choice of the SUV – implicit meaning made explicit

##### 4.2.6.1 Swahili usage of ‘roho’

The Swahili word ‘roho’ (‘soul’, ‘spirit’, ‘personality’) is according to the Swahili dictionary TUKI placed in Ncl. 9/10 (2014:279). These Ncl. can sometimes refer to things in a more impersonal way. But by placing these nouns in Ncl. 1/2 they become connotatively more animate, ‘human’, or even more personal.

##### 4.2.6.2 Usage of ‘roho’ in the usual way in the translation

In 1 Corinthians 5:5 where the inner being of a person is set in contrast to the body, the SUV uses the normal Ncl., namely, ‘roho’ in Ncl. 9 and not 1. “...ili mwili uadhibiwe, ili na roho<sup>[spirit]</sup> iokolewe<sup>[i = ag. for Ncl. 9]</sup> ...” (lit.: “...so that the body be punished, but the spirit may be saved...”).

In Galatians 6:18, the word ‘roho’ can be found in the plural, in Ncl. 10, as would be expected for normal Swahili usage: “... neema [...] iwe pamoja na roho<sup>[spirit]</sup> zenu. [z = ag. for Ncl. 10]” (lit.: “...grace [...] be with your spirits.”).

As can be seen in the examples above (1CO 5:5 and GAL 6:18), the word *'roho'* has been used by the SUV to show *'roho'* ('spirit') as a spiritual entity separate from the body.

#### **4.2.6.3 Usage of *'roho'* in a special way in the translation**

It is interesting to see how the SUV translators deviated from normal Swahili language usage because they wanted to make sure that those πνεύμασιν of 1 Peter 3:19 are understood as people. This is the only verse in the whole NT where the SUV translates the word πνεῦμα (in plural) in Ncl. 2 as *'watu'* ('people'). This seems to indicate that the word *'roho'* here is used as a synonym for *'watu'* ('people') as a whole, and is not intended to refer to only a part of a person.

The only other verse in the NT where the SUV uses *'roho'* in Ncl. 2 is Hebrews 1:14 where even in the source text it is clearly referring to angels.

#### **4.2.7 Conclusions drawn from the word choice made**

SUV uses *'roho'* ('spirit') and not *'pepo'* ('demons') in 1 Peter 3:19. This decision in itself, together with placing the noun *'roho'* ('spirit') in Ncl. 2, already makes it clear for the reader of the SUV that there is no other option for understanding these 'spirits' (πνεύμασιν) other than humans in some form.

If the Sangu wanted, they could choose a similar translation, but they would have to leave out the challenging term *'roho'* ('spirit') and just say, what SUV somehow does anyway – “the ones who have died”.

But, does the exegesis of this passage and the context of 1 Peter allow for such a rendering? What happens, when a translation team, their advisors and consultants have doubts about the rendering used in the LWC?

This question leads naturally into the area of acceptability, which will be addressed in the next section.

### **4.3 Acceptability or perceived authenticity**

The prestige and influence of the translation in the LWC for the translation into local languages cannot be underestimated. Since the general public do not have access to

the original texts in either Greek or Hebrew, they usually compare a new translation to the standard that is set by the most valued translation in a country or region. “When you compare with a standard, you evaluate how accurately the standard has been reproduced” (Andersen 1998, chap. 2.2).

#### **4.3.1 Questionnaire responses on the issue of acceptability**

The responses of the questionnaire show different opinions on the matter of acceptability.

The first question asked:

*According to your experience interacting with the people of your language group – how do people see it when you translate differently from the Union Version?*

It is interesting to see the variety of responses that sometimes were a bit longer involving personal testimonies. The responses were the following:

- *They think I have changed the Word of God – I made a mistake, therefore they will not accept the translation (5 people)*
- *They think I have improved the translation and agree with it completely (13 people)*
- *Other:*
  - ⇒ *They don't say anything as they are not used to differentiating between different Bible versions*
  - ⇒ *They say that the translations produced by SIL are easy to understand. Even some church leaders that we visited said that our work helps to lay the meaning open and that the people understand it more. One bishop said that our work helps the preachers a lot.*
  - ⇒ *The people see that the translation has been improved, especially with the new writing system that is easier than the old one, which was hard. But some older ones say that the translation is not so good because it is too clear and that the preachers will then not have a reason to preach, because everything is understood. They say it is different to the Union Version.*
  - ⇒ *Some think I have changed the Bible while others see that I have improved the translation. Some Swahili words are old and hard to understand. Once I heard a preacher teaching on a passage, but one bit he left out. I asked what he thought the bit he left out meant, but I did not get an answer. As I had the NT in my language with me I read the text to the people and everybody got the meaning. With this kind of people I try to explain to them that a meaning-based translation is not changing the Word of God.*
  - ⇒ *We had quite some opposition to our meaning-based translation approach, especially from one denomination. But we took the time to sit together with them and explained what translation is and how the translation has to be*

*acceptable, clear, natural and accurate. Since then they approve of what we are doing.*

⇒ *They think we put more explanations, but they understand that we try to bring the correct meaning across.*

Even though many translators said that their people group responded positively to a meaning-based Bible translation, it has to be mentioned that not all of them might have responded this way 5-10 years ago. In general, a positive attitude towards a different translation approach (meaning-based vs. literal) may be seen when people of that community have been involved by the translation team for various tasks over the years. Usually reviewers, who help check for language quality, get trained at the beginning of the project, in order for them to see the benefits of a translation that aims to be understood by the average reader of their community.

Nevertheless, five translators (representing three language groups out of 15) responded that in their people group some people do not trust the translation when it deviates from the SUV.

How can this challenge be handled? The last question of the questionnaire asked about possibilities to improve acceptability of a meaning-based translation without changing the translation style.

This is what was asked:

*It is possible that you have translated differently to the Union Version because you think you can show the meaning better that way. What do you think are helpful tools that could help the reader to accept your different translation version?*

The responses are below, indicating all the ideas the translators know or even have used themselves:

- *Footnotes*
- *Cross references*
- *Background explanations*
- *Explanatory phrases (for unknown concepts for example)*
- *Extra textual explanations that explain the meaning of hard words*
- *Glossary / biblical key terms*
- *Pictures*
- *Book introductions*
- *Dictionary*
- *Bible dictionaries*

- *Little booklets that help to explain the meaning of words*
- *Maps*

#### **4.3.2 How to get acceptability when translating differently**

As can be seen from the responses above, the translators have already been dealing with many issues. From all of those helpful tools that can help with overall acceptability in a translation, two could be used in the case of a different translation version of 1 Peter 3:19. A footnote with further explanation can be included and cross references could be added in order to show a connection to other passages in the Bible.

The idea of making use of footnotes is also what others who work in the field of Bible translation suggest for versions that deviate from a LWC version. Larsen for example explains what footnotes can accomplish in this case:

In footnotes we can defend ourselves by saying that we honestly don't know what this text means (common in the OT, rare in the NT.) Or we can quote the literal version that the reader expected and explain why we do not think that such a literal version adequately communicates the intended meaning (2010, chap. Why use footnotes at all?).

To consider these issues is crucial because, if the two translations (SUV and Kisangu translation) are not similar enough, the new translation will likely be rejected since it is regarded as not being accurate. This can even happen to perfectly good translations: "Translations that are deemed accurate, natural, and clear could be rejected by the host community" (Maxey 2015:9). Andersen (1998), Nida (1988:301) and Wendland (2003:346) make similar statements.

## 5 The message of 1 Peter 3:19

Up to this point, the following issues have been addressed: Bible translation approaches in general and what style of translation the Sangu team are following, terminology for the spirit world in Kisangu, how Swahili Bibles have dealt with the issue of 'spirits' in 1 Peter 3:19 and also the issue of acceptability of a new Bible translation in a local language. The following section will help readers to appreciate a variety of issues that play into the understanding and interpretation of this passage.

In a book where Heiser addresses different challenging passages of the Bible, he recounts the following incident:

The pastor had been preaching a series of messages through 1 Peter. When it was time for 1 Peter 3:14-22, he sincerely announced, "We're going to skip this section since it's just too strange." He was right and wrong that day. As odd as it is, this passage is one of the most compelling in the New Testament - if you understand what it's saying (2015, locs. 1956-1959).

Something like this might be done in a church setting, but in a Bible translation project where such an issue is encountered, there is no way to erase those verses simply because they are not easily understood or not understood at all. This chapter will therefore explore what Peter most likely wanted to tell his audience.

### 5.1 Introduction

#### 5.1.1 *The passage*

As has been shown above, this passage of the Bible is and has been a challenging one to engage with and to explain its intended meaning to an audience. The challenge for the Sangu translation was mainly the word 'spirits' in verse 19, but in order to understand its meaning in the overall passage, verses 18 and 20a must also be put into focus so as to include the most immediate surrounding context.

#### 5.1.2 *The problems*

For the Sangu team it was important to find out who the 'spirits' are, in order to use the right term in their language. In addition to knowing who the 'spirits' are, other questions can be asked: When did Jesus go to where the spirits are? How did he 'go' there? Where or what is 'the prison'? What did he preach or proclaim?

What actually is addressed in this passage, which includes so many important points of the Christian faith? Did Peter by accident place something here that is of minor importance? Dalton is certain that what Peter is stating here *is* of importance: “The writer is concerned with ‘witness’ and ‘exhortation’, not with theological speculation. It follows that we have every right to expect in this text great central ideas of New Testament tradition, not theological side-issues” (1989:106).

### 5.1.3 *The perspectives*

In the scholarly world at least three major interpretation streams exist regarding the identity of the ‘spirits’ which then can be subdivided into other categories:

- Dead people
- Noah’s contemporaries
- Supernatural evil beings (‘fallen’ angels / demons)

Table 7 below gives a rough overview on different expansions of the main strands of interpretation. This table shall serve to illustrate the complexity of the issue. Further explanations of the different views will be given later on.

*Table 7: Main interpretations with variations*

Interpretation ‘to whom’	Actor ‘who’	When / how	What ‘message’	Where
Noah’s contemporaries	Spirit of Christ in Noah (pre-incarnate Christ)	Noah’s time (in spirit)	repentance	in Noah’s time
dead people (people from time of Noah; all OT people; all OT saints)	Christ not resurrected yet (his spirit)	disembodied (in spirit form), during ‘triduum mortis’, descent	good news	Hades
			salvation	Hell
Evil spirits (fallen angels, demons)	Christ resurrected (his whole being)	during ascent	victory	Prison

These interpretations spring from understanding the different parts of the verse in various ways. The major building blocks are: Does ἐν ᾧ καὶ (in which also...) refer to a certain ‘spiritual sphere’ back in 3:18 or is it to be understood instrumental meaning ‘by the Spirit’? Who could the ‘spirits’ be?

In chapter 5.4 more explanations are given concerning the different views, bearing in mind Boring's correct statement about the complexity of the matter: "The combinations of the variables listed [...] produce a large number of possible interpretations. Even to list them all, identified with their major proponents, is a labyrinthine project requiring many categories, subcategories, and cross-references [...]" (1999:136). Realizing that for this thesis, overly detailed explanations are not possible, recommendations are made below on where to obtain such information.

Comprehensive overviews on different interpretations can be found in various articles and books dealing with the meaning of 1 Peter 3:19. Helpful overviews are given by Dalton (1989:27ff), Grudem (1988:211ff), Pierce (2009:2ff) and Himes (2017, chap. 1PE 3:19-22).

#### **5.1.4 The plan**

The remainder of this chapter will deal with the following:

- The context of the letter of 1 Peter with general background information.
- A translation of 1 Peter 3:18-20a will be given and text critical issues will be addressed.
- The section on 'meaning for the original readers' (5.3.2) will lead exegetically through the text paying attention to challenging words and concepts.
- Then the significance for today's reader will be pondered.
- In the section on 'interpretations' (0) the three strands of interpretation, from the time of the early church into modern scholarship, will be compared through its literature, and each version will be briefly evaluated, paying attention to the immediate and broader context (whole letter).

## 5.2 Context of 1 Peter

### 5.2.1 General background: author, date and audience

In scholarly literature, there is a broad variety of different opinions available on questions of authorship, dating, audience and the overall genre of the letter. A lengthy treatment of these opinions, although important, falls outside of the scope of this work, and therefore these issues will be dealt with only briefly.

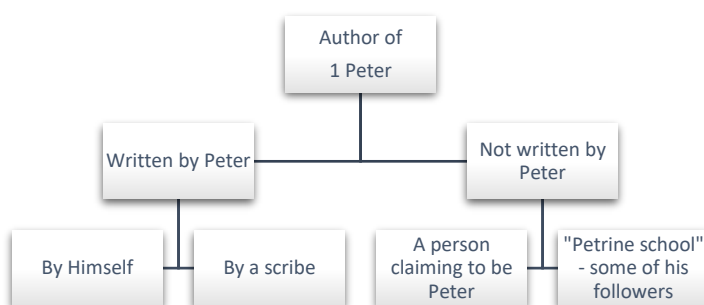
#### 5.2.1.1 Author

The author of the epistle introduces himself as Peter, apostle of Jesus Christ (1:1). That statement will be what this study takes as the base for further thoughts. Petrine authorship is what the church believed from its earliest days on, and it was not until much later that scholars started to question Peter's authorship. Though some questions arise regarding its originality, still no completely convincing facts have been given to believe otherwise (see Grudem 1988:33-34).

Pierce, who has also written on the identity of the 'spirits' states rightly that: "The authorship debate is not itself vital for understanding the identity of the Petrine imprisoned spirits, [...]" (2009:177). Even so, some areas of discussion are mentioned below.

As can be seen in Figure 18 below, the authorship discussion can be divided into two major sections, each being then divided into two again.

Figure 18: Four views of the authorship of 1 Peter



##### 5.2.1.1.1 Factors pointing to Peter as author

- The author mentions his name and function as 'Peter, apostle of Jesus Christ' in 1:1.

- In 5:1 the author calls himself a ‘witness of the sufferings of Christ’, which seems to be talking about an eyewitness of Jesus.
- Possibly 2 Peter 3:1 refers to Peter’s first letter.
- Early Christian leaders accepted Peter as the author (see DeSilva 2004:844 for further details).

#### 5.2.1.1.2 Factors brought forward against the authorship of Peter

- Style of Greek - The high quality of the style of Greek used. How could Peter, a Galilean fisherman, have written using such good Greek? *Serious doubts on this point:* First – if Peter’s Greek was too poor, he could have asked a scribe, e.g., Silvanus (5:12) to come alongside him in the composition of the letter. Second – why does it seem impossible for a Semitic speaker, whose second language was Greek (having been immersed in the Scriptures and related subjects for a few decades), to write this text (see Jobes 2005:7-8; Wright and Bird 2019:759)?
- Peter was a missionary with a main focus on Jews (Jewish Christians) – (see GAL 2:7-9).
- Use of the LXX – why would a Hebrew speaking Jew use a Greek translation of the Old Testament?
- 1 Peter seemingly reflects a time of great official persecution for the church which did not occur during the apostle Peter’s life.
- Christianity could not yet have spread to such faraway places (the provinces mentioned by Peter in 1:1).

This thesis opts for the view that Peter is the original author who might have taken the help of a secretary.

#### 5.2.1.2 Date

The question of the date of writing is interwoven with the question of authorship. If the apostle Peter is accepted as author, then a date in the early 60s is assumed (before his death in about 65-66 AD, see Burge, Green, and Cohick 2009:402).

For scholars who do not accept Peter as author, usually a later time of writing is assumed, namely, the later first century - between 70-95 AD (96 AD being the latest if the letter was known by Clement, see Davids 1990:9).

#### 5.2.1.2.1 Dating with respect to persecution

Some interpreters see the persecution described in 1 Peter possibly occurring at an earlier date. DeSilva, weighing both options, writes about the earlier option: “The situation of the addressees would suit a pre-65 date since the kind of harassment they endured marked unbelievers’ responses from the beginning” (2004:847).

The persecution referred to includes mostly verbal actions (slander, false accusations, social ostracism; e.g., 1:6; 2:12; 3:16; 4:12, 16) and possibly some physical attacks (4:1) in order to pressurise the Christians back into their old way of life (see Wright and Bird 2019:762). Jobs comments correctly: “While these problems would also be present in times of martyrdom, the situation in 1 Peter appears to reflect a time when the threat had not yet escalated to that point” (2005:9).

Others, who favour a later date of writing, see the need for a longer time span for a conflict like the one described to develop between believers and non-believers: “[S]ufficient time must be allowed for the social conflict between Jesus-followers and their neighbors mentioned in 1 Peter to have developed generally throughout these Roman provinces” (Elliott 2007:5). Elliott, favouring a time of writing not earlier than 70 or even 75 AD, estimates about ten years for such a conflict to develop (see 2007:6).

However, Elliott’s stand has several weaknesses. When hearing stories about people of major religions who become Christians, it usually does not take that long to experience at least some sort of rejection or even worse. But even the Bible itself shows how rapidly aggression against the first Christians developed. Paul himself (even though being from a Jewish and not a pagan background) reports how he persecuted the church in order to destroy it already early on (GAL 1:13).

#### 5.2.1.2.2 Dating with respect to the provinces mentioned

Another factor for determining the approximate date of writing, favouring an earlier date, could be the names of the provinces mentioned in 1:1. The list contains the following: Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia.

Gundry claims that: “After A.D. 63 Pontus, located in northern Asia Minor, ceased to exist as a client kingdom of Rome. Yet Peter lists Pontus first in the letter’s address” (2012:523).

In the Lexham Bible Dictionary, Odor gives further details on the same matter, with a slightly different date: “Pontus remained a client kingdom (Appian, *Mithridatic Wars* 121) until AD 62, when Nero transferred it to the province of Galatia, which was under Rome’s direct rule (Suetonius, *Nero* 18)” (2016, sec. Pontus).

The fact that Pontus is mentioned on its own as an independent political entity seems to point to an earlier date still during Peter’s lifetime.

### 5.2.1.3 Place of writing

Peter calls the place where he is writing from ‘Babylon’ (5:13). Himes explains how this name is mostly understood: “The majority of scholars, regardless of theological persuasion, see this as a veiled reference to Rome” (2017, sec. Location).

Two other locations that could be options for ‘Babylon’ are Babylon in Mesopotamia or Babylon in Egypt. Elliot (2000:132) comments on these two options, stating that Babylon in Mesopotamia was virtually desolate at the time of writing and that the Egyptian Babylon was a Roman military garrison.

Jobes remarks that it could also have been some other place that Peter did not want to state openly. She still sees Rome as being a valid option: “A more personal reason may have involved Peter’s desire to avoid calling attention to his actual location, if Rome was in fact the ‘other place’ to which he fled after being arrested in Jerusalem and narrowly escaping execution” (2005:14).

### 5.2.1.4 Audience

The audience of the letter were clearly Christians, a mixture of believing Jews and Gentiles. The bigger question is whether Peter was mainly addressing Jewish believers (see Fruchtenbaum 2005:317) or mainly Gentile believers (see Elliott 2007:16).

In the beginning of the letter, one might think that mostly Jewish Christians were addressed since Peter talks about “*elect exiles of the Dispersion*” (1:1) who are put in contrast with the Gentiles (2:12 - “*Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honourable*”). But then in 4:3 Peter talks about their former lifestyle (“*living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry*”), which does not match the way Jews were supposed to live. Especially the reference

in 1:18, “*the futile ways inherited from your fathers*”, does not seem to indicate Jewish heritage. Lastly, in 2:10 they are labelled as formerly not having been “*a people, but now you are God’s people*”. This can hardly be said about the Jews, God’s chosen nation.

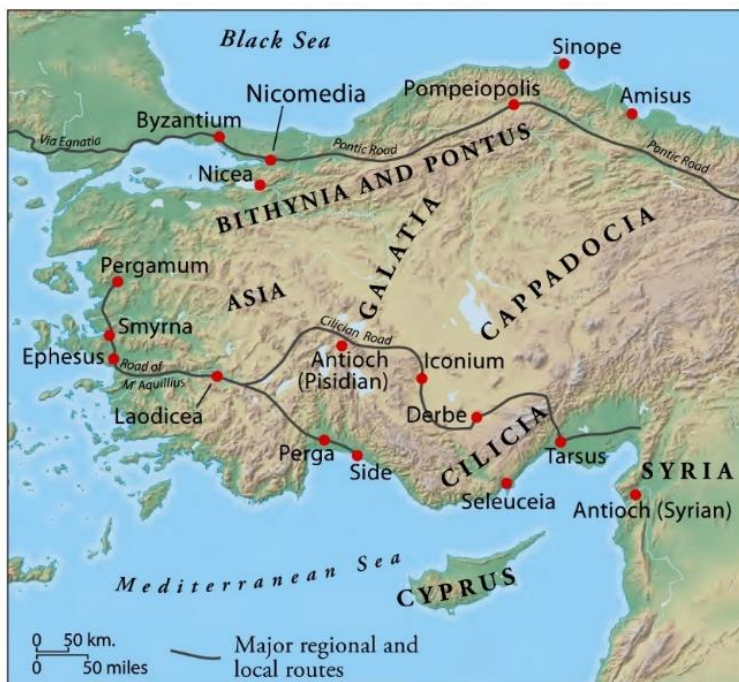
How then can the ‘Jewish labels’ be explained? DeSilva gives helpful insight:

Each one of these labels had been used to distinguish ethnic Israel from all other people groups: chosen, as opposed to not selected by God; a collective priesthood, thus set apart for a special level of interaction with the deity; a holy nation, as opposed to the profane nations that had not been so privileged; a special possession for God among the nations. Now they are applied to the Christian body of Jews and Gentiles to the same end, emphasizing their difference from the people around them and making that difference something to value positively and to preserve (2004:850).

What DeSilva explains makes even more sense when looking at the question for which purpose Peter wrote this letter (see 5.2.2.3).

Where did Peter’s audience live? The regions addressed are the following Roman provinces: Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia (see **Error! Reference source not found.** below). The way those are listed (1:1) could indicate what route the letter bearer might have travelled.

Figure 19: Regions of the addressees (Burge 2009:398)



How and when did the Gospel spread into the regions mentioned? We do not know when those churches started and who went there to preach. A good possibility is that people who became Christians at Pentecost (ACT 2:9) could have evangelized their neighbours after their trip to Jerusalem (see also Arnold 2002:121).

Jobes sees colonization as another option for the spreading of the Gospel in the provinces mentioned: “[...] it was also not uncommon for the emperor or senate to deport a group viewed to be troublemakers in Rome to colonize a newly acquired territory in some remote area of the empire [...]” (2005:30). And, to be sure, those Christians were troublemakers! Jobes continues later with a description of possible offences against the Roman order during the reign of Caesar Claudius (41-54 AD), who also had ordered people like Aquila and Priscilla to leave Rome (see ACT 18:2):

Evangelistic Christians, whether of Jewish or of Gentile origin, could be accused of violating all three points of Claudius’s policy on religious tolerance: disturbing the public peace, possibly by their street preaching (as Paul seemed to do wherever he went); offending accepted morals (biblical morals being so different from those accepted by pagan society); and engaging in converting native Romans (which was the hallmark of first-century Christianity, as attested by the explosion of the church in those early decades) (2005:33).

### **5.2.1.5 Summary of general background questions**

After the explanations given above, the overview in Table 8 below will help readers to see at a glance what presuppositions this thesis is working from:

*Table 8: Summary overview on general background*

Author	Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ
Date	in early 60 AD
Place of writing	probably Rome
Audience	Christians, a mixture of Jewish and Gentile believers
Location of the addressees	Roman provinces: Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia (most of modern Turkey)

## **5.2.2 Historical context: occasion, milieu and purpose**

### **5.2.2.1 Occasion**

There is no direct reason verbally mentioned by Peter in the letter to indicate why he is writing to his audience. Although it becomes clear early on that he wants to

strengthen a church that is going through suffering (1:6-7), there is no specific event mentioned which could have triggered Peter's desire to write to them.

Some see the mentioning of "*a fiery trial*" (4:12) as possibly pointing towards Nero and his actions against the Christians.

### **5.2.2.2 Milieu - social context and worldview**

The social context is strongly interwoven with the worldview of the regions of the addressees. It was not only the worldview of their cultural background that mattered, but it was most important to value what Rome dictated and legislated. Apart from the importance of worshipping the emperor, it was also very important to worship the many gods who were seen as responsible for the wellbeing of a town or city.

The problem the Christians were facing was that the Bible taught them that only the God of Scripture was worthy of worship and no one else. So they lived differently and broke the standard norms of worship, of how someone had to behave towards the gods and the emperor. Wright comments on this problem: "[...] in the ancient world those who abstained from worshipping the local gods were suspected of wishing trouble upon their city or region" (2019:762).

Given the background to the challenges these Christians were facing, the perspective of their pagan opponents at who's hands they suffered is of no great surprise. The Christian faith and doctrines were disrupting to the system. Bad luck and punishment by the gods or the divine emperor might be the result awaiting them if they tolerated Christian beliefs.

The only way to get back to normal was to pressurise Christians to leave their faith and make them return to what they believed before. Elliott explains well:

[...] aliens and strangers were under constant suspicion of being disloyal to the local communities and their gods and being up to no good. Unrelenting pressure was brought upon these foreigners to conform and assimilate to 'acceptable' local standards of 'proper' behavior and loyalty (2007:18-19).

Another issue is also important for the understanding of this letter. It is the idea of what lies behind what people can see with their eyes. That is the unseen parallel world with gods and other spirit beings, who are believed to exist and to influence matters in the visible world. Marshall elaborates:

The early Christians also lived in a society that really believed in the existence of spiritual powers, both good and evil. Obviously the New Testament writers shared this belief. It was entirely natural, therefore, for Peter to perceive the persecution of Christians as motivated not merely by the malice of pagan masters, neighbors and rulers but by sinister demonic forces behind them (1991, chap. 3:18-22).

### **5.2.2.3 Purpose**

Along with teachings on different subjects, the major purpose of this letter is the encouragement of a suffering minority of Christians living in hostile surroundings (see also Grudem 1988:40; DeSilva 2004:843). Peter clearly states this purpose in 5:12b (NLT07): *“My purpose in writing is to encourage you and assure you that what you are experiencing is truly part of God’s grace for you. Stand firm in this grace.”*

This is therefore not a letter on how to defend the faith or how to engage in theological debate (see Elliott 2007:40), but rather, it reminds its readers of who they already are. Himes summarizes: “[...] 1 Peter was written to churches struggling under harsh external pressure to remind them of who they are in Jesus Christ and how they should live” (2017, chap. Message).

### **5.2.3 Theological issues: themes and motifs**

Even though Peter includes different theological matters, he is primarily very practical. Adeyemo notes: “Peter is a practical theologian and constantly relates his theology to the duties of the Christian life. While his major themes are salvation and grace, he also addresses issues of Christian relationships” (2006:1543).

Three main strands of these themes will be discussed below:

- God – His personality and work (Trinitarian working unity)
- Christians – who they are and what gives them strength in their sufferings (unity with God and among themselves)
- The real enemy – cosmic warfare

These theological themes are presented by Peter in order to give the Christians a firm foundation to enable them to live through their struggles. Often, he also gives concrete advice on how to apply those themes in everyday life.

### 5.2.3.1 God – His personality and work (Trinitarian working unity)

Apart from the unity that the Christians need to have among themselves and with God, the triune unity that God has within himself is shown already in 1:1-2b (NLT07):

- “**God the Father** knew you and chose you long ago”
- “[...] his **Spirit** has made you holy”
- “[you] have been cleansed by the blood of **Jesus Christ**”

All three members of the Trinity work together as a team, each one playing different parts in God’s history with humanity. The characteristic work of each person of the Trinity appears throughout the whole book. A strong emphasis is placed on the redeeming work of Christ on the cross (salvation and grace) whose victory was made visible through his bodily resurrection. The climax of this theme shows the glorified Christ as being “seated in the place of honor next to God” (NLT07), “with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him” (3:22, ESV).

Jobes explains Jesus’ victory and vindication appropriately: “Christ’s resurrection and ascension find a central role in Peter’s Christology as the proclamation of victory over all the powers that oppose God [...]. In Christ’s resurrection the endgame has been played” (2005:47).

### 5.2.3.2 Christians – their identity, unity and place in society

A central theme throughout the epistle is ‘suffering’. Himes explains this well: “[...] 1 Peter does not paint a naive picture of the Christian life, full of fun and flowers. To the contrary, some sort of suffering – whether official persecution or simply social pressure – is considered normative (1 Pet 4:12)” (2017; chap. Themes).

Many instructions are given on how to live and behave in this suffering. Peter’s aim is to encourage this persecuted Christian minority. In order to show Christians that suffering for Christ is worthwhile, Peter explains their identity and thereby strengthens it. McKnight summarizes, “Peter intends his readers to understand who they are before God so that they can be who they are in society” (1996:36).

#### 5.2.3.2.1 Chosen people, special nation, household of God

Jobes calls the controlling concept of God ‘divine fatherhood’. “God is first introduced as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (1:3). God has become the Father of Christians

by virtue of the new birth generated by his imperishable seed, which is his living and enduring word (1:3; 1:23)” (2005:46).

The Christians, having the eternal God as their Father (1:17) are:

- elected (1:1-2), a race chosen by God (2:9), God’s people (2:10)
- born again to a living hope (1:3)
- heirs of an imperishable inheritance (1:4)
- being guarded by God’s power (1:5)
- ransomed with the precious blood of Christ (1:18-19)
- a spiritual house for God (2:4-5) with Christ as the cornerstone, household of God (2:17)
- a holy, royal priesthood (2:5, 9)
- a holy nation (2:9)

Alongside the unity and family ties to God, Christians also are a family with a ‘brotherhood’ in the whole world (5:9). They can experience strength in unity – with God and each other (3:8; 4:8).

#### 5.2.3.2.2 Christians as aliens, foreigners

The Christians are strangers, exiles, foreigners (1:1). These references possibly have two meanings. On the one hand, they are foreigners because the area they live in is not their homeland, and on the other hand, they are strangers in society because of being followers of Christ. Their homeland is not this perishing world, but the eternal home in the heavenly realm with God (5:10).

While the Christians could be seen by outsiders as the losers in history, Peter compares them throughout the book with their oppressors (see Table 9 below) in order to show them how blessed they are. Sometimes a description of one group is given without an explicit counterpart mentioned (which is shown in square brackets).

Table 9: Persecutors and Christians - a comparison

<b>They (2:8) – the persecutors</b>	<b>You (2:7) – the persecuted</b>
those who do not believe (2:7) and disobey the word (2:8)	those who believe (2:7)
<i>[born to die]</i>	born for eternity (1:23), salvation (1:5)
shame (2:6)	honour (2:6-7)
they stumble (2:8)	<i>[standing on firm ground]</i>

<i>[not part of God's house, community]</i>	you are a spiritual house (2:5), a chosen race, royal priesthood, holy nation
not a people (2:10)	God's people (2:9-10) for his own possession
foolish people (2:15)	honourable people with good deeds (2:12)
darkness (2:9)	light (2:9)
<i>[slaves, servants of Satan]</i>	free people and servants of God (2:16)
<i>[still 'sick' with sin]</i>	you have been healed (2:24)
like straying sheep (2:25)	like returned sheep under the care of the Shepherd (2:25)
evildoers (3:12)	righteous (3:12) – saved (4:18)
<i>[not being insulted, but also not blessed]</i>	suffering and being insulted, but blessed (3:14; 4:14)
slander, revile (3:16), malign (4:4)	good behaviour (3:16)
follow human passions (4:2-3), such as: living in sensuality and passions, orgies, drinking parties, drunkenness and lawless idolatry	doing the will of God (4:2)

It becomes clear how much more spiritual wealth the Christians have and how blessed they are, especially when one also sees the lasting effects their union with Jesus has, as will be shown below.

#### 5.2.3.2.3 Eschatology – time vs. eternity – the 'now' vs. the 'future'

Not everything in this letter sounds positive and encouraging, but it shows clearly two very different realities: the visible perishable side (the 'now') and the often hidden eternal reality (the 'future' or the 'not yet').

Whereas the persecutors of the Christians only live for the 'here and now', the Christians have a secure hope for the future. Throughout the letter, both aspects are being placed vis-à-vis each other and give insight with regard to the blessings of being a Christian even though being persecuted. Christians are encouraged to follow the example of their Lord Jesus who also suffered (e.g., 2:21; 3:17-18; 4:1) and even died.

Some aspects of the two 'realities' are shown and compared below (Table 10), based on two other important words in the epistle, namely 'perishable' and 'imperishable':

Table 10: Overview of perishable vs. imperishable

<b>perishable</b>	<b>imperishable</b>
strangers, exiles, foreigners	elected, citizenship of heaven
'gold that perishes' (1:7)	faith (1:7), a living hope (1:3)

not ransomed with gold and silver (1:18)	ransomed with the precious blood of Christ (1:19)
death – mortal body	resurrection (1:3) – eternal body
temporary suffering – ‘for a little while’ (1:6; 5:10)	eternal inheritance – in heaven (1:4)
being shamed (2:12; 3:9,16; 4:16)	eternal glory in Christ (5:10)
In all of it – “the true grace of God” (5:12) – is always there! It accompanies the Christian in life and death.	

Apart from showing what perishes and what will last, Peter strongly encourages Christians to keep the future reality in mind. He wants them to understand this because “[...] what one believes about the future will largely shape how one will live today” (Jobes 2005:49).

What does this future hope promise? An unfading inheritance – in heaven (1:4); a salvation revealed – in the last time (1:5); glory, honour and grace – at the revelation of Christ (1:7, 13) and, God glorified at the day of visitation (2:12; 4:13; 5:1).

#### 5.2.3.2.4 Evangelism – The Gospel translated and lived by people transformed by God

Peter’s epistle is mainly written to encourage the suffering church. But he also explains how Christians should live in society. Because Christianity was seen as a threat to society at large, Peter does not push an aggressive evangelistic lifestyle with much preaching and proselytizing. Rather, he often mentions that the Christians should humbly *live out* the eternal truths (2:12, 15; 3:15-16) so that their good deeds will lead the people around them to *ask* about the hope they have (3:14-16).

#### 5.2.3.3 The real enemy – Cosmic warfare

Even though the whole book of 1 Peter explains challenges inflicted by enemies, the chief enemy is only mentioned once in 5:8: “*Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour*” (NLT07).

Satan’s ‘helpers’, such as angels (demons), authorities, and powers have been subjected to Christ (3:22), and subsequently this victory carries enormous encouragement for the persecuted Christians.

Their earthly, human persecutors were not the real enemies, but instead, the forces behind them (see EPH 6:12, see also Figure 20 below). Osborne summarizes the above mentioned nicely:

In terms of cosmic warfare, Peter clearly considered there to be demonic powers behind the persecutors (5:8-9); the Christians were embattled not merely by human opponents but by the devil who wanted to ‘devour’ them. Christ had won the victory (3:19), proclaiming the defeat of these demonic forces after his resurrection. Believers participate in that victory by placing themselves under ‘the mighty power of God’ (5:6) and by standing firm and strong in their faith (5:9) (2011:136).

Figure 20: Christ the victor is in control

War in the invisible realm					
‘War’ in the visible world					
God	Jesus Christ	Believers	<i>Unbelievers</i>	<i>Evil spirits</i>	<i>Satan</i>
<b>Victors</b>			<i>Losers</i>		
<b>Christ is Lord over all!</b>					

There is nothing outside Christ’s control in the spiritual war in which Christians are engaged (see also Abernathy 2001; Wright 2011:82). Even though the unbelievers fight a ‘war’ against Christians which involves much suffering, Peter encourages them to cling onto the eternal reality that will one day be revealed.

#### 5.2.4 Literary structure: structure and argument

In this section the structure of the epistle will be looked at together with questions about genre, unity, structural devices and a brief discourse analysis to clarify the boundaries of the text under discussion.

##### 5.2.4.1 Genre

The genre of 1 Peter is that of a letter (see also Himes 2017) as indicated by the following markers (see Elliott 2007:4): Salutation (1:1-2), communication proper (1:3-5:11) and final greetings (5:12-14). Boring puts it simply as, “1 Peter is a real letter to real churches” (1999:38).

Some scholars suspect that Peter’s letter is a composite writing comprised of some liturgy or a baptismal homily plus his own words. Elliott calls those speculations “imaginative but unsupported” (2007:7) as there is no manuscript evidence to support such claims. Grudem comments further: “The thesis that 1 Peter was originally a liturgy or perhaps a sermon at a baptism remains unconvincing and provides an unsatisfactory setting for the composition of the letter” (1988:42-43).

#### 5.2.4.2 Unity – coherence of the letter

Based on the speculation of a composite style, some do not see this letter as a unity. Against these presuppositions, Silva and Tenney state that: “Today [...] most scholars acknowledge the basic unity of the document; in particular, several studies in rhetorical analysis have highlighted the coherence of the letter as a whole” (2009:824). Starwalt in his doctoral dissertation “A discourse analysis of 1 Peter” comes to the following conclusion: “The present text analysis of 1 Peter demonstrates that the text is a coherent hortatory letter” (2005:15).

#### 5.2.4.3 Structural overview of 1 Peter

Achtemeier stresses the importance of context for getting to the meaning of 1 Peter 3:18-20: “[...] one’s understanding of the point of the passage will depend in large part on how one resolves those problems of context and meaning” (1996:244).

Since context seems to play a crucial role for understanding, the whole structure of 1 Peter will now be presented. At first the macrostructure will be shown and then the finer units together with structural devices used.

The three main units of the epistle (opening, body and closing) are shown in Table 11 below:

Table 11: Macrostructure of 1 Peter

<b>THEME: Stand firm in the faith – Christ the victor is with you</b>	
<b>MACROSTRUCTURE</b>	<b>CONTENTS</b>
opening	1:1-2 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. Blessings!
BODY	1:3-5:11 I am giving you a firm foundation for who you are in Christ (identity). You are experiencing trials, so I show you how to behave to bring God glory. It is worth suffering for Christ! In all SUFFERING – you are united with God, stay unified with each other.
closing	5:12-14 Silvanus helped me with this letter. Greetings from all of us here to you all. Blessings!

In this overview it becomes clear that the verse under discussion is part of the ‘BODY section’ of the letter.

To get a better and more detailed overview, the whole letter will now be shown with its smaller sections. This is a challenging task since it depends on how the researcher goes about it. Among the commentators, many very different overviews have been produced which reveals the challenge of determining the structure of Peter’s letter. Starwalt comments on this challenge as follows: “[...] an examination of the outlines presented in [...] commentaries on 1 Peter reveals considerable diversity in attempts to lay out the structure” (2005:15).

The base for the divisions shown below (Table 12) was taken from the section headings of the *Neue Genfer Übersetzung* (2009) which have been slightly adjusted for this thesis.

The theme of ‘unity’ that runs through the epistle is shown in its own column – showing the different aspects stressed about unity.

Table 12: Sections in 1 Peter

Section	Section headings	Strength through <b>UNITY</b>
<b>1:1-2 Opening</b>	Sender, recipients, blessing	Unity with God – all planned
<b>1:3 – 5:11 BODY</b>		
1:3-12	A new life; a secure, well-founded hope	Unity with God – made possible
1:13-2:3	A life corresponding to God’s holiness	Unity with God – He works in us
2:4-10	Jesus Christ, the cornerstone, is your firm foundation	Unity with Jesus and believers
2:11-12	Free to do good – lead an exemplary life	
2:13-17	Christians towards the government	
2:18-25	Slaves towards masters (21b-25 Christ’s example)	United with the Shepherd (25)
3:1-5	Wives towards husbands	
3:7	Husbands towards wives	
3:8-12	<b>ALL OF YOU...</b> Do not repay evil with evil	Unity among believers
3:13-17	Suffering for doing good	
3:18-22	Christ and his example – the reason for our hope	United with the victor – in baptism
4:1-6	New life – changed behaviour	United with Christ in his sufferings
4:7-11	Use God’s gifts wisely	Unity with believers and God

4:12-19	Trials – an honour to participate in Christ’s sufferings!	United with Christ – in his sufferings, glorification (honour)
5:1-4	Elders	Unity among believers
5:5a	Younger ones to elders	
5:5b-11	<b>ALL OF YOU...</b> Final instructions for the church	Unity with believers and God
<b>5:12-14</b> <b>Closing</b>	Greetings and blessing	Unity in the worldwide brotherhood

When considering the structural overview of this letter, a few points have to be mentioned about the passage of 3:18-22. The addressees are again all readers of the letter (3:8) and not a specific group as in 2:18-3:7 (i.e., slaves, wives and husbands). Again in 3:8-12, the theme of good and evil or of suffering comes into focus. Some commentators see 3:12 as ending a longer section and starting with a new one (e.g., Dalton 1989). Others see 3:8 starting a longer train of thought, as indicated by the way all readers are again addressed (Achtemeier and Epp 1996, Himes 2017, Grudem 1988).

Wherever the break might be placed, it becomes clear that after the practical advice in 3:8-9 and a general statement on the good and the evil in 3:10-12, from 3:13 onwards Peter is again giving general advice for Christian living under trying circumstances. Dalton (1989:103), who interprets the text with a longer section starting at 3:13 that goes up to 5:11, places the following title on it: “The Christian and persecution”. The first sub-section is then 3:13-4:11, called “Persecution viewed in detachment”. He then divides this part into 3:13-17 and 3:18-22, noting in the first part the Christian’s confidence in persecution and in the latter portion the basis of that confidence. That sub-section is then again divided into two with the first showing the solid foundation of the Christian’s confidence in persecution, namely “Christ’s victory over evil” (3:18-22) and how Christians share in this victory (4:1-6). For Dalton, 3:18 clearly starts a new train of thought which is obviously still connected to the preceding verses, with 3:17 being interpreted as a summary verse transitioning to the following verses.

In my opinion, it is not only that Christians are sharing in Jesus’ victory from 4:1-6 onwards, but this subject is already hinted at in 3:21 together with the theme of baptism, where the believers show and proclaim their unity with the Saviour (see also Heiser 2017, loc. 2412). Being united together through Jesus, all believers have

therefore themselves been united with Christ by faith into one 'body' (see GAL 3:27-28).

#### **5.2.4.4 Structural use for the argument of 3:18-22**

Different scholars (e.g., Abernathy 2001, Wendland 2008 and Keener 1993) see Peter using a stylistic device called 'chiasmus' in this section. In this structure, one idea is first presented and then again later in reversed order: A-B-B'-A'. Abernathy summarizes Peter's use of a chiastic structure in this section:

He uses antithetical contrasts in grammatical and rhetorical balance to express the wonder of the incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension, wherein the spiritual realm invaded the earthly realm, spirit triumphed over flesh, and life prevailed over death (2001, chap. 1PE 3:18-22).

For the identity of the 'spirits', Combrink sees that the structure of the passage could help clarify the issue:

[...] the question may be asked whether the chiastic structure [...] cannot aid our interpretation of e.g. the spirits in prison. In the light of the parallelism between col. 66 [3:19] and 69 [3:22], it can be asked whether the disobedient spirits in prison cannot be related to the angels and powers subjected to Him (1975:45).

Wendland and Keener also see chiastic structure applied in this pericope. Wendland sees rather larger sections (with 1-2 verses each) as the building blocks. He shows an A-B-B'-A' structure with two umbrella themes: 'Christological events' and 'deliverance through water'. The display below (Figure 21, after Wendland 2008:315) follows his idea but it has been slightly adjusted for the purposes of this thesis:

Figure 21: Wendland's display of chiastic structure (3:18-22)

A	<sup>18</sup> For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous suffered for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, <sup>19</sup> in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison,	Deliverance through water (20-21b)	Christological events (18-19; 21c-22)
B	<sup>20</sup> because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water.		
B'	<sup>21</sup> Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience,		
A'	<sup>21c</sup> through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, <sup>22</sup> who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.		

Keener's display (Figure 22 below) has more detailed nuances. He interprets 3:13-22 as being a section in his structural overview of 1 Peter starting with a chiastic structure at 3:16 going into 4:5 (1993, chap. 1PE 3:17):

Figure 22: Keener's display of chiastic structure (3:16-4:5)

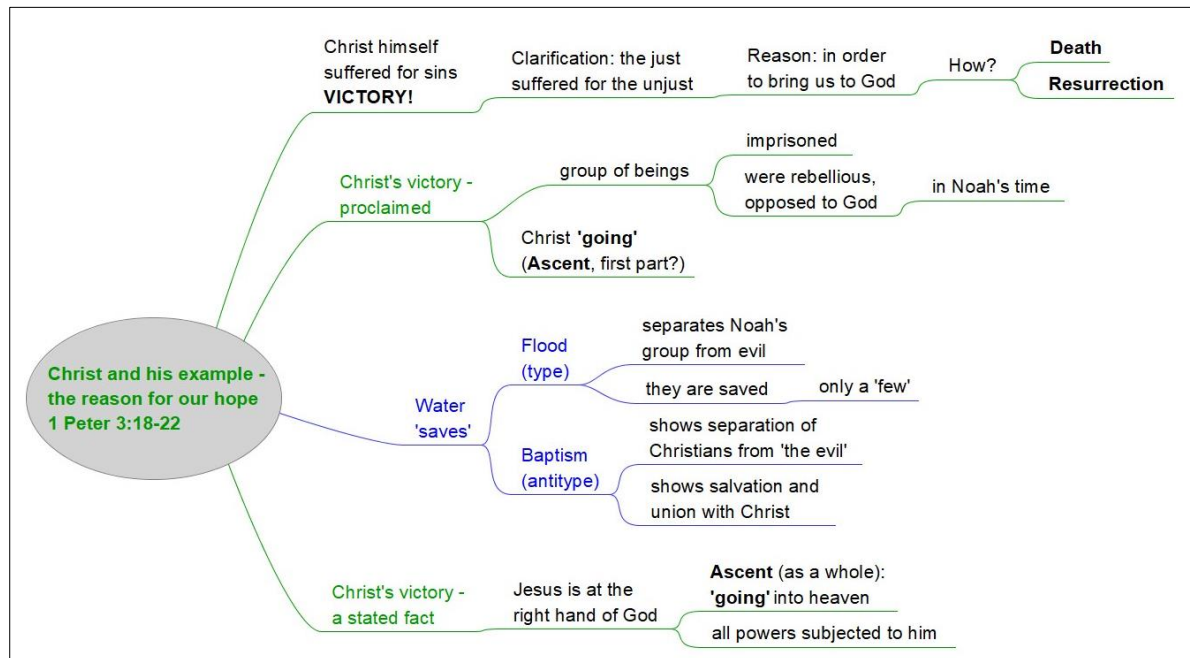
A	Your slanderers will be ashamed (3:16)
B	Suffer though innocent, in God's will (3:17)
C	For Christ suffered for the unjust (3:18)
D	<i>He triumphed over hostile spirits (3:19)</i>
E	Noah was saved through water (3:20)
E'	You are saved through water (3:21)
D'	<i>Christ triumphed over hostile spirits (3:22)</i>
C'	For Christ suffered (4:1a)
B'	Suffer in God's will (4:1b-2)
A'	Your slanderers will be ashamed (4:3-5)

Abernathy has an even more detailed structure that he sees in 3:18-22. For the sake of space his display has been placed in Appendix D.

All three structural displays see 3:19-20 as being paralleled by 3:22 which would then lead to the conclusion of interpreting the 'spirits' as 'hostile spirits' (i.e. 'evil supernatural beings').

When looking at the thematic structure in **Error! Reference source not found.** below, it helps to use Wendland's approach by splitting off 3:18 and using it as an introductory statement into this section. This statement shows how Jesus won the victory through

Figure 23: Thematic structuring of 3:18-22



his death and resurrection.

The victor proclaims his victory which is clearly stated in 3:22 that he has conquered all evil powers. Through faith in Christ the believers are united with the victor which they also visually proclaim in the act of baptism.

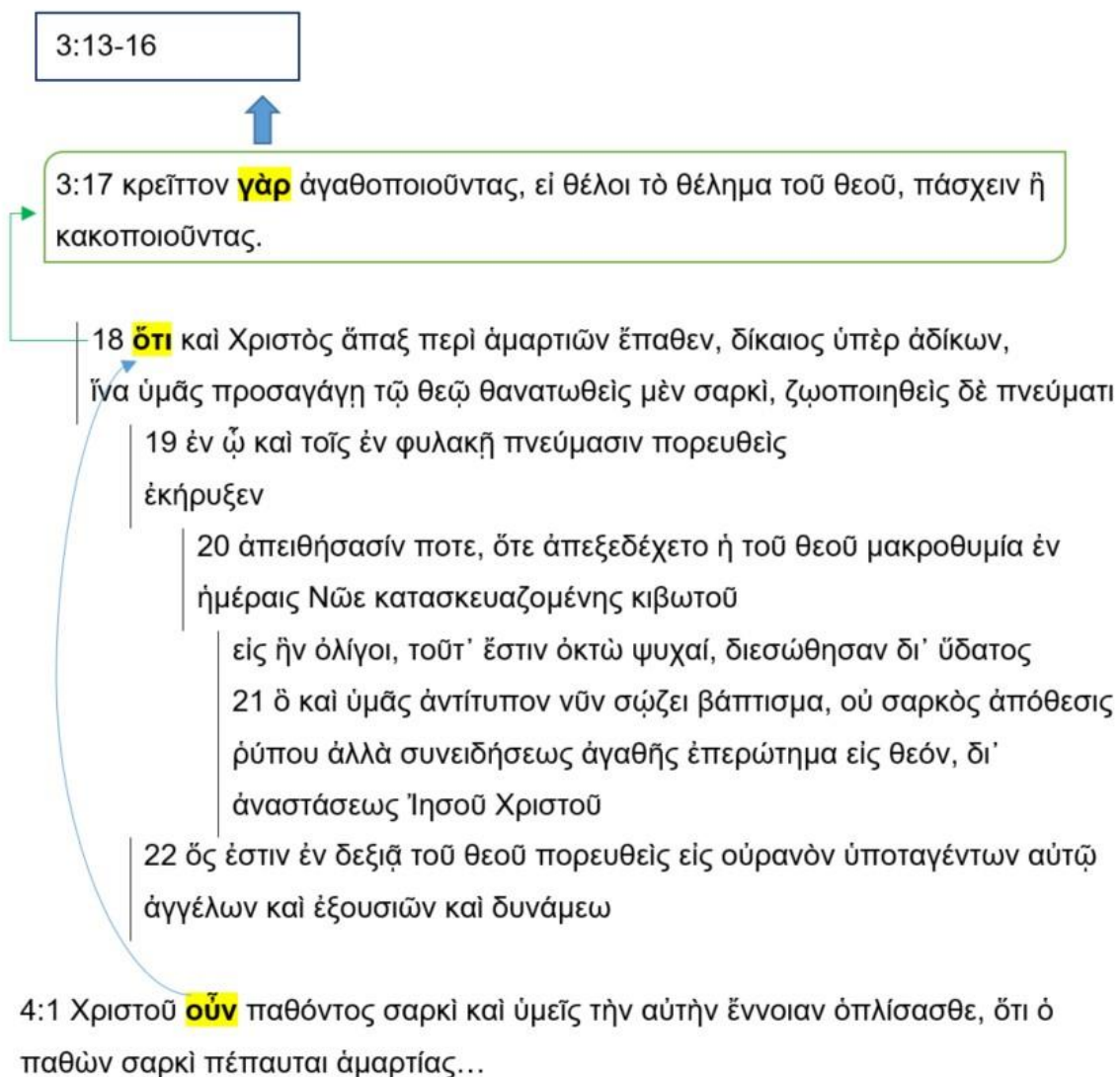
#### 5.2.4.5 Discourse analysis

The question now is whether 1 Peter 3:18-22 may be seen as a pericope on its own or as part of a larger structure. There is a switch in the addressees earlier in 3:8 where Peter starts addressing all believers again. From there onwards the themes of good and evil are developed and, with several imperatives, believers are exhorted how to behave.

At 3:13 there is again a break with a rhetorical question: “Now who is there to harm you...”, which is then followed by further imperatives on how to live in such an environment of suffering.

3:17 can be seen as a summary of what has been explained in 3:13-16 (or even 3:8-16). The subordinate section of 3:18 (introduced by ὅτι) continues to the end of the chapter. 3:17 could also be seen as a general statement with 3:18 specifically applied to the example of Jesus. Some see 3:17 as summarizing 3:8-16 and starting a new section with the example of Christ. Some also see 3:17 working like hinge linking 3:13-16 to 3:18-22 (see Figure 24 below).

Figure 24: Display of discourse units (from 3:13-4:1)



#### 5.2.4.5.1 The use of the connectors γὰρ, ὅτι and οὖν

From 3:17-4:1, three different connectors are used that will be explained briefly in order to show their function in the flow of the text.

The first connector is **γάρ**: Runge explains the function of γάρ (in v. 17) as signalling close continuity with the preceding verse(s) (2010:52). Thus, there is no break since the main theme is continued in what follows. He also states that: “Γάρ introduces explanatory material that strengthens or supports what precedes” (2010:54).

Starting with 3:17, therefore, some additional explanatory material is presented. As mentioned above, 3:17 can be seen as a general statement about suffering unjustly and how this is better than suffering because one deserves it.

The second connector is **ὅτι**: In 3:18 a specific example is presented in a subordinate section, both strengthening 3:17 and elaborating on it. Starwalt explains about ὅτι: “V. 18 opens with the conjunction *because*, ὅτι, signalling that the following material gives a reason based on an evident fact (see Louw and Nida 1988:781 for this use of ὅτι)” (2005:125).

The third connector is **οὖν**: Levinsohn explains that in almost every NT letter οὖν is used resumptively: “Typically, it occurs after strengthening material associated with γάρ or ὅτι. In such situations, the topic that was under consideration before the strengthening material occurred is resumed and advanced [...]” (2000:127).

According to Runge, another function of οὖν is to possibly indicate some boundary in the text: “One often finds οὖν at high-level boundaries in the discourse, where the next major topic is drawn from and builds upon what precedes” (2010:43).

#### 5.2.4.5.2 Boundaries of the text

For the start of the pericope, the question is whether the ὅτι clause needs to be linked with 3:17 or if the passage starting with 3:18 should be viewed as a distinct unit in itself. One pertinent observation is that 3:17 is a more general statement, summarizing what comes before, whereas in 3:18 a specific example is given, namely Jesus’ suffering and all the good that resulted from it. Therefore, I would see 3:18 as starting a separate section that goes up to 3:22, giving further explanation about why the statement of 3:17 is true and worth living by. This does not mean that there is a big division between 3:17 and 3:18 since thematically in this chapter the themes are strongly interwoven.

The end of the pericope is easier to define than the beginning. The οὖν of 4:1 refers back to 3:18, and so it becomes clear that there is a break between 3:22 and 4:1, which marks the beginning of a new, but still related topical section, one of personal application to the lives of all readers.

Starwalt summarizes nicely what he understands as happening in the passage of 3:18-22:

Ending with the enthronement of Christ and the subjugation of evil spiritual beings, the point of the paragraph of vv. 18-22 gives a reason why the readers should persist in doing good (v. 17): though they may suffer, Christ still rules over all, and through the salvation 'they are also joined to the resurrected reigning Christ' (Davids 1990:147). Though they may suffer now, their future is secure (2005:131).

### 5.3 Exegesis of 1 Peter 3:19

A first step towards understanding the text is making clear what the text in the original language is. Guthrie and Duvall propose the following: "Before we can translate from Greek to English, we must establish what Greek text needs to be translated. Consequently textual criticism stands as foundational to translation and exegesis" (1998:117).

#### 5.3.1 Text and Translation

##### 5.3.1.1 Textual criticism

The standard software used to do Bible translation within the organization of SIL International is called *Paratext*. The source text by default given for the Greek NT in *Paratext* is the critical text of UBS 4, which is taken as the base for translations in many projects around the globe. This text is shown below for 1 Peter 3:17-20a in order to include the closest context (footnotes A-C have been indicated for the explanation about manuscript differences below):

<sup>17</sup> κρείττον γὰρ ἀγαθοποιοῦντας, εἰ θέλοι τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ, πάσχειν ἢ κακοποιοῦντας. <sup>18</sup> ὅτι καὶ Χριστὸς ἅπαξ περὶ ἁμαρτιῶν<sup>A</sup> ἔπαθεν.<sup>B</sup> δίκαιος ὑπὲρ ἀδίκων, ἵνα ὑμᾶς προσαγάγῃ τῷ θεῷ θανατωθεῖς μὲν σαρκὶ ζωοποιηθεῖς δὲ πνεύματι. <sup>19</sup> ἐν ᾧ καὶ τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ πνεύμασιν<sup>C</sup> πορευθεῖς ἐκήρυξεν, <sup>20[a]</sup> ἀπειθήσασίν ποτε ὅτε ἀπεξεδέχετο ἡ τοῦ θεοῦ μακροθυμία ἐν ἡμέραις Νῶε κατασκευαζομένης κιβωτοῦ

The latest apparatus of the UBS 5 text, which was also prepared with the aim of assisting translators, does not indicate any significant variations for 3:17 and 3:19-21a. However, two variants of this apparatus for 3:18 will be explained briefly below.

NA28 with a more comprehensive apparatus has variants in 3:18-19. In addition to the variants of UBS 5 that will be shown, an additional variant mentioned in NA28 will be addressed for 3:19.

The three manuscript differences explained below are indicated with footnote callers (A-C) in the Greek text displayed above.

- A. **περὶ ἁματιῶν** ‘for sins’ – As this may sound like Christ died because of sins, even though a bit later he is called ‘the righteous’; some copyists have added a clarifying pronoun like ‘your’ or ‘our’ to make sure that Jesus did not die for sins he committed, but for the sins of others. As ‘died for sins’ is the harder reading this has to be preferred as textual basis. However, it is very important to check the comprehension of a translation. If there is any indication that ‘dying for sins’ might be misunderstood, like the copyists noted, then it will be necessary to clarify this.
- B. **Χριστὸς ... ἔπαθεν** vs. **ἀπέθανεν**, ‘suffered’ vs. ‘died’ – According to the UBS Translator’s Handbook, ‘died’ is preferred because the textual evidence shows this and it is the harder reading, but almost no translation follows this advice. Contrary to the advice of the UBS Handbook, Metzger (1994:623) explains the opposite decision of the UBS committee for the UBS 4 text (see also Omanson 2006:487-488), where most of the editors preferred the reading ‘suffering’. Their main reason was that the verb ‘suffering’ connects to the thought in 3:17 whereas ‘died’ would abruptly introduce something new, and also because the verb (ἀποθνήσκω) is not used anywhere else in 1 Peter. Some translations expand on ‘suffered’ and make it ‘suffered and died’.
- C. **πνεύματι** instead of **πνεύμασιν** – This variant as found in *P72* has virtually no support. It could be seen as a scribal error where πνεύματι was mechanically repeated from 3:18 (see Dalton 1989). If it is taken as a serious variant, then πορευθεὶς would be linked to πνεύματι and change the meaning as follows: “In these circumstances he also went in spirit and made proclamation to those in

prison” (Dalton 1989:151). As this variant has not found much support this reading has been rejected in this study.

### **5.3.1.2 Translation with focus on 1 Peter 3:18-20a**

In this section the passage of 1 Peter 3:17-20a will be translated. 3:17 has been included in order to show the connection to the general idea of ‘suffering’.

I have produced my own translation working from the following texts and translations as source texts and using interpretational helps:

- Greek (UBS 5)
- ESV (English, literal)
- NLT (English, meaning-based)
- NGÜ – *Neue Genfer Übersetzung* (German, meaning-based)

Certainly, some of my translation decisions also have been influenced by the whole study of this challenging verse while researching for this thesis. In addition, special translation helps such as the *Translator’s Notes on 1 Peter* of SIL International (Kelly 2018) and *A Handbook on the First Letter from Peter* by UBS (Arichea and Nida 1980) have been used.

I have prepared two different translations, each one with a different audience in mind. The first one is referred to as *HL* (Huber literal) in the tables below and aims at people who prefer a ‘moderately literal’ version and who also have access to external helps like commentaries and lexica. The second version adopts a ‘meaning-based’ approach and is designated *HM* (Huber meaning-based). It has people in mind who do not have access to any helps, which is similar to the situation of the Sangu people in Tanzania.

For the literal version, I followed Kelly’s advice which is: “Because the interpretation of these verses is uncertain, it is best to translate them literally. Supply as little implied information as possible” (2018, chap. 1PE 3:19-22).

For the meaning-based version, I did not follow Kelly’s advice because it is not helpful for the Sangu target audience to be given a literal rendering leading to a text that is hard or even impossible to understand. An audience with no external helps cannot benefit much from a Bible with strongly ambiguous passages. If they do not understand what the text means, they might either adopt the wrong interpretation or

refuse to use the translation since they see no sense in continuing to read such a confusing book.

The display below shows the following resources before presenting the two translations HL and HM: Greek UBS 5, interlinear English (using Paratext and Logos glosses), ESV, NLT and NGÜ:

<b>3:17</b>	
<p><b>κρείττον γὰρ ἀγαθοποιούντας, εἰ θέλοι τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ, πάσχειν ἢ κακοποιούντας.</b>  <i>better for doing.good if wills[it] the will of God to.suffer than doing.evil</i></p>	
ESV	For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.
NLT	<i>Remember</i> , it is better to suffer for doing good, if that is what God wants, than to suffer for doing wrong!
NGÜ	Und sollte es Gottes Wille sein, dass jemand leiden muss, weil er Gutes tut, dann ist das auf jeden Fall besser, als wenn er leiden muss, weil er Böses tut.
<b>HL</b> (Huber literal)	For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than to suffer for doing evil.
<b>HM</b> (Huber meaning-based)	So, if it should be God's will that you suffer, remember that it is better to do so for doing good rather than for doing evil.

<b>3:18</b>	
<p><b>ὅτι καὶ Χριστὸς ἅπαξ περὶ ἁμαρτιῶν ἔπαθεν, δίκαιος ὑπὲρ ἀδίκων, ἵνα ὑμᾶς προσαγάγῃ τῷ θεῷ θανατωθεὶς μὲν σαρκὶ, ζωοποιηθεὶς δὲ πνεύματι</b>  <i>for also Christ once.and.for.all for sins suffered the.just for the.unjust in.order.that you(pl) he.could.bring to God being.put.to.death while in.the.flesh made.alive but in.the.spirit</i></p>	
ESV	For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit,
NLT	Christ suffered for our sins once for all time. He never sinned, but he died for sinners to bring you safely home to God. He suffered physical death, but he was raised to life in the Spirit.
NGÜ	Christus selbst hat ja ebenfalls gelitten, als er, der Gerechte, für die Schuldigen starb. Er hat mit seinem Tod ein für allemal die Sünden der Menschen gesühnt und hat damit auch euch den Zugang zu Gott eröffnet. Ja, er wurde getötet, aber das betraf nur sein irdisches Leben, denn er wurde wieder lebendig gemacht zu einem Leben im Geist.
<b>HL</b>	For also Christ suffered, the righteous for the unrighteous, once and for all, that he might bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit,
<b>HM</b>	Even Christ himself suffered for doing good. He who was sinless died on behalf of the sinners once, but that counts forever. He did this to

	open up the way to God for you. He was killed but then he was resurrected.
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<b>3:19</b>	
<b>ἐν ᾧ καὶ τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ πνεύμασιν πορευθεὶς ἐκήρυξεν</b> <i>in which also the in prison spirits he.went proclaimed</i>	
<b>ESV</b>	in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison,
<b>NLT</b>	So he went and preached to the spirits in prison—
<b>NGÜ<sup>28</sup></b>	Und so, zu neuem Leben erweckt, ging er zu den Geistern in der unsichtbaren Welt, [...] die jetzt bis zu ihrer endgültigen Verurteilung gefangen gehalten werden, und verkündete ihnen seinen Sieg.
<b>HL</b>	in which he also went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison,
<b>HM</b>	After he rose from the dead, Christ also went to the spiritual forces of darkness and announced his victory. These evil angels are imprisoned and awaiting their final judgment

<b>3:20a</b>	
<b>ἀπειθήσασιν ποτε, ὅτε ἀπεξεδέχετο ἡ τοῦ θεοῦ μακροθυμία ἐν ἡμέραις Νῶε κατασκευαζομένης κιβωτοῦ</b> <i>disobedient [who were] formerly when waited the of God patience in the days of Noah was being constructed [while] an ark...</i>	
<b>ESV</b>	because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared,
<b>NLT</b>	those who disobeyed God long ago when God waited patiently while Noah was building his boat.
<b>NGÜ</b>	[...] die sich zu Noahs Zeit gegen Gott aufgelehnt hatten [...]. Damals, in den Tagen Noahs, hatte Gott in seiner Geduld mit dem Gericht gewartet, bis die Arche gebaut war.
<b>HL</b>	because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared.
<b>HM</b>	because in the past they had rebelled against God. This happened in the time when Noah was building the ark while God patiently waited before bringing the flood.

### 5.3.1.3 Translation alternatives

#### 5.3.1.3.1 Alternatives for the literal version

For a literal version, it depends how much the reader is assuming their own worldview and how this then shapes the understanding of the text. When does the reader need help to understand the text in its original setting? Where are notes and references needed in order to point the reader towards the right contextual understanding?

<sup>28</sup> The NGÜ has made a verse bridge here, combining 3:19-20 to reorder information. For the sake of showing the differences for each verse, the verse bridge has been taken apart to be able to better compare the translations. The text of the NGÜ for 3:19-20a is as follows: "Und so, zu neuem Leben erweckt, ging er zu den Geistern in der unsichtbaren Welt, die sich zu Noahs Zeit gegen Gott aufgelehnt hatten und die jetzt bis zu ihrer endgültigen Verurteilung gefangen gehalten werden, und verkündete ihnen seinen Sieg. Damals, in den Tagen Noahs, hatte Gott in seiner Geduld mit dem Gericht gewartet, bis die Arche gebaut war."

Below the literal ‘Huber’ translation is shown with a few challenges that are explained and ideas of alternative options:

*17 “For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God’s will, than to suffer for doing evil. 18 For also Christ suffered, the righteous for the unrighteous,<sup>A</sup> once and for all, that he might bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit,<sup>B</sup> 19 in which he also went and proclaimed<sup>C</sup> to the spirits in prison,<sup>D</sup> 20a because they formerly did not obey,<sup>E</sup> when God’s patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared.”*

Challenges	Alternatives, additions
‘Righteous’ vs. ‘unrighteous’ – is that clear for the reader?	<sup>A</sup> footnote explaining ‘righteous’ and ‘unrighteous’
What does the ‘once and for all’ connect to?	If it is unclear for the reader what the ‘once and for all’ refers to, a footnote might be used for further explanations
What is ‘being put to death in the flesh’ and ‘being made alive in the spirit’?	<sup>B</sup> cross reference to 1CO 15:42-44 (showing the ‘spiritual’ or ‘glorified’ state) – in order to avoid a misunderstanding of a non-bodily resurrection; footnote to explain that some see ‘Holy Spirit’ acting here?
‘Proclaimed’ vs. ‘preached’?	<sup>C</sup> ‘Proclaimed’ is the more natural meaning for Peter’s usage, but in English it is a transitive verb. ‘Preached’ could be used as intransitive and would not need to explain what was preached (unless ‘preached’ in a target language collocates with ‘a sermon’).
Who are the spirits in prison’?	<sup>D</sup> footnote with explanations showing the different opinions (also making clear that no ‘ancestral spirits’ are meant); cross references could be included
Whom did they not obey?	<sup>E</sup> it might need to be clarified whom the ‘spirits’ did not obey

### 5.3.1.3.2 Alternatives for the meaning-based version

When aiming for a meaning-based version, it is still a challenge to gauge how much the readers will interpret the text from their own background. In a European setting, footnotes and cross references might be helpful tools to indicate differences and to add longer explanations. This is, for example, done in the *Neue Genfer Übersetzung* with a meaning-based approach that gives more background on decisions and different interpretations (see Appendix E for display and explanations).

Below the meaning-based ‘Huber’ translation is shown with a few challenges that are explained and ideas of alternative options:

17 “So, if it should be God’s will that you suffer, remember that it is better to do so for doing good rather than for doing evil. 18 Even Christ himself suffered for doing good. He who was sinless died on behalf of the sinners<sup>A</sup> once, but that counts forever. He did this to open up the way to God for you. He was killed but then he was resurrected.<sup>B/C</sup> 19 After he rose from the dead, Christ also went to the spiritual forces of darkness<sup>D</sup> and announced his victory. These evil angels<sup>E</sup> are imprisoned<sup>F</sup> and awaiting their final judgment <sup>20a</sup> because in the past<sup>G</sup> they had rebelled against God. This happened in the time when Noah was building the ark while God patiently waited before bringing the flood.”

Challenges	Alternatives, additions
<p>The ‘original wording’ has been explained differently (‘sinless’ vs. ‘sinners’ used instead of ‘righteous’ vs. ‘unrighteous’ and ‘was killed’ vs. ‘was resurrected’ instead of ‘died in flesh’ vs. ‘was raised in spirit’). ‘Was raised in spirit’ was avoided as it bears the danger of not seeing it as a bodily resurrection.</p>	<p><sup>A</sup> footnote with literal wording ‘righteous for the unrighteous’.  <sup>B</sup> footnote with literal wording ‘died in the body’ and ‘was raised in spirit’ (this could possibly be done for languages who do not have a problem with terms like ‘spirit’ or ‘spiritual’)  <sup>C</sup> cross reference to 1CO 15:42-44</p>
<p>Is it the evil angels only (a specific group) or is it ‘demons’ more generally; or more broadly also human persecutors who are obviously influenced by the ‘forces of darkness’?</p>	<p><sup>D</sup> footnote with literal wording ‘spirits in prison’.  <sup>E</sup> explain the two other interpretations (maybe refer to EPH 6:12 to show how demonic forces can be seen as acting in the persecutors)  <sup>F</sup> cross reference to 2PE 2:4; JUD 6  <sup>G</sup> cross reference to GEN 6:1-4</p>

The above-mentioned challenges for the literal and meaning-based versions are only a few that could be mentioned. Much more could be discussed and translated differently, but it is clear that there is no perfect translation available as each one has its pros and cons.

### 5.3.2 Meaning for the original readers

As seen in the previous paragraphs 1 Peter 3:19 has been extensively discussed and various interpretations are available. But it cannot have been that way when Peter first wrote as Clowney states: “His words were no doubt clear to those who first heard them, but they have been hard for later generations to understand” (1989:156).

Even though the text is ‘hard’ to understand for us, there should be a way to come closer to certainty about what it means. We must not see this passage as an interpolation that somehow got into the text, but to see the letter as a unity with even

this passage making sense. For Reicke it seems to be clear that this passage can be understood: “In view of the conceptions prevalent in Judaism and early Christianity, everything is quite logical and reasonable in sequence” (1981:109).

Reicke mentions conceptions of Judaism as a backdrop for understanding the passage. Also others (DeSilva 2004:854; Fruchtenbaum 2005:363, Heiser 2015, locs. 2004-2005) see the Book of 1 Enoch providing background and giving helpful insight into their worldview.

### **5.3.2.1 Background information**

#### 5.3.2.1.1 [The Book of 1 Enoch – The Book of Watchers \(1-36\)](#)

This apocryphal book is an intertestamental work ascribed to Enoch which dates to about the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC. The complete text, which survives only in Ethiopic, is not part of the canon of Scripture, but it is nonetheless important as it gives insight into the worldview of that time and was apparently known by Jesus, his disciples and the Jewish settlers at Qumran, as well as the early church.

The book is comprised of five sections, but the important part which can be seen as background for 1 Peter 3:19 is found in the book of Watchers (chapters 1-36), which elaborates on the briefly mentioned story in Genesis 6:1-4 and its consequences.

However, it is not clear how far spread the knowledge about the story of 1 Enoch was (see Feinberg 1986:321), especially when thinking about Peter’s audience who possibly were Gentiles in predominance.

#### 5.3.2.1.2 [Archetypes / typology](#)

A method of how the ‘spirits’ could be identified might be by means of literary devices such as ‘archetypes’ (see Wendland 2004) or typology. Could this possibly help to get more understanding for the application of a possible ‘subjugation of spirits’ as mentioned in 3:19 and 3:22?

“An archetype is something that is considered to be a perfect or typical example of a particular kind of person or thing, because it has all their most important characteristics” ([www.collinsdictionary.com](http://www.collinsdictionary.com)).

Wendland gives a few examples: “some archetypes that are common in the literature of the Ancient Near East as well as the Scriptures include the benevolent king, an oppressive opponent, [...]” (2004:167).

Following on from this explanation, it might be possible to interpret God as benevolent king and Satan as the oppressive opponent who uses his army of evil spirits to plague Christians through their human persecutors. That could be seen as an option here with Christ acting as God’s agent who conquers the evil’s army, but virtually nobody considers this idea in their commentaries on the passage.

Heiser (2015, locs. 1975-79, 1997-98) sees typology in the passage of 1 Peter 3:14-22. But he does not explicitly link it to the ‘spirits’ but combines it more with the picture of Noah and his family being saved through water and Christians in baptism.

After the general introduction to this section, the most important words in 3:18-19 and their meanings will now be elaborated on below.

### 5.3.2.2 *μὲν in combination with δὲ (3:18)*

When looking at the Greek text of 3:18 it is important to see what is happening with **μὲν ... δὲ** and how those relate to each other.

*ὅτι καὶ Χριστὸς ἅπαξ περὶ ἁμαρτιῶν ἔπαθεν, δίκαιος ὑπὲρ ἀδίκων,  
ἵνα ὑμᾶς προσαγάγῃ τῷ θεῷ*

**θανατωθεὶς μὲν σαρκί, ζωοποιηθεὶς δὲ πνεύματι**

Runge explains the function of **μὲν**: “It serves primarily to correlate the clause that it introduces with some corresponding element that follows, typically introduced by δέ. [...], μὲν is forward-pointing. Its sole function is to create the expectation that some related element will follow” (2010:55).

Therefore, μὲν is a cataphoric device. Usually the element that follows is more important than its previously mentioned counterpoint (see Runge 2010:77). Michaels also comments that this “has the effect of subordinating the first to the second [element]: ‘though put to death in the flesh, he was made alive in the Spirit’ [...]” (1988:205).

### 5.3.2.3 σαρκὶ and πνεύματι (3:18)

How do σαρκὶ and πνεύματι work together? Some see Peter speaking about a dichotomy, a separation of body and spirit. Others see some kind of ‘spiritual death’ being addressed. Again others see in those two words different modes of existence. These different views will be elaborated on below.

#### 5.3.2.3.1 Dichotomy - Two parts of a person - flesh and spirit?

In the *Africa Bible Commentary* Adeyemo explains that: “When death separated Christ’s spirit from his body, he was enabled to go to preach in the spirit world (3:19)” (2006:1548). He therefore sees σαρκὶ as the body of Christ being dead and the πνεύματι being alive and preaching without the hindrance of the body.

However, some disagree, as seen from Davids:

Peter is not contrasting two parts of the nature of Christ, body and soul, a Greek distinction that would be read into this passage in the Fathers (Origen, *C. Cels.* 2.43; Epiphanius, *Haer.* 69.52), but rather two modes of existence, as an examination of the passages cited would show (1990:137).

While on the one hand it is clear that θανατωθεὶς μὲν σαρκὶ means that Jesus was killed (i.e., his existence in human form ended), how can on the other hand ζωοποιηθεὶς δὲ πνεύματι mean that his spirit was resurrected? Dubis also asks: “In what sense could Jesus’ spirit, distinct from his body, be said to be ‘made alive’? This suggests that Jesus’ spirit was at some point ‘dead,’ an unthinkable notion within the broader confines of NT theology” (2010:117).

#### 5.3.2.3.2 Spiritual death – spirit being dead?

Some commentators do not only see a bodily death, but also a spiritual death in this verse. MacArthur for example states that: “For that brief time, Christ’s experience paralleled the condition of unbelievers who live, paradoxically, in spiritual death (separation from God) in this life and face divine judgment in physical death” (2004:209). To MacArthur, this does not mean that Christ’s spirit was dead, as earlier on he states: “He remained alive in His spirit” (2004:208).

This interpretation takes the figurative expression of sinful humankind as being ‘dead in sins’ (spiritually dead) and applies it to Jesus’ experience on the cross. Here it is not

clear, if the second part (ζωοποιηθεῖς δὲ πνεύματι) is actually pointing towards a bodily resurrection of Christ or if it is only seen as his spiritual state.

#### 5.3.2.3.3 Agent of ζωοποιηθεῖς δὲ πνεύματι – the Holy Spirit? (3:18)

Quite a few commentators see πνεύματι as being a dative of agency indicating the actor of the resurrection of Christ: “[T]he idea here is that Jesus was resurrected by the Spirit of God, by whom also he went [...]” (Keener 1993, chap. 1PE 3:18-19).

A weakness of this interpretation is that σαρκὶ in θανατωθεῖς μὲν σαρκὶ is mostly understood as being a dative of sphere, referring to Christ’s bodily death. Why then should πνεύματι be interpreted differently, as a dative of agency even though σαρκὶ and πνεύματι are strongly linked with the words **μὲν ... δὲ**?

Achtemeier sees interpreting both σαρκὶ and πνεύματι instrumentally as a valid option: “[I]f one understands σάρξ to stand here for humanity as it does in 1:24, then it names the agency of Christ’s death. In that case, it means that Christ was put to death by humans but raised by (God’s) Spirit” (1996:250).

This idea is countered by Dubis: “Achtemeier’s interpretation, however, must be rejected in light of subsequent appearances of the dative σαρκὶ in 4:1 (twice), which refers to suffering in the body (see also other occurrences of σάρξ in 3:21; 4:2, 6, which also refer to the body)” (2010:118).

The question is whether there is really a focus on the agents in this passage or not. The verbs are in the passive and therefore the actors are implicit or hidden. It is also interesting to observe counterpoints in 3:17-18: ‘good’ vs. ‘evil’ and ‘righteous’ vs. ‘unrighteous’. I would therefore recommend understanding ‘flesh’ and ‘spirit’ as counterpoints in this verse.

#### 5.3.2.3.4 Modes of existence/sphere?

Most recent commentators neither understand σαρκὶ and πνεύματι as constituent parts of Jesus (see Dubis 2010:118; Boring 1999:140), nor do they see a focus on the agents (see Abernathy 2001). These nouns are seen as two modes or two spheres of existence (others call it locative datives; see Osborne 2011:225).

Therefore, θανατωθεῖς μὲν σαρκὶ means that Christ in his human, mortal body died. The counterpoint of this then is that ζωοποιηθεῖς δὲ πνεύματι – he was resurrected to life again with a ‘spiritual body’, a real body that has eternal qualities.

This is also how I personally understand the passage and it will be shown below why I think this to be the best option in the context. A key parallel text to understand death and resurrection together with ‘flesh’ and ‘spirit’ is 1 Corinthians 15. A few verses out of this chapter will serve to demonstrate how one can arrive at this understanding.

The first passage is 1 Corinthians 15:44-45: *“It is sown a natural body [σῶμα ψυχικόν]; it is raised a spiritual body [σῶμα πνευματικόν]. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. <sup>45</sup> Thus it is written, ‘The first man Adam became a living being’; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit.”*

People are born with a ‘natural’ body and then they die. What happens in the resurrection? They get a so-called ‘spiritual body’. The challenge here is, how is this ‘spiritual body’ to be understood? Is it ‘spiritual’, therefore something invisible or is it a ‘body’ that can be touched and seen? How do those two go together? Wright comments on this challenge as follows: “Many translations render these in a very unhelpful way, for instance as ‘physical body’ and ‘spiritual body’, which to modern ears sounds as though, whatever the latter body may be, it will not be ‘physical’ in our sense” (2019:312).

When Jesus died on the cross, he was really dead, and the Roman soldiers made sure that he was (JHN 13:33-34)! On the third day he was resurrected with a body that could be seen and touched.

Therefore a ‘spiritual body’, a ‘resurrection body’ is a physical body. When Jesus had been resurrected and appeared to his disciples, he was not just a ‘spirit being’ or a ‘ghost’, because he says: *“See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have”* (LUK 24:39).

1 Corinthians 15:20 states that Christ was the first to be raised from the dead: *“But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead. He is the first of a great harvest of all who have died”* (NLT). How can Jesus be the first who was resurrected from the dead?

There have been many others who were resurrected before him. Even Jesus himself raised many from the dead. So how is his resurrection the first?

All other people who were raised to life were raised in their natural body (σῶμα ψυχικόν), back to a mortal existence. But Christ was the first to be resurrected with a body that can be called a ‘spiritual body’ (σῶμα πνευματικόν), a glorified body which exists eternally.

The quality of the ‘spiritual body’ is that it has God’s eternal resurrection life in it. It is not perishable anymore, but it has been transformed, or ‘glorified’, in order to become imperishable (1CO 15:42, 51-53). About this spiritual, eternal sphere Michaels explains that it is “a sphere in which the Spirit and power of God are displayed without hindrance or human limitation” (1988:204-205).

Below in Table 13 the differences of a ‘natural body’ and a ‘spiritual body’ are compared:

Table 13: *Flesh (natural body) vs. spirit (spiritual body)*

Greek text	Time frame	meaning
θανατωθεις μεν <b>σαρκι</b> σάρξ ≈ σῶμα ψυχικόν?	during life / death	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• perishable</li> <li>• ‘natural’ body</li> <li>• flesh + blood</li> <li>• human</li> <li>• mortal</li> </ul>
ζωοποιηθεις δε <b>πνεύματι</b> πνεύματι ≈ σῶμα πνευματικόν?	after resurrection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• imperishable</li> <li>• ‘spiritual’ body</li> <li>• flesh + blood</li> <li>• spiritual</li> <li>• eternal</li> </ul>

Wright comments on the function of the adjectives ψυχικόν and πνευματικόν (1CO 15:44) and offers helpful explanations:

Greek adjectives ending with the -ikos suffix normally tell you, not what something is composed of, but what it is animated by. [...] Paul is contrasting a body animated by a soul, a natural life-force, with a body animated by the spirit, God’s divinely imparted vitalizing power. The point is that in both cases it is still a ‘body’, something which in our terms we would call ‘physical’, even if in the case of the latter body it will be what we might call ‘transformed physicality’ (2019:313).

Going back to the text in 1 Peter 3:18, it is important to understand that the resurrection is an indispensable part in this message of encouragement. “While He was in the grave there was no victorious Gospel to preach [...]” (Ramey 2017:33). If Christ has not been resurrected, then Paul says that the whole of Christianity is worth nothing: “*For if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, then all our preaching is useless, and your faith is useless*” (1CO 15:13-14, NLT).

But it is Christ’s death and resurrection that are mentioned here in 1 Peter 3:18, and therefore: “It was ‘in this resurrection state’ [...] that Jesus ‘went and preached to the spirits in prison’” (Arnold 2002:140).

In what follows each element in 1 Peter 3:19 will be looked at, in an attempt to “unpack” its meaning, so as to better address the key question: Who are the “spirits” (πνεύμασιν)?

#### **5.3.2.4 ἐν ᾧ – in which (3:19)**

The introductory words of 3:19, ἐν ᾧ have been interpreted by scholars in multiple ways, in relation to how it relates to 3:18. What is the antecedent of the relative pronoun ᾧ?

Himes (2017, 1PE 3:19-22) citing Michaels (1988:205) lists four possible options:

- linked to πνεύματι in 1 Peter 3:18 (i.e., ‘in the Spirit’)
- linked to “the preceding phrase as a whole” (‘in which process’)
- functioning “as a relative casual conjunction (‘for which reason’)
- functioning as “a relative temporal” conjunction (‘on which occasion’)

Actually, Himes seems to have missed another option which Michaels lists as “ ‘in that state’ (i.e., his risen state)” (1988:205), referring to the spiritual sphere as mentioned below by Dalton and Hiebert (5.3.2.4.2).

Michaels does not see much difference in these approaches:

The question is less important than the volume of discussion suggests. If the emphasis in the preceding verse is indeed on Christ’s triumph or vindication, then the proclamation indicated here must have been made in

connection with that triumph, not in connection with the suffering and death that preceded it (1988:205).

But the challenge is that not everybody is of this opinion, as shown in the example below from Reicke, who does not connect it to the resurrection.

#### 5.3.2.4.1 Examples of a 'temporal understanding'

According to Reicke “ἐν ᾧ is clearly a temporal conjunction [...] and means ‘whereat’, ‘on which occasion’, ‘while’, ‘at the same time as’, ‘in doing which’ [...]” (2005:108). The connection of ἐν ᾧ would not be made back to πνεύματι at the end of 3:18, but to Jesus’ death in 3:18a (2005:113). This would then place Christ’s action of 3:19 during the time between Jesus’ death on the cross and his resurrection.

Boring suggests that ἐν ᾧ “should be taken as an adverbial conjunction ‘when’, ‘at that time,’ as elsewhere in 1 Peter (cf. 1:6; 2:12; 3:16; 4:4)” (1999:140). Although Boring sees the ἐν ᾧ as having the same function just as Reicke does, his interpretation of 3:19 is still different as he sees Christ’s preaching *after* the resurrection.

#### 5.3.2.4.2 Examples of understanding it as ‘sphere’

Dalton (1989:145-146), Hiebert (1982:151) and others see the ἐν ᾧ as a relative construction depending on πνεύματι in 3:18. Therefore ἐν ᾧ is interpreted as ‘in the spiritual sphere’ after the resurrection. It is therefore not seen as occurring in the time between his death and his resurrection. “In other words, the person who makes the proclamation is the risen Lord” (Dalton 1989:145).

#### 5.3.2.5 καί - also (3:19)

Καί, a word often used as connector (i.e. ‘and’), needs to be translated differently here since it is not standing at its normal position, which would usually be at the beginning of the clause.

Dubis explains the change in this position, as being the “adverbial additive use of καί: ‘also.’ The postpositive appearance of καί after ἐν ᾧ clearly marks it as adverbial [...]” (2010:119).

Dubis, referring to Titrud (1991:4-5) and Levinsohn (2000:101), continues to explain the use of the adverbial καί as usually marking a word or phrase that follows it as an item which is thematically added.

Runge explains the function of the adverbial καί not only as addition, but also as drawing special attention to the added part: “The grammarians also recognize that at times the usage attracts extra attention to the added or intensified element [...]” (2010:338).

The question then is, what is added thematically in 3:19? Some might say that it is τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ πνεύμασιν which could be an option. Dubis though extends the thematic addition to include πορευθεῖς as he explains below:

[...] the additive element would be τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ πνεύμασιν πορευθεῖς. This makes much better sense contextually, since the καί can then be understood to mark this participial phrase as additive to the propositions in the preceding two participial phrases, θανατωθεῖς ... σαρκί and ζωοποιηθεῖς ... πνεύματι (similarly Elliott 2000, 651), thus completing the threefold crucifixion-resurrection-ascension paradigm (2010:119).

Dubis (2010:120) further explains that ἐκήρυξεν still would need an indirect object and that implicitly this would be πνεύμασιν.

#### **5.3.2.6 φυλακή – prison (3:19)**

Whatever the identity of the ‘spirits’ is, the text says that they are in φυλακή. According to Louw and Nida (1996:260) this is a place of detention, often translated as ‘jail, prison’. Other senses mentioned (guard post, period of night, haunt) can be excluded in this context.

What kind of prison could be meant here? For whom and where is it? It does seem clear that this prison is somewhere in the unseen realm for the detention of some ‘spirits’. For Dalton (1989:160) it is clear that it can not be for the souls of the dead as this is not the way the Bible talks about Hades.

Dalton then, referring to Revelation 20:7, explains that “φυλακή is used in the New Testament for the prison in which Satan is chained: ‘And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be loosed from his prison.’ This usage is quite normal” (1989:160).

This ‘prison’ seems to exist in general for ‘evil spirits’ as Achtemeier elaborates: “That such a prison exists for evil ‘spirits,’ [...] is assumed both in the NT and in Jewish tradition, particularly the traditions concerning Enoch, although the location of the

prison is unclear, that is, whether it is in the earth, in the heavens, or at the end of both heaven and earth” (1996:256).

Elliott (2008) explains that within the Hellenistic period, the ideas of where the world of the dead, or a possible place for imprisoned angelic beings, seems to have shifted in the perceptions of people. While such a place was usually considered to be in a lower region (as people were buried ‘below’), some people started to locate such a region between earth and heaven:

[...] others located this realm in one of the lower of the seven heavens. For the latter, including Second Temple Israelite authors (e.g., *1 Enoch*, *2 Enoch*, *3 Baruch*), a journey to the realm of the dead and imprisoned angel-spirits would entail not a descent but an *ascent* to one of these nether regions of the sky [...]. The Petrine author is among the Israelite and Christian authors sharing this modified view (2008, sec. Detailed Comment 2).

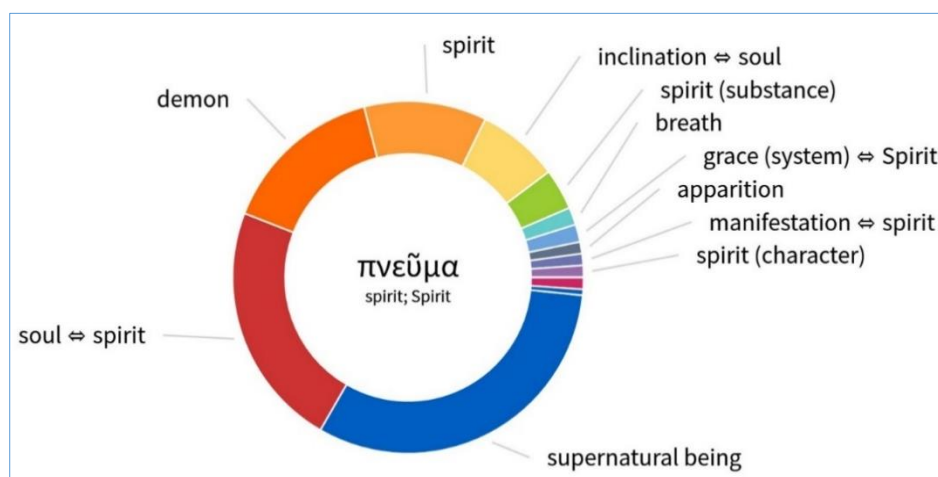
### 5.3.2.7 πνεύμασιν (πνεῦμα) – ‘spirits’ (3:19)

The focus of this study is to identify the πνεύμασιν mentioned in 3:19. Below some general components of meaning of the polysemantic word will be examined before trying to decide its meaning in the passage.

#### 5.3.2.7.1 Linguistic semantic study of the word ‘spirits’ in the NT

Louw and Nida (1996:200) give eight senses for the word πνεῦμα in the NT: Holy Spirit, spirit, evil spirit, ghost, inner being, way of thinking, wind and breath. Most commentaries and translations of 1 Peter 3:19 see spirits in the sense of ‘evil spirits’ (supernatural being) or ‘spirits of dead people’ (human origin).

Figure 25: Senses for ‘spirit’



Above a schematic display is given (**Error! Reference source not found.**) as it appears in Logos when searching for the meaning of πνεῦμα.

It becomes quickly clear that scholarship is divided on the matter of the meaning of πνεῦμα for 1 Peter 3:19, with some focussing on supernatural beings, and others considering other possibilities.

#### 5.3.2.7.2 ‘Spirits’ – supernatural beings

For this section Keener’s explanation shall serve as a starting point: “In early Christian literature, ‘spirits’ nearly always refers to angelic spirits rather than human spirits, except when explicit statements are made to the contrary” (1993, chap. 1PE 3:18-19).

Dalton (1989:153) and Michaels (1988:207) not only call them ‘angelic’ as Keener does, but call them ‘superhuman’ (meaning immortal), ‘supernatural beings’ or ‘demons’ (see also Goppelt 1993, chap. 1PE 3:19 and Gundry 2012:528).

The variety of senses on ‘spirits’ when seen as supernatural beings:

Clear identification of ‘spirit/s’ as supernatural	
πνεῦμα	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• angelic beings (angels)</li> <li>• superhuman beings (immortal)</li> <li>• supernatural beings</li> <li>• demons</li> <li>• non-human spiritual beings</li> </ul>

Dalton is also convinced that the NT evidence is clear and even sees exact parallels in word usage in the Gospels:

We find it [spirit/s] in the singular, but it is its usage in the plural which illustrates better the πνεύμασιν of 1 Pet 3:19. The following are exact parallels: ‘And he cast out the spirits with a word’ (Mt 8:16); ‘Then he goes and brings with him seven other spirits more evil than himself’ (Mt 12:45; cf. Lk 11:26); ‘Do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you’ (Lk 10:20). It is of importance for our interpretation of 1 Pet 3:19 to note that, in each of these cases, πνεύματα refers to evil spirits (1989:153).

Dubis makes a crucial observation:

Πνεῦμα is seldom used in the plural of human spirits, and never so without additional modification (Heb 12:23; perhaps also 1 Cor 14:32; Rev 22:6). Rather, the over thirty plural uses of πνεῦμα in the NT typically refer to angelic (usually demonic) beings (e.g., Matt 8:16; 12:45; Luke 10:20) (2010:120).

It would appear then that in the NT πνεῦμα is not usually used for a human spirit unless it is clearly stated. The verse usually mentioned to support this claim is Hebrews 12:23 ('spirits of the righteous made perfect'). Thus, πνεῦμα standing on its own would typically refer to supernatural beings. Dalton even says that Matthew 8:46; 12:45; Luke 10:20 and 11:26 are exact parallels to 1 Peter 3:19. But this claim does not hold as the πνεῦμα ('spirit/s') in these Gospel passages are described in the context more clearly and therefore are not directly comparable to the situation in 1 Peter 3:19, where the interpreter has to see how to understand the πνεύμασιν and how and if they are to be connected to 3:20.

For example considering Luke 10:20: *"Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits [πνεύματα] are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven,"* the meaning is clear from context, since in the immediate context (10:17) the πνεύματα are clearly defined: *"The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, even the demons [δαιμόνια] are subject to us in your name!'"*

Similarly, in the other passages the 'spirits' are not directly (in the same verse) explained, but the closer context gives clarification. All the other passages mentioned by Dalton and Dubis are listed and explained in Appendix F where the plural usages of πνεύμα in the New Testament are presented.

Finally, it becomes clear that this matter is more complex than it looks. Most often πνεῦμα gets defined in one way or another: Either by direct explanation as in Hebrews 12:23 or by more indirect explanation in the development of the narrative (as seen in LUK 10:20).

#### 5.3.2.7.3 'Spirits' – a broad range of interpretations

Clearly it is not easy to pin down the meaning of this word. Pierce, who has studied 1 Peter 3:19 extensively paying special attention to extra-biblical literature, states about πνεῦμα:

It is evident that throughout early Jewish and Christian literature, πνεύματα is used for angels, giants, humans, as well as other cosmic entities. Therefore, the reference to the recipients of Christ's proclamation in 1 Pet 3:19 as spirits does not, in itself, aid in their positive identification (2009:185).

Fruchtenbaum also sees human spirits as an option but thinks that the normal or general use for πνεύματα is 'supernatural beings': "The word spirits may refer to human, disembodied spirits, or it may also refer to demonic or angelic spirits, which is the more common use of the term" (2005:362).

Pierce even understands 'spirits' as a way to express both 'evil supernatural beings' and 'evil human people', which would then make all kinds of 'evil spirits' being addressed by Jesus' proclamation. In addition, Reicke sees this as a possible explanation: "In speaking about persons of remote antiquity, no sharp distinctions were made between angels and men (cf. Jude 6f.). Human beings often assumed superhuman proportions, in particular those who were exceptionally evil [...]" (1981:109).

Although some say that 'spirits of dead humans' could also be a possible interpretation, most do not see this being a real possibility. The verse mostly cited against this idea is Hebrews 12:23. Arichea and Nida (see also Michaels 1998:207) explain that "[...] there is very scanty linguistic evidence regarding the use of 'spirits' for dead people, or for the surviving part of a person after death. In the New Testament, this sense appears only in Hebrews 12:23 (*TEV the spirits of good people*)" (1980:116).

Abernathy distinguishes the term ψυχή (the "soul" or inner being of a person) from πνεύμα and opts for a supernatural rather than human reading: "Even in this passage in 1 Peter [3:20] the term ψύχη 'soul' is used without a qualifier to refer to people, but πνεύμα 'spirit' never occurs without a qualifier anywhere in Scripture. Thus, 'souls' would refer to humans, but 'spirits' would refer to supernatural beings" (2001, sec. Ac 2).

Goppelt, explaining the view 'Christ speaking through Noah' (to Noah's contemporaries) asks: "Can πνεύματα have this meaning? The souls of the departed are, of course, usually called ψυχή in the NT. But 1 Peter, like Hebrews and Luke, tries always to present biblical concepts in Greek terms, and πνεῦμα is an ancient Greek synonym for ψυχή" (1993, chap. 1PE 3:19). He therefore leaves room to interpret ψυχή synonymously with πνεῦμα.

When looking at the broad spectrum of meaning on the term πνεῦμα, the variety of senses is summarized below:

<b>Various ideas for the identification of ‘spirit/s’:</b>	
πνεῦμα	• supernatural beings (angels, demons, non-human)
	• rulers, authorities – seen as being influenced and led by supernatural beings
	• human souls (alive, ‘now’ dead, dead)

Feinberg who interprets 3:19 as Christ as preaching through Noah, still sees supernatural beings as a possibility: “[...] the word study on the usage of *pneuma* in the NT establishes the clear possibility that it refers to angels in 1 Pet 3:19, but only context can establish that it actually has that meaning here. Thus, the word study argument cannot be conclusive” (1986:321).

#### 5.3.2.7.4 Summary

Who are the ‘spirits’ then? Together with Feinberg, Pierce also stresses the fact that the context of the whole letter needs to be consulted in order identify the ‘spirits’: “Hence, the identity of the imprisoned spirits in 1 Peter can best be found not by looking back to earlier traditions but to within the letter itself to ascertain who these spirits need to be to best support the aim of the Petrine Epistle” (2009:198).

As seen in the introduction, this epistle was written with the purpose to offer comfort to the Christian community undergoing different sorts of persecution.

My opinion here is that in order to comfort the Christians, mainly ‘evil supernatural beings’ (fallen angels, demons) are in focus, who either directly or indirectly (through unbelievers) want to make the Christians suffer. A message of the defeat of the ‘demons’ would encourage the Christians. Wright summarizes:

What Peter is saying here is that the victory over these dark forces of evil has in fact been won – through the Messiah; [...] Their power, such as it was, had been broken. This ought then to function as a considerable encouragement to the little groups of Christians who face persecution from their own local authorities, and from the shadowy spiritual ‘forces’ that seemed to give them their power (2019:82).

#### 5.3.2.8 πορευθεῖς (πορεύομαι) – going, he.went (3:19)

Louw and Nida (1996:203) give five senses for the word πορεύομαι: go, travel, go away, behave, die. Most translations use the meaning of ‘going’ (he.went) which

makes sense in this context. The challenge as seen with different interpretations though is this: Where did Christ go and what kind of directional movement is therefore involved? The word πορεύομαι is neutral in this matter. Later on in 3:22 it is most likely indicating an ascent. It is interesting to see that the word πορεύομαι was used and not ἀναβαίνω.

On the one hand, when an interpretation of the passage sees this 'going' as Christ's ascension, then one would expect to see the word ἀναβαίνω used in the Greek text, but it is not. Interestingly though, the word πορεύομαι is used in the NT to indicate upward movement in places (e.g., ACT 1:10-11) where ἀναβαίνω could have been used but was not.

On the other hand, when an interpretation has Christ descending to the prison or the world of the dead, then the question has to be asked whether the word πορεύομαι has ever been used in the NT to indicate a downward movement. Pierce (2009:220) claims that the word πορεύομαι is never used in the NT to indicate descent. The fact is that the word καταβαίνω is normally used in the sense of 'to go down' (e.g., JHN 3:13; ROM 10:6-7; EPH 4:8-10).

Another factor that has to be mentioned is the function of the participle in this sentence. While κηρύσσω is the main verb, what is the function of the participle πορεύομαι preceding it? Runge explains: "Participles that precede the main verb have the effect of backgrounding the action with respect to the main verb of the clause, while most participles that follow the main verb elaborate the main verbal action" (2010:129). This seems to show that the most important action in this phrase is the action of a proclamation.

Yet another thought to consider is the sequence of the three participles in 3:18-19. Dubis comments that these three can be seen as actions following on from each other: "Against the view that this verse refers to events *between* [emphasis mine] Jesus's death and resurrection, the order of the Greek participles θανατωθείς ... ζωοποιηθείς ... πορευθείς is noteworthy, with the progression suggesting that verse 19 refers to events *after* Jesus' resurrection" (2010:121).

A last consideration in this section is the usage of the aorist. The question could be: If πορεύομαι was explaining in more detail *when* the 'proclaiming' was done, would not

the usage of a present participle fit better for the idea of an ascent? Dalton explains these considerations as follows:

It has been said that, if the going of 3:19 refers to the ascension, then we would expect a present participle rather than an aorist, 'on his way (to heaven) he preached'. I find it difficult to understand this argument. The aorist participle is quite compatible with the ascension. As is well known, in Greek the aorist participle does not necessarily refer to an action prior to that of the main verb. The text, as it stands, simply means that Christ went on a journey (to the area of the heavens) and that he made proclamation to the spirits (1989:162).

Therefore 3:19 could be seen as the first part of his ascension (he went there first, and then continued on afterwards) with 3:22 looking back on the complete event of the ascension.

#### **5.3.2.9 *ἐκήρυξεν (κηρύσσω) – proclaim, preach (3:19)***

The word κηρύσσω is used in the Bible with the meanings 'to proclaim / announce / herald' or 'to preach the Gospel'. Its more general sense seems to be 'to proclaim', but it is often used in the NT to mean 'preaching the Gospel' (e.g., MAT 4:23; MRK 1:38; ROM 10:14).

In such cases where the meaning can be interpreted in more than one way, it is important to see, what word choices an author makes in his book. In the whole of his letter, whenever speaking about preaching the Gospel, Peter only uses the word εὐαγγελίζω (1:12, 25; 4:6). In 4:17 he uses a combination with the noun for Gospel (εὐαγγέλιον) with reference to people who refuse to accept the Gospel. He never uses κηρύσσω (or κήρυγμα; κήρυξ) in the sense of referring to the Gospel.

The only place where κηρύσσω appears is here in 1 Peter 3:19, where it most likely means 'to proclaim' (see also Hough 2011:14), even if the content of this proclamation is not stated. Feinberg comments on this uncertainty as follows: "There is nothing implicit in the meaning of the word which suggests the content of the heralding, but only that proclaiming or heralding is done" (1986:325). One therefore needs to look for its meaning in the context of the passage itself.

As in English the verb 'to proclaim' is transitive, therefore a translation would need to clearly state what was being proclaimed.

Dalton sees a parallel text with the verbs 'going' and 'proclaiming' in Jonah 1:2, where Jonah is sent to Nineveh to tell the people there that God will destroy them. "The text of Jon 1:2, especially in its Greek form, presents an interesting parallel to 1 Pet 3:19. God gives Jonah his prophetic mission with the words: "Arise and go (πορεύθητι) to Nineveh ... and make proclamation (κήρυξον) in it" (1989:155).

#### 5.3.2.9.1 A message of ... salvation?

Some commentators, who can see a message of salvation being proclaimed in Noah's time, place an emphasis on how this message could be encouraging to Peter's audience.

Arichea and Nida explain this position as follows:

If the spirits in prison are taken to be the generation of Noah who in turn are prototypes of the vilest and most desperate human beings, then the very fact that the gospel was proclaimed to them would give the greatest encouragement to Christians to proclaim also the Good News to the heathen around them, for they too can be touched by the love of God and the message of salvation (1980:116-117).

Even though this is a possible explanation, one might ask: How can it be encouraging for Christians suffering for their faith to see that the Good News was preached, and that nobody apart from the preacher Noah and his family were saved? The only encouragement I can see here is that Noah, the preacher of righteousness, did not have to die together with the unrighteous when God judged the world.

The other option which states that this text refers to salvation being offered to the dead is even weaker. How would this strengthen believers who suffer for their faith if, in the end, everybody gets a second chance anyway?

#### 5.3.2.9.2 A proclamation of ... condemnation, subjugation, victory, judgment?

If the content of the heralding was against 'evil spirit beings' then it is understood as a message of victory over them, resulting in their condemnation and judgment – all connected to Christ's work on the cross and his resurrection.

Hillyer explains the view of a message of judgment well and expresses its outcome for the suffering Christians:

If the meaning is that he proclaimed judgment, Jesus was declaring that the power of evil had been finally broken, and that those who had exercised its power faced certain and total ruin. Such an interpretation would greatly increase the confidence of Peter's readers to believe in their ultimate triumph by sharing in Christ's victory, however testing their present or anticipated situation (2011:114).

Dalton makes it even more tangible and applicable to the situation of the believers back then: "Christ's victory over the powers of evil means the Christian's victory over the same powers and their earthly representatives" (1989:105).

#### **5.3.2.10 Summary**

In summary, it can be said that a message of Christ's victory over all evil forces will bring the needed encouragement for the church of Peter's time suffering persecution. Even though they currently suffer and are being shamed, they know that Jesus has conquered all evil forces, and in the end they will be vindicated together with him.

#### **5.3.3 Significance for today's readers**

After having elaborated on what the message for the first audience might have been, the question of applicability to the present day is important. One major challenge as Heiser puts it is: "While God's Word was written for us, it wasn't written to us" (2015, loc. 99).

Being removed from the time the epistle was written by more than 2000 years does not make its application an easy task. While considering what meaning it might have for some Christian's life in Europe, it could apply quite differently to, for example, a Tanzanian and even more differently to a Christian in Nigeria.

Taking the background of an 'unseen realm' and its interplay with the 'visible world' into consideration, it might be easier for Africans to see greater significance since they are much more aware of a world beyond us. Especially for people in countries where Christians are being oppressed and persecuted for their faith (e.g., Nigeria, Algeria or Somalia), the message of 1 Peter 3:19 can also bring encouragement to them.

There is probably less impact in countries where the church is not facing persecution. This message of victory over the evil forces will be true, but it might not be felt as applying to everyday life.

## 5.4 Overview of interpretations – from then to now

In this section the development of interpretations will be shown from the time shortly after the letter was written until more recently. Which views existed when, and who defends which position? Dubis (2006) has published a survey of scholarly literature on 1 Peter since 1985, which has been very helpful for this purpose.

After the following overview, the three main strands will be evaluated while discussing the different aspects of the viewpoints brought forward by their proponents.

### 5.4.1 Overview of interpretations with timeline

According to Hiebert (1982:152) and others, the oldest view supposedly was that Christ went to proclaim his victory to evil supernatural beings.

After that came Justin Martyr (103-165 AD), Clement of Alexandria (150-216 AD) and Origen (185-254 AD) who saw in this passage a descent into hell. Dalton (1989:32) states that most likely Clement of Alexandria was first in linking 3:19 with a descent. Himes, referring to Senior explains the following: “Senior (2003, 103) suggests that Justin Martyr’s *Dialogue with Trypho* 72 is the first place where this view seems to appear in the early church” (2017, chap. 1PE 3:19-22).

Later on, Augustine (354-430 AD) introduced the understanding that it was Christ’s spirit working in Noah, preaching to Noah’s contemporaries. This might be interpreted to counteract the view of Christ’s descent with the perspective of offering salvation to dead people. Since this is not something the Bible teaches, Augustine found another way to explain 3:19 in keeping with his theology.

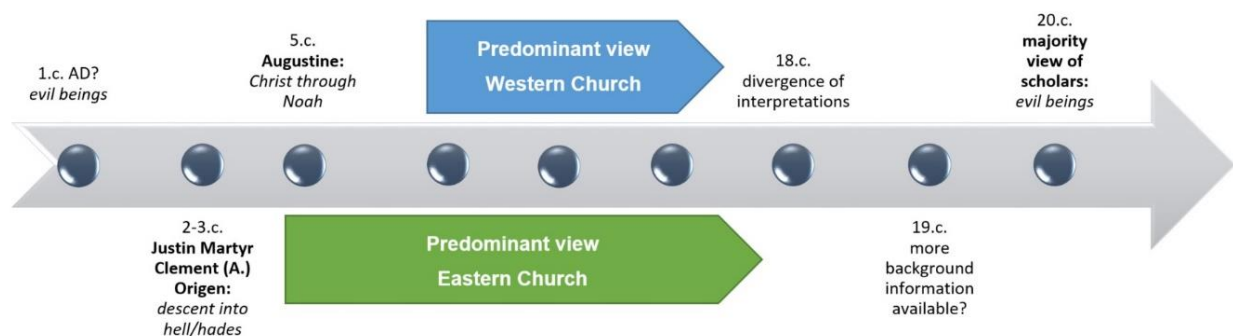
About the time in between then and more recent times, Feinberg (1986) states that two views were popular. With the Western Church, it was mostly the Augustinian view, whereas with the Eastern Church it was mainly Clement’s view of a descent.

In the time of the Reformation, nothing new developed apart from minor variations to the already existing views.

Feinberg comments that then, “in the period from the Enlightenment onward, there has been a great divergence in interpretation of the passage” (1986:311).

This might be a bit of an overstatement since it has gone from two main strands of interpretation to three, because the supposedly oldest view was considered again as a valid option. This might have been due to the fact that the book of 1 Enoch became accessible to the West, as Collins explains: “1 Enoch, [...] is fully preserved in Ethiopic and was made known to the Western world by the translation of R. Laurence in 1821” (2000:314). This obviously opened up a new window into Jewish thought of the Second Temple Period.

Figure 26: Timeline interpretations



As shown above (Figure 26), at least two different interpretations were available alongside each other for a long time, until the allegedly earliest first view was taken into consideration again and became the majority view in the scholarly world.

Below the three main strands are explained and evaluated. In addition, some of their main proponents are listed.

#### 5.4.2 Christ preaching to the dead

Many of the early church fathers (Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Origen) proposed that upon his death, Christ’s spirit descended to Hades and proclaimed salvation to human souls imprisoned there. It was therefore in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD when this interpretation was first proposed. A more recent proponent of this view is Goppelt (1978).

As can be seen in

Table 14 below, there are quite a few variations on who those humans might have been and what the message was that Christ proclaimed.

Table 14: Interpretation Christ preaching to the dead

Interpretation 'to whom'	Actor 'who'	When / how	What 'message'	Where
dead unbelievers from time of Noah	Christ not resurrected yet (his spirit, disembodied state)	descent during 'triduum mortis'	condemnation	Hell
all OT people (unbelievers)			good news (the Gospel)	
people of Noah's time who repented before dying			salvation	Sheol Hades
OT believers			repentance	
			release (into heaven)	

Commenting on the different interpretations, Himes states: "Few modern scholars of any theological persuasion hold to this position. The view seems to hinge on this passage referring specifically to Jesus' 'descent into hell', and scholars are less likely to see that event (if legitimate) as being portrayed here" (2017, chap. 1PE 3:19-22).

#### 5.4.2.1 ἐν ᾧ καὶ - in which also

This view connects the ἐν ᾧ καὶ back to πνεύματι at the end of 3:18. The proponents who work from a dichotomist view, see the 'spirit' as one of two parts of Jesus' existence (only his spirit, not his body). In his disembodied state (during his time in the grave) Christ's spirit goes to the 'spirits in prison'.

#### 5.4.2.2 τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ πνεύμασιν – the spirits in prison

The 'spirits' in this view are the souls of either Noah's unrepentant or last-minute repentant contemporaries or all Old Testament people – believing or not.

Ways in which φυλακῇ has been interpreted in this view:

- Robert Bellarmine, a Roman Catholic in the late 16th century, interpreted the 'prison' as **purgatory** (see Pierce 2009:10).
- Calvin understands the term φυλακῇ as '**watch tower**' and not as 'prison'. Himes cites Calvin for his interpretation: "[...] godly souls were watching in hope of the salvation promised them"; these godly souls were also watching for the coming of Christ, which brings to them the Holy Spirit (Calvin 2010, 113-14)" (2017, chap. 1PE 3:19-22).

- The place of the dead using different names: **Hades, Sheol** or **hell**.

### 5.4.2.3 πορευθείς - going

In this view the 'going' of Jesus' spirit is interpreted as a downward movement, a descent. Elliott explains:

According to one of the oldest cosmological views of the ancient world, the abode of the humans who died was the 'underworld,' known as Hadēs in Greek, *infern*a in Latin [...], and Sheol in Hebrew. Thus, to die and join the dead was thought to involve a 'descent' (katabasis, *descensus*) into the infernal regions (2008, chap. Detailed comment 2).

### 5.4.2.4 ἐκήρυξεν

The proponents of this view look at the usage and the meanings for κηρύσσω in the whole New Testament. There κηρύσσω is often used for the proclamation of the Gospel and therefore it is seen as having that meaning also in 1 Peter 3:19.

### 5.4.2.5 Reasons against this view

#### 5.4.2.5.1 Theological difficulty

Many scholars comment that this view has a serious theological difficulty (see Hiebert 1982:153; Feinberg 1986:326, Pierce 2009:22, Grudem 1991:111).

The difficulty as such is that the view of giving people a second chance after death contradicts the biblical teaching. Luke 16:19-31, 2 Corinthians 5:10 and Hebrews 9:27 show that humans will be judged according to what they have done during their lifetime on earth.

The following might be another theological or just a logical problem: Why would there be a reference to Noah's time if Peter wanted to talk about all OT saints or sinners, as some are claiming? Why can it not just be the people of Noah's time or maybe people who lived until that time?

#### 5.4.2.5.2 About κηρύσσω

The NT does not only use this word with the sense for 'proclaiming the Gospel', but it also uses it in a more neutral way. For Peter it becomes clear, that he uses it in the neutral sense of a 'proclamation', because for 'preaching the Good News' he uses the word εὐαγγελίζω.

#### 5.4.2.5.3 Reference to the Apostles' Creed

The Apostle's Creed is where people also can get the idea that Christ went to hell, and that this has to refer to the same event mentioned in 1 Peter 3:19.

However, Grudem questions the early influence of the phrase "He descended into hell..." in the Apostles' Creed, which he sees as a "late intruder" (1991:103). According to his explanation, the creed took shape between 200-750 AD. He elaborates: "[T]his means that until A.D. 650 no version of the Creed included this phrase with the intention of saying that Christ 'descended into hell.' The only version to include the phrase before 650 gives it a different meaning" (1991:105). Earlier, on p. 103, he explains that the meaning was that Christ was 'buried'.

#### 5.4.2.6 Place in the overall theme of 1 Peter

When looking at the general thrust of Peter's message, one really has to ask how a 'second chance' after death could have encouraged his readers who were facing many difficulties due to holding on to their Christian beliefs. Boring comments quite pointedly "[...] there is no motive for Christian faithfulness if all are finally redeemed anyway [...]" (1999:141).

Dalton's comment shows the issue in more detail:

How would the threatened Christians in Asia Minor be encouraged to stand firm by knowing that Christ had preached the gospel in the underworld to the most notorious sinners in Jewish-Christian tradition? If the mercy of Christ went beyond this life to the world of the dead, no matter how great the sin, surely the readers of 1 Peter would be encouraged to see less value in their present struggle to survive (1989:127).

It becomes clear that such an interpretation would hold not much value for the struggling Christians.

#### 5.4.3 Christ preaching through Noah

This view proposed by Augustine (354-430 AD) sees Christ's spirit active during the time of Noah, preaching repentance to his contemporaries. Some more recent proponents of this view are: Grudem (1986), Feinberg (1986), Clowney (1989) and Peters (2013).

The different aspects of this view are presented below (Table 15):

Table 15: Interpretation Christ through Noah

Interpretation 'to whom'	Actor 'who'	When / how	What 'message'	Where
Noah's sinful contemporaries (now spirits in prison/hell)	Spirit of Christ in Noah (pre-incarnate Christ)	it happened in Noah's time	repentance	'prison' in a more allegorical sense
			righteousness	spirits who are in prison <i>now</i> (Hades?)

According to Pierce this view was: "The predominant interpretation of the Western Church from Augustine up to the Reformation [...]" (2009:11).

Boring gives a possible reason how this interpretation could have evolved: "Augustine, partly in opposition to the Alexandrian view [descent and second chance], interpreted this text to mean that the pre-existent Spirit of Christ preached through Noah to the wicked generation that perished in the flood (cf. 1 Pet 1:11)" (1999:136-137).

It could therefore be said that this view developed to counter the view of a 'descent into Hades' offering salvation to humans because of its theological difficulties.

#### 5.4.3.1 ἐν ᾧ καὶ - in which also

Here the connection to 'spirit' is made back to 3:18 in another way, as it does usually not speak about a risen Christ. The word 'spirit' sees a pre-incarnate Christ being active before the events described in 3:18, where the text explains that Jesus suffered, died and was resurrected.

#### 5.4.3.2 τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ πνεύμασιν – the spirits in prison

These 'spirits' are understood in two different ways. Some see Noah's evil contemporaries being 'souls' or 'spirits' who were bound in the prison of sin, which makes this an allegorical interpretation. Others see it as referring to those people back then who are *now*, at the time of Peter's writing, 'spirits' in prison – the world of the dead.

The question is if it is natural in Greek to speak about active 'spirits' when referring to the 'souls' of dead people, or if it is necessary to specify 'spirits of people' if the intended meaning really is people (see also Storms 2018:339). In Revelation 6:9,

when the text clearly means humans the Greek says: “τὰς ψυχὰς τῶν ἐσφαγμένων” (“*the souls of those who had been slain*”).

#### **5.4.3.3 πορευθεῖς - going**

This ‘going’ is interpreted as an activity of Christ’s ‘soul’ or ‘spirit’ in or through Noah (1PE 1:11) back in the time when he was building the ark.

#### **5.4.3.4 ἐκήρυξεν**

As Noah in 2 Peter 2:5 is called a ‘preacher of righteousness’, this view sees the message being one of repentance or judgment.

#### **5.4.3.5 Reasons against this view**

In an attempt to understand this complex text, to interpret it as allegory would be questionable. Also, as Bandstra rightly comments, “The Bible never says that humans are ‘imprisoned’ ” (2003:123).

Osborne comments correctly on another point: “[...] there is no biblical evidence for a Christophany in the form of Noah (Jesus entering Noah and speaking through him); 2 Pet 2:5 speaks of Noah preaching, but not of Christ speaking through him” (2011:225). Marshall, supporting Osborne’s claim, states: “The major weakness of this view is that Noah is not named as the one through whom Christ preached” (1991:124). On the basis of reading all the verses in the Bible that refer to Noah, it becomes clear that nowhere is he called a ‘prophet’.

The parallel passage used from 1 Peter 1:10-11 has to be carefully looked at and should not just be taken as support for this view. This is what it says: “*Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.*”

This passage does not focus on what the prophets were saying to other people. When the ‘Spirit of Christ’ worked in them, the aim was to reflect on, discover and illuminate Christ’s future work, which was to a certain extent revealed to them.

It seems discordant with the flow of the argument coming from 3:18 to interpret the ‘going’ of Jesus’ spirit back to Noah. What sense would it make having talked about

suffering, death and resurrection to then jump to an event that has nothing to do with Christ's work on the cross just mentioned (see also Hillyer 2011:114)?

The word πνεύματι of 3:18 gets a double interpretation in this view. First, it talks about the resurrection of Christ, as this is the crucial part of Christ's victory and the Christian faith (1CO 15:14). Second, it then applies the meaning of a pre-incarnate Christ (his 'spirit') to the same word.

Another issue is the possible meaning for πνεῦμα which, as already seen above, "by itself is hardly ever used in the Bible for departed human 'spirits'. (The one exception is Heb 12:23.)" (Osborne 2011:225).

Lastly and "more importantly, this view fails to do justice to the contextual link extending to 3:22, at which point Christ is said to rule over the angelic, and specifically the demonic, realm" (Charles 2006:339).

#### **5.4.3.6 Place in the overall theme of 1 Peter**

According to McKnight when interpreting these verses "one needs to recognize how easy it is to drift into the problem verses (3:19, 21) and lose sight of the way in which these particularly disputable passages fit into the general theme of persecution and suffering" (1996:217).

What would the impact of this information be for the suffering church of that time? It would be discouraging to have Noah as an example paralleled with their suffering for Christ, seeing that not even one soul repented and got saved!

The only encouragement could be that, even though Noah and his family were few they still got saved while the others died in God's judgment.

#### **5.4.4 Christ's proclamation to evil spirits**

This view explains the 'spirits in prison' as evil spirits (fallen angels or demons) often connected to the events mentioned in Genesis 6:1-4. Either during 'triduum mortis' (seen as a descent into Hades or hell) or on the occasion of his ascent, Christ goes to them. The message proclaimed is either one of Christ's victory over them or the announcement of their final condemnation.

This interpretation seems to be the oldest way of understanding the ‘spirits in prison’ (see Hiebert 1982:152; Doedens 2013:251, Keener 1993, chap. 1PE 3:18-19). It is also the position taken by the majority of scholars today (see Dubis 2010:120; Himes 2017). Some proponents are Dalton (1965), Reicke (1981), Elliott (2000), Fruchtenbaum (2005), Jobes (2005), Pierce (2009), Heiser (2015) and Storms (2018).

Nevertheless, there are still other variations (see Table 16 below) being brought forward by scholars who in general see the ‘spirits’ as evil beings (mostly supernatural).

Table 16: Interpretation ‘fallen angels’

Interpretation ‘to whom’	Actor ‘who’	When / how	What ‘message’	Where
Evil spirits (fallen angels, demons)	Christ before resurrection (disembodied state, his spirit)	during triduum mortis, descent	condemnation	Hades
				Hell
Evil spirits (supernatural <u>and</u> human)	Christ resurrected (his whole being)	during ascent	victory	Prison

#### 5.4.4.1 ἐν ᾧ καὶ - in which also

A few variations have been shown above on how those words are understood. Some see a focus on the agent as the Holy Spirit who enabled Christ to go to the spirits in prison. Others see them as referring to the disembodied spirit state (between death and resurrection) of Christ when he went. Again, others see them as referring to the risen Christ in his resurrected, renewed or even ‘spiritual’ body.

Du Toit connects 3:18 and 3:19 with the following summary: “Lastly, the phrase ‘made alive by the spirit’ in 3:18 refers to the bodily resurrection of Christ, in which case the activities in 3:19 are probably after the resurrection” (2007:66).

#### 5.4.4.2 *τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ πνεύμασιν – the spirits in prison*

Here a connection is made between the spirits of 1 Peter 3:19 and the ‘sons of God’ in the story of Genesis 6:1-4. Other Bible passages used as parallels are 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6-7. Also 1 Peter 3:22 is seen as a parallel statement to 3:19.

At the same time, some see obvious references to the extra-canonical book of 1 Enoch, which seemingly was quite influential and supposedly widely known at the time when 1 Peter was written.

Himes comments on a possible connection between 1 Peter and 1 Enoch as follows:

[...] although any direct link between 1 Peter and 1 Enoch may be debated, there are undeniable similarities between 1 Peter 3:19-22; 2 Peter 2:4-5, and Jude 6 (see the discussion in Elliott 2000, 701-2). Furthermore, since Jude shares inescapable parallels with 1 Enoch - parallels that would seem to indicate citation (compare Jude 14-15 with 1 Enoch 1.1.8-9; Jude 6 with 1 Enoch 1.10.12) - and since 2 Peter has so many clear parallels with Jude, it is difficult to dismiss the possibility that both 2 Peter and Jude give credence to at least some of what 1 Enoch claims regarding the ‘Watchers’ of Genesis 6 [...] Himes 2017, chap. 1PE 3:19-22.

Keener gives a summary on how Jews long ago understood the meaning of ‘spirits’: “Except for most later rabbis, nearly all ancient Jews read Genesis 6:1-3 as a reference to the fall of angels in Noah’s day (1 Pet 3:20); after the flood, they were said to be imprisoned (so also 2 Pet 2:4; Jude 6), either below the earth or in the atmosphere (cf. 1 Pet 3:22)” (1993, chap. 1PE 3:18-19).

For MacArthur (2004:209) it is clear that these ‘spirits’ must be understood as non-humans, as the Greek text does not use the word normally used for ‘soul’ (ψυχή).

Even though many scholars interpret this passage with a connection to ‘fallen angels’, it is not as clear cut as it seems. Reicke, for example, sees a mix of both humans and non-humans as possibly stressing the aspect of ‘evil beings’:

It was a preaching before the most dreadful sinners - those spirits that were in prison since they had been disobedient in the days of Noah. This undoubtedly refers to the angels mentioned in Gen vi 1-4 who fell into sin and thus were responsible for the flood. Probably the people who perished in the flood are also numbered with these ‘spirits’. They were the descendants of the fallen angels, and in the story of Gen vi received the punishment meted out as a consequence of the sin of the angels with the daughters of men (1981:109).

Pierce claims that it is impossible to clearly identify the 'spirits' as supernatural beings just with the meanings used for πνεῦμα in biblical or extra-biblical texts (2009:198). In his view, both options, human and supernatural beings in combination, might be the key to understanding correctly the identity of the 'spirits'. This should then give the most encouragement to Peter's audience: "Thus, 1 Pet 3:18-22 offers comfort to a marginalized community: because of the victorious resurrection of Christ, all forces of evil, both human and cosmic, are now under the lordship of Christ" (2009:239).

#### 5.4.4.3 πορευθεῖς - going

How this word is interpreted depends mainly on the understanding of the location of the 'prison' in which these evil spirits are detained. Some see possible places as being in 'lower regions', such as Hades, hell, Sheol, abyss, Tartarus. Others say that during the time of Peter's writing the idea of where these 'spirits' are kept shifted to an understanding of being located in the 'lower heavens' (see DeSilva 2004:854 referring to 2 Enoch 7 and Dalton 1989:179-180). This would mean somewhere 'between' the visible world below and the invisible world above.

##### 5.4.4.3.1 Descent

A few scholars understand Christ's 'going' as a 'descent' during the time of his disembodied state (during the 'triduum mortis'). While his body lay dead in the grave, his spirit was active. Heiser (2015, loc. 1984) and Fruchtenbaum (2005:362) seem to be sure of their assumption of a 'descent', whereas Gundry keeps his view a bit more tentative:

The preaching of Christ to the spirits in prison (3:18-20) most probably means that during the time between his death and resurrection he descended in disembodied form into hell to proclaim his triumph over the demonic spirits whom God had imprisoned there because of their corrupting the human race at the time of Noah, just before the flood (2012:528).

##### 5.4.4.3.2 Ascent

Many other scholars see Christ's 'going' as his 'ascent' to heaven. One argument mentioned for this position is that the word πορεύομαι is never used in the NT with the notion of descent, whereas it is sometimes used to indicate an ascent (see 1PE 3:22, ACT 1:10).

As already shown above in the section about the structural formation of the text (5.2.4.4), it seems to be a valid option to understand 3:19 and 3:22 as referring to the same event. If that is the case, then both times the word *προεΐομαι* can be interpreted as upward movement (see also Osborne 2011:228).

DeSilva explains: “In this interpretation 1 Peter 3:19 and 22 refer to [...] the same movement on Jesus’ part (his ascent after his resurrection), not his activity among the dead between his own death and resurrection, which would then be out of sequence with 1 Peter 3:18” (2004:854).

#### **5.4.4.4 *ἐκήρυξεν***

As shown in Table 16 above, the proclamation has been variedly interpreted, though always connected to Christ’s victory on the cross. Some see it as a proclamation of triumph over the fallen angels (e.g., Keener 1993). MacArthur interprets the proclamation event with different nuances: “The fallen angels’ long effort to demonize people, hinder the redemptive purpose of God, and prevent the ‘seed’ of the woman (Gen. 3:15) from crushing Satan’s head and sending the demons into the lake of fire (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 19:20; 20:10, 14, 15) was ultimately foiled at the Cross” (2004:215).

Another aspect, according to Davids, is the idea of judgment: “[...] it seems likely that this passage in 1 Peter refers to a proclamation of judgment by the resurrected Christ to the imprisoned spirits, that is, the fallen angels, sealing their doom as he triumphed over sin and death and hell, redeeming human beings” (1990:140-141).

Pierce again sees a combination of recipients as possible, and therefore, to him, it is unclear what the exact message was: “Christ’s proclamation in 1 Peter could in fact be purposefully vague enough that evil in all of its forms have now begun to exist in a defeated state based upon the actions of Christ” (2009:239).

#### **5.4.4.5 *Reasons against this view***

Although this view is supposedly the oldest and the one accepted by the majority of scholars today there are still a few open questions that need to be acknowledged.

##### **5.4.4.5.1 *The influence and importance of 1 Enoch***

Grudem (1986:16-18) and Feinberg (1986:321) question the fact that 1 Enoch was as widely known as it has been proposed by others. Also, if the readers were mainly

Gentiles, how would they understand the importance of the message, possibly without any Jewish background knowledge? For me, this raises doubts on the importance of 1 Enoch for this view.

Osborne also comments on this matter questioning somewhat the influence and importance of 1 Enoch:

However, I do not see Enoch being so central, for I think Peter drew on the whole Jewish tradition in developing this little side story here. His emphasis is on what the glorified Jesus did (not on the tradition) and its significance for the readers' encouragement by realizing they share not just in Jesus' suffering but in his glory as well (2011:226).

It is also possible that the readers knew a text like Ephesians 6:12, where the connection between human persecutors and the spiritual forces behind them are made.

Feinberg, who does not support the 'fallen angels' view, stresses the idea of taking meaning out of the context of 1 Peter: "Appealing to Enoch gives us a clue as to what Peter could mean. Only the context of 1 Peter 3 can tell us what he does mean" (1986:322). This context will help in understanding the meaning of Peter's message in section 5.4.4.6 below.

#### [5.4.4.5.2 Fallen angels of Genesis 6 = spirits of 1 Peter 3:19?](#)

Feinberg questions the parallel passages cited by others: "Even if Genesis 6, 2 Peter 2, and Jude 6 all refer to angels in the days of Noah, that does not prove that 1 Pet 3:19-20 does, too. Asserting that it does without other evidence begs the question" (1986:324). Yes, there is no 100% certainty, but if Feinberg argues like this, how can anyone ever be sure about possible parallel passages in the Bible?

#### [5.4.4.5.3 The reason for the flood](#)

Grudem cannot see angelic beings here (3:20) as the ones being talked about: "These phrases indicate that only human spirits can be intended, for nowhere in the Bible or in Jewish literature outside of the Bible are angels ever said to have disobeyed 'during the building of the ark' " (1988:167).

This statement of Grudem indicates that he does not seem to see 1 Peter 3:19 being paralleled by 2 Peter 2:4, Jude 6 and Genesis 6. I am also not sure what he makes of

1 Enoch as Jewish literature. 1 Enoch clearly talks about a time span that could refer to a time during Noah's life, even though being a bit more implicit. Jared (GEN 5:18) is mentioned as living at the time when the 'angels' started to rebel (1 Enoch 6:1, 6), and he was still alive way into Noah's lifetime.<sup>29</sup>

An argument from the literary structure to bring Grudem's view into question could be that it breaks the flow of the information of suffering, death, resurrection and ascension if suddenly people are in focus now.

The question remains why Peter calls them '*spirits, who rebelled*' and not '*spirits of people, who rebelled*' (see also Storms 2018:339), but this might only be a hint as it is questionable how Greek would express these different ideas.

#### **5.4.4.6 Place in the overall theme of 1 Peter**

If the goal of 1 Peter is to encourage Christians in their sufferings and to strengthen their faith, then this view would make the most sense. Charles explains:

The burden of 1 Peter, it should be reiterated, is the endurance of Christians, not the salvation of 'spirits' (however one might define them). The point of Christ's preaching to the spirits, then, the notion of which reaches a climax in v. 22, is to show that Jesus has triumphed over and exposed the very powers of evil themselves - forces that are hostile to Christ and Christ's disciples (2006:340).

Boring (see also Wright 2011:83) explains that the 'fallen angels' (GEN 6:1-6) were "later understood as the demonic powers behind the world's systemic evil" (1999:140). DeSilva also sees this as a valid point of this view, connecting evil beings with the people intimidating the Christians: "Christ's declaration of victory over the fallen angels would then assure the believers of their victory over the hostile forces and the demonic power ultimately behind those forces (see 1 Pet 5:8-9)" (2004:854).

Another helpful passage on this connection between enemies of the Christians and evil spirits is Ephesians 6:12 where Paul states that: "*For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world,*

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<sup>29</sup> According to the genealogy of Genesis 5:18-32 and the times mentioned there, Jared would have lived during 366 years of Noah's life.

*against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places” (NLT 07).*

As already shown in the section about literary structure, some see the statement of 3:19 as being paralleled by 3:22. Osborne, who sees this to be a valid parallel, states:

This journey of Jesus (‘went’) was at his ascension (cf. 3:22) through the heavens, and the ‘prison’ for the evil spirits was this earthly sphere (perhaps the upper heavens of it, perhaps the abyss of Rev 9:1-2; 11:7; cf. Jude 6) to which Satan and the fallen angels were “thrown down” (Rev 12:7-9) [...] The proclamation told the evil spirits that their power had been broken (2011:225).

## **5.5 Conclusion**

Even though not every question is answered, I see the interpretation of ‘fallen angels’ as being the one that fits best with the overall message of 1 Peter. It might therefore also be why it is the option preferred by modern scholars – and possibly the option preferred by the first Christians.

From my point of view, in the other two interpretations there are more questions left unanswered and more is unclear, either from linguistic arguments or from the overall theme which does not seem to fit.

Michaels summarizes nicely how God is in control for those Christians living a hard life, facing intense challenges inflicted by the non-Christians around them:

Vindication is real, and Christ’s vindication belongs precisely to those who suffer. The purpose of Peter’s reference to ‘disobedient spirits’ is not to identify these spirits directly with the slanderers and accusers of Christians in the Roman Empire in Peter’s time, but simply to reassure the epistle’s readers that if Christ can ‘subdue’ or ‘tame’ the former [disobedient spirits], how much more easily can he deal with the latter (1988:221).

Yes, Christ has won against all powers of evil. Even though Satan roams around (1PE 5:8) and his helpers are obviously active, some of them have been already imprisoned and incapacitated (1PE 3:19). They all are the losers in history, despite the apparent power that they often display in the world. Christ has won a complete victory over *all* evil powers (1PE 3:22)!

## 6 Summary

The previous chapters have shown different challenging areas that need to be considered when translating 1 Peter 3:19 into Kisangu. This chapter will present a summary by applying all the factors explained previously to a sample front translation (FT) of 1 Peter 3:18-20a for Kisangu. To make access easier for the reader, the FT will be presented in English (and not in Swahili as is usual for the MCP). For the word 'spirits', two Kisangu terms will be offered as options and weighed against each other.

### 6.1 Factors to consider

#### 6.1.1 *Translation approach of the Sangu team*

For the Sangu this is the first Bible translation to be published that we know of. The MCP has developed a writing system that has been agreed upon with the Sangu language committee. Even though written materials are now being produced by the MCP, no one else is promoting reading and writing. The Sangu come from an oral culture, so they are not used to reading in their mother tongue, but they will love to hear the translation being read to them.

No Bible commentaries and no other background materials are available to them in their language. Some who are interested in additional resources to help in understanding the Bible could possibly get books in Swahili, but those are usually hard to get hold of or are too expensive. This means that the reader normally just gets what he reads in the translation of the Sangu NT.

The only way to help the average Sangu reader get a better picture of a passage is by adding explanatory footnotes and cross references. The challenge here is that the Sangu are not used to reading, and even less to reading footnotes and making sense of cross references. This can however be remedied by means of training on a Scripture Engagement (SE) course, where people are trained how to read the Bible. On the basis that not many people might get this training, the Sangu team therefore usually only add short footnotes and a few cross references.

As already mentioned, the Sangu translation style is meaning-based, which is recommended by many people working in the field of Bible translation for people

groups like the Sangu: “[...] for groups just emerging from illiteracy [...] an *idiomatic* translation is much to be preferred” (Beekman and Callow 2002:24).

Another point to be considered is that the first draft of a book comes directly from the adaptation of the MCP FT. As this FT has been done by another language team, their translation approach has to be understood in order to see if it fits the Sangu team’s approach, or if changes need to be made. The Malila team, who produced the FT for 1 Peter, have a different translation approach (a more literal modified version). For the Sangu team, this means that they have to ask themselves if the first text drafted through adaptation really fits their translation concept.

In this passage, the MCP FT mostly follows the SUV by providing some extra information in the text. The MCP FT reads<sup>30</sup> *“he went to the dead and preached to them the message/news of/about God”*. It makes clear that humans are being referred to (i.e., by the word choice ‘wafu’ [‘dead.people’]) and that Christ preached the ‘message of God’, but leaves open what exactly that message was and what his purpose was in doing so. This allows for the possible interpretation of a second chance of conversion after death. Another difference is that the ‘prison’ is not mentioned (death or the world of the dead might have been interpreted as ‘prison’).

The SUV here translates<sup>31</sup> *“he went to the spirits who are staying/sitting in prison and preached to them; <sup>20</sup> people who did not obey long ago...”*. In the SUV clearly spirits of dead people are in view, but the content of the preaching is left unstated.

Not surprisingly the FT resulted in quite a diversity of translations on the MCP. Two languages made use of a verse bridge (3:18-19) in order to restructure the content and to have Christ preach before his bodily resurrection.

Two of six languages who stayed with the interpretation of ‘dead people’ added information about their imprisonment. They also saw the need to clarify the content of Christ’s message, which in one language is ‘judgment’ and ‘the message of God’, and in the other it is ‘Christ’s victory’ and ‘their judgment’.

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<sup>30</sup> The Swahili text of the MCP FT is: *“akaenda kwa wafu akawahubiria habari ya Mungu.”*

<sup>31</sup> The Swahili text of the SUV is: *“aliwaendea roho waliokaa kifungoni, akawahubiri; <sup>20</sup> watu wasipotii zamani...”*

None of these six languages made use of footnotes in order to show another possibility or to explain deviations from the SUV.

Three languages decided that the interpretation of ‘evil spirits’ is more in line with the context of the letter. All of them added the information about the imprisonment of the evil spirits. Two of them made the content of the proclamation explicit (Christ’s victory). One does not state the content of the message. Only one of these three languages made use of footnotes indicating that other translations have interpreted the ‘spirits’ as ‘dead people’.

Below a summary of all these variations is shown in Table 17:

*Table 17: MCP translation variations on 1 Peter 3:19*

<b>MCP No. of Languages</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>	<b>Content of proclamation</b>	<b>Use of footnotes</b>
6	dead people (their spirits)	(3) preach, (1) spread the [(1) good] News of God	(6) not used
		(1) judgment and news of God	
		(1) victory of Christ and judgment	
3	evil spirits (evil angels)	(2) victory	(1) to show different interpretation and possible cross references
		(1) not stated	(2) not used

The challenge in 3:19 for the Sangu team now is that they want to show the reader what the text means. Is this even a realistic goal? Beekman and Callow’s comment on ‘dynamic fidelity’ might help, but the challenge remains:

Dynamic fidelity requires that a translation communicate familiar or unfamiliar information meaningfully; it does not generally require that unfamiliar information be recast by substituting concepts already known nor does dynamic fidelity require an answer to all of the questions which might be raised about a topic under discussion (2002:41).

After this recap on the Sangu translation approach and its challenges, now Sangu terminology which could be used for ‘spirits’ will be explained.

### 6.1.2 Sangu terminology

The following terms (see Table 18 below) came out of the interviews with the Sangu community on their view of humans and the spirit world. This terminology could be used for either a literal version or a meaning-based translation. There is no local terminology available to say ‘spirit’ with a more neutral meaning.

If the Sangu decided to interpret ‘spirits’ as dead people, they could use two terms. They could just say *vina vafwile* (‘the ones who died’) or they could use *manguluvi* which are what the spirits of the deceased are called.

If the Sangu preferred to see ‘spirits’ as ‘evil spirits’ (non-human) they could either use *malungu* (‘demons’), or they could say *vamalayikha avavi* (‘evil angels’).

Table 18: Sangu terminology for the ‘spirits’ in 1 Peter 3:19

Human origin	Supernatural origin
<i>vina vafwile</i> (dead people, lit. ‘the ones who died’)	<i>vamalayikha</i> (angels)
<i>manguluvi</i> (spirits of deceased)	<i>malungu</i> (demons)

There is really no other option when talking about the ‘soul’ or ‘spirit’ as a separate part of a person, since the Sangu do not dissect a person. When talking about feelings, they use *numbula* (‘heart’) to do that. Also not separable from the whole person, is the *munsinsi munang’ana ga wuumi* which is ‘the little shadow of life’, which indicates that a person is alive. Once a person has passed away, this shadow does not exist anymore. The dead person then becomes a *linguluvi* (‘the spirit of a deceased’, or ‘ancestral spirit’).

Depending on the decision of how to interpret the ‘spirits’, the Sangu can choose between two terms each (see Table 18 above).

### 6.1.3 Influence from Swahili – the LWC

The influence from the SUV should not be underestimated. Even though not many people have their own Bible, some might have one (mostly the SUV) and could compare the SUV with the Kisangu translation. As the SUV is almost seen as ‘the original’, the team has to be careful in how to render different decisions, which plays into the factor of acceptability or perceived authenticity.

As has been shown, the SUV decided to interpret 'spirits' as dead people (possibly their 'souls', 'spirits') who are imprisoned. Christ goes to them and preaches a message which is not defined in the SUV.

In order to gain acceptance for a new translation, it is crucial that the translation team involve the language community as much as possible. It is also important to explain early on that the intention is to produce a translation which communicates in an easily understandable way. These steps and other factors for getting acceptability came out of the interviews about the influence from Swahili. Other 'tools' have been mentioned to help people accept a different translation. Footnotes can be used to show the reader that the team was aware of another translation decision. Cross references can help to anchor a decision directly upon Scripture. Sometimes also background information, either in the introduction to a book or in footnotes, can help.

After deciding that the text indicates 'evil spirits' (non-human), then this translation goes into the body of the text with a footnote to indicate the different translation approach used by others, who have come to the different conclusion that 'spirits of the deceased' are meant.

#### **6.1.4 Exegetical summary**

The exegesis of the passage has shown that it is less likely that the πνεύμασιν refer to spirits of dead people. It is more likely that 'evil spiritual forces' are meant which have been conquered by Jesus' victory (paralleled by 3:22).

This means that the Sangu team have two possible terms they could use: *vamalayikha avavi* ('bad angels') or *malungu* ('demons'). As angels are usually seen as good in their behaviour, it would need to be made explicit that these angels are evil and that they had rebelled against God. The term for 'demons' is inherently showing an evil character and would therefore not need an additional description.

#### **6.1.5 Theological implications for the local church**

A final, but very important matter, are the implications of such an interpretation for the local church. What does this passage teach the church? Certainly, there should be no door open to false teaching that contradicts the message of the Bible.

Abernathy sees it as crucial that ambiguity in 3:19 is avoided:

The translator must decide whether the spirits are people or angels, whether the proclamation is of victory or an evangelistic message, and whether the prison is a place of detainment for fallen angels or the abode of the dead. Because these choices will have theological significance for the indigenous church in the receptor-language community, the translator must be especially careful to avoid ambiguity or imprecision here (2001, sec. Ac. 2).

Also, Hill states that translation and the word choices made do not happen in a vacuum, but that this will have a significant impact on the local church community and the worldview of the people who read the translation:

Translation has significant theological implications. The terms that are used affect the way people perceive of both their traditional world as well as the relationship of Christianity to it, and this has a significant effect on local theology and the growth of the church. Scripture translation can effect worldview change (2007:16).

This all shows that the Sangu translation team have to think carefully about their translation decision and the impact it might have on their people.

#### **6.1.6 Advice from translation experts**

When searching for advice from specialized resources, one can find different recommendations. These vary from keeping ambivalence to making explicit who is being meant and what was being proclaimed.

##### **6.1.6.1 On the identity of πνεύμασιν**

The UBS Handbook (Arichea and Nida 1980:115) provides much background on the discussion of the identity of the ‘spirits’, but does not give specific advice on how to deal with the challenge.

SIL’s *Translator’s Notes* (Kelly 2018) recommend using a term for ‘spirits’ which could be interpreted in both ways – dead people or evil spirits. The reason mentioned is: “Because the interpretation of these verses is uncertain, it is best to translate them literally. Supply as little implied information as possible” (2018, chap. 1PE 3:19-22).

Realizing that not all languages might have such general terms, the advice is then to choose the interpretation of the ‘evil spirits’ because this view represents the majority view of the more recent commentators (Kelly 2018).

Abernathy (2001), as mentioned earlier, recommends a clear translation which is neither ambiguous nor imprecise. He does so while picturing the local church (pastor and congregation) who want to understand what this passage means. Abernathy refers to parallel passages like 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6 and also Genesis 6:1-4. As another reason, he brings in the chiasmic structure of the passage where he sees 3:19 being paralleled by 3:22.

#### **6.1.6.2 On the meaning of κηρύσσω**

Even though the ‘proclamation’ is not the focal discussion point, it still is of interest how this could be translated.

The UBS Handbook (Archea and Nida 1980:116) again only presents what other translations have done without providing explicit advice.

Kelly (2018) recommends that if one has to choose, this going in tandem with the identity of the ‘spirits’, one should go with interpreting the content of the proclamation as being one of Christ’s victory over all spiritual forces of darkness.

## **6.2 Translation – a suggested version**

### **6.2.1 Front translation for the Sangu team**

Weaving all the previous discussions together, I will now provide a FT below (Figure 27) that I suggest for the Sangu team to follow. In order to make this text directly accessible to the reader, it is written in English (and not in Swahili or Kisangu) while explaining what Kisangu terms could be used for ‘spirits’. Cross references and a footnote are shown below the text.

This front or base translation aims for straight access to the meaning on these two matters – identity of the ‘spirits’ and the content of Christ’s proclamation.

In further sections below, additional helps will be explained which could help the readers (e.g., footnotes, cross references, etc.).

Figure 27: Front translation for 1 Peter 3:18-20a for Kisangu

<sup>18</sup> Even Christ himself suffered for doing good. He who was sinless died on behalf of the sinners once, but that counts forever. He did this to open up the way to God for you. He was killed but then he was resurrected. <sup>19</sup> **After he rose from the dead, Christ also went to the forces of darkness and announced his victory<sup>i</sup>. These evil angels are imprisoned and awaiting their final judgment<sup>ii 20a</sup> because in the past they had rebelled against God<sup>iii</sup>. This happened in the time when Noah was building the ark and God patiently waited before bringing the flood.**”

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<sup>i</sup> Read 1 Peter 3:22.

<sup>ii</sup> Read 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6.

<sup>iii</sup> Read Genesis 6:1-4.

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<sup>1</sup> 3:19 - Other translations say, *He went to the dead who are imprisoned and preached to them.*

The FT follows the majority view of more recent scholarship. This decision also takes into account that it is less likely that the text refers to spirits of deceased people.

For the Sangu team there are now two terms possible to translate ‘spirits’ into Kisangu: *malungu* (‘demons’) and *malayikha avavi* (‘evil angels’). The *malungu* (‘demons’) are inherently evil whereas the *malayikha* (‘angels’) would be good beings, servants of God. The addition of *avavi* (‘evil’) and the rebellion against God in 20a will show the reader that in the beginning these angels were good, but then they turned their backs on God and therefore did something very evil.

In 3:19a I partly followed suggestion number 1 of SIL’s *Translator’s Notes* which is that “Christ proclaimed his victory over the spiritual forces of darkness” (Kelly 2018, chap. 1PE 3:19). This makes a link between the ‘fallen angels’ and the larger group (‘forces of darkness’, possibly summarized in 3:22) which has been conquered by Christ’s victory. On purpose I left out the word ‘spiritual’ that I had used in my ‘Huber meaning-based translation’ because this word and its translation is another challenge for Kisangu. The Sangu can say ‘powers of darkness’ or also ‘evil powers of darkness’, whereas it is already clear in the first one that those powers are evil.

As shown above (Figure 27), I also recommend cross references and at least one footnote. These will be explained in the following sections.

## 6.2.2 Additional helps

### 6.2.2.1 Footnotes

Since this translation deviates from the SUV, I recommend a footnote which indicates that the translation team was aware of another interpretation. This shall serve as a defence mechanism in case readers start questioning the authenticity of the Sangu translation.

It would certainly be helpful to make more information available to the reader in a longer footnote, providing some of the background involved in interpreting this verse. The challenge though is that the average Sangu reader might be overwhelmed by all these explanations in a Bible version that is aiming at the average Sangu reader.

Wendland also ponders the challenge of the lack of biblical background knowledge in a longer footnote of his book *Translating the Literature of Scripture*:

A given target audience simply cannot completely or correctly perceive and understand what they have no experience or education about. Inadequate knowledge of the biblical background is undoubtedly the greatest conceptual barrier that people face as they read or hear the Scriptures; it is more of a barrier than a poor translation. [...] The great need for such contextualizing information about the total biblical setting offers a serious challenge to contemporary Scripture communicators worldwide (2004:168).

If the aim was to produce a Kisangu study Bible, then such elaborate explanations would be helpful in order to give pastors, evangelists and people who seriously study the Bible more background knowledge on the issues involved.

### 6.2.2.2 Cross references

The first cross reference (to 3:22) could possibly be left out, if the reader was paying close attention to the whole paragraph of 3:18-22. But for average readers it might still be helpful to be reminded that 3:19 is being paralleled by 3:22 in this chiastic structure.

The second cross reference, referring to 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6, can help the reader to read other passages of the Bible that are possibly speaking about the same group of evil beings.

The third cross reference, to Genesis 6:1-4, points the reader to the incident that happened with these 'evil angels' around Noah's time.

### 6.2.3 Challenges

#### 6.2.3.1 Word choice of 'evil angels' vs. 'demons'

Even though in the research interviews the Sangu have explained how they understand the concept of *malayikha* ('angels'), I wonder about the effect it has when this word is used. Nida claims that: " 'Angels' are quite foreign to most animistic cultures" (1947:216). This is most likely also true for the Sangu. They do not have an original Kisangu word which they use for 'angels' but they use a loan word from Swahili ('*malaiika*') that is then used along with Kisangu features (pronunciation and Ncl. placement) – *vamalayikha*. It is questionable what happens when Sangu readers learn about 'evil angels who rebelled against God'. Was this rebellion only something between them and God? Or did this also have an effect on humans? Are they able to influence humans?

The term *malungu* ('demons') is a more natural Kisangu term, and this group, together with the *manguluvi* ('ancestral spirits') were the only two groups of spirit beings mentioned in the interviews with Sangu speakers. All other groups of beings were only discussed when being asked if there was anything else that existed in that invisible realm. The *malungu* ('demons') are perceived as evil and they do influence people.

Hill, who favours the use of local language terminology warns about challenges that arise in Bible translation: "Local worldview categories can be ignored, but they do not disappear" (2007:11). Even though the term 'evil angels' might be the best fit for the exegesis of 3:19, the question remains whether it might be better to choose the term *malungu* ('demons'), which is more easily connected by the Sangu people to evil beings who influence people.

In this case, some community testing could help. It might be helpful to read the translation of 3:18-19 using either term once and then asking Kisangu speakers about what they understand in each version.

#### 6.2.3.2 Impact

Another challenge is the impact this verse will have on the life of Sangu believers. Does it really speak into their situation? Does it help them to understand that Christ is victor over all evil spirits and that they do not have to fear them? Sangu Christians are not being persecuted in the same way as Peter's audience was. But they still might

feel and experience some kind of rejection by their community if they behave differently from what the others expect.

Sangu believers might leave traditional 'medicines' aside while farming, because they do not think of them as having any power at all. They might not participate in ancestral offerings anymore and possibly have other burial ceremonies. They might be seen as a threat to the peace between the visible and invisible realm where ancestors 'live' in harmony with their descendants who are still on earth.

This passage certainly was an encouragement to Peter's audience. He showed them how they could persevere while living in unity with their Saviour Jesus Christ who had conquered all 'evil spirits' who were either directly or indirectly (through human persecutors) mistreating them.

In that sense the Sangu might see a greater impact of 3:19 on their lives than 'Westerners', who often do not see any connection between the visible world and an unseen realm.

#### **6.2.4 Summary**

As has been shown above, there are still challenges left in deciding how to translate the 'spirits' of 1 Peter 3:19 into Kisangu. Along with the exegetical decision that favours an understanding of 'evil spirit beings', it would need to be tested with Kisangu speakers whether the possibly exegetically more 'correct' term of *malayikha avavi* ('evil angels') should be used, or if the more natural word for 'evil spirits' *malungu* ('demons') would be a better choice.

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## 8 Interviews cited

Since I want to honour the openness of the interviewees to talk about deep cultural issues, their names are not mentioned. Instead, acronyms are used in order to be able to connect the audio recordings of these interviews with the corresponding notes.

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SAN-MYS 2016 (18 May). Interview by the author. Mbeya, Tanzania. Transcript of the summary of the audio recordings available from the author: andy\_huber@sil.org.

SAN-FPTS 2017 (14 February). Interview by the author. Mbeya, Tanzania. Transcript of the summary of the audio recordings available from the author: andy\_huber@sil.org.

SAN-FFTS 2017 (20 February). Interview by the author. Mbeya, Tanzania. Transcript of the summary of the audio recordings available from the author: andy\_huber@sil.org.

Sangu Translation Team 2017 (28 February). Interview by the author. Mbeya, Tanzania. Transcript of the summary of the audio recordings available from the author: andy\_huber@sil.org.

Sangu Reviewers' Committee 2017 (22 May). Interview by the author. Utengule, Usangu, Tanzania. Transcript of the summary of the audio recordings available from the author: andy\_huber@sil.org..

## 9 Appendix A

### Sangu cosmology interviews done by Andy Huber – General information

No.	Interviewee(s)	Date	Duration (hours)	Notes (all qualitative research)
1	SAN-MOS and SAN-MYS (group) – initial talk	11 Oct 2015	0:30:00	General, informal talk while thinking about doing more research on Sangu cosmology, written notes
2	SAN-MOS	18 May 2016	0:40:33	Recorded (audio) – Swahili (transcribed), then entered into an overview sheet in English (the same with all the following interviews)
3	SAN-MYS	18 May 2016	0:36:17	Recorded (audio) – Swahili
4	SAN-FPTS	14 Feb 2017	0:37:26	Recorded (audio) – Swahili
5	SAN-FFTS	20 Feb 2017	0:34:15	Recorded (audio) – Swahili
6	Sangu translation team (group)	28 Feb 2017	1:35:00	Recorded (audio) – Swahili, Kisangu
7	Sangu reviewers' committee (group)	22 May 2017	2:11:00	Recorded (audio) – Swahili, Kisangu Six reviewers, three were delayed. SAN-FFTS is part of this group and also SAN-MYS and SAN-FPTS attended.

In all sessions (except the reviewers' committee) a whiteboard was used to jot down words or to visualize concepts. In the meeting with the reviewers' committee, paper slips were used to note important words – to help visualize what had been talked about. The interviews were semi-structured and all were audio-recorded (except for the first one).

- **Interview 1:** This took place before the start of the MTh thesis and was between the Sangu team and their translation advisor (myself). My purpose was to get a general understanding from the Sangu of their cosmology. It was very informal and relaxed and only written notes were taken.
- **Interview 2:** This took place at the Mbeya office with SAN-MOS. He was very open and told a few stories. He grew up close to where Usangu borders other language areas (an area more mixed with other people groups) and therefore he can have a slightly different view on things.
- **Interview 3:** This took place at the Mbeya office with SAN-MYS. He grew up in a village where people seem to have the best knowledge of how to use Kisangu. He

was a friend to one of the chief's sons, so he was able to see and learn about many traditional things.

- **Interview 4:** This took place at the Mbeya office with SAN-FPTS. She grew up in the chief's village and seemed to be very familiar with Sangu cosmology and terminology.
- **Interview 5:** This took place at the Mbeya office with SAN-FFTS. She is the Literacy/Scripture Engagement co-ordinator based in the language area, but that particular day she had some official business at the Mbeya office, which is where I had the opportunity to interview her. She lives in Luhanga.
- **Interview 6:** This was a group interview at the Mbeya office. It was very lively and interesting. The three translators had good discussions among themselves, and even challenged one another if someone presented a view that was different from the others. These discussions were mostly carried out in Kisangu after which I asked them for clarification in certain places.
- **Interview 7:** This was a group interview in Utengule, Usangu, at a church building where the reviewers' meeting is usually hosted. The group was very open and welcoming. The group consists mostly of men – usually SAN-FFTS, a lady, is part of the meeting. This time also SAN-FPTS was part of the discussion. The group consists mostly of Christians, and also some Muslims. The chief himself was not available as he had to attend to other business in the village. After introductions and explanations, they all readily agreed on an audio-recording for the researcher to be able to check back on what he writes about. The discussions were lively and many times Kisangu was used. This made it again clear that it is easier to discuss cultural matters in the language concerned. As appreciation, each participant was given an envelope with some money (this whole meeting was part of an official reviewers' meeting) as an extra 'thank you' gift which was very much appreciated. The participants came from a variety of backgrounds and different places in Usangu: Utengule, Luhanga, Kangaga, Ruiwa, Rujewa and Chimala.

## 10 Appendix B

### Interview questions about the 'spirit world'

List of questions translated from the *Bible Translation Basics Manual* (Hill et al. 2011:165-166).

#### **Mungu** (God)

- (a) Je, katika mtazamo wa kabila lenu, Wasangu mnaamini kwamba yupo Mungu mmoja, Mungu mkuu?  
(b) Je, mnatumia neno gani kwa huyo Mungu?  
(c) Je, yuko/anaishi wapi?  
(a) Is there a concept of a high God? (b) What word is used to refer to this God? (c) Where is he/does he live?
- (a) Je, Wasangu wanasema huyo Mungu yukoje? (Ana sifa gani?)  
(b) Je, yeye ni mwumbaji wa dunia? (if not available as answer to 2a)  
(c) Je, yeye ni mwema kabisa? (if not available as answer to 2a)  
(a) How do people describe God? (b) Was he perceived to be the creator? (c) Is he morally good?
- (a) Je, Mungu ana husiano gani na watu wake?  
(b) Je, anawahukumu watu?  
(c) Je, watu wanamwomba msaada?  
(a) What is his relationship to people? (b) Does he judge people? (c) Do people ask him for help?

#### **Viumbe vingine (miungu, mapepo, ...)** (other spirit beings: gods, spirits/demons, ...)

- (a) Je, wapo viumbe wengine (ambao hawana mwili)?  
(b) Je, aina zipi zipo? (if not available in 1a)  
(c) Je, mnatumia maneno yapi kuwataja? (if not available in 1a or 1b)  
(a) Are there any beings that are spirits (without physical bodies)? (b) What kinds are there? (c) What words are used to refer to each kind?
- (a) Je, kila aina wakoje (wana sifa gani)? (these questions are sometimes answered in 1 already)  
(b) Je, watu wanafikiri wako wabaya, wazuri, wema, waovu? (connotations, mostly answered in 2a)  
(c) Je, wanasaidia/wanatesa?  
(d) Je, wanawaadhibu/wanawatesa watu wanapofanya mabaya?  
(a) How would you describe each kind? (b) Were they thought to be good, bad, (c) or sometimes helpful/sometimes harmful? (d) Did/do they punish people for doing wrong?
- (a) Je, watu wana husiano gani na wale viumbe?  
(b) Je, watu wanawatolea sadaka/dhabihu? Wakati gani? Kwa nini?  
(c) Je, viumbe hawa wanaweza kuingia kwa mtu? Kwa njia gani?  
(a) How do people relate to them? (b) Do they offer sacrifices to them? When? Why? (c) Can they enter into people? How?

## **Mizimu** (Spirits of the ancestors)

- (a) Je, roho za watu waliokufa bado ni sehemu ya jamii?  
(b) Je, watu wote watakuwa mizimu baada ya kufa?  
(c) Je, wako/wanaishi wapi?  
(d) Je, wale mizimu wanaanza lini kufanya kazi zao?  
(a) Do people's spirits continue to be a part of the community after death? (b) Do all people become ancestors? (c) Where do they live/exist? (d) When do they become "active" ancestors?
- (a) Jaribu kueleza wale mizimu wakoje.  
(b) Je, wanawaadhibu watu kwa mabaya yao?  
(c) Je, mtazamo wa Wasangu, mizimu ni mema, wanasaidia watu? (usually answered in 2a)  
(a) How would you describe ancestor spirits? (b) Do they punish people for doing wrong? (c) Are they considered to be helpful and good?
- (a) Je, watu wana husiano gani na wale mizimu?  
(b) Je, watu wanawaheshimu au wanawachukia?  
(c) Je, watu wanatoa matambiko kwao?  
(d) Je, watu wanawaabudu?  
(a) How do they relate to people? (b) Are they honoured and appreciated or resented? (c) Do people sacrifice to them? (d) Do people worship them?

## **Sehemu katika ulimwengu usioonekana** (Places in the "other"/invisible world)

- Je, waliokufa wanaenda wapi? Nini itatokea nao?  
Where do the dead people go? What happens to them?
- Je, kuna sehemu maalum ambapo watu wataadhibiwa – panaitweje?  
Is there a place of punishment – what is it called?

## **Mahusiano katika ulimwengu usioonekana** (Relationships in the invisible world)

- Je, Mungu ana husiano gani na viumbe wengine ambayo hawaonekani (miungu mingine, mapepo, mizimu)?  
What is God's relationship to other spirit beings (divinities, demons, ancestors)?

## **Sehemu za mtu ambazo hazionekani** (The invisible parts of a person)

- Je, sehemu za mtu ambazo hazionekani zinaitweje? (roho, nafsi, sehemu ambayo inaondoka wakati wa kifo...)  
What are the invisible parts of people? (soul, spirit that animates people while they are alive, and departs at death, and so forth)
- Je, kila sehemu ya mtu inafanya kazi gani?  
What is the function of each part?

# 11 Appendix C

## Questionnaire

The questionnaire was sent out as a Google form to all the indigenous translators of the Dodoma, Mara and Mbeya regions working with SIL International in Tanzania. In total 26 responses came back. Together with the link for the form the translators got explanations in an email what the questionnaire was for.

For the questions that were asked, see below:

### Questionnaire about 'The meaning of words and the acceptability of a translation'

#### Section 1 - About you:

What language group are you from?

.....

For how long have you been working with SIL translating the Word of God?

- 1-2 years
- 3-4 years
- 5-6 years
- more than 6 years

#### Section 2 – How people who speak Swahili understand the word 'roho' (spirit)

When you hear the word 'roho' (spirit), what does it mean? Please list what comes to mind...

.....

When you hear the word 'roho' (spirit), what does it first mean to you (from your list of meanings)?

.....

When you read the sentence here below, what does the word 'roho' (spirit) mean to you? Don't think theologically but about the meaning of the word. "[Jesus] he went and preached to the spirits who were in prison."

.....

**Section 3 – The understanding of the people from your language group about us (projects of SIL), how we translate the Bible into their language**

According to your experience with your people – how do they see it when you translate differently from the Union Version?

- They think that I have changed the Word of God – I have made a mistake and therefore they will not accept the translation
- They think that I have improved the translation and they agree with it completely
- Other: ...

It is possible that you translate differently from what the Union Version has done because you think that you can show it more clearly your way. What tools are there that will make it easier for the reader to accept your different translation?

.....

**Thank you for your help! God bless you in your work!**

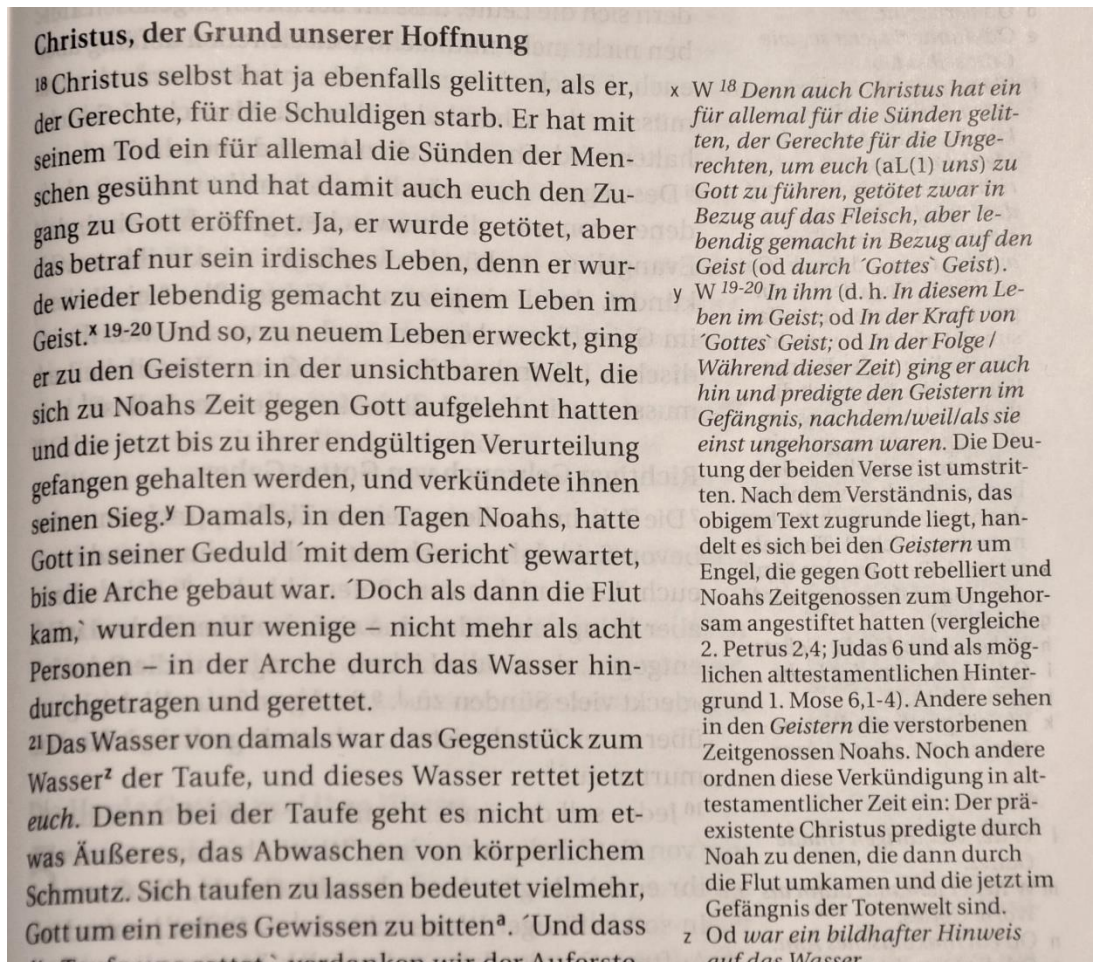
## 12 Appendix D

Abernathy about structure of passage and context: “And in vv. 18–22 (excluding vv. 20b-21) we see the following inversion in which there is a correspondence of contrasting elements” (2001, chap. 1PE 3:20). The following display has been created according to Abernathy’s explanations.

A	Christ the righteous	(V. 18a)
B	suffered/died	
C	once for all	
B'	to bring to God	
A'	you who were unrighteous.	
D	He was put to death	(V. 18b)
E	in the flesh	
D'	but made alive	
E'	in the spirit (in which)	
F	he went (πορευθεῖς)	(V. 19-20a)
G	to the prison (where)	
H	he proclaimed [victory to]	
I	the disobedient spirits	
[V. 20b-21 – excluded in this structural overview]		
F'	and he has now gone (πορευθεῖς)	(V. 22)
G'	into heaven	
H'	having been subjected to him	
I'	angels, authorities, and powers.	

## 13 Appendix E

Display of how the *Neue Genfer Übersetzung* (NGÜ) does footnotes and cross references in the margins of 1 Peter 3:18ff.



In the introduction to the NGÜ the callers for the marginal notes are explained and can be places in two categories:

- Footnote explaining the literal version indicated by W (= wörtlich, 'literal'). Variant readings are shown by AL (= andere Lesart, 'other reading').
- Explanatory text and cross references then just come after the footnote explanations. Here the three main interpretations are explained and 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6 and Genesis 6:1-4 are shown as possible parallel texts.

In the main text words that make implicit meaning explicit are indicated between '...'.

## 14 Appendix F

### Plural use of πνεύμα in the NT

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**Demonic/evil spirits** (the spirits get a definition from an adjective or the context, never really standing alone)

1. **MAT 8:16 (demonized / spirits)** - Ὁψίας δὲ γενομένης προσήνεγκαν αὐτῷ **δαιμονιζομένους** πολλούς· καὶ ἐξέβαλεν **τὰ πνεύματα** λόγω καὶ πάντας τοὺς κακῶς ἔχοντας ἐθεράπευσεν,
2. **MAT 10:1 (unclean spirits)** - Καὶ προσκαλεσάμενος τοὺς δώδεκα μαθητὰς αὐτοῦ ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς ἐξουσίαν **πνευμάτων ἀκαθάρτων** ὥστε ἐκβάλλειν αὐτὰ καὶ θεραπεύειν πᾶσαν νόσον καὶ πᾶσαν μαλακίαν.
3. **MAT 12:45 (spirits, more wicked)** - τότε πορεύεται καὶ παραλαμβάνει μεθ' ἑαυτοῦ ἑπτὰ ἕτερα **πνεύματα πονηρότερα** ἑαυτοῦ καὶ εἰσελθόντα κατοικεῖ ἐκεῖ· καὶ γίνεται τὰ ἔσχατα τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐκείνου χεῖρονα τῶν πρώτων. οὕτως ἔσται καὶ τῇ γενεᾷ ταύτῃ τῇ πονηρᾷ.
4. **MRK 1:27 (the unclean spirits)** - καὶ ἐθαμβήθησαν ἅπαντες ὥστε συζητεῖν πρὸς ἑαυτοὺς λέγοντας, Τί ἐστὶν τοῦτο; διδαχὴ καινὴ κατ' ἐξουσίαν· καὶ **τοῖς πνεύμασι τοῖς ἀκαθάρτοις** ἐπιτάσσει, καὶ ὑπακούουσιν αὐτῷ.
5. **MRK 3:11 (the unclean spirits)** - καὶ **τὰ πνεύματα τὰ ἀκάθαρτα**, ὅταν αὐτὸν ἐθεώρουν, προσέπιπτον αὐτῷ καὶ ἔκραζον λέγοντες ὅτι Σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ.
6. **MRK 5:13 (the unclean spirits)** - καὶ ἐπέτρεψεν αὐτοῖς. καὶ ἐξεληθόντα **τὰ πνεύματα τὰ ἀκάθαρτα** εἰσῆλθον εἰς τοὺς χοίρους, καὶ ὤρμησεν ἡ ἀγέλη κατὰ τοῦ κρηνοῦ εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν, ὡς δισχίλιοι, καὶ ἐπνίγοντο ἐν τῇ θαλάσῃ.
7. **MRK 6:7 (the unclean spirits)** - καὶ προσκαλεῖται τοὺς δώδεκα καὶ ἤρξατο αὐτοὺς ἀποστέλλειν δύο δύο καὶ ἐδίδου αὐτοῖς ἐξουσίαν **τῶν πνευμάτων τῶν ἀκαθάρτων**,
8. **LUK 4:36 (the unclean spirits)** - καὶ ἐγένετο θάμβος ἐπὶ πάντας καὶ συνελάλουν πρὸς ἀλλήλους λέγοντες, Τίς ὁ λόγος οὗτος ὅτι ἐν ἐξουσίᾳ καὶ δυνάμει ἐπιτάσσει **τοῖς ἀκαθάρτοις πνεύμασιν** καὶ ἐξέρχονται;
9. **LUK 6:18 (unclean spirits)** - οἱ ἦλθον ἀκούσαι αὐτοῦ καὶ ἰαθῆναι ἀπὸ τῶν νόσων αὐτῶν· καὶ οἱ ἐνοχλούμενοι ἀπὸ **πνευμάτων ἀκαθάρτων** ἐθεραπεύοντο,
10. **LUK 7:21 (wicked spirits)** - ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ὥρᾳ ἐθεράπευσεν πολλοὺς ἀπὸ νόσων καὶ μαστίγων καὶ **πνευμάτων πονηρῶν** καὶ τυφλοῖς πολλοῖς ἐχαρίσατο βλέπειν.
11. **LUK 8:2 (wicked spirits)** - καὶ γυναῖκές τινες αἱ ἦσαν τεθεραπευμέναι ἀπὸ **πνευμάτων πονηρῶν** καὶ ἀσθενειῶν, Μαρία ἡ καλουμένη Μαγδαληνὴ, ἀφ' ἧς δαιμόνια ἑπτὰ ἐξεληλύθει,
12. **LUK 10:20 (spirits – in context from v. 17 = demons/evil spirits)** - πλὴν ἐν τούτῳ μὴ χαίρετε ὅτι τὰ **πνεύματα** ὑμῖν ὑποτάσσεται, χαίρετε δὲ ὅτι τὰ ὀνόματα ὑμῶν ἐγγέγραπται ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς.
13. **LUK 11:26 (wicked spirits)** - τότε πορεύεται καὶ παραλαμβάνει ἕτερα **πνεύματα πονηρότερα** ἑαυτοῦ ἑπτὰ καὶ εἰσελθόντα κατοικεῖ ἐκεῖ· καὶ γίνεται τὰ ἔσχατα τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐκείνου χεῖρονα τῶν πρώτων.
14. **ACT 5:16 (unclean spirits)** - συνήρχετο δὲ καὶ τὸ πλῆθος τῶν περὶ πόλεων Ἱερουσαλὴμ φέροντες ἀσθενεῖς καὶ ὀχλουμένους ὑπὸ **πνευμάτων ἀκαθάρτων**, οἵτινες ἐθεραπεύοντο ἅπαντες.

15. **ACT 8:7 (unclean spirits)** - πολλοὶ γὰρ τῶν ἐχόντων **πνεύματα ἀκάθαρτα** βοῶντα φωνῇ μεγάλη ἐξήρχοντο, πολλοὶ δὲ παραλελυμένοι καὶ χωλοὶ ἐθεραπεύθησαν·
16. **ACT 19:12 (wicked spirits)** - ὥστε καὶ ἐπὶ τοὺς ἀσθενοῦντας ἀποφέρεσθαι ἀπὸ τοῦ χρωτὸς αὐτοῦ σουδάρια ἢ σιμικίνθια καὶ ἀπαλλάσσεσθαι ἀπ' αὐτῶν τὰ νόσους, τὰ τε **πνεύματα τὰ πονηρὰ** ἐκπορεύεσθαι.
17. **ACT 19:13 (wicked spirits)** - ἐπεχείρησαν δὲ τινες καὶ τῶν περιερχομένων Ἰουδαίων ἐξορκιστῶν ὀνομάζειν ἐπὶ τοὺς ἔχοντας τὰ **πνεύματα τὰ πονηρὰ** τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ λέγοντες, Ὁρκίζω ὑμᾶς τὸν Ἰησοῦν ὃν Παῦλος κηρύσσει.
18. **1ΤΙ 4:1 (misleading spirits)** - Τὸ δὲ πνεῦμα ῥητῶς λέγει ὅτι ἐν ὑστέροις καιροῖς ἀποστήσονται τινες τῆς πίστεως προσέχοντες **πνεύμασιν πλάνοις** καὶ διδασκαλίαις δαιμονίων,
19. **REV 16:13 (unclean spirits)** - Καὶ εἶδον ἐκ τοῦ στόματος τοῦ δράκοντος καὶ ἐκ τοῦ στόματος τοῦ θηρίου καὶ ἐκ τοῦ στόματος τοῦ ψευδοπροφήτου **πνεύματα** τρία **ἀκάθαρτα** ὡς βάτραχοι·
20. **REV 16:14 (demonic spirits)** - εἰσὶν γὰρ **πνεύματα δαιμονίων** ποιοῦντα σημεῖα, ἃ ἐκπορεύεται ἐπὶ τοὺς βασιλεῖς τῆς οἰκουμένης ὅλης συναγαγεῖν αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸν πόλεμον τῆς ἡμέρας τῆς μεγάλης τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ παντοκράτορος.

### Spirits [of God / the Father]

1. **HEB 12:9 (the Father of the spirits – others: spiritual Father)** - εἶτα τοὺς μὲν τῆς σαρκὸς ἡμῶν πατέρας εἶχομεν παιδευτὰς καὶ ἐνετρεπόμεθα· οὐ πολὺ [δὲ] μᾶλλον ὑποταγησόμεθα **τῷ πατρὶ τῶν πνευμάτων** καὶ ζήσομεν;
2. **REV 1:4 (seven spirits, non-human – positive)** - Ἰωάννης ταῖς ἑπτὰ ἐκκλησίαις ταῖς ἐν τῇ Ἀσίᾳ· χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν ἑπτὰ πνευμάτων ἃ ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου αὐτοῦ
3. **REV 3:1 (seven spirits of God)** - Καὶ τῷ ἀγγέλῳ τῆς ἐν Σάρδεσιν ἐκκλησίας γράψον· Τάδε λέγει ὁ ἔχων τὰ ἑπτὰ πνεύματα τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τοὺς ἑπτὰ ἀστέρας· Οἶδά σου τὰ ἔργα ὅτι ὄνομα ἔχεις ὅτι ζῆς, καὶ νεκρὸς εἶ.
4. **REV 4:5 (spirits of God)** - καὶ ἐκ τοῦ θρόνου ἐκπορεύονται ἀστραπαὶ καὶ φωναὶ καὶ βρονταί, καὶ ἑπτὰ λαμπάδες πυρὸς καιόμεναι ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου, ἃ εἰσὶν τὰ ἑπτὰ πνεύματα τοῦ θεοῦ,
5. **REV 5:6 (seven spirits of God)** - Καὶ εἶδον ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ θρόνου καὶ τῶν τεσσάρων ζώων καὶ ἐν μέσῳ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων ἄρνιον ἐστηκὸς ὡς ἐσφαγμένον ἔχων κέρατα ἑπτὰ καὶ ὀφθαλμοὺς ἑπτὰ οἳ εἰσὶν τὰ [ἑπτὰ] πνεύματα τοῦ θεοῦ ἀπεσταλμένοι εἰς πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν.

### Spirits of the prophets

1. **1CO 14:32 (human - spirits of the prophet, alive)** - καὶ **πνεύματα προφητῶν** προφήταις ὑποτάσσεται,
2. **HEB 12:23 (human - spirits of the righteous made perfect; bodily dead)** - καὶ ἐκκλησία πρωτοτόκων ἀπογεγραμμένων ἐν οὐρανοῖς καὶ κριτῇ θεῷ πάντων καὶ **πνεύμασι δικαίων** τετελειωμένων
3. **REV 22:6 (human - spirits of the prophets)** - Καὶ εἶπέν μοι, Οὗτοι οἱ λόγοι πιστοὶ καὶ ἀληθινοί, καὶ ὁ κύριος ὁ θεὸς τῶν **πνευμάτων τῶν προφητῶν** ἀπέστειλεν τὸν ἄγγελον αὐτοῦ δεῖξαι τοῖς δούλοις αὐτοῦ ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι ἐν τάχει.

### **Gift of discernment of spirits (good or bad)**

1. 1CO 12:10 (discernment of the spirits) - ἄλλω δὲ ἐνεργήματα δυνάμεων, ἄλλω [δὲ] προφητεία, ἄλλω [δὲ] διακρίσεις **πνευμάτων**, ἑτέρω γένη γλωσσῶν, ἄλλω δὲ ἑρμηνεῖα γλωσσῶν·
2. 1JN 4:1 (spirits – if from God or not) - Ἀγαπητοί, μὴ παντὶ πνεύματι πιστεύετε ἀλλὰ δοκιμάζετε τὰ **πνεύματα** εἰ ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστίν, ὅτι πολλοὶ ψευδοπροφῆται ἐξεληλύθασιν εἰς τὸν κόσμον.

### **Spiritual gifts (gifts of the Holy Spirit)**

1CO 14:12 (about gifts of the Spirit) - οὕτως καὶ ὑμεῖς, ἐπεὶ ζηλωταὶ ἐστε **πνευμάτων**, πρὸς τὴν οἰκοδομὴν τῆς ἐκκλησίας ζητεῖτε ἵνα περισσεύητε.

### **Winds (spirits)**

HEB 1:7 (winds) - καὶ πρὸς μὲν τοὺς ἀγγέλους λέγει, Ὁ ποιῶν τοὺς ἀγγέλους αὐτοῦ **πνεύματα** καὶ τοὺς λειτουργοὺς αὐτοῦ πυρὸς φλόγα,

### **Angels**

HEB 1:14 (serving angels) - οὐχὶ πάντες εἰσὶν λειτουργικὰ **πνεύματα** εἰς διακονίαν ἀποστελλόμενα διὰ τοὺς μέλλοντας κληρονομεῖν σωτηρίαν;

### **Human spirits or angelic/demonic beings?**

1PE 3:19 (???) - ἐν ᾧ καὶ τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ **πνεύμασιν** πορευθεὶς ἐκήρυξεν,