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The Catholic Baptism Fulfills the Longing for Salvation at Ruwatan : Pastoral Circle Approach Overview

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Abstract

Javanese Catholic people live in Javanese culture with its still preserved traditions. Out of these traditions, the Javanese people still keep the ruwatan ceremony. Javanese Catholics often question whether or not ruwatan is permissible according to the teachings of the Catholic Church. In this particular topic, the theological question arises regarding whether it is still necessary to seek salvation through rituals, while salvation has been fully accomplished through Jesus Christ and received in the Sacrament of Baptism. In answering this theological problem, the writer uses the pastoral circle method from the theory of Joe Holland & Peter Henriot. Meanwhile, to analyze the ruwatan ritual, the writer uses Victor Turner's theory regarding the three stages of the rite of passage.

Keywords:

Baptism, Ruwatan, Salvation, Pastoral Circle, Javanese Culture

Introduction

At this time, some Javanese people still practice the ruwatan tradition, such as in Central Java and the Special Region of Yogyakarta. Javanese Catholics also preserve the traditions among the Javanese people who still preserve this hereditary tradition. This tradition is believed to be a ceremony to liberate people from bad luck that befell them, so that things

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can return as it was.[1] In Javanese belief, bad luck means *sukerta* (dirty) situation which refers to an unsafe condition.[2] Based on the interview, according to Mr. Nardi, the Javanese people who practices the *ruwatan* tradition are those who have a *sukerta* condition. [3] This condition of success can occur due to birth or an act of error. There are various sukerta situations, which essentially point to an unsafe condition.[4] Based on the interview with Br. Art Activist Kirja, people who belong to *sukerta* want to be freed from danger and lived without worry or peace.[5]

From this *ruwatan* tradition, it appears that salvation is an important part of human life. Salvation is not only a part of urge but as a longing or desire of every human being. Facing the visible and invisible forces of creation, the Javanese try to get certainty about the salvation of their lives. The *ruwatan* tradition that is carried out answers, more or less, the longing of the Javanese. Every child who has done *ruwatan* hopes to be kept away from harm because various disorders have been tamed. In Javanese mythology, the unsafe condition was caused by the disturbance of Bhatara Kala. The story is, Bhatara Kala will prey on children or people who are still *sukerta* and have not been doing *ruwatan*. *Ruwatan* usually led by a *dhalang* (person who plays wayang), which Bhatara Kala's wrath will be tamed. At the moment when Bhatara Kala successfully tamed that salvation occurs. As a result, Javanese people will feel calm, peaceful and happy.[6]

[1] Ign. Joko Suyanto, "Ruwatan dalam Perspektif Iman Kristiani," *Jurnal Teologi,* Vol. 03, No. 01 (May 2014): 64. https://doi.org/10.24071/jt.v3i1.452.

[2] A. Hari Kustono, "Ruwatan: Tinjauan Alkitabiah," *Studia Philosophica et Theologica,* Vol. 6 No. 1 (March 2006): 71. https://doi.org/10.35312/spet.v6i1.113.

[3] From the results of an interview with Mr. Nardi, cultural practitioner from the Wonosari community who is still practicing the *ruwatan*, on December 17, 2021.

[4] The *sukerta* condition happens because of the birth of *ontang-anting* (only son), *unting-unting* (only daughter), *uger-uger lawang* (two sons), etc. A person can also enter the *sukerta* condition because of one's own action, such as breaking *gandhik* (an accessory of keris), breaking pipisan (grinding brick), making a house without roof, breaking *dandang* (cooking tool to steam rice), etc. (cf. Karkono dkk, *Ruwatan Murwakala Suatu Pedoman.* (Yogyakarta: Duta Wacana University Press, 1992), 36-47, in journal Ign. Joko Suyanto, "Ruwatan dalam Perspektif Iman Kristiani", *Jurnal Teologi,* Vol. 03, No. 01 (May 2014): 73. https://doi.org/10.24071/jt.v3i1.452.

[5] From the interview with Br. Kirja, art activist, on November 23, 2021.

[6] Iman Budhi Santosa, *Manusia Jawa Mencari Kebeningan Hati* (Yogyakarta: Diandra Pustaka

Questions arise when Javanese Catholics carry out this *ruwatan* tradition. Due to the Christian faith, salvation has been done completely and completed through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. So, where is the relevance of the *ruwatan* ceremony for the Javanese Catholics? According to the writer, the issue of spirituality and Christian faith can be viewed as a cultural problem as well as a theological one. To the extent that Javanese Catholics still feel the need to carry out the *ruwatan* ceremony because of cultural issue. A person is always bound to one's socio-cultural context, because humans are social creatures. In order to feel safe and secure as their country person's with all their cultures, people will tend to undergo rituals according to their customs and traditions. This, for example, is also practiced in the case of other rituals, such as ceremonies around birth, marriage, and death. Theological issues arise regarding with the meaning of salvation which has been fully realized through Jesus Christ. In concrete terms: one can ask, "why do Javanese Catholics still practice the *ruwatan* tradition while salvation has already been fulfilled in Jesus Christ? Is not the grace of Christ sufficient for His people? From the results of an interview with Mr. Nardi, those who are still practicing the *ruwatan* feel more secure and safe because they are protected from the *sukerta* situation.[7] Furthermore, it can be questioned whether this *ruwatan* tradition does not conflict with Christian faith.

The research and discussion on the relationship between *ruwatan* and Christian faith has actually been done a lot. For example, Ignatius Joko Suyanto discusses from the perspective of the Javanese's main beliefs, which can be a fertile ground for Christian faith. [8] Another perspective come from Hari Kustono, he approaches from a biblical point of view on salvation, [9] and Henricus Pidyarto responds to the practice of *ruwatan* from the point of view of the Christian faith,[10] Ign. Joko Suyanto argues,

Indonesia, 2014), 149.

[7] From the results of an interview with Mr. Nardi, cultural practitioner from the Wonosari community who is still running the Ruwatan, on December 17, 2021,

[8] Ign. Joko Suyanto, "Ruwatan dalam Perspektif Iman Kristiani," *Jurnal Teologi,* Vol. 03, No. 01 (May 2014): 63-74. https://doi.org/10.24071/jt.v3i1.452.

[9] A. Hari Kustono, "Ruwatan: Tinjauan Alkitabiah," *Studia Philosophica et Theologica*, Vol. 6 No. 1 (March 2006): 75-85. https://doi.org/10.35312/spet.v6i1.113.

[10] Mgr. Pidyarto, "Tanggapan Terhadap Ruwatan Cara Katolik," *Studia Philosophica et Theologica,Vol. 6 No. 1* (March 2006): 86-95. https://doi.org/10.35312/spet.v6i1.114.

Ruwatan is intended to save the *Sukerta* people from this catastrophe.[11] Hari Kustono in an article entitled "Ruwatan: Tinjauan Alkitabiah", said that Catholic *ruwatan* should strengthen the desire for salvation as well as proclaim Christ as a guarantee for the salvation of the faithful.[12] In line with Hari Kustono, Pidyarto also emphasizes that the essence of the *ruwatan* tradition is asking for salvation from God.[13] From these sources, the *ruwatan* tradition does not need to be contradicted with Christian faith, but contains noble values that can strengthen Christian faith.

One theological issue that has not been widely discussed is the relation of the *ruwatan* tradition to the sacrament of Baptism. The point is that through baptism a person has received the salvation that has been given through Jesus Christ. Meanwhile, the *ruwatan* tradition still needs to be implemented for some Javanese Catholics. Therefore, the writer wants to focus on the relationship between *ruwatan* and the sacrament of Baptism, especially on the aspect of salvation. The writer argues that baptism fulfills the human yearning for salvation. The writer believes that in the Christian faith, everyone's salvation has been fulfilled through the redemption of Jesus Christ, which is now remembered in the event of baptism. Baptism can be understood as the encounter between Christ's sacrifice and the active response of humans to the salvation that Jesus offers. Through Baptism, all humanity, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, participates in the divine life as "adopted children" in the Only Begotten Son of God (CCC par. 6). Everyone will get the gift of holiness, the gift of the Holy Spirit, divine virtue, and eternal salvation that come through the Church and originated from Christ.

In discussing the relationship of the *ruwatan* tradition with the sacrament of Baptism, the writer will use the pastoral circle method from Joe Holland & Peter Henriot's theory, "Social Analysis & Theological Reflection: The Relationship of Faith and Justice" (1986). As summarized by J. Haryatmoko, SJ, this pastoral circle method shows that theology

[11] Ign. Joko Suyanto, "Ruwatan dalam Perspektif Iman Kristiani," *Jurnal Teologi,* Vol. 03, No. 01 (May 2014): 64. https://doi.org/10.24071/jt.v3i1.452.

[12] A. Hari Kustono, "Ruwatan: Tinjauan Alkitabiah," *Studia Philosophica et Theologica,* Vol. 6 No. 1 (March 2006): 85. https://doi.org/10.35312/spet.v6i1.113.

[13] Mgr. Pidyarto, "Tanggapan Terhadap Ruwatan Cara Katolik," *Studia Philosophica et Theologica*, Vol. 6 No. 1 (March 2006): 90. https://doi.org/10.35312/spet.v6i1.114.

can be drawn out of experience.[14] The pastoral circle method, which is one form of this contextual theology method, starts from formulating the problem that comes from experience, whether individual or communal, then social analysis, theological reflection, and finally pastoral planning. The social analysis that will be used to analyze the *ruwatan* ceremony as a longing for salvation is Victor Turner's theory of the three stages of the rite of passage (reparation stage, liminal and reaggregation).[15]

According to the pastoral circle method, this article starts from formulating the problem on the theme of this *ruwatan*. In this analisis, the writer firstly writes about the description of *ruwatan* and the emphasis on the longing for salvation in the *ruwatan* ceremony. Then this *ruwatan* tradition is analyzed with Victor Turner's theory. From the results of the social analysis, the writer reflects on the theological tradition of *ruwatan*, with a focus on the discussion of baptism as fulfilling the longing for salvation in *ruwatan*. In the last section, the writer concludes the research on *ruwatan* and the sacrament of baptism, and also provides suggestions in Christian perspective towards the meaning of *ruwatan*.

Problem Formulation

Ruwatan is one of the ancestral legacies in Javanese culture, which has noble values, so it should be preserved. The Javanese believe this tradition liberates or purifies humans from all evil influences. In the ancient Javanese language, the word "ruwat" means: wrong, damaged.[16] While ngruwat (practicing *ruwatan*) means freeing from evil spirits. *Ngruwat* can also be interpreted as a means to free people from bad luck that will befall them. The people who must be treated or released are the people who bear the *sukerta*, namely the circumstances or situations that wreak havoc. The disaster or catastrophe took the form of Bhatara Kala (God of Destruction) who preyed on the *sukerta* people.

[14] J. Haryatmoko, Sj, "Lingkaran Pastoral: Analisis Sosial & Refleksi Teologis". This article consists of 22 pages for the education purposes at the Faculty of Theology, Sanata Dharma University – *not published* – 3.

[15] Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Stucture and Anti-Structure* (USA: Cornell University Press, 1966), 94.

[16] P.J. Zoetmulder bekerja sama dengan S.O. Robson, *Kamus Jawa Kuno-Indonesia* (Jakarta: PT Gramedia, 2004), 967; (*cf* . L. Mardi Warsita, *Kamus Jawa Kuno-Indonesia* (Ende: Nusa Indah, 1978), 277.

The *ruwatan* ceremony consists of several stages, starting from preparing offerings, several rituals and up to a wayang (puppet show) with the play Murwakala. The wayang, which takes the theme/story of Murwakala, is the culmination in which the *dhalang* has a dialogue with evil influence (Bhatara Kala). [17] The play murwakala is a pure story created by *adi carita* (storyteller/dalang) in the Saka Javanese era. Then, the *wayang's* story with the play *Murwakala* in *ruwatan* developed in the Old Javanese story. This story is about the liberation of humans who have been tainted. This murwakala play uses several characters found in the Purwa puppet. The main character is Bhatara Kala, the youngest son of *Sang Hyang Jagatnata* (*Bhatara Guru*).[18]

Sukerta people arise because of various types of situations in the family. Their existence is considered dangerous. This causes *sukerta* people to be susceptible to bad luck, such as illness and even death. So, bad events can be experienced by people who have not been treated because they became victims of Bhatara Kala.[19] Therefore, the people of *Nandhang Sukerta* (who are in the state of *sukerta*) must be treated to avoid Bhatara Kala. [20] At this time, the implementation of *ruwatan* with the aim of having a peaceful life and away from disaster is difficult to accept because the story, which is displayed, is mythology. However, this ceremony still survives in the life of the Javanese people. Therefore, traditional Javanese people still believe that Bhatara Kala strongly influences their lives.

The continuity of the *ruwatan* ceremony in Javanese society is due to the longing for the guarantee of salvation. Relin quotes Geertz by saying that there are two rules or principles in Javanese society.[21] First, the principle of harmony aims to maintain the Javanese society to remain in a state of harmony, namely conformity, calm, and peace. A state of

[17] Relin D.E, *Aktualisasi Ruwatan Pada Masyarakat Jawa (Kajian Filosofis)*, (Denpasar: Ashram Gandhi Puri, 2015), 3.

[18] Budiono Herusatoto, *Mitologi Jawa: Pendidikan Moral dan Etika Tradisional* (Yogyakarta: Oncor, 2012), 37.

[19] Koentjaraningrat, *Kebudayaan Jawa* (Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 1984), 376

[20] Sarwanto, *Pertunjukan Wayang Kulit Purwa dalam Ritual Bersih Desa Kajian Fungsi dan Makna* (Surakarta: ISI Press - CV Cendrawasih, 2008), 376.

[21] Relin D.E, *Aktualisasi Ruwatan Pada Masyarakat Jawa (Kajian Filosofis)*, 11.

harmony, calm and peace, is a defense of socio-cultural conditions. There are no negative feelings in this situation so that a safe and peaceful situation is created. Second, the principle of respect appears through speaking and behaving respectfully to others according to their degree and position. This principle plays an important role in the interaction of Javanese society. The existence of this principle indicates that the Javanese social order contains hierarchical order so that harmony is created. Thus, these two principles show that Javanese people like *tentrem kertaraharja* (lives peacefully).[22]

In general, Javanese people who long for salvation are those who fall into the *sukerta* category. The longed for salvation is a hope to be freed from the threat of the power of evil. The problem is that the evil power, described as Bhatara at that time, was just a myth that contained *gugon-tuhon* or pointed to reality.[23] *Gugon tuhon* is a prohibition or advice from the ancestors and passed down to their children and grandchildren. *Gugon tuhon* contains teachings and advice aimed at making a better life.[24] Furthermore, Hari Kustono questioned this matter more deeply. Is gugon tuhon has become a myth that people can ignore at this time, if that gugon tuhon is only a story, why should it be preserved? Apparently, *gugon-tuhon* in Javanese tradition is often used as a means of education so it does not have to be interpreted as superstition. Padmosoekotjo in his book *Ngengrengan Kasusastran Djawa Jilid I* explains about *gugon tuhon* that is also quoted by Hari Kustono.[25] Padmosoekotjo wrote that gugon-tuhon is defined as a disguised set of teachings or advice, which can also be referred to as a symbolic message. It is hoped that the Javanese can learn from a mythological story. The value is a moral value for the good with others. In the next process, people who practice ruwatan are expected to be freed from evil influences and safe when dealing with other people. People who have good moral values will be given convenience with the help of others.

[22] H. M Nasruddin Anshoriy, *Kearifan Lingkungan dalam Perspekstif Budaya Jawa* (Jakarta: Obor, 2008), 223.

[23] H. Karkono dkk, *Ruwatan Murwakala: Suatu Pedoman* (Yogyakarta: Duta Wacana University Press, 1992), 46.

[24] Purwadi, *Folklor Jawa* (Yogyakarta: Pura Pustaka, 2009), 133.

[25] A. Hari Kustono, "Ruwatan: Tinjauan Alkitabiah," *Studia Philosophica et Theologica,* Vol. 6 No. 1 (March 2006): 74. https://doi.org/10.35312/spet.v6i1.113.

The scope of salvation from *ruwatan* is only for those who are in condition of *sukerta*. In other words, the evil influence of the *sukerta* people is not universal but local. This is different from original sin in the Christian faith. Original sin is the first personal sin of human, namely Adam and Eve, which befell human nature, then passed on to all humankind through succession, because God has determined that in Adam all mankind is united (cf. CCC 404). Adam's failure to obey God had the effect of sin on all his descendants. Therefore, Adam's original sin is a sin to all humans as a condition and not as an act. People who have original sin do not mean that, from birth, humans have automatically committed personal sins (cf. CCC 405). However, humans have weaknesses and tendencies towards sin from birth because of that original sin.[26] In the next section, the social analysis of *ruwatan* will be discussed.

Social Analysis

Victor Turner's theory is inspired by Arnold van Gennep's theory in the book "The Ritual Passage" which discusses the ritual process.[27] Van Gennep argues that ritual involves an individual's journey from one social order to another which includes three stages, namely the separation stage, the transition stage, and the merging stage.[28] These three stages by Victor Turner are referred to as the three intermediate stages consisting of the reparation stage, the liminal stage, and the reaggregation stage.[29] The first is the reparation stage which is part of the separation stage. This stage consists of symbolic behavior that signifies the release of the individual or either group from a fixed point in the social structure, from a set of cultural conditions, or from both. The second is the liminal stage which is the characteristic stage. At this stage, the subject of the

[26] Sihol Situmorang & Agustian Ganda Sihombing, "Dosa Asal Menurut Agustinus," *Logos: Jurnal Filsafat-Teologi,* Vol. 17, No. 1 (2020): 16. https://doi.org/10.54367/logos.v17i1.1037.

[27] Y. Wartajaya W, *Masyarakat Bebas Struktur: Liminalitas dan Komunitas Menurut Victor Turner* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1990), 36.

[28] Koentjaraningrat, *Sejarah Teori Antroplogi I* (Jakarta: UI Press, 2010), 77.

[29] Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Stucture and Anti-Structure* (USA: Cornell University Press, 1966), 94.

ritual experiences a state "not here and not there" but "in the middle".[30] It passes through a cultural area with little or no past or future state attributes. The third is the reaggregation stage, which is the stage of reincorporation (reunification) which has the function of perfecting.[31] Victor Turner's theory will become the analytical knife of the *ruwatan* tradition. There are several sequences in the treatment that can be categorized as three intermediate stages, but the main highlight of Victor Turner's three transitional stages is the liminal stage. At the liminal stage, there is a process of negating the structure of everyday life which opens up new possibilities.

1. Reparation Stage

Reparation is the release of individuals or groups from a fixed state in the social structure or from a series of structural conditions. In *ruwatan*, this stage occurs when a person is devoted because there are conditions that are different from society by various factors. The reason for this specialization is because someone is in a condition that includes *sukerta*. According to historical data, the ruwatan ceremony was mostly performed by the underprivileged/common people in ancient times. The types of sukerta people who commonly did the ruwatan were fewer in number than what was written in recent literary works.[32] According to the report of a British scholar (1923), in the Tegal area there are five types of *sukerta* people. In the 1930s JN Van Daperen (1934) reported the existence of 9 types of wong *sukerta* in the Bangelan area. Meanwhile, Koentjaraningrat mentions that there are 16 types of *sukerta* people.[33] According to Javanese belief, the *ruwatan* ceremony is a ritual that is believed to be able to free people from the valley of misery. The Javanese believe that there are provisions that the Javanese should avoid. If there are Javanese who do not comply with these provisions, it is considered to invite great catastrophe.

[30] Y. Wartajaya W, *Masyarakat Bebas Struktur: Liminalitas dan Komunitas menurut Victor Turner*, 35.

[31] Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Stucture and Anti-Structure*, 94.

[32] Relin D.E, *Aktualisasi Ruwatan Pada Masyarakat Jawa (Kajian Filosofis)* (Denpasar: Ashram Gandhi Puri, 2015), 5.

[33] Soedharsono, *Peranan Seni Budaya dalam Sejarah Kehidupan Manusia Kontinuitas dan Perubahannya* (Yogyakarta : Universitas Gadjah Mada, 1985), 12.

2.Liminal Stage

The liminal stage is a stage where the subject experiences an ambiguous condition that transcends the cultural field of the past and the future.[34] This situation makes the subject experience a state of not being in any position. The subject of ritual is distinguished from the everyday world as a medium of learning in the future. The liminal stage is experienced by the subject of the *ruwatan* ritual when that person is required to perform a ceremony because this is considered as a *sukerta*. In this situation, the subject will be separated from public life by participating in all the series of special events. This stage lies in the preparation of the *ruwatan* which is preceded by preparing all the provisions such as finding water in the nine springs, making snacks, and all the equipment for the puppet show. The *sukerta* will wear white clothes. Relatives will accompany the subject of the ritual during the ceremony Furthermore, he is required to attend several series of ceremonies such as: Siraman ceremony, offerings - *Slametan*, submission of provision, and Haircut. A *dhalang* will lead this series as a representative of Bhatara Guru. At this stage the subject of the ritual feels unfamiliar with the things being done, but this is where the person will think that this is a reality that must be faced to gain liberation.

A brief description of the liminal stage in the *ruwatan* tradition can be described as such. The implementation of the first *ruwatan* was preceded by an entertainment puppet show. The entertainment puppet show can be varied. When the puppet show almost ends, siraman ritual will follow it. The siraman ritual is a physical and mental purification ceremony, cleansing (bathing) of the provision, places, and the people who will undergo the *ruwatan*.[35] Then, the *sukerta* must prepare offerings for Bhatara Kala. This offering is in the form of provision. The offering of slametan aims at the well beingness of the person who undergoes *ruwatan*. In this ritual to offer the provision, the provision will be handed over to the *dhalang* through his parents and, in return, the parents hand over their child's clean "underwear".[36] The ritual to

[34] Y. Wartajaya W, *Masyarakat Bebas Struktur: Liminalitas dan Komunitas Menurut Victor Turner* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1990), 36.

[35] Relin D.E, *Aktualisasi Ruwatan Pada Masyarakat Jawa (Kajian Filosofis)*, 54.

[36] Relin D.E, *Aktualisasi Ruwatan Pada Masyarakat Jawa (Kajian Filosofis)*, 60.

offer provision has a meaning to protect those who are in the *sukerta* state. After that, there is a ritual haircut that can be interpreted as a symbol that everything dirty must be trimmed, cut, and thrown away. After all of those things are fulfilled, the *dhalang* will recite a mantra that can drive away Bhatara Kala.

Sukerta people usually behave passively in experiencing various series of *ruwatan* ceremonies as a symbol of humility. They must obey instructions implicitly, and accept arbitrary punishment without complaining. This situation will help them in a uniform condition to be reshaped and blessed with additional strength to arrive at a new stage of life.[37] The *sukerta* did all of this for the sake of holiness and salvation.

3.Reaggregation Stage

Reaggregation stage is the transition to perfection. The subject of the ritual returns to its original state, so the person has rights and obligations like the others. The reaggregation stage in the *ruwatan* tradition lies in tirakatan. *Tirakatan* will take place after completion of the ritual *pengruwatan*.[38] *Tirakatan* is a form of devotion and an expression of gratitude to God for the abundance of all gifts and the liberation of the family from the influence of Bhatara Kala. During *tirakatan* parents and children usually participate in carrying out the ritual, but not all night long. Children are not allowed to sleep after the *ngruwat* ritual until midnight. The purpose of tirakatan for the child is as an expression of gratitude physically and mentally to the parents who educate and protect, their child even in a *sukerta* condition. At this stage, the subject experiences a reunification with the social order of society. The *sukerta* people experience a change in their status from *sukerta* to become a free person. The existence of *tirakatan* also means inviting the community to come and welcome the *sukerta* people as free people. The presence of the community in *tirakatan* is also a form of acceptance of the Sukrta people as free people into the community.

Theological Reflection

Social analysis at the liminal stage shows that there are rituals with various preparations so a person can be freed from the influence of

[37] Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Stucture and Anti-Structure*, 95.

[38] Relin D.E, *Aktualisasi Ruwatan Pada Masyarakat Jawa (Kajian Filosofis)*, 64.

Bhatara Kala. Through this ritual, the sukerta people obeyed Bhatara Kala's orders to prepare offerings. The Javanese who carry out the *ruwatan* believe that the *sukerta* people will be free from the grip of Bhatara Kala after undergoing the ritual. Meanwhile in the Christian faith, all authorities, and powers have been subjected to Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Pet 3:22). Thus, the power of darkness, which in Javanese belief is described as the figure of Bhatara Kala, has also been conquered by the power of Lord Jesus Christ. People should come to Jesus Christ and do not follow the chaos maker (Bhatara Kala).[39]

The power of Jesus Christ over the evil one is manifested when people believe in Him. For all those who have accepted the Gospel and heard that Christ is "the way, the truth and the life", then baptism is the only way to God and salvation (cf. CCC 1257-1261).[40] The reason for baptism is to take part in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.[41] Baptism is the first sacrament received by the faithful. This sacrament is the foundation and entry point for living the Christian life. Baptism imparts sanctifying grace and brings people to new life. Through Baptism, people are freed from sin and born again as children of God (cf. CCC 1213). The faithful are joined to His Church and share in the mission of the Church as a follower of Christ. Baptism is necessary because everyone absolutely needs salvation from God which is accomplished through Jesus Christ.[42]

Brenda Colijn explains that salvation is "a story of God's love for His broken creation, His desire for covenant relationships, and His patience in shaping peoples who will reflect His love for one another and for the world."[43] In Ephesians 5:25-26 there is an important saying about baptism, "Christ loved the church and gave himself up for it after he

[39] Pancha W. Yahya, "Ruwatan dan Pandangan Dunia yang Melatarbekanginya," *Veritas: Jurnal Teologi dan Pelayanan 8*, no. 1 (April 2007): 46. https://doi.org/10.36421/veritas.v8i1.173..

[40] Benediktus XVI, *Youcat: Katekismus Populer* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2012), 24.

[41] Jonanda Groenewald, "The Foundation, Value and Meaning Of Baptism in the New Testament," *Department of New Testament Studies University of Pretoria*, HTS 59(2) (2003): 379. https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v59i2.662.

[42] C. Groenen, *Teologi Sakramen Inisiasi: Baptisan – Krisma Sejarah dan Sistematika* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1992), 222.

[43] Brenda J. Colijn, *Images of Salvation in the New Testament* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2010), 313.

had cleansed it with water and the word." The phrase "water and word" presumably refers to baptism, as a means to achieve soteriologically relevant cleansing.[44]

Javanese people who do not believe in Christianity do not know the sacrament of Baptism. However, society has a deep longing for salvation. Javanese people have traditions or local wisdom that are believed as a means to achieve the salvation they long for. The Church herself recognizes that all those who do not have the opportunity to know Christ and study the faith, but they sincerely seek God and live according to their conscience also find salvation.[45] But the Church also teaches that the sacrament of Baptism is necessary for a person to gain salvation (cf. LG 14).

To be baptized means entering the fellowship with Jesus Christ, with the Triune God, the fellowship of the Church and ecumenical unity. Baptism always refers to a dynamic thing, namely that a person is entered into a relationship with Jesus. Baptism, which unites people with Jesus Christ, also incorporates people into the whole event of Jesus Christ. Communion with the events of Jesus Christ includes the forgiveness of sins. Indeed, forgiveness of sins is the central meaning of the gift of baptism, as was the belief of the early Christians (cf. Acts 2:38, 22:16). In addition, baptism makes people included and united with the fate of the life of Jesus Christ, including the passion, death, and resurrection of His life for God.[46]

Because of the same fate and fellowship with Jesus Christ, the baptized person is united with the Triune God Himself. Through baptism, people entered into the trinitarian community of love, namely a dialogue of love between the Father and the Son that takes place in the Holy Spirit. The love of the Holy Spirit that is poured into each person's heart (*cf.* Rom 5:5) makes it possible to experience fellowship with the internal

[44] Jorg Zehelein, "Baptism and Faith as Means of Salvation: An Exegetical Discussion of Significant Passages in the New Testament," *Africa Theological Journal,* ATJ Vol. 37, No 1 (2020): 10. https://www.academia.edu/46059162/Baptism_and_Faith_as_Means_of_Salvation_An_Exegetical_Discussion_of_Significant_Passages_in_the_New_Testament.

[45] Benediktus XVI, *Youcat: Katekismus Populer*, 24.

[46] E. Martasudjita, *Sakramen-sakramen Gereja* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2003), 228.

life of the Triune God.[47] This union also means including someone in the Church. This unity in the Church includes two movements. Firstly, a person is accepted and recognized as a new member of the Church with all his rights and obligations. Secondly, the person internalizes the entire life of the Church, both concerning faith and tradition and all forms of expression.[48] Baptism, that someone receives, also means that it contains an ecumenical bond.[49] "Baptism is the sacramental bond of unity between all who are born again because of it" (UR 22).

Petrus Maria Handoko in his writing "Ruwatan: Rekonsiliasi Kosmis", emphasized the positive role of those who undergo *ruwatan* for those who have been baptized.[50] Through the *Ruwatan* tradition, the Holy Spirit works in the hearts of people who long for liberation, namely the redemption offered by Jesus Christ. Hari Kustono in an article entitled "Ruwatan: Tinjauan Alkitabiah", said that Catholic *ruwatan* should strengthen the longing for salvation as well as proclaiming Christ as a guarantee for the salvation of the faithful. He gave an affirmation and attention to the *ruwatan* tradition.[51] First, the humans' yearning for salvation is necessary and worthy to be maintained in a spiritual life. Second, salvation is not only limited to the life, but it also needs to be viewed in an eternal perspective. Third, the story of Murwakala should be considered as a fairy tale that contains advice or teaching. Fourth, the work of God's salvation in Jesus Christ who has redeemed humans from sin must be used as the central theme that colors the knick-knacks of Catholic *ruwatan* ceremonies. Fifth, the uniqueness of culture with all its noble values can still be maintained. Sixth, the stipulation regarding the sukerta child becomes relative because everyone needs to be saved in the Christian faith.

The *ruwatan* tradition needs to be preserved because it can enrich

[47] E. Martasudjita, *Sakramen-sakramen Gereja*, 229.

[48] E. Martasudjita, *Sakramen-sakramen Gereja*, 231.

[49] E. Martasudjita, *Sakramen-sakramen Gereja*, 232.

[50] Petrus Maria Handoko, "Ruwatan: Rekonsiliasi Kosmis," *Studia Philosophica et Theologica*, Vol. 6 No. 2 (October 2016): 119. https://doi.org/10.35312/spet.v6i2.106.

[51] A. Hari Kustono, "Ruwatan: Tinjauan Alkitabiah," *Studia Philosophica et Theologica,* Vol. 6 No. 1 (March 2006): 85. https://doi.org/10.35312/spet.v6i1.113.

Christian faith. *Ruwatan* reminded the Javanese people to understand the existence of evil and good spirits. Furthermore, this tradition emphasizes that the good spirit always surpasses and triumphs over the evil spirit's power. Keeping the *ruwatan* tradition is not enough just by practicing, but it is also necessary to understand it correctly in the context of the message of the Christian faith for salvation that fully occurs in Jesus Christ. This right understanding needs to be given to the next generation of Javanese Catholics, so that they understand and put *ruwatan* as a cultural expression of the longing for *salvation* that is fulfilled in Christ. When everyone understands the meaning or value of a tradition, then that tradition can be preserved and remains solid, although there are always adjustments because it follows the times. Likewise, the *ruwatan* tradition can be preserved because it has good and valuable values and reflects Christian values. "Whatever is good, which is sown in the hearts and minds of the people, or in the customs and cultures peculiar to the nations, is not only not lost, but is healed, lifted up and perfected for the glory of God, to shame the devil and for the sake of human happiness" (AG 9).

The *ruwatan* tradition which has rituals needs to be interpreted in a new way. Rituals in ruwatan, especially at the liminal stage, do not need to be associated as offerings to Bhatara Kala. For example, the *siraman* ritual needs to be interpreted as a sign that the person has the intention to return to the state cleanliness. The ritual of cutting hair needs to be interpreted as a real act that the person is aware that the dirty must be trimmed, cut, and thrown away. In addition, tirakatan is a form of response to salvation received in the form of gratitude with neighbors addressed to God. Rituals become a means to show that the person is truly responding to the salvation that God offers.

Ritual also exists in the Catholic Church, as in the sacraments and other worships celebrations. People who practice rituals do not mean making humans safe without the need for God. Ritual in *ruwatan* is a means of salvation, the fullness of which can only be found in Christ. The acceptance of salvation through Christ has already happened to the faithful when they receive the sacrament of baptism which is the gate of salvation (Canon Law Book of Can. 849). Baptism is indeed a means of gaining salvation, but faith is required for that salvation to be more tangible. Faith is realized by exercising all the rights and obligations of Christians when they are baptized. Baptism and faith are both means of attaining salvation. Jorg Zehelin emphasized that none of

these two things (baptism and faith) is more important than the other.[52] In relation to the role of the sacrament of Baptism in salvation, the Catholic Church takes the position that the sacrament of Baptism has a major role in salvation. Sacrosanctum Concilium article 59 also explains the relationship between the sacraments and faith. It is true that the sacrament obtains grace, but the celebration of the sacrament itself also very well prepares the faithful to receive that grace which bears tangible results, to worship God properly, and to practice love (*cf.* SC 59).

Conclusion

In the view of the Javanese people, the *ruwatan* tradition is a means for everyone who practices it to gain salvation. The *ruwatan* tradition that is practiced answers the longing for salvation for the Javanese. From this paper, it is increasingly clear that *ruwatan* is not enough to answer the longings of the Javanese people who practice it. *Ruwatan* has not been able to answer the longing for salvation because the salvation offered by this tradition is only for those who are in the sukera state, even though not all Javanese are included in the *sukerta* category.

The Javanese Catholics are assured that baptism is able to answer the longing for salvation. Of course, everyone who is still involved in practicing the ruwatan longs for safety for all. Baptism is the gateway to all people, whether they are in *sukerta* condition, or not. Baptism is necessary for everyone because all humans have original sin. The existence of original sin makes us aware that every human being from birth is unable to reach salvation from God, and humans continue to have weaknesses and tendencies towards sin. So everyone needs a salvation that can erase original sin. In the perspective of the Christian faith, original sin is removed by receiving the sacrament of Baptism.

Ruwatan is one of the ancestral heritages in Javanese culture that has noble values, so the writer believes that this *ruwatan* tradition needs to be preserved. *Ruwatan* needs to be preserved with a note of new meanings. First, *ruwatan* is performed by the Javanese Catholics as an expression of gratitude to God. Thus, this ritual is not intended for Bhatara Kala. Second, the mythological story about Bhatara Kala in

[52] Jorg Zehelein, "Baptism and Faith as Means of Salvation: An Exegetical Discussion of Significant Passages in the New Testament," *Africa Theological Journal,* ATJ Vol. 37, No 1 (2020) 24. https://www.academia.edu/46059162/Baptism_and_Faith_as_Means_of_Salvation_An_Exegetical_Discussion_of_Significant_Passages_in_the_New_Testament.

Ruwatan needs to be realized as a fictional work that wants to teach good deeds. Third, the central theme in the Catholic *ruwatan* ceremony is God's work of salvation in Jesus Christ who has completely redeemed the human kind from sin and all unsaved conditions. Fourth, the sacrament of baptism is a celebration that answers the longing of the Javanese people (whether successful or not) to gain salvation. Thus, the *ruwatan* tradition can still be preserved in the context of Javanese Catholics, but it always be put within the framework of salvation which is only fully and completely implemented through Jesus Christ.

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