

Beliefs of *Kankana-ey* and a Contextualization of the Gospel

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Introduction

While engaged in a master's program at the Asia Pacific Theological Seminary in Baguio City, Philippines, I served in an Assemblies of God church in the mountains surrounding the city. In order to minister there effectively, I began to ask the following questions: What are the worldviews of the people? How can churches and missionaries present the gospel in a way people can understand? What kind of transformation has the church brought? To answer these questions, I chose to focus on the *Kankana-ey* tribes and Pentecostal ministry by the Assemblies of God (AG). The first part of this article will focus on a brief explanation of the historical and religious background of the Philippines and the people of the mountain ranges of northern Luzon and a cultural exegesis of the *Kankana-ey*. Comparison with the biblical text will then be provided. The second part will explore the spiritual formation found among *Kankana-ey* Pentecostals based on the basis of the work Julie C. Ma, a noted scholar in the field.¹

Background

Together with other ethnolinguistic groups, the *Kankanay* are known as *Igorots*, which means, "mountaineer."² The *Kankanay* consists of two subgroups: the northern *Kankanay* and the southern *Kanakanay*.³ The northern *Kanakanay* are also called *Kankanai*. In this paper, the word "the *Kankanai*" refers to the northern *Kankanay* and "the *Kankana-ey*" to the southern *Kankanay*, according to the wording of Jesus T. Peralta.

While each ethnolinguistic group has a unique culture, there are common beliefs and values held by many, if not all, people groups in the

¹Julie C. Ma, *When the Spirit Meets the Spirits: Pentecostal Ministry among the Kankana-Ey Tribe in the Philippines*, Studies in the intercultural history of Christianity vol. 118 (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: P. Lang, 2000).

²Maria Nela B. Florendo, "Ethnic History (Cordillera)," *National Commission for Culture and the Arts*, <https://ncca.gov.ph/about-ncca-3/subcommissions/subcommission-on-cultural-heritagesch/historical-research/ethnic-history-Cordillera/>; Encyclopaedia Britannica, s.v. "Igorot", Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., June 20, 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Igorot> (Accessed February 17, 2021).

³Florendo, "Ethnic History (Cordillera)."

Philippines.⁴ One of such common elements is kinship.⁵ Melba P. Maggay introduces a metaphor to describe Filipino sense of selves and interconnectedness in this way: “If you fry many eggs in one large pan, the whites are seamlessly connected to each other. While there are individual yolks, you don’t know where one egg ends and the next begins. This mirrors the Filipino sense of self, always connected, always part of a larger *sakop*.”⁶

This sense of interconnectedness generally involves the relationships with dead ancestors, a significant element of Filipino animistic beliefs. It is commonly believed that the living people are connected with the dead who move to an invisible realm through religious rituals.⁷ Most *Igorots* also believe in the existence of the supreme god and other lesser gods. People appease the deities and spirits by sacrificial gifts and offerings.⁸ Reuel A. Almocera states that the motivation of Filipino people to worship them is mainly fear.⁹

Catholicism is another important element of Filipino culture. Roman Catholicism was widely spread to the Philippines from the time of Spanish colonization (1565–1898). Nationally, 79.5 percent of national household populations are Roman Catholic, including Catholic Charismatics.¹⁰ In Benguet, the Catholic population is lower, 59.4 %¹¹ and Leonila L. Taray, a Benguet *Kankana-ey* Catholic Christian states

⁴Jesus T. Peralta, “Ethnic Differentiation,” in *Glimpses: Peoples of the Philippines* (Manila, Philippines: National Commission for Culture and the Arts, 2000), <https://ncca.gov.ph/about-culture-and-arts/culture-profile/glimpses-peoples-of-the-philippines/ethnic-differentiation/>. (Accessed February 17, 2021).

⁵Jesus T. Peralta, “Persistence of Tradition,” in *Glimpses: Peoples of the Philippines* (Manila, Philippines: National Commission for Culture and the Arts, 2000), <https://ncca.gov.ph/about-culture-and-arts/culture-profile/glimpses-peoples-of-the-philippines/persistence-of-tradition/>. (Accessed February 17, 2021).

⁶Melba P. Maggay, “Towards Contextualization from within: Some Tools and Culture Themes,” in *Doing Theology in the Philippines*, ed. John Suk (Presented at the Annual Forum on Theology, Quezon City, Philippines; Manila, Philippines: Asian Theological Seminary; OMF Literature, 2005), 46. *Sakop* means “jurisdiction; territory over which jurisdiction extends; in-group” in Tagalog. See, Tagalog.com, s.v. “sakop” Tagalog.com, <https://www.tagalog.com/words/sakop.php> (Accessed March 3, 2021).

⁷*Ibid.*, 47.

⁸*Ibid.*, 83.

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰Philippine Statistics Authority, *2019 Philippine Statistical Yearbook* (Quezon City, Philippines: Philippine Statistics Authority, 2019), 1–21, https://psa.gov.ph/sites/default/files/2019-PSY_1003.pdf. The data were collected in 2015 (Accessed October 20, 2020).

¹¹Philippine Statistics Authority, *Demographic and Socioeconomic Characteristics: Benguet*, 2015 Census of Population (Quezon City, Philippines, n.d.), http://www.psa.gov.ph/sites/default/files/14_Benguet.pdf (Accessed February 17, 2020). The percentage of Christian affiliations includes religious groups which are not including in mainstream Christian groups, such as Jehovah’s Witness and Iglesias ni Cristo.

that the “marginalized people” among Catholic Christians in Benguet, also hold on to their indigenous beliefs and practices.¹²

Setting: Indigenous Beliefs of the Kankana-ey

Not all are in agreement as to the nature of the *Kankana-ey*'s religious beliefs. Julie Ma seems to indicate that they are animistic with some elements of polytheism and calls all invisible beings “spirits,” avoiding the terminology of gods and goddesses as much as possible.¹³ On the other hand, Taray acknowledges animistic characteristics in their beliefs and differentiates some spirits from others depending on whether or not they have godhood.¹⁴ This study takes the position that the *Kankana-ey* are primarily animistic but mixed with polytheism.

***Kankana-ey* Indigenous Beliefs and Comparison with the Biblical Text**

Deities and Spirits

Among the gods and goddesses of the *Kankana-ey*, *Kabunian* (or *Kabunyan*) is the highest deity, the creator, and the prime sustainer of creation.¹⁵ During an interview by the author, the chairperson of Itogon Indigenous People Organization, Rosita Bergaso said that they believe this *Kabunian* is the almighty God of the Bible.¹⁶

Wasing D. Sacla says, however, the maker of the universe is *Adikalia*, while *Kabunian* is the collective names of gods and goddesses rather than referring to an individual personage.¹⁷

Other spiritual beings can be categorized into two groups: the spirits of dead persons and of natural spirits. According to Sacla, the *Kankana-ey* consider all spirits are generally good, however, they can be offended

¹²Leonila L. Taray, “Towards a Christian Understanding of Ancestor Reverence in the Benguet Tradition,” in *2008 National Conference on Theories and Practices of Interfaith Dialogue in the Philippines; Conference Proceedings* (Presented at the 2008 National Conference on Interfaith Dialogue in the Philippines, Manila, Philippines: De La Salle University, 2008), 166, <https://interfaithphilippines.files.wordpress.com/2009/11/taray.pdf> (Accessed February 12, 2021).

¹³Ma, *When the Spirit Meets the Spirits*. The wording is explicit especially in chapter 4.

¹⁴Taray, 167.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Rosita Bergaso, interview by author, Itogon, Philippines, January 16, 2021.

¹⁷Wasing D. Sacla, *Treasury of Beliefs and Home Rituals of Benguet* (Baguio City, Philippines: BCF Printing Press, 1987), 10, 17.

by human actions and therefore punish people.¹⁸ Curses and blessings, however, are negotiable through rituals.¹⁹

There are two types of spirits of the dead. One of them is the *Ap-apo*, the spirits of ancestors who died long ago, but “now share the status of godhood.”²⁰ Taray says that spirits who acquire the status of *ap-apo* are especially honorable men and women. The other type is the *kak-kading*, the spirits of the people who have just died.²¹ These spirits stay on earth because they do not have the privilege to go to the sky world and join the deities.²² The offering of wine during rituals and sacrifices is necessary, or the offended *kak-kading* can cause sickness.²³ Ancestral spirits in relationship with the living people will be discussed in a following section on “human beings.”

The *anito* are underground spirits consisting of various subgroups which are identified by their dwelling places and most are considered sensitive, selfish, and easily offended,²⁴ causing sickness and bad luck.²⁵ The sickness caused by these spirits can be cured by performing rituals.²⁶

Comparison with the Biblical Text

The God of the Bible, the Creator of heaven and earth says that there is no god besides him (Isa. 45:5). He is separated from and independent of all created beings including human beings and spiritual beings like angels, and superior to the whole universe (Isa. 6:1-5; 55:8-9).²⁷ A focus on transcendence alone could make him distant, inaccessible and impersonal. But the Bible says that God’s nature is both transcendent and immanent.

The incarnation of Christ demonstrates God’s immanence. Thus, Jesus came to earth as a man, experienced temptations (Heb. 4:15), sufferings (Isa. 53:5), and even death (Luke 23:46) so that he could become the one and only mediator between God and men (1 Tim. 2:5). The uniqueness of Christianity is the physical resurrection and ascension of Christ (e.g. John 21:12-14; Acts 1:9). Seated at the right hand of the Father, Jesus is not a distant, inaccessible god but God who is actively

¹⁸Sacla, *Treasury of Beliefs and Home Rituals of Benguet*, chapters 4 and 6.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 4.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 17; Taray, 167.

²¹*Ibid.*, 18.

²²*Ibid.*

²³*Ibid.*; Moss, “Kankanay Ceremony,” 348.

²⁴Sacla, *Treasury of Beliefs and Home Rituals of Benguet*, 19.

²⁵Moss, 348.

²⁶*Ibid.*

²⁷Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1985), 312–313.

ruling over creation, while interceding for his people. A focus on immanence alone, however, could remove God's independent status from nature and confuse him with animistic beliefs, where the gods and spirits are part of the cosmos.²⁸

Another demonstration of God's immanence is the Holy Spirit (Lk 24:49; Jn 20:22; Acts 2:1-4),²⁹ which is significant for Christians because he makes the Trinity personal to believers.³⁰ The Holy Spirit regenerates believers (John 3:8), indwells and illuminates them (John 14:16-17), teaches them the truth (John 14:26, 15:26), intercedes for them (Rom. 8:26-27), and sanctifies them (Rom. 8:1-17). He also grants them gifts (Rom 12:6-8; 1 Pet. 4:11; 1 Cor. 12 and 14), which include faith healing, exorcism, speaking in tongues and prophesying.³¹ Such experiences take a central role in *Kankana-ey* Christians' spirituality and answer the animist's felt need for spiritual power.³²

The only spiritual beings, other than God himself, are angels—good and evil ones. The Bible calls angels various names, including “holy ones” (Ps. 89:5, W 7), “heavenly host” (Luke 2:13), “spirits” (Heb. 1:14), etc.³³ Although they are spiritual beings, they can take material bodies and appear before people (e.g. Gen. 19:1). However, such an appearance is only temporary and depends on God's purpose, according to Erickson.³⁴

In the Bible, evil angels are also referred to as demons, unclean spirits, and evil spirits,³⁵ created spiritual beings, whose natures were originally good (Gen. 1:31), yet later became evil because they sinned against God (2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6).³⁶ Their goal, led by Satan himself, is to destroy, deceive and conquer God's creation as well as cause sickness.³⁷

The Bible speaks of life after death (Matt. 25:31-46; 1 Cor. 15:12-31, 2 Cor. 5:1-10; 1 Thess. 4:13-18, etc.). However, Christians neither believe that the dead are invisibly present on earth nor that the dead affect living people.³⁸ The Bible forbids worshiping any spirits, including the

²⁸Erickson, 303.

²⁹Ibid., 846, 872.

³⁰Ibid., 846.

³¹William W. Menzies and Robert P. Menzies, *Spirit and Power: Foundation of Pentecostal Experience: A Call to Evangelical Dialogue*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), chapter 11, sec. 2. Kindle. The word “miraculous gifts” is deprived from Erickson, 877.

³²Allan Heaton Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2014), chapter 9, sec. 5. Kindle.

³³Erickson, 438.

³⁴Ibid., 439.

³⁵Ibid., 447, 449.

³⁶Grudem, chapter 19, sec. A.

³⁷Ma, *When the Spirit Meets the Spirits*, 147.

³⁸Ibid., 230.

spirits of the dead, other than God himself (Exod. 20:3-6). It also prohibits inquiring of the dead (Deut. 18:9-13).³⁹

Human Beings

The *Kankana-ey* myth includes some of the Genesis account, although the gods are not named and humans are not believed to bear the divine image. Human beings dwell in the earth world, but so do spirits, making the material world and spirit world inseparable. According to Taray, human beings and spirits are interdependent with one another.⁴⁰ Human beings are obligated to seek harmony with nature and spiritual beings by appeasing them through rituals.⁴¹

Ancestral spirits are dependent on the living family to maintain their socioeconomic status and occupation while living, even after death.⁴² One way that the ancestral spirit communicates its needs with the living is through dreams and omens.⁴³ The person who receives such signs needs to consult with a priest (*mankotom*) for an interpretation and prescription of the proper ritual.⁴⁴ If the living family neglects the dream, misfortune—including death—will happen.⁴⁵ The living family is also obligated to honor the dead through rituals so that the dead can become *ap-apo*.⁴⁶ In other words, living an ethical life is not enough for dead ancestors to dwell in the sky world but the cooperation of the living family is necessary.

Comparison with the Biblical Text

In contrast with the *Kankana-ey* myth, The Bible says that people were created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27). While the exact nature of what this means has been long been a matter of debate, at the very least it implies that people were created to have a relationship with God.⁴⁷ When Adam and Eve sinned, the relationship was affected because “to sin is make oneself an enemy of God.”⁴⁸ However, even after

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Taray, 168.

⁴¹George N. Capaque, “The Problem of Evil in the Filipino Context,” in *Doing Theology in the Philippines*, ed. John Suk (Presented at the Annual Forum on Theology, Quezon City, Philippines: Manila, Philippines: Asian Theological Seminary; OMF Literature, 2005), 102.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Ma, *When the Spirit Meets the Spirits*, 226.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Taray, 169.

⁴⁷Erickson, 502.

⁴⁸Ibid., 602, 604.

the Fall of man and woman, God continued to have a relationship with human beings.

Furthermore, a strong sense of kinship and collectivism can be found in the Bible. This does not simply mean honoring and respecting ancestors, even though the Bible recognizes the inter-generational connections of human life.⁴⁹ The God of the Bible is often introduced as God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob (e.g., Genesis 50:24; Exodus 3:15; Acts 7:32). Biological environment, socio-economic status, tradition, and culture have been handed down from ancestors and are to be handed down to future generations.⁵⁰

Blessings, Curses and Rituals

A ritual is a ceremonial act or actions, which may involve religion but are performed according to social custom or normal protocol.⁵¹ When associated with religion, it functions to show human beings the relationship between physical need and spiritual power.⁵² In *Kankana-ey* society, most rituals are performed to obtain blessings from the spirits and for cure and/or protection from sickness and misfortune, reflecting a worldview where spirits control these things.⁵³

Comparison with the Biblical Text

Conducting rituals in a way instructed by the Law was a way to demonstrate the Israelites' obedience through interaction between spiritual and physical reality.⁵⁴ William R. Burrows says both worship and ritual are expressions of giving honor and gratitude to God for who

⁴⁹Amos Yong, "Going Where the Spirit Goes: Engaging the Spirit(s) in J. C. Ma's Pneumatological Missiology," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 10, no. 2, (April 2002): 124, <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=ATLA0001639461&site=ehost-live> (Accessed February 6, 2021).

⁵⁰*Ibid.*

⁵¹Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, s.v. "ritual," Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ritual>, (Accessed March 7, 2021).

⁵²R. Daniel Shaw, "The Dynamics of Ritual and Ceremony: Transforming Traditional Rites to Their Intended Purpose," in *Traditional Ritual as Christian Worship: Dangerous Syncretism or Necessary Hybridity?*, ed. R. Daniel Shaw and William R. Burrows, American Society of Missiology series No. 56 (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2018), 30.

⁵³Sacla, *Treasury of Beliefs and Home Rituals of Benguet*, 37.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*

he is and what he promises to believers.⁵⁵ The Scripture says he is a jealous God (Exod. 20:5) meaning “being deeply committed to seeking the honor or welfare of someone, whether oneself or someone else”—in God’s case, his own honor.⁵⁶ Therefore, the Bible strictly commands to worship no other god (Exod. 20:5; 34:14; cf. Deut. 4:24; 5:9).

In the Old Testament, rituals are tied to the covenant which binds God and his people in a special relationship.⁵⁷ In this covenant relationship, the condition of blessings and curses depends on whether or not the vassal keeps the individual laws.⁵⁸ The ritual laws—detailed instruction on how to carry out the practices of worship—are found in many parts of Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, also throughout Leviticus.⁵⁹

Because the condition of blessings and curses is clearly determined, blessings can be defined as God’s faithfulness to keep his covenant.⁶⁰ Blessings in the Bible are never about human efforts or how often rituals are conducted, but depend rather on God’s goodness and love.⁶¹ Because God is good and compassionate to all his creation including those who are outside of God’s covenant, he blesses them with rain, harvest, food, and joy (Psalm 145:8-9; Acts 14:17).

The curse was first pronounced in Gen. 3:17-19 when man and woman failed to obey God’s commandment not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:17; 3:6). As the result, evil entered the originally “very good” creation (Gen. 1:31). At the same time, all creation became the subject of “futility” (Rom. 8:20, NRSB), which means the incessancy of corruption.⁶² In other words, diseases, calamities, and death are all the result of sin, God’s punishment of people according to what they deserve.⁶³

⁵⁵William R. Burrows, “Theological Ideals, Cross-Cultural Realities: Syncretism and Hybridity in Christian Culture Crossings,” in *Traditional Ritual as Christian Worship: Dangerous Syncretism or Necessary Hybridity?*, ed. Robert Daniel Shaw and William R. Burrows, American Society of Missiology series No. 56 (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2018), 54.

⁵⁶Grudem, chapter 12, sec. C. 12.

⁵⁷Erickson, 574.

⁵⁸Ibid., 171–172.

⁵⁹Ibid., 173.

⁶⁰Ma, *When the Spirit Meets the Spirits*, 215.

⁶¹Ibid., 216.

⁶²Ma, *When the Spirit Meets the Spirits*, 220.

⁶³ Ibid.

The Kankana-ey and Pentecostal Mission

Pentecostal Missionaries to *Kankana-ey*s

The Pentecostal and Charismatic movements are growing among Christian Filipinos.⁶⁴ According to one survey, more than a third of non-Catholic Christians are Pentecostal or Charismatic, while fifteen percent of Catholics are active in the Charismatic movement.⁶⁵ These movements are characterized as a populist religion that involves the ability, among other things, to induce miracles.⁶⁶ Christl Kessler and Jürgen Rüland explain that the reasons this movement is attracting Filipino people include 1) it answers people's everyday questions and provides guidance for the general conduct of life, 2) it provides a spiritual experience that helps them cope with everyday struggles, 3) it gives the sense of belonging to a close-knit community, and so on.⁶⁷ Thus, it can be said that many Pentecostal/Charismatic beliefs fit the *Kankana-ey* worldview.

The story of the Assemblies of God, the largest Pentecostal group among the *Kankana-ey* began in 1947 when Elva Vanderbout came to Baguio City as an Assemblies of God (AG) missionary. She began her ministry focused on *Igorots* not only in Baguio but also in Tuding Barangay, which was known for its high crime rate and poverty.⁶⁸ More than one-hundred fifty people received water baptism within a year.⁶⁹ The first AG church in the Cordillera mountain range was built in Tuding in 1949.⁷⁰ From this church about thirty pastors were trained and sent to Igorot churches and more than one hundred preaching points during Vanderbout's time of ministry.⁷¹ In time, more missionaries came. When the Far East School of Theology (FEAST, now known as the Asia Pacific Theological Seminary) moved from Manila to Baguio in 1986, more missionaries and seminary students came to Benguet Province, some of

⁶⁴ Christl Kessler and Jürgen Rüland, "Response to Rapid Social Change: Populist Religion in the Philippines," *Pacific Affairs* 79, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 74–75, 81.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 81.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, 84–92.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, 92–93.

⁶⁸Dave Johnson, *Led by the Spirit: The History of the American Assemblies of God Missionaries in the Philippines* (Pasig City, Philippines: ICI Ministries, 2009), 48. A barangay is the smallest territorial, administrative, and political unit in the Philippines. Barangay Tuding is located in the northwest of the Municipality of Itogon, adjacent to Baguio City.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 50–51.

⁷⁰Ma, *When the Spirit Meets the Spirits*, 79.

⁷¹Johnson, 52.

whom engaged in mountain ministries.⁷² Wonsuk Ma from Korea and his wife Julie were two of them.⁷³

Vanderbout's ministry was blessed with manifestations of the Spirit, including numbers of miraculous healings.⁷⁴ Dave Johnson writes, "When healing began to take place, people began to notice and hundreds came to know Christ when they saw his power at work."⁷⁵ The *Kankanaey* Pentecostals confidently believe that the Holy Spirit will heal the sick when he is present.⁷⁶ Considering taking the sick to the hospital and/or performing rituals affect the family financially to a great degree, especially in a remote area, Ma states that people "acknowledge the power and goodness of God who works healing wonders 'without cost.'"

⁷⁷

Contextualization

Timoteo D. Gener, a Filipino theologian, says that contextualization is not a biblical technique of evangelism but the basics of mission or "doing mission in light of our cultural inheritance."⁷⁸ Paul as a missionary cared for not only spreading the gospel but also establishing a church in order for the gospel to be embodied and discerned.⁷⁹ In this process, contextualization happened as soon as the gospel was preached to the Gentiles. For example, Jesus was introduced to Greeks as *κυριος* or Lord—the term for cult divinities of East Mediterranean religions—instead of Messiah.⁸⁰ The gospel is universal yet needs to be told in a way people from different cultures understand. As Romans 1:20 says, God has revealed his power and nature through Creation before Christianity is brought to a culture. Therefore, both churches and missionaries need to remember that they can find God's revelation even in the indigenous culture, although the Scripture is still the primary theological source, and culture needs to be converted under the authority

⁷²Ibid., 134, 322. FEAST was founded in 1964 and follows Assemblies of God theology.

⁷³Wonsuk was a FEAST student and became its full-time faculty in 1983. In addition to their responsibilities at the school, Wonsuk and Julie Ma engaged heavily in ministry to the *Igorots*, including the Kankanaey, when the seminary moved to Baguio.

⁷⁴Johnson, 48; 50.

⁷⁵Ibid., 50.

⁷⁶Ma, *When the Spirit Meets the Spirits*, 224.

⁷⁷Ibid., 225.

⁷⁸Timoteo D. Gener, "'I Heard a Voice Speaking. . . in the Hebrew Tongue' (Acts 26:14): Pauline Insights on Mission and Vernacularizing the Faith," in *The Gospel in Culture: Contextualization Issues through Asian Eyes*, ed. Melba Padilla Maggay (Manila, Philippines: OMF Literature Inc. : Institute for Studies in Asian Church and Culture, 2013), 58. Timoteo uses the word *vernacularization* instead of *contextualization*.

⁷⁹Ibid., 60.

⁸⁰Maggay, 39.

of Jesus Christ.⁸¹ Thus, Christianity should not remain “import”-ed but it must be rooted in the *Kankana-ey* culture and keep growing.

In the following section, the beliefs of *Kankana-ey* Pentecostals surveyed in Ma’s research are introduced and argued in the light of contextualization. First, the *Kankana-ey*’s strong kinship and a sense of intergeneration relationship are like the idea of a “great cloud of witnesses” (Heb. 12:1).⁸² Family and extended kinship even with dead ancestors are important for both people in the Bible and the *Kankana-ey*, however, the ritual to satisfy ancestors’ needs is not biblical and should not be practiced. Ma’s study emphasizes the ancestors solely in terms of spiritual power or the spiritual realm and shows that the converted regard any manifestation of ancestors as demonic.⁸³ Nevertheless, the Bible affirms the importance of the concept of intergenerational connectedness with the ancestors. As discussed in the section on “human beings,” family relationship in the Bible includes people who are united by the faith in Jesus Christ. Therefore, biblical heroes are now ancestors to all Christians. This sense of continuity through generations is meaningful to the Filipinos, including the *Kankana-ey*.⁸⁴

Second, interpretation of supernatural revelation, particularly through dreams, can be another bridge for discourse. The *Kankana-ey* believe that spirits communicate with the living people through omens and dreams.⁸⁵ Again, Ma’s survey indicates that the *Kankana-ey* Pentecostals reject such dreams as demonic,⁸⁶ but Amos Yong argues that this is not an appropriate Pentecostal response.⁸⁷ He admits some dreams are indeed demonic, however, the Pentecostals should not neglect dreams but ought to interpret and discern them.⁸⁸ The Bible gives examples of troubling dreams given to pagan rulers that were prophetic dreams from God (Gen. 41:1-8; Dan. 2:1-2, 4:4-27). These narratives indicate that religious authorities called wise men and magicians who interpreted dreams in their religious context (Gen. 41:8; Dan. 2:4, 4:6-7). If God gave the rulers prophetic dreams, the Pentecostal needs to affirm the possibility that God speaks to a *Kankana-ey* person in a dream. Another reason why the Pentecostal should affirm the function of dreams among the *Kankana-ey* is because of their eschatological pneumatology. When the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, Peter declared it was the fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel

⁸¹Gener, 68–73.

⁸²Yong, 124; Maggay, 48.

⁸³Ma, *When the Spirit Meets the Spirits*, 209–211.

⁸⁴Maggay, 48.

⁸⁵Ma, *When the Spirit Meets the Spirits*, 226.

⁸⁶Ibid., 206–207.

⁸⁷Yong, 123.

⁸⁸Ibid.

2:28-32 in Acts 2:17-32, in which dreaming a dream is counted as the work of the Spirit of God, the same as prophecy. This is one of the key texts of Pentecostal pneumatology.⁸⁹ Of course, it needs to be carefully segregated from ritualistic traditions to avoid syncretism. However, instead of labeling and interpreting all dreams as demonic altogether, the Pentecostal may start a dialogue with the *Kankana-ey* and show the truth of God, just like Joseph and Daniel did (Gen. 41:16, 25, 32; Dan. 2:27-30; 4:21-22).

Third, prayer for healing is practiced by both the *Kankana-ey* and Pentecostals. As Ma states that the *Kankana-ey* Pentecostal stopped offering sacrifices and doing rituals to the spirits for healing disease but came to believe that the Holy Spirit is the only source of the healing power. Robin Steen studied possible influences of indigenous beliefs and practices on the *Kankana-ey* AG church's practice of praying for the sick.⁹⁰ He states that he finds only successful contextualization while syncretism is carefully avoided.⁹¹ He introduces an interviewee who witnessed a prayer in a pagan style "like calling on the spirits," however, he concludes there are only a few cases of such syncretism.⁹² More than half of respondents from the middle-age group point out "the need for strong faith in the healing power of the Holy Spirit."⁹³ But care must be taken here. Paul Hiebert says that a prayer of request can become a magic formula to force God to answer their request, for magic is defined as an approach to control one's own destiny.⁹⁴ He also says that while proclaiming the gospel in an animistic context, one of the things the church "must" do is to guard Christianity against becoming a new form of magic.⁹⁵ Holy Spirit is God and should be worshipped. In worship, people seek God's will instead of their own.

Seeing how Catholicism has become folk Catholicism or even "a Christianized version" of indigenous religion in the Philippines, the need to be alerted by the danger of syncretism is understandable.⁹⁶ Still, Burrows points out that Christian worship was the product of

⁸⁹Menzies and Menzies, chapter 5, sec. 3.1.

⁹⁰Steen, "Syncretism in Prayer for Healing among the *Kankana-ey* Part 1," 165. His analysis includes literature review of Ma's *When the Spirit Meets the Spirit*.

⁹¹Robin Steen, "Syncretism in Prayer for Healing among the *Kankana-ey* Part 2," *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 16, no. 2 (August 2013): 188, <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=ATLA0001975274&site=ehost-live>. (Accessed February 6, 2021.).

⁹²Ibid., 189.

⁹³Ibid., 202.

⁹⁴Hiebert, 46.

⁹⁵Ibid.

⁹⁶Almocera, 84.

contextualization from its earliest day.⁹⁷ However, instead of centralizing the authority to discern what is appropriate or not onto church leaders, the Pentecostals need to trust the Holy Spirit to guide them to completion (John 16:12; Phil. 1:6).

Conclusion

In the first section, the *Kankana-ey*'s animistic beliefs and worldview were introduced and compared with the Scripture. Ma's *When the Spirit Meets the Spirit* presents the Pentecostal mission to the *Kankana-ey* spoke to their worldview: the existence of the supreme god, spirit world, and supernatural healing power. As the result, spiritual transformation was brought to the *Kankana-ey*.

Also, the Pentecostals can admit that some dreams are possibly from God. This study encourages Christians to re-examine their practices according to Scripture without fearing syncretism more than necessary, for they might find what they reject as pagan is actually biblical whereas what they accept may actually be a pagan distortion of scripture.

⁹⁷Burrows, "Theological Ideals, Cross-Cultural Realities: Syncretism and Hybridity in Christian Culture Crossings," 52.

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