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Pentecostal Praxis in Southeast Asia



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Pentecostals in Asia are well known as ministry practitioners. In this edition, our focus reflects that ethos in Southeast Asia. Jenny Siow leads off this edition by reflecting on a Christian response to Taoist funerary rites among the Chinese in the multi-cultural and religious context of her native Singapore. She contends that these rites and, more to the point, the value of the filial piety that stands behind them, are a major stumbling block to the Chinese coming to Christ. Her goal, focusing more on the anthropological issues than the theological ones, aims to help Christians come to an understanding of the various beliefs and values underlying Chinese funeral rites so that they can meaningfully express the value of filial piety and respect within their Christian faith.

Ngo Lam Khai, who hails from Myanmar, writes on the church's response to one of the hundreds of festivals in his country, the Taungbyone Nat Festival, which is dedicated to two of the thirty-seven *nat* spirits there. He begins by describing the mythological history of the festival, as well as the details of the festival itself. Then he proceeds to delineate the theological issues involved. Finally, following Hiebert's well-known model of critical contextualization, he outlines what parts of the festival may be acceptable to followers of Christ and which must be changed or discontinued.

Lew Belcourt then takes a look at the *ziarah kubur* rite among Javanese Folk Muslims in Indonesia. This rite involves visiting places where supernatural power is believed to be found in order to seek a blessing. Rooted in the *ziyara* (visitation) concept found in the hadiths of formal Islam, this rite has been contextualized in the animistic traditions of the Javanese. Belcourt then asks whether a critical contextualization of this rite "may result in a bridge for Javanese Muslims to encounter the God of the Bible, rather than the spirits of the dead, as the true source of blessing." In other words, can an anthropocentric rite like this be transformed into something that is theocentric, allowing the people of Indonesia to be authentically both Christian and part of their own culture?

Josiah Ang then takes us to a growing trend, at least in Singapore, his homeland, of expressing prophecy through the arts. His purpose

is twofold: “to discuss the role of the Holy Spirit in the inspiration of prophetic arts” and to clarify what prophetic arts are, seeking to provide clarity to the discussion. He argues “that the process of inspiration in prophetic painting is dynamic, where God and the artist collaborate in the process of painting, where the Holy Spirit gives the message, and the artist gives expression to the message.” Furthermore, he also “argues that prophetic arts should be defined as artworks that the artists paint to report the revelation that God has laid on their hearts or brought to their minds through artistic inspiration.”

Joel Tejedo, a leading scholar in the rather nascent field of Philippine Pentecostal studies, concludes this edition by taking us once again into the world of megachurches in Manila (see AJPS 26.2 at www.aptspress.org for his first article). He contends that these churches significantly impact society, especially when it comes to mediating the sacred to their members and adherents in a world undergoing rapid change.

As with the previous article, this one focuses on a survey of the pastors and leaders of two megachurches in Metro Manila, Christ Commission Fellowship (CCF) and Victory Christian Fellowship (VCF). The research was sponsored by the John Templeton Foundation and, amazingly, was successfully completed during the COVID-19 pandemic, despite the challenges presented by significant restrictions regarding social contact. While the research focused on important, basic doctrinal issues, all of the biographical and other data will also be useful to missions scholars and anyone interested in studying the Pentecostal-Charismatic movements in the Philippines.

Thank you for taking this journey with us into the ever changing ministry contexts of Southeast Asia. As always, feel free to reach me through our website, www.aptspress.org.

Respectfully,
Dave Johnson, D.Miss.
Managing Editor