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**THE *JOURNAL* SEEKS TO PROVIDE A FORUM:** To encourage serious theological thinking and articulation by Pentecostals/Charismatics in Asia; to promote interaction among Asian Pentecostals/Charismatics and dialogue with other Christian traditions; to stimulate creative contextualization of the Christian faith; and to provide a means for Pentecostals/Charismatics to share their theological reflection.

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# *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies*

Volume 18, Number 2 (August 2015)

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### **Listening to Asia's Younger Scholars**

For the first time in our eighteen year history, every article in this edition is written by an Asian. Also, to the best of my knowledge, this is the first edition ever done where all of the authors are currently associated with APTS. First, Herman Dionson, is a junior faculty member. Second, Luan Thang and Anattiphong (K) Phanon, are MTh students. The other Daniel Liu, is in the Master of Divinity program. For more information on these programs, please visit [www.pts.edu](http://www.pts.edu).

To celebrate this event, we've invited our dear friend and one of the founders of this Journal, Dr. Wonsuk Ma, to write a special editorial to give his perspective on why we need to listen to Asia's younger scholars. To allow his voice to be clearly heard and, in the spirit of this completely Asian edition, I will reserve my own reflections on this vital subject for another time.

Herman Dionson's article regarding a theology of encouragement leads off this edition. Here, Dionson claims that Paul intended 1Timothy 4:6-16 as both a challenge and an encouragement to Timothy, his son and protégé in the faith, challenging him to preach sound doctrine and lead a correct life. Dionson sees this as a model for older Filipino pastors and challenges them to mentor the younger generation of leaders who will soon take their place.

Luan Thang then adds a new twist to the age old debate between Paul and James' views on the relationship between faith and works by applying it to the ecclesiastical situation in his native Myanmar (Burma). Thang contends that the difference between Paul and James is complementary rather than contradictory because Paul is contending with those who hold that faith is necessary to salvation and James contending with those who believe that saving faith bears no social responsibility. According to Luan, this relates directly to the situation in Myanmar where the older, more liberal churches focus on the practical needs of people while ignoring their spiritual needs while the newer, more evangelical churches do the reverse. Both groups, according to Luan, need to change and reflect a more holistic and biblical view.

Daniel Liu exegetes Chinese culture as well as the Scriptures in grappling with a biblical approach to the *Zhong Yuan Festival* in his part of Mainland China. Liu explains that the purpose of the festival is to honor the ancestors. Can Christians participate in at least some of the aspects of the festival? If not, what might they do to honor their ancestors without worshiping them? Liu provides some excellent reflections on these and other related questions.

Anattiphong (K) Phanon concludes this edition with an attempt to clear up the confusion that, he holds, exists among believers regarding the Baptism in the Holy Spirit and the practice of spiritual tattooing done among folk Buddhists in his part of northeastern Thailand. According to Phanon, these spiritual tattoos are infested with local spirits whom Phanon describes as “Wild spirits.” How does one know the difference between these spirits and the Spirit of God? Phanon answers this question and a number of related questions in order to help local believers have a better understanding of what it means to be “Filled with the Spirit.”

Our regular readers will notice that this edition is smaller than normal with only four articles. This stems from the fact that Debbie and I have been in transition for the last few months and are now home in the States for itineration—visiting our supporters. In the hustle and bustle of preparing to leave Baguio and getting settled here in the States, I failed to notice this shortage. Please accept my apologies and know that we will resume our normal size again with the next edition. And, yes, we will return to Baguio once we have completed our itineration cycle.

I would also like to acknowledge my debt to the Reverend Frank McNelis, our senior editor, who is serving as the acting director of our publishing ministries while we are home, and is making a tremendous contribution. Any mistakes, however, are my responsibility.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact me through the APTS website, [www.pts.edu](http://www.pts.edu).

Your partner for Asia,

Dave Johnson  
Managing Editor

## AJPS AND GLOBAL CHRISTIANITY

The publication of each issue of a journal is a reason for celebration. There are at least two good reasons to do so. First, the mortality rate of academic journals is extremely high, especially in the first few years. Everyone begins with a clear vision and mission, often aligned with those of the institution that sponsors the journal. The Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies (AJPS) was not an exception: it once had a period where its death, even in its “teen” years, was rather apparent. To a founding editor, it was hard to watch. Its “resurrection,” therefore, came with much rejoicing. Second, each issue is different from all others. The character of the journal remains constant, but its content is always different. (For this issue, I will speak more below). The institution’s decision to make the journal content available online is an expression of missional generosity.

AJPS is an Asian journal on Pentecostal studies, not a journal of Asian Pentecostalism. The name of the journal points to a distinct Asian perspective for a wide range of Pentecostal subjects, while it aims to serve broader constituencies. Its global awareness is therefore to be celebrated. At the same time, the journal has been a source of rare studies on Asian Pentecostalism for almost two decades. In many academic books on Pentecostal topics, “AJPS” is a regular entry in the list of abbreviations. The world turns to this journal when researchers look for Pentecostal thoughts and voices in Asia. For example, when a ground breaking book was recently published on Pentecostal creation care, the most important voice among Asian Pentecostals was found from the journal. Agustinus Dermawan began his Indonesian reflection among Indonesian Pentecostals on creation care (or the lack thereof) as a class paper at the Asia Pacific Theological Seminary. After a considerable revision, the study was published in the journal.<sup>1</sup> His study received extensive attention as a crucial Asian Pentecostal voice.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Agustinus Dermawan, “The Spirit in Creation and Environmental Stewardship: A Preliminary Pentecostal Response toward Ecological Theology,” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 6:2 (2003): 199-217.

<sup>2</sup>A. J. Swoboda, *Tongues and Trees: Toward a Pentecostal Ecological Theology* (Blandford Forum, UK: Deo Publishing, 2013), 187-88.

Today, there is another important reason why the watchers of global Christianity focus on Asian Pentecostal Christianity. There are credible data proving that Christianity throughout its two-millennium history has not yet grown beyond the one-third wall of the world population. One exception, according to the *Atlas of Global Christianity*, was the record rate of 34.8% in the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>3</sup> The historic Edinburgh Missionary Conference (1910) was perhaps a brilliant moment to mark this unprecedented point of Christian history. The participants of this first-ever gathering of world mission leaders (although it was really “Western”) firmly believed that “Evangelisation of the world in our [their] generation” was a possible reality. At the height of western colonialism, a vast part of the world was under “Christian” domination. But within that generation, two world wars brought devastations and destruction that human history had never experienced. This time, destruction of lives numbered millions, not thousands. We just marked the seventieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War, which occurred with a blazing fire of atomic bombs in Asia. When the centenary of the Edinburgh conference was held with a smaller number than was at the original gathering, the mood was obviously different. Since the early 1980s, more Christians have lived in the three southern continents. Today, almost two-thirds of the world’s Christians live and witness in what is now called the “Global South.”<sup>4</sup> At the same time, the world Church had learned hard lessons. At that point, world Christianity was under 33.3% of the world’s population, in spite of historic gains in Africa (that is, almost a 42-fold growth of Christianity in one hundred years!).

Asia has been the prime suspect for this “under 1/3 saga” of global Christianity with its massive population (close to 60% of today’s world population). Christianity is about 1/3 of the world average, that is, about 15.5% of the Asian population. When Asia grows, this will definitely impact the world scene. When Christianity in the two “billion club” nations (that is, China and India) begins to grow, we know Asian Christianity will increase. Furthermore, that is happening in our time. There is one last important key: about one half of Asian Christians are of a Pentecostal/Charismatic type, open to the dynamic work of the Holy Spirit. That means the most logical answer to the quest is Asian Pentecostals, who can cause this “1/3 wall” to finally be broken and

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<sup>3</sup>Todd M. Johnson and Kenneth R. Ross, eds., *Atlas of Global Christianity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 59.

<sup>4</sup>Johnson and Ross, *Atlas of Global Christianity*, 51.

keep global Christianity on the other side of the wall in a sustained manner. This was not a role which the journal perceived when it began at the end of the last century.

Four main studies of this particular issue well exemplify what Asian Pentecostals offer to the world. Again, the range and contextual engagement of each study provides a good possibility that Asian Christianity can be a mile wide and a mile deep. First, Dionson's exegetical study is significant in two ways. The first is the ministry of encouragement that is crucial for any ministry, and the study is addressed to both mentors and mentorees. Its second importance is the very fact that Pentecostal faith and life is firmly grounded in the Word and this study demonstrates just that. Indeed, Pentecostals have been known as "people of the book" and only when a biblical principle is confidently laid can a robust contextual engagement can take place. Thang now brings his own Myanmar Christianity into discussion, which is divided between the "work" and "faith" lines or evangelical and mainline churches. He brings this contemporary challenge in a serious engagement with two key passages of the New Testament, which each camp may base their emphasis on. It is not only a careful exegetical study, but also a self-critical and constructive proposal for both to see each other as members of the same body of Christ, and commonly called to reach the vast nation still not touched by the transforming power of the gospel. Phanon's study on Thai spiritual tattoo is another splendid example of a Pentecostal engagement with the socio-religious realities of societies in Asia. Amidst the widespread spirit-related practices, Asian Pentecostals are called to bring a clear gift of God's salvation and freedom from bondage, while countering spiritual forces, beliefs and practices that have permeated deeply the social psyche and life. Liu takes up his own Chinese cultural festival, Zhong Yuan, and contends that there is a strong animistic and religious aspect to it. His exploration of a Pentecostal response to the animistic aspect of the festival is particularly impressive. It is important to remember the pervasiveness of animism, especially in Asia. Anthropological analysis of the festival concludes that it has strong animistic and religious components and Liu provides a practical guide for ministering to people who are involved in the festival.

In my editorial experience of this particular journal, I have noticed that many contributors had their first published studies appear in the pages of *AJPS*. This proves its unique service to new thinker-practitioners. At the same time, it is expected some studies may lack scholarly nuances and refined choice of terms, especially those by non-

English-speaking authors. This is exactly where the journal provides a rare space for such “first-time” thinkers to share their thoughts and experiences with the world. It is clear that all these and other studies in this journal exemplify originality, engagement with cultural and contemporary social issues and deep commitment to the Word and the Spirit. This is the unique call of this journal and I am proud to have been part of this unique ministry in the beginning years.

*Wonsuk Ma*

Executive Director and David Yonggi Cho Research Tutor of Global Christianity, Oxford Centre for Mission Studies

Founding co-editor (1998-2006) of the *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies*

## 1 TIMOTHY 4:6-16: TOWARDS A THEOLOGY OF ENCOURAGEMENT

By Herman Dionson

### **Introduction**

The gravity of the problem in the Ephesian church has led the Apostle Paul to neglect the conventional ancient letter-writing style. He wastes no time in directing Timothy to a course of action that must be followed in order to address this pressing problem in the congregation. Its seriousness has prompted Paul to use searing words to awaken the senses of those who read them. If the purpose of 1 Timothy 1:9-10 was to appeal to those who are spreading the false doctrines, then they are “lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for the sexual immoral, for those practicing homosexuality, for slave traders and liars and perjurers.”<sup>1</sup> Paul’s deviation from conventional letter-writing brings an intensity to 1 Timothy 4:6-16 that at first may seem out of place. But in light of the seriousness of the situation, such deviation might well be an important aspect of Paul’s writing to Timothy, who at this particular moment likely needs more than just orders on how to navigate the church through the problem; he also needs a mentor’s comforting words. Thus, this exegesis paper will consider the above verses, the purpose of which is to provide encouragement and a personal challenge to Timothy.

The Pauline Epistles were not written in a vacuum but are curtailed with issues that erupted in the churches (or individuals, in the case of Philemon). And the element of encouragement, which is often overlooked, is perhaps best exemplified in this passage.

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<sup>1</sup>Holy Bible, *New International Version*, Belfast: Biblical Europe, 2011.

## Background

### The Author and Authenticity

Dibelius and Conzelman turned the argument around when they stated that the burden of proof lies with those who hold to the Pauline authorship,<sup>2</sup> which had not been in question until Schleiermacher cast doubt on it.<sup>3</sup> Dibelius and Conzelman claim that the Pastoral Epistles were written “around the turn of the century, suggesting that the author aimed to revive Pauline teaching for his day or to compose a definitive and authoritative Pauline manual for denouncing heresy in the post-apostolic church.”<sup>4</sup> The arguments were that: (1) external evidence does not authenticate it, nor did the early fathers mention the letters; (2) the Pauline Epistles are not similar to the Pastoral Epistles; (3) the Book of Acts account displaces the Pastoral Epistles; (4) the church structure identified in the Pastoral Epistles was more suited to turn-of-the-century situations; (5) the middle-class audience is contrary to the early church assembly; and (6) the words used were foreign to other Pauline works.<sup>5</sup>

There are two other hypotheses regarding the question of authenticity. One suggests that a fragment of an authentic Pauline letter was used, especially in the personal statements; the other suggests the use of an amanuensis (i.e., a secretary) who was given the liberty to write, thus providing an answer to the differences mentioned above. This theory, though, still supports the contention that the Pastoral Letters are not what tradition says they are.<sup>6</sup>

On the contrary, Gordon Fee posits that external evidence is available that Irenaeus (about 180 A.D.) and Polycarp (135 A.D.) might have an idea of the material. The strongest clue, however, to the traditional view would be in the language and style of the letters.<sup>7</sup> Fee demonstrates that: (1) the purpose and occasion of the writing would require a “genius” to bring the loose ends in the setting, (2) the situation in the Ephesian church is similar to that of the later problems

<sup>2</sup>Martin Dibelius and Hans Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Fortress Press, 1972), 4.

<sup>3</sup>Raymond F. Collins, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, 1st ed. (Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 3.

<sup>4</sup>Philip H. Towner, “1-2 Timothy & Titus,” *The IVP New Testament Commentary Series 14* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 15.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>6</sup>Dibelius and Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 4–5.

<sup>7</sup>Gordon D. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, ed. W. Ward Gasque (Hendrickson Publishers / Paternoster Press, 1995), 23–24.

mentioned above; and (3) this genius writer did not have to write three letters—thus, the traditional view of Pauline authorship still holds.<sup>8</sup>

Theories of pseudepigraphy, therefore, must reconstruct a historical situation in the time of the pseudepigrapher, in this case about A.D. 90-110, that accounts for the data of these letters as addressing the “author’s” situation while still making them plausible as belonging to the alleged historical situation of the letters themselves. Right here is where the difficulties arise.<sup>9</sup>

Furthermore, considering that the correspondence was with two closely related individuals, it can be argued that a different dynamic in writing can surface, as opposed to the other letters directed to the churches. Reading the Pastoral Letters should take this into account. Also, it would be incongruent to church ethics that, indeed, a material being passed on to them purporting to be Paul’s was, in fact, not his.<sup>10</sup>

### The Recipient

Timothy would first surface in Acts 16:1,2, being described as a young man from Lystra, where he was highly regarded. His relationship with Paul is defined in Acts as becoming Paul’s “itinerant apostolic delegate.”<sup>11</sup> He would also be prominently mentioned in most of the Pauline letters, even as a co-author. Paul considers him *γνησίῳ τέκνῳ ἐν πίστει* (1 Timothy 1:2), indicating that close relationship, since *γνησίῳ* “conveys both intimacy and authority.”<sup>12</sup> Such a close relationship is also evident as Paul writes, “You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings—what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endure” (2 Timothy 2:10-11). Paul has sent Timothy on great tasks, which indicates that Paul saw him as strong rather than weak.<sup>13</sup> Fee suggests that him being relatively young (about 30 years

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 25–26.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 6.

<sup>10</sup>Walter L. Liefeld, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus* (Zondervan, 2008), 28.

<sup>11</sup>William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, ed. Ralph P. Martin and Lynn A. Losie, vol. 46, Word Biblical Commentary (Thomas Nelson, 2000), lviii.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 46:8.

<sup>13</sup>Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*.

old) and facing a grave church problem were factors in Paul's words of advice in 4:12.<sup>14</sup>

#### The Occasion and Purpose

It is not known where Paul was when he wrote his first letter to Timothy. It is clear, however, that he was not in prison. The mention of Macedonia and Ephesus (1:3) helps place the letter's recipient as being in Ephesus, with Paul indicating his plans on getting there (3:14, 4:13). This would put into question when he possibly wrote it and the occasion of its writing.

Although it has been suggested that Paul wrote 1 Timothy around the same time as his travels mentioned in the Book of Acts, that supposition would face problems, since the events in Acts would not coincide with the available data mentioned. For instance, in Acts 20:1, Paul's travel would be from Ephesus to Macedonia, with Timothy having already been sent ahead and left in Ephesus (*cf.* Acts 19:22, 1 Timothy 1:3). There are other possibilities from where in Acts this would appear, but such would be more illogical, thus supporting the conclusion that Paul must have been released from prison after what was recorded in Acts 28:30.<sup>15</sup> This will likewise be supported via the early works of Clement mentioning "limits in the West," the Muratorian Canon noting Paul going to Spain, and Eusebius suggesting Paul's second visit to Rome to face death under Nero.<sup>16</sup> With the evidence provided, 1 Timothy can be dated at about 62 A.D.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, it would be for that very purpose Paul wrote the letter, which is to issue to Timothy directives in handling the affairs of the church. Further discussion regarding the problem of that church is discussed in the following exegesis.

#### Exegesis of 1 Timothy 4:6-16

Several books that provided an outline of the whole of 1 Timothy show puzzlement about what header to ascribe to 1 Timothy 4:6-16. Towner ("More instructions to Timothy"),<sup>18</sup> Guthrie ("Methods of

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<sup>14</sup>Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 2.

<sup>15</sup>George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles (New International Greek Testament Commentary)*, ed. I. Howard Marshall and W. Ward Gasque (William. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 15.

<sup>16</sup>Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 46:lv.

<sup>17</sup>Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles (New International Greek Testament Commentary)*, 54.

<sup>18</sup>Towner, "1-2 Timothy & Titus," 36.

dealing with false teaching”),<sup>19</sup> and Liefeld (“Further specifics as to Timothy’s assignment”)<sup>20</sup> are examples that indicate there is no clear identification to this particular part of the letter. Guthrie points out that, as a character of the letter, some areas can be clearly outlined, whereas others are a combination of church advice and church doctrines.<sup>21</sup> Mounce presents a better alternative, arguing that, through the lens of their relationship, “Personal notes to Timothy” makes for a better reading.<sup>22</sup>

Paul pens direct messages to Timothy in the following verses—1:3, 18; 3:14; 4:6-16; 5:21-25; and 6:11-14, 20.<sup>23</sup> Fee, however, finds our pericope as the “thanksgiving” that is missing from the conventional ancient letter writing.<sup>24</sup> The gravity of the error in the church intensifies the need for a personal address of encouragement to Timothy.

### Part 1 (verses 6-10)

#### *Unconditional encouragement (verse 6)*

The first words *Ταῦτα ὑποτιθέμενος* can also be translated by adding “if”—thus, “if you point out” or “if you instruct.” Yet that might not be the direction toward which Paul would want to encourage Timothy. With regard to the problem being faced by the Ephesian church, there is a requirement for Timothy to uphold the teachings (*Ταῦτα*, referring to the previous commands). It would mean that, by pointing these commands to the brothers, Timothy will have discharged the work of a good servant.<sup>25</sup> The phrase *τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς* indicates that the recipient of the instruction is the whole church. Timothy as a good servant is connected not to the conditions set but on his *ἐντρέφόμενος* (i.e., “being nourished” or “since you are nourished”<sup>26</sup>), glued both to faith and to good teaching. Although *παρηκολούθηκας* would be

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<sup>19</sup>Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Inter-Varsity Press, 1990), 63.

<sup>20</sup>Liefeld, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, 39.

<sup>21</sup>Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles: An Introduction and Commentary*, 18.

<sup>22</sup>Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 46:cxxxv.

<sup>23</sup>Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles (New International Greek Testament Commentary)*, 4.

<sup>24</sup>Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 102.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup>Barth Campbell, “Rhetorical Design in 1 Timothy 4,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 154, no. 614 (1997): 197.

conveniently translated regarding Timothy's Christian family, it is rather conformity to the Gospel.<sup>27</sup>

*Maximum training (verses 7-9)*

In Acts 20:30, Paul prophesied that false teachers will be found among the members of the church in Ephesus. This might have come to fulfillment in the heretical problem that Timothy is facing. Paul earlier described these heresies as “myths and endless genealogies . . . [which] promote controversial speculations” (v. 1:4)—heresies that “involved spiritualizing the resurrection and promoting ascetic practices relating to Jewish elements. This ascetic syncretism led to the errorists' gross speculation, false knowledge, and immoral behavior.”<sup>28</sup>

As opposed to the myths characterized by the ascetic practices (4:3), Paul picks a tangible image, the *Γύμναζε*, to encourage Timothy toward *εὐσέβειαν*. It is with care not to put extra meaning to *Γύμναζε* as pertaining to the root of it; literally it means “exercise naked” or “train in athletic discipline;” for it can also be “of mental and spiritual training and discipline control oneself, exercise self-control.”<sup>29</sup> Judging from the context of verses 7-10 and 6:12, it definitely provides for the idea of the athletic discipline applied to the quest for godliness. In addition, verse 8 added *σωματικῇ το γυμνασία* enhancing the action, although it is of little value (*πρὸς ὀλίγον ἐστὶν ὠφέλιμος*). This emphasizes then on the *εὐσέβεια* to provide a benefit to the present as well as the future with a parallelism between “physical exercise” and “godliness,” the former of little benefit, with all benefits coming from the latter.<sup>30</sup>

Verse 9 intensifies the message with the expanded *Πιστὸς ὁ λόγος* formula, which appears three times in 1 Timothy. While a degree of uncertainty exists as to how this formula works, one suggestion is that it serves as a marker of sorts; but even so, it leaves no clue as to how it operates.<sup>31</sup> Mounce took pains in identifying that the literary device

<sup>27</sup>Towner, “1-2 Timothy & Titus,” 105–106.

<sup>28</sup>David A. Mappes, “The Heresy Paul Opposed in 1 Timothy,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 156, no. 624 (1999): 458.0

<sup>29</sup>Timothy Friberg, Barbara Friberg, and Neva F. Miller, “Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament,” *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, Baker's Greek New Testament Library (Grand Rapids Mich.: Baker Books, 2000), 102.

<sup>30</sup>Liefeld, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, 158.

<sup>31</sup>R. Alistair Campbell, “Identifying the Faithful Sayings in the Pastoral Epistles,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 54 (1994): 77.

refers to verse 10.<sup>32</sup> But the whole idea of verses 7-9 (and even 10) is the encouragement of Timothy to *εὐσέβεια*, in which the quest requires toiling in the present, hoping in the future, and focusing on salvation.<sup>33</sup>

*Living God and Soteriology (verse 10)*

Again, the *Εἰς τοῦτο γάρ* refers back to verse 8, pointing to *εὐσέβεια* as the goal<sup>34</sup> that provides for the security of the believer with the present and eschatological life.<sup>35</sup> Then, *ὄνειδιζόμεθα*<sup>36</sup> points back to the athletic imagery in verse 7. With the *ἠλπίζομεν ἐπὶ θεῷ ζῶντι*, the hope is set on what is not just in the future; but because God is a living God, that hope is available.<sup>37</sup> Goodwin recognizes that Pauline element of *θεῷ ζῶντι* yet exercises logical gymnastics, pointing to a non-Pauline authorship, although he does provide an agreeable conclusion that “Paul toiled and strove because he was an apostle of the living God, sent by the living God as the instrument of divine salvation. Paul’s hope in the living God was a hope based on his personal experience of call and commission.”<sup>38</sup>

The soteriological significance of verse 10 needs to be recognized, especially in the atonement debate. Erickson finds the significance of this verse in relation to a universal atonement.<sup>39</sup> In 2:4-6, salvation is clearly stated as available to all but that its context should not be equated with what Paul is saying in verse 10, where he can ascribe a different meaning to the word.<sup>40</sup> Fee interprets this then as “Our hope rests in him, because, *he is the Savior of all men*, that is, he would save (give life to) all people, but his salvation is in fact effective *especially for those who believe* (emphasis in original).”<sup>41</sup>

<sup>32</sup>Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 46:246–248.

<sup>33</sup>Collins, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, 126–127.

<sup>34</sup>Dibelius and Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 68.

<sup>35</sup>Mark J. Goodwin, “The Pauline Background of the Living God as Interpretive Context for 1 Timothy 4.10,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 61 (1996): 69.

<sup>36</sup>For detailed discussion on the textual variant see Appendix 1.

<sup>37</sup>Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles: An Introduction and Commentary*, 108; Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 46:256.

<sup>38</sup>Goodwin, “The Pauline Background of the Living God as Interpretive Context for 1 Timothy 4.10,” 84–85.

<sup>39</sup>Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Baker Academic, 1998), 846.

<sup>40</sup>Steven M. Baugh, “‘Savior of All People’: 1 Tim 4:10 in Context,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 54, no. 2 (1992): 340.

<sup>41</sup>Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 106.

## Part 2 (verses 11-16)

*Drama in two verses (verses 11-12)*

A certain demand is asked of Timothy in *Παράγγελλε ταῦτα καὶ δίδασκε* (repeated again in 6:2b)—a call to command and teach these things to the elders of the church but contrasted with his youthfulness.<sup>42</sup> Liefeld says that “This contrast is not a passing phenomenon but expresses the heavy plot (if one can call it that way in a letter) of gleaming truth opposing dark error with a relatively young warrior leading the change, wielding a sword given to him by the aging apostle.”<sup>43</sup> Youth (*νεότητος*) may be someone about 30 years old<sup>44</sup> (perhaps even 40<sup>45</sup>). But despite the age difference relative to the elders to *καταφρονεῖτω*, the challenge is nonetheless for Timothy to excel in the outward (*λόγῳ* and *ἀναστροφῇ*) and inner life (*ἀγάπῃ, πίστει, ἀγνείᾳ* [Textus Receptus adds *ἐν πνεύματι*, but the shorter reading is best attested by various texts]<sup>46</sup>), which Guthrie believes youth lacks.<sup>47</sup> Perhaps greater weight can be placed on the notion that those same character qualities are lacking in the false teachers. Nevertheless, one with godly character can always be looked up to and emulated.<sup>48</sup> He becomes the *τύπος*, a model for the whole church.

*Focus on the Church (verses 13-14)*

As to the present problem, Timothy is persuaded to continue with the task pending Paul’s arrival, *Ἔως ἔρχομαι*. Verse 13 identifies three aspects of that task—*τῇ ἀναγνώσει, τῇ παρακλήσει, and τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ*, all accompanied by the definite article, which implies that the work is to be done as a unit. In fact, Mounce observes the order—i.e., “Timothy is to immerse himself in the biblical text, to encourage

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<sup>42</sup>Dibelius and Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 70.

<sup>43</sup>Liefeld, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, 165.

<sup>44</sup>Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 107.

<sup>45</sup>Walter Lock, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles (I & II Timothy and Titus)* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1924), 52.

<sup>46</sup>Bruce M. Metzger and United Bible Societies, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, Second Edition a Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies’s Greek New Testament, (4th Rev. Ed.)* (London; New York: United Bible Societies, 1994), 574.

<sup>47</sup>Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles: An Introduction and Commentary*, 109.

<sup>48</sup>Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 107.

people to follow the text, and to teach its doctrine.”<sup>49</sup> He is still to continue the *τύπος* in verse 12.

The institutionalized ordination was not practiced around this time; in fact, the “laying of hands” might be done by colleagues rather than by superiors.<sup>50</sup> It was not viewed as a mystical practice of power being transferred through the hands,<sup>51</sup> but perhaps was likely more akin to the present day Pentecostal “laying on of hands.” The *χαρίσματος* were first received *διὰ προφητείας* accompanied then *μετὰ ἐπιθέσεως* by the body of elders. The crucial element (also in 2 Timothy 1:6-7) is the work of the Holy Spirit, who provides this *χαρίσματος*, not the human actions.<sup>52</sup> Timothy is encouraged further to practice them, putting to memory by not neglecting (*Μὴ ἀμέλει*) the *χαρίσματος* (a gift that is received graciously).<sup>53</sup>

#### *Great motivations (verses 15-16)*

“If you do not combine godliness with proper doctrine in your life, you will give the lie to your own claim to salvation and be a hindrance to others who seek to be saved.”<sup>54</sup> That is putting negatively what Paul stresses in the final two verses of this pericope. Four imperatives appear here that are directed towards Timothy’s own conduct, rather than towards the church or the false teachers. In verse 15, *Ταῦτα μελέτα* can be translated “meditate on” or “give careful thought on” these things. The NIV translates it as “be diligent in these things,” or it can also be translated “practice these things,” which refers back to the athletic imagery.<sup>55</sup> The phrase *ἐν τούτοις ἴσθι* also elicits different translations that try to capture its essence of “immerse yourself in them.”<sup>56</sup> The language Paul uses can be that of a coach prodding his protégé, with *ἵνα* providing a clause of result, i.e., that all will be able to observe of Timothy’s progress—*σου ἡ προκοπή φανερά ἦ ἐν πᾶσιν*, referencing again his being young (verse 12) and the fact that ministers are public figures.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>49</sup>Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 46:260.

<sup>50</sup>Liefeld, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, 167–168.

<sup>51</sup>Dibelius and Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 70–71.

<sup>52</sup>Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 108.

<sup>53</sup>Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles (New International Greek Testament Commentary)*, 208.

<sup>54</sup>Liefeld, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, 168–169.

<sup>55</sup>Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 108.

<sup>56</sup>Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 46:263.

<sup>57</sup>Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles: An Introduction and Commentary*, 110–111.

Verse 16 amplifies the same call in verse 15. Timothy is to *Ἐπεχε* (i.e., “give attention to”<sup>58</sup> or “watch”), with *σεαυτῶ* referring to one’s own self, which is rendered then to “give attention to yourself (or life) and doctrine.” It is true that “the teacher and the teaching are intimately linked.”<sup>59</sup> Adding to that *Ἐπίμενε αὐτοῖς*, which means to “be persistent in them”<sup>60</sup> or “persevere.”<sup>61</sup> One then should “continually be evaluating his life so that both aspects—his life and teaching—might maintain a right course. Sound doctrine is essential for great preaching . . . Such a relentless examining of one’s theology is absolutely necessary if one’s preaching is to be effective.”<sup>62</sup>

The final charge closes with “rapid-fire exhortations,”<sup>63</sup> ending not with the negative motivation (above) but rather one that closes with salvation. What greater motivational tool than a reminder to his personal salvation and that of other people—*σεαυτὸν σώσεις καὶ τοῦς ἀκούοντάς σου*.

### Toward Encouragement

There are possible two levels of communication in the 1 Timothy 4:6-16 passage—one is from verses 6-11, the other from verses 12-16. The first level starts and ends with encouraging Timothy to fully teach the things that were given to him, to “point these things out” (v. 6) and to “command and teach these things” (v. 11), highlighting the teachings he has to follow, not fables but spiritual disciplines, appealing to the physical training. The second level, which is connected to the first, provides a detailed account of what to train for. Verse 12 deals with having the confidence and setting a high example; verse 13 outlines the pastoral duty; verse 14 is a reminder to exercise spiritual gifting; verse 15 encourages having the attitude of a learner; and verse 16 presents a recap, such that salvation is achieved for Timothy and the church.

As to the problem that Paul has dealt with head on in 1:3, the purpose of 4:6-16 is to encourage Timothy to focus not just on correct doctrine but also on correct life. The problem coming from within prompts Paul to encourage Timothy to build up strong character so that he sets himself apart from those who are “hypocritical liars” (4:2). Paul

<sup>58</sup>Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles (New International Greek Testament Commentary)*, 210.

<sup>59</sup>Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles: An Introduction and Commentary*, 111.

<sup>60</sup>Mounce, *Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 46, Pastoral Epistles*, 265.

<sup>61</sup>Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles (New International Greek Testament Commentary)*, 210.

<sup>62</sup>S. J. Lawson, “The Passion of Biblical Preaching: An Expository Study of 1 Timothy 4:13-16,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 159, no. 633 (2002): 93.

<sup>63</sup>Collins, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, 132.

uses the athletic metaphor (4:8) and keeps referring to it, implying that the journey will not be easy. One thing that can be deduced is that it is a shared (i.e., private) image (*σωματική γυμνασία* = “bodily training”), which both easily understand, not to mention a shared Ephesian culture, much like men today can talk about basketball and be fully aware of the shared imagery it can provide. In essence, Paul’s encouragement is to exercise in spiritual training with same amount of energy and discipline as in physical training. His words ring out to Timothy like an athletic coach.

The affinity between Paul and Timothy is better understood in this passage. As is common to the letters of Paul that address certain issues of the church, in this letter he provides Timothy with guidelines in his leadership to the issues that were at hand. Taken from the distance, this passage provides a breath of fresh air to those issues (or perhaps the whole of the issues of the New Testament church) as Paul brings into the conversation that affinity (i.e., strong Christian bond) that both have in their service for Christ and His church.

### **Applying 1 Timothy 4:6-16 to Today**

It is to this particular segment of the whole Scripture that many young people have found courage to face their calling in life. At camps, youth meetings, Bible studies, etc., the Joshua Generation has received a mandate to be strong. “Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith, and in purity” (v. 12). Words that outlined the life that young people ought to live provide the gist of the whole Christian life.

The call in the Philippines is not just for the Timothys, but also for the Pauls—those leaders who will assume the responsibility of helping develop lives at deeper levels. We need Filipino pastors who are committed in the ministry to raising up and entrusting Timothys in the ministry. We need:

- I. Pauls who are trainers of healthy Timothys unconditionally.  
(v. 6)
- II. Pauls who are coaches of trained Timothys to godliness  
(vv. 7-9)
- III. Pauls who are promoters of the godly life to the Timothys  
(v. 10)

- IV. Pauls who are inspirers of young Timothy to be models (vv. 11-12)
- V. Pauls who are believers in the gifts of the Timothy for ministry (vv. 13-14)
- VI. Pauls who are motivators of Timothy toward evangelism (vv. 15-16)

Unfortunately, many of the mentors in the Philippines travel to America and other “greener pastures,” leaving the Timothy all alone and afraid to make calls in the churches. With the technology available, we can still help redeem and make the Pauls to rise up and write, chat, or visit to encourage the new generation of Philippine church workers, ensuring that the churches will not become hostile to the Gospel they have received.

The call of 1 Timothy 4:6-16 is for Timothy to rise to the occasion and to enrich his life so that, instead of leaders who are in error taking their positions, he provides a better example. Paul’s reminders to him as a good and godly minister makes this passage stand out.

### **Conclusion**

The reading of 1 Timothy 4:6-16 is a direct effort of Paul to encourage Timothy to serve in faithfulness with his doctrine and the life that he lives. Paul’s careful use of imagery both challenges and points to mutual affinity. We meet in this passage a Paul who knows a “true son in the faith,” a Paul who is a coach that motivates, and a Paul who believes in and challenges a Timothy with the huge task that lies ahead.

## Appendix 1

Problem Text: 1 Timothy 4:10

εις τουτο γαρ κοπιωμεν και αγωνιζομεθα οτι ηλπικαμεν επι θεω ζωντι ος εστιν σωτηρ παντων ανθρωπων μαλιστα πιστων

Particular Problem:

Reading: αγωνιζομεθα

Variant: ονειδιζομεθα

UBS indicated that the textual problem is a contentious one. Variant text is supported by most minuscules, on the other hand, the text used has more readings and have an older text being a\*. The scholars chose αγωνιζομεθα, although only with hesitation, and reasoning that it has slightly better bearing and provides a better translation for the context.

*Αγωνιζομεθα* means “we contest” in contrast to *ονειδιζομεθα* means “we suffer” I think harder reading would be former.

In this consideration, I would go with *αγωνιζομεθα*.

(1) literally, of public games *engage in a contest, contend for a prize* (1C 9.25); figuratively, of any heroic effort *strive earnestly, make every effort, try very hard* (CO 1.29); (2) of fighting with weapons, literally *fight, struggle* (JN 18.36); figuratively, of great nonphysical effort and struggle *strive earnestly, do one’s very best* (CO 4.12)<sup>64</sup>

Translation of the text:

For in this we labor and we contest as we hoped on the Living God who is the Savior of all men, especially of trustful men.

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<sup>64</sup>Friberg, Friberg, and Miller, “Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament,” 34.

**Appendix 2**  
**Translation**  
**1 Timothy 4:6-16**

- 6 In pointing these things to the church you will be a good servant of Jesus Christ, since you are nourished to the words of faith and the good teaching which you have followed.
- 7 Moreover, have nothing to do with the profane and old wives myths, but you exercise godliness.
- 8 For exercise is of little benefit, but godliness is very beneficial in the present and the future [life].
- 9 These words are true and worthy to be accepted.
- 10 For in this we labor and we strive to do our best having our hope in the Living God, the Savior of all people, especially those who are faithful.
- 11 Command and teach these things!
- 12 Let no one look down on your being young, but be a model of the faithful in words, behavior in love, in faith, and in purity.
- 13 Until I come, pay attention to the reading [of the Scriptures], the encouragement [of the church], and to teaching [of the doctrine].
- 14 Do not neglect the gift that is in you which was given to you through prophecies and laying on of hands by the elders.
- 15 Meditate on these, be fully immersed [in them], in order that your progress might be evident to all.
- 16 Persevere fully yourself in the teaching, remain in them, because in doing this you will save both yourself and the ones hearing you.

- 6 Ταῦτα ὑποτιθέμενος τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς καλὸς ἔση διάκονος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ, ἐντρέφόμενος τοῖς λόγοις τῆς πίστεως καὶ τῆς καλῆς διδασκαλίας ἧς παρηκολούθηκας·
- 7 τοὺς δὲ βεβήλους καὶ γραώδεις μύθους παραιτοῦ. Γύμναζε δὲ σεαυτὸν πρὸς εὐσέβειαν·
- 8 ἡ γὰρ σωματικὴ γυμνασία πρὸς ὀλίγον ἐστὶν ὠφέλιμος, ἡ δὲ εὐσέβεια πρὸς πάντα ὠφέλιμός ἐστιν ἐπαγγελίαν ἔχουσα ζωῆς τῆς νῦν καὶ τῆς μελλούσης.
- 9 πιστὸς ὁ λόγος καὶ πάσης ἀποδοχῆς ἄξιος·
- 10 εἰς τοῦτο γὰρ κοπιῶμεν καὶ ἀγωνιζόμεθα, ὅτι ἠλπίκαμεν ἐπὶ θεῷ ζῶντι, ὃς ἐστὶν σωτὴρ πάντων ἀνθρώπων μάλιστα πιστῶν.
- 11 Παράγγελλε ταῦτα καὶ δίδασκε.
- 12 Μηδεὶς σου τῆς νεότητος καταφρονεῖτω, ἀλλὰ τύπος γίνου τῶν πιστῶν ἐν λόγῳ, ἐν ἀναστροφῇ, ἐν ἀγάπῃ, ἐν πίστει, ἐν ἀγνεΐᾳ.
- 13 ἕως ἔρχομαι πρόσεχε τῇ ἀναγνώσει, τῇ παρακλήσει, τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ.
- 14 μὴ ἀμέλει τοῦ ἐν σοὶ χαρίσματος, ὃ ἐδόθη σοὶ διὰ προφητείας μετὰ ἐπιθέσεως τῶν χειρῶν τοῦ πρεσβυτερίου.
- 15 ταῦτα μελέτα, ἐν τούτοις ἴσθι, ἵνα σου ἡ προκοπὴ φανερὰ ᾖ πᾶσιν.
- 16 ἔπεχε σεαυτῷ καὶ τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ, ἐπίμενε αὐτοῖς· τοῦτο γὰρ ποιῶν καὶ σεαυτὸν σώσεις καὶ τοὺς ἀκούοντάς σου.

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IMPACTING THE FUTURE OF THE ASIA-PACIFIC CHURCH

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF JAMES' "WORKS" AND PAUL'S  
"FAITH" FOR EVANGELICAL AND NON-EVANGELICAL  
CHRISTIANS IN MYANMAR: AN EXEGETICAL STUDY OF  
JAMES 2:14-26 AND ROMANS 3:21-28

By Khaw Thang

The purpose of this research is to find out how works and faith relate in the writings of James and Paul. Special attention will be given to the original texts, and an exegetical work, in order to better understand the purposes of James and Paul for Christians in the nation of Myanmar today.

**Introduction**

Roman Catholic missions began in Myanmar (formerly called Burma) in 1554, with Protestant Christianity coming in 1807. According to Myanmar church history, Christians began to divide into two groups following a revival that occurred in the 1970s. Some, mainly from the mainline churches, began to focus on social ministry at the expense of meeting the spiritual needs of the people, based on James 2:26 (NIV): ". . . so faith without works is dead." As a result, non-believers have little opportunity to hear the gospel from those churches. On the other hand, the evangelical Christians emphasized being saved by faith alone, based on Romans 3:28 (NIV): "For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law," and are less concerned about "doing" Christian charity. This lack of social concern tends to result in non-believers being uninterested in evangelical Christianity. According to the teaching of the Scripture, these two "schools of thought" need to be addressed. Only then will Myanmar Christians be instrumental in advancing the gospel.

The research presented here attempts to address the issue of how to synthesize these widely divergent views. Thus, the path we have taken is to do an exegetical study of both James 2:14-26 and Romans 3:21-

28. The goal is to provide a proper understanding of how faith and works relate, which former Myanmar Christian leaders failed to teach succeeding generations. To realize that goal, our investigation needs to dig out from the original texts what Paul and James actually meant when writing to their original readers and then the implication of those texts for us today. For the sake of space, what is presented here will be limited to the contemporary issues among the evangelical and non-evangelical Christians in Myanmar.

### **Definitions of Evangelical and Non-Evangelical**

The term “Evangelical” has been defined in various ways. In the Myanmar context, however, it means those Christians who believe “in the infallibility and the authority of Scripture, the virgin birth of Christ, the atoning death of Christ for the salvation of human kind, his bodily resurrection, his second coming and personal salvation by faith through grace”.<sup>1</sup> For evangelicals, evangelism is the primary task and social ministry is secondary. Evangelical Christians have no attachment to the ecumenical movement in Myanmar.<sup>2</sup>

The term “non-Evangelical” in the Myanmar context means those Christians who do not share the same statement of faith with the evangelical Christians. Rather, they embrace the ecumenical movement, which is “so dominated by the theologically liberal denominations,”<sup>3</sup> the adherents are generally nominal Christians.<sup>4</sup> Khai wrote, “The ecumenical movement in Myanmar, represented by the Myanmar Council of Churches (known also as the Conciliar Movement), includes nearly all the mainline churches. They emphasize the priority of the cultural mandate over that of the evangelistic mandate.”<sup>5</sup> In other words, they advocate a social ministry rather than a spiritual one.

In summary, strictly speaking, those Christians who experience the new birth (John 3:5) are evangelicals, whereas anyone who has never experienced the new birth, yet consider themselves Christians, are considered non-evangelical. In this paper, I will use the terms “non-

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<sup>1</sup>Chin Khua Khai, “Dynamics of Renewal: A Historical Movement Among the Zomi in Myanmar” (Ph.D. diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 1999), 24.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Kawl Thang Vuta, “A Brief History of the Planting and Growth of the Church in Burma” (D.Miss. diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 1983), 264.

<sup>4</sup>Khai, “Dynamics of Renewal: A Historical Movement Among the Zomi in Myanmar,” 25.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 24-25.

evangelical” and “nominal” interchangeably because they are synonyms in the Myanmar context.

### **Background of Myanmar Christianity**

Myanmar is predominantly an animistic country.<sup>6</sup> It is generally assumed that Buddhism took root there in the first century; however, not until the 11<sup>th</sup> century, during the reign of King Anaw-Rahta, did Buddhism become well known.<sup>7</sup> Buddhism was made the state religion in 1961.<sup>8</sup> Christianity entered the country through the efforts of several missionaries, notably a French Franciscan and a Roman Catholic from Portugal, in 1554<sup>9</sup>. Later James Charter, Richard Mardon, and Felix Carey (eldest son of William Carey), Baptists from England in 1807, began mission work in Rangoon, now Yangon and the former capital of Myanmar.<sup>10</sup>

Six years later, the first American Baptist missionaries to Burma, Adoniram and Ann Judson, arrived in Rangoon.<sup>11</sup> Their labor among the Myanmar people was exceptional, the first Burmese Bible being one of the products of their assiduous work.<sup>12</sup> The Myanmar Institute of Theology (formerly Myanmar Divinity School), founded in 1927, became the most prestigious Baptist seminary from which former and present Christian leaders received their theological and ministerial training.

Pentecostalism came to existence in Myanmar long after the mainline churches were well established. The Lisu people, who had emigrated to Myanmar's Kachin State from southwest China, were the first recipients of Pentecostalism. In 1930, Clifford and Lavada Morrison, Assemblies of God missionaries to southwest China, had

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<sup>6</sup>Nat worship was already in existence before Theravada Buddhism became the religion of Myanmar. See, Maung Htin Aung, *Folk Elements in Burmese Buddhism* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1962), 1-2.

<sup>7</sup>Hla Pe, *Burma: Literature, Historiography, Scholarship, Language, Life, and Buddhism* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985), 189.

<sup>8</sup>“Burma,” in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. II (1967): 901.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Chin Khua Khai, *The Cross Among the Pagodas: A History of the Assemblies of God in Myanmar* (Baguio City: APTS Press, 2003), 40.

<sup>11</sup>Maung Shwe Wa, *Burma Baptist Chronicle* (Rangoon: Burma Baptist Convention, 1963), 1-4.

<sup>12</sup>Vuta wrote in his dissertation that Adoniram Judson dedicated his Burmese Bible to God in January 31, 1834, and it was printed in December 29, 1835 (1983).

ministered to the Lisu in China before they emigrated.<sup>13</sup> The next year, Yong Paul and Esther, a married couple from southwest China, were sent to the Lisu in Kachin State, making that couple the first Assemblies of God missionaries to Myanmar.<sup>14</sup> In November 1938, the Lisu in Myanmar began to experience the baptism of the Holy Spirit, one of whom spoke in English, which he had never learned.<sup>15</sup> According to Saw Tint San Oo, in 1940, the Morrisons and Mrs. Jean Wagner first visited the Assemblies of God churches in Kachin State, ministering to more than 500 members in their first service.<sup>16</sup>

A study of Myanmar church history shows that Christianity first entered among the minority tribal people groups.<sup>17</sup> Today, the need to evangelize the typical Bamas<sup>18</sup> is enormous. Although a number of mission organizations worked in Myanmar from the 1800s to the 1900s, the Baptist mission was most successful.<sup>19</sup> As a result, “Today, the Baptists are the largest single denomination in the country and among the Zomis as well,”<sup>20</sup> with Baptist missions and churches found almost everywhere in the country. Three-fourths of Myanmar Christians identify themselves as Baptists, according to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Factbook.<sup>21</sup> The denomination celebrated its bicentennial in 2013.

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<sup>13</sup>Adele Flower Dalton, “How Pentecost Reached Burma,” *Mountain Movers* (September 1980): 10.

<sup>14</sup>Saw Tint Sann Oo, “The Indispensable Mission: The History of the Assemblies of God Theological Education in Myanmar” (Th.M. thesis, Asia Pacific Theological Seminary, 2003), 20. See note, 48.

<sup>15</sup>Dalton, 10.

<sup>16</sup>Oo, 22.

<sup>17</sup>Most Christians are from the minority ethnic groups such as the Chin, Karen, Lisu, Kachin, and Lahu. See “Christianity in Burma,” [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity\\_in\\_Burma](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity_in_Burma) (accessed August 6, 2014).

<sup>18</sup>The Bamas are the majority people group with strong Buddhist adherence. There is a saying that “to be a Myanmar citizen is to be a Buddhist.” They are considered the hosts of the land of Myanmar where ethnic people groups are considered guests. The Bamas are in control of the systems of the government of Myanmar.

<sup>19</sup>Lunminthang Haokip recorded that out of the 4% Christians, 3% of the total population of the Union of Myanmar are said to be Baptist. See “Christianity in Myanmar,” [http://e-pao.net/epSubPageExtractor.asp?src=leisure.Essays.Lunminthang\\_Haokip.Christianity\\_In\\_Myanmar](http://e-pao.net/epSubPageExtractor.asp?src=leisure.Essays.Lunminthang_Haokip.Christianity_In_Myanmar) (accessed August 5, 2014).

<sup>20</sup>Khay, “Dynamics of Renewal: A Historical Movement Among the Zomi in Myanmar,” 129. The Zomis are one of the ethnic people groups who reside in northern part of Chin State. In general, they are known as Chins because of their location in Chin State.

<sup>21</sup>The 4% of the population of Myanmar is Christian (Baptist 3%, Roman Catholic 1%). See “Christianity in Burma.”

## **The Theological Debate between Faith and Works in Myanmar**

The majority of Christian leaders in Myanmar are graduates of the liberal Baptist seminary.<sup>22</sup> Because of the influence of the seminary's liberal theology, these leaders (including Hau Lian Kham<sup>23</sup>) became liberal. As a result, "By the 1960s, mainline churches were more inclined to theological liberalism than toward evangelistic priorities."<sup>24</sup> Concerning liberalism, Saw Gler Taw wrote, "And because of liberalism in the theological schools in Burma today, their graduates who serve in various churches seem to lose the vision for the mission of the church, and their congregations gradually become nominal, losing their zeal and vitality in outreach."<sup>25</sup> In this case, it is obvious that these Christians are spiritually dead, having no experience of the new birth (John 3:5). In other words, they are nominal, or non-evangelical, Christians.

The nominal Christians believe in the teaching of "salvation by faith plus good works."<sup>26</sup> The Burma Council of Churches<sup>27</sup> "does not encourage the evangelical efforts of evangelical churches and parachurch ministries" (Vuta 1983), but rather "Professional ministries encouraged social works; but all the while, the church declined and became spiritually lukewarm" (Khai 1999). For these reasons, the church lost the biblical directive of preaching the gospel. Therefore, the nominal Christians, both ministers and lay persons, need a renewal of salvation knowledge.

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<sup>22</sup>This seminary is the largest Baptist seminary where the former and present Christian leaders received their theological training. It has become a liberal Baptist seminary since 1960. See Chin Khua Khai, "Legacy of Hau Lian Kham (1944-1995): A Revivalist, Equipper, and Transformer for the Zomi-Chin People of Myanmar," *Asian Journal Pentecostal Studies* 4(1) (2001):102. See note 7.

<sup>23</sup>Khai wrote that Hau Lian Kham earned his Bachelor of Religious Education from the liberal Baptist seminary. Fortunately, Kham abandoned his liberal bent when he came to faith in the Lord and accepted the whole of Scripture as the word of God sometime in 1970. Later, he became the great preacher of the gospel (2001).

<sup>24</sup>Khai, *The Cross Among the Pagodas: A History of the Assemblies of God in Myanmar*, 192.

<sup>25</sup>Saw Gler Taw, "A Renewal Strategy of the Karen Baptist Church of Myanmar (Burma) for Mission" (Th.M. thesis, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1992), 127. See note

<sup>26</sup>Khai, "Dynamics of Renewal: A Historical Movement Among the Zomi in Myanmar," 318. The term 'nominal teaching' in Myanmar context is a teaching that "in order to be saved, one must believe Christ, do good works, take water baptism, and go to church" (Khai 1999).

<sup>27</sup>The Burma Council of Churches with its adherent of nominal Christians is more concerned about social gospel than meeting the spiritual needs of the people.

In the midst of such spiritual laxity, God raised up evangelists for a renewal movement. In the early 1960s, Lal Than Liana, founder of the Evangelical Free Church in Burma, began preaching the gospel with a born-again message, but only a few responded to that message.<sup>28</sup> According to Khai, in the 1970s, Hau Lian Kham, who was senior pastor of Cope Memorial Baptist Church in Tedim (Chin State), began preaching a renewal or salvation message. The Baptist church, being spiritually dead,<sup>29</sup> rejected his new found faith and dismissed him not only from his position, but also from Baptist membership. Those who accepted his renewal message joined him to start the Evangelical Baptist Convention for the advancement of God's kingdom.<sup>30</sup> Despite the opposition, many people got saved through his preaching. Consequently, a number of them became evangelists who are now serving the Lord effectively. Through these efforts, more members were added to the evangelical faith.

The renewal message of Hau Lian Kham marked the dawning of the evangelical movement<sup>31</sup> among the Zomis—a movement that later spread over the whole country. Since the Zomis were the first recipients of the evangelical faith, they now form the highest percentage of Christians among all the ethnic groups,<sup>32</sup> even though they are a minority in population.<sup>33</sup> Since many Zomis are involved in evangelical Christian organizations and missionary outreaches

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<sup>28</sup>Khuang Nawni, *The History and Growth of the Churches in Chin State* (Th.M. thesis, Fuller Theological Seminary, June 1990), 69.

<sup>29</sup>The Christian leaders in those days saw no need to engage in evangelistic outreach. Vuta wrote: "The Baptist missionaries and national leaders did not understand the charismatic characteristics of the new converts during the revival years (1946-50)." See Vuta, 210; Khai also recorded: "There existed among the Zomi Christians a moral laxity and a lack of salvation knowledge." See "Legacy of Hau Lian Kham (1944-1995): A Revivalist, Equipper, and Transformer for the Zomi-Chin People of Myanmar," 100.

<sup>30</sup>Khai, "Legacy of Hau Lian Kham (1944-1995): A Revivalist, Equipper, and Transformer for the Zomi-Chin People of Myanmar," 101.

<sup>31</sup>Khai wrote, "The evangelical stream emerged as a return to biblical faith when the conciliar stream embraced liberal theology in the 1950s." See "Dynamics of Renewal: A Historical Movement Among the Zomi," 314.

<sup>32</sup>According to IRIN: Asia Myanmar, Myanmar is a majority Buddhist country but more than 80 percent of the people in Chin State are Christian. See "Myanmar Chin State," <http://www.irinnews.org/report/87352/myanmar-chin-state-a-mountain-of-trouble> (accessed September 8, 2014). God uses the Chins (Zomis) in the present generation for the advancement of His kingdom; as a result there is a Zomi missionary in every part of the country.

<sup>33</sup>Ethnic Composition in Burma (rough estimate) as of August 6, 2014, is as follows: Bamar 68%, Shan 9%, Karen, 7%, Rakhine 3.5%, Chinese 2.5%, Mon 2%, Kachin 1.5%, Indians 1.3%, Chin 1%, Kayah 0.8%, Other groups 5%. See "Burma," <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Burma#Religion> (accessed August 6, 2014).

throughout Myanmar, it is obvious that God is using them in a great way in this present generation. They are, indeed, instrumental in preaching the evangelical message throughout the country

From the above discussion, it is now obvious that there are two kinds of Christians in Myanmar—the evangelicals and non-evangelicals. The evangelical Christians are involved in doing ministries in which the evangelistic gospel is of primary concern, whereas the non-evangelicals focus on the social gospel (Khai 1999).

Today, biblical teaching about salvation is an urgent need in order for people to get salvation knowledge, which has long been neglected by many church leaders both in the past and in the present. The non-evangelical leaders teach a mixture of faith and works, quoting “faith without deeds is dead” (James 2:26) as a proof text for their teaching and advocate a social gospel without including a salvation message. They build hospitals, orphanages, and schools as part of their community development work, and they teach people to do good works without meeting their spiritual needs. They think that their good works merit the favor of God for salvation, and they consider faith alone as passive, often criticizing others for neglecting social issues. On the mission field, evangelists are often confronted by non-evangelical Christian leaders who accuse them of “stealing their sheep.”<sup>34</sup> Thus, non-evangelical teaching has indeed become a roadblock for the advancement of God’s kingdom in Myanmar.

On the other hand, evangelicals are focused on justification by faith alone and concerned about the spiritual needs of people. They do evangelistic crusades, church planting, teaching seminars, and missionary works. While these are indeed crucial, evangelicals should not neglect “good works” or forget the social benefits of those works. That is why the research presented here is essential for understanding the relationship between faith and works.

### **An Exegetical Study of James 2:14-26**

Relative to this issue of faith and works, an exegetical study of this passage is of great importance because, “Some have imagined that there is a quarrel between James and Paul on this fundamental matter.”<sup>35</sup> In this respect, “The real problem began when Luther

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<sup>34</sup>Nawni, 87.

<sup>35</sup>Guy H. King, *A Belief that Behaves: An Exegetical Study of the Epistle of James* (Fort Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade, 1941), 53.

concluded that the difference in this case was a contradiction.”<sup>36</sup> Martin Luther called the Epistle of James an “epistle of straw” or a “right strawy epistle.”<sup>37</sup> As a result, “The close association of “faith” and “works” has led interpreters going back to Luther in the 6<sup>th</sup> century to view James as in direct conflict with Paul.”<sup>38</sup> James wrote his letter to encourage and exhort those Jews who had fled from persecution and lived outside Palestine.<sup>39</sup> He admonishes them to be strong in the faith; and at the same time, he exhorts the rich people not to neglect their fellow poor Christians. Particularly in this passage, James deals with the static faith of Christians who fail to do Christian charity. He strongly encourages his readers “to be doers of the Word.”<sup>40</sup>

The issue of faith and works is a big theological problem among the Christians in Myanmar. To make matters worse, there is a Buddhist teaching outwardly similar to James’ words, “A person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone” (2:24 NIV). Buddhism is a do-it-yourself religion, which teaches that a person must earn his own salvation by meritorious deeds. Since Myanmar is a Buddhist country, this teaching has had a strong influence. As a result, the nominal Christians mistakenly understood the idea of works as a means of earning salvation. Therefore, an exegetical study of James 2:14-26 should help Myanmar Christians to better understand how James relates works with justification.

### James’ Theology of Works

As Martin discovered, 2:14-26 is James’ judgment on the danger of a self-deceiving attitude.<sup>41</sup> In this regard, Douglas J. Moo asserts, “James is combating some false teachers who were setting forth an

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<sup>36</sup>Luke Timothy Johnson, “*The Letter of James*,” *In the New Interpreter’s Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), 197; T. Carson states, “This is the celebrated passage which was a stumbling-block to Martin Luther. He considered it impossible to reconcile Paul and James.” See “James,” in *The International Bible Commentary*, eds. F.F. Bruce, H. L. Ellison and G. C. D. Howley (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), 1541.

<sup>37</sup>Sharyn Dowd, “Faith That Works: James 2:14-26,” *Review and Expositor* 97 (2000):195.

<sup>38</sup>Ralph P. Martin, “*James: Word Biblical Commentary*,” vol. 48 (Waco, TX: Word Books, Publisher, 1988), 80.

<sup>39</sup>Douglas Moo, “James” in *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1989), 1151.

<sup>40</sup>Ronald A. Ward, “James” in *The New Bible Commentary*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970), 1222.

<sup>41</sup>Martin, 79.

incorrect view of faith.”<sup>42</sup> In this passage, the word *πιστις* “faith” occurs only once (v.14), whereas *ἡ πίστις* occurs eight times. The *πιστις* without the article *ἡ* introduces a new idea.<sup>43</sup>

In relation to the word *πιστις*, New Testament scholars like Peter H. Davids, Martin, and others<sup>44</sup> agree that, in verse 14, James raises a rhetorical question for which he expected a negative answer. Concerning “rhetorical question,” Donald W. Burdick and Simon J. Kistemaker are in agreement that there are two ironic questions.<sup>45</sup> With regard to the first, Kurt A. Richardson observes, “*οὐ φελοῦς* ‘advantage’ or ‘use’ is employed in a startling way in the text.”<sup>46</sup> Davids also agrees that a negative answer is expected, adding, “The second rhetorical question (‘Can such faith save him?’) begins with the Greek *μη*, which introduces questions expecting a negative answer.”<sup>47</sup> In favor of Davids, Joseph B. Mayor writes, “*μη* expects a negative answer, and *ἡ πίστις* is not faith absolutely, but ‘such faith.’”<sup>48</sup> Therefore, Chris A. Vlachos rightly argues, “James’s illustration in

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<sup>42</sup>Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter of James: The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985), 99; Martin also states, “James appears to be combating some form of misunderstanding that has developed in the church.” See Martin, 79.

<sup>43</sup>James Hardy Ropes, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle Of St. James* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991), 203.

<sup>44</sup>Peter H. Davids wrote, “The question is purely rhetorical, for the form of the question implies James’s expectation of a negative answer. No good at all!” See *James: A Good News Commentary* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1983), 37; Martin observed that “V. 14 is composed of two questions, both rhetorical and both constructed to expect answers of no (*μη*). He goes on to say that “The phrase *τί τὸ οφελος* signals the beginning of an argumentative style that resembles a diatribe. James appears to be combating some form of misunderstanding that has developed in the church. See Martin, 79.

<sup>45</sup>Donald W. Burdick wrote, “James first states his proposition interrogatively. The two questions posed in this verse (2:14) actually declare that faith not accompanied by good deeds is of no saving value whatsoever.” See “James,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 12, edited by Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 182; Simon J. Kistemaker wrote, “James began by posing two direct questions which the reader can answer only with a negative reply.” See *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Epistle of James and the Epistles of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1986), 87.

<sup>46</sup>Kurt A. Richardson, *James: The New American Commentary*, vol. 36 (U.S.A.: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1997), 128.

<sup>47</sup>“*τί τὸ οφελος* is a regularly occurring phrase in such a dialogical style always expecting a negative answer.” See Peter H. Davids, *The Epistle of James: A Commentary the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), 120.

<sup>48</sup>Joseph B. Mayor, *The Epistle of St. James: The Greek Text with Introduction Notes and Comments*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1978), 93.

vv.15-16 answers the question raised in v.14: failure to provide for an obvious need calls into question the faith of the one who fails to act (cf. Matthew 25:42-43).<sup>49</sup>

In this respect, *πιστις* and *ἡ πιστις* are clearly defined by Martin, who argues, “The faith of v. 14a is useless for salvation, and the *πιστις* of 14b refers to the ‘workless’ faith of v. 14a.”<sup>50</sup> He adds, “[There is] No salvation for anyone who has the type of faith described in vv. 15-16a.”<sup>51</sup> With that in mind, we can see that *πιστις* without the article that introduces a new idea (Rope 1991:203) is fully understood; for *ἡ πιστις* “such faith” is a dead faith as opposed to authentic or living faith, like that of Abraham and Rahab, in this context. Thus, the expected negative answer to the second question (“Can such dead faith save?”) is fully met; and the new idea is to be understood in light of “such dead faith cannot save.”

According to Martin, “*λεγει* and *εχει* indicate a repeated claim: ‘if a person keeps on saying he or she has faith but keeps on having no works.’”<sup>52</sup> With that in mind, the word *λεγει*<sup>53</sup> is crucial to our understanding of the preceding *πιστις*, which a man claims to have without actually possessing it. Thus, he is never motivated to act by what he claims to have. His “claimed faith” never motivates him to take action to do good works. Thus, James is right in saying, “Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead” (2:17). Such claimed faith cannot be accompanied by action nor can it produce good works, for it is fraudulent and barren.

Concerning faith, King observed that, for James, there are two kinds of belief—head-belief and heart-belief.<sup>54</sup> When James deals with the issue “not by faith only” (2:24), he means the faith of just a head-belief,<sup>55</sup> which is a static faith.<sup>56</sup> Accordingly, I agree with J. A. Motyer that, in verses 19 and 23, we learn about both “false faith” by which the devils produce fear, and the “genuine faith of Abraham,” which made

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<sup>49</sup>Chris A. Vlachos, *James: Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishing Group, 2013), 89.

<sup>50</sup>Martin, 81. Martin adds the *πιστις* with article ‘such faith’ (NIV) indicates the previous *πιστις*.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., 80.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid.

<sup>53</sup>Vlachos, 86. Vlachos notes that James’s use of *λεγει* of *λέγω* rather than in the first half of the protasis is likely significant; at issue are empty boasts.

<sup>54</sup>King, 50.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., 53.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., 52.

him the friend of God.<sup>57</sup> Now in this context, we can see that the second question, which expects a negative answer, is fully met because a workless faith is static and dead; as a result, such head-belief cannot confer salvation. Head-belief is described as "faith of the devil" (Mark 1:24; 26-27), and such does not motivate the devils to love and worship God. Satan did not commit to worship God (Matthew 4:10-11). Similarly, if a person professes that he has faith but has no potential of doing good works, his faith is only a head-belief. Thus, the word ὀφελός used in a surprising way, fits the idea of dead faith. "How can such dead faith profit a man and save him?" (2:14).

Now we need to examine what saving faith is. Theodore H. Epp states, "James maintained that, if you have true faith, you will have some works as the outward evidence of the inward salvation."<sup>58</sup> In this regard, Richardson argues that James does not mean the deeds of faith are effective for salvation, but rather, "The deeds of faith demonstrate the validity of the claim to be a believer."<sup>59</sup> Thus, Burdick rightly contends, "Faith is an attitude of the inner man, and it can only be seen as it influences the actions of the one who possesses it."<sup>60</sup> This is evidently seen in Abraham's faith, as PHEME PERKINS theologically argues, "The sacrifice of Isaac constitutes the work that demonstrates the faith of Abraham (Hebrews 11:17)."<sup>61</sup> In favor of Perkins, Moo states, "Faith without works does not justify (2:24)."<sup>62</sup> However, Moo's argument may lead to misunderstanding of works as necessary for justification. That is why David makes it clear that, "Works are not 'an added extra' to faith, but are an essential expression of it."<sup>63</sup> Thus, good works is the fruit of living faith.

It is clear, then, that saving faith is the heart-belief that produces good works in its widest sense. By the saving or true faith, a genuine Christian possesses the potential of doing good works. Again, I agree with what Motyer says, "It [genuine faith] is the root from which good works (James. 2:22; Titus 3:8) grow."<sup>64</sup> Thus, genuine faith produces

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<sup>57</sup>J. A. Motyer, *The Message of James: The Test of Faith* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1997), 112.

<sup>58</sup>Theodore H. Epp, *James: The Epistles of Applied Christianity* (Lincoln, Nebraska: Back to the Bible, 1980), 135-6.

<sup>59</sup>Richardson, 129.

<sup>60</sup>Burdick, 183.

<sup>61</sup>PHEME PERKINS, "James," *Interpretation: First and Second Peter, James, and Jude* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1995), 113.

<sup>62</sup>Moo, *The Letter of James: The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, 108.

<sup>63</sup>Peter H. Davids, *The Epistle of James: A Commentary the Greek Text*, 121.

<sup>64</sup>Motyer, 106.

love for God and a heart to live in integrity. In other words, a man of integrity is not lacking good works. This can be seen in a person whose life has been transformed. For example, when a wicked person truly accepts Jesus Christ as his Savior and Lord, by the power of the Holy Spirit he begins to live a life of worshiping God and not doing wicked things. Genuine faith intrinsically motivates believers to live not only to please God but also to be a blessing to others.

#### Observation

James T. Draper observed that James wrote his letter to the scattered church, which went through trials and testings.<sup>65</sup> The church then was composed of Jewish Christians who had been ousted from Palestine into the Gentile world.<sup>66</sup> Draper argues that James strongly defines works as doing Christian charity because there were poor people (2:16-17) in the Christian community. Thus, in his letter, James dealt with the problem of neglecting the poor.<sup>67</sup> Robertson contends that, “The antithesis in James is not, in reality, between faith and works but between living faith and dead faith.”<sup>68</sup> Accordingly, Ropes agrees that, as with Paul, James deals with the problem as being between a living faith and a dead faith (1991:207). Thus, James’ argument is not the “works of the law,” but explicitly the works of faith (Johnson 1998:197) against the empty words.

With regard to living faith, it is not meant for salvation, for as Richardson points out, “Active faith is not that which saves... only the implanted Word is able to save (James 1:21).”<sup>69</sup> Living faith is meant for good works. To emphasize this issue, E. M. Sidebottom writes, “Works are the outward expression of faith: the two go together like the obverse and reverse of a coin.”<sup>70</sup> Thus, there is no genuine faith without works, for works are the results of genuine faith.

Obviously, the so-called Christians with dead faith in James’ day claimed that salvation and works were separate. For lack of such saving faith, they were not able to exercise Christian charities to the poor.

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<sup>65</sup>James T. Draper, *Faith That Works: Studies in James* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1971), 12.

<sup>66</sup>A. T. Robertson, *Studies in the Epistle of James* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, n.d.), 28.

<sup>67</sup>Draper, 13.

<sup>68</sup>Robertson, 93.

<sup>69</sup>Richardson, 129.

<sup>70</sup>E. M. Sidebottom, *The New Century Bible Commentary: James, Jude, 2 Peter* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), 43.

Therefore, James “was refuting a heresy claiming that salvation has no bearing on how we live,”<sup>71</sup> wrote Draper. In favor of that point, Nystrom states, “Righteousness that is true will always compel the righteous to acts of mercy and kindness (Romans 2:7).”<sup>72</sup> Now, we can see that a true Christian (i.e., one has been regenerated by a saving faith) will no longer stand with his hands folded but rather will delight in doing charity to those who are in need. Thus Draper is saying, “Works is the works of love, obedience, kindness, graciousness—i.e., our obedience to God based upon our love for God.”<sup>73</sup> James does not teach that works of Christian charity bring about salvation. Salvation belongs to God, for as Richardson argues, “Neither profession of faith nor deeds of faith actually ‘save’ anyone; only God saves.”<sup>74</sup> Nevertheless, although James is deeply concerned with salvation in the last judgment, in this particular portion of his letter, he is not dealing with salvation but rather is challenging people who have such useless faith. For this reason, he strongly opposes the dead faith that does not motivate people to do merciful deeds of charity (Davids 1982).

### **An Exegetical Study of Romans 3:21-28**

Since the 16<sup>th</sup> century in Martin Luther’s time, the doctrine of justification by faith has been at the heart of Protestant thinking.<sup>75</sup> Faith, according to Paul, is crucial in terms of salvation—“For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law” (3:28 NIV). Thus, Paul, in this particular passage, is “challenging judgmental Jewish pride (chapters 2-4).”<sup>76</sup> He teaches that the Jews also need salvation by grace through faith in Jesus. With that in mind, he wrote Romans so that “the Roman church might apprehend the greatness of divine grace and the wideness of God’s mercy.”<sup>77</sup>

Holding the idea of justification by faith alone, Myanmar evangelicals are, to some extent, neglecting social issues. Paul wrote in

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<sup>71</sup>Draper, 86.

<sup>72</sup>David P. Nystrom, *James: The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997), 154.

<sup>73</sup>Draper, 87.

<sup>74</sup>Richardson, 129.

<sup>75</sup>James D. G. Dunn, and Alan M. Suggate, *The Justice of God: A Fresh Look at the Old Doctrine of Justification by Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993), 5.

<sup>76</sup>Royce Gordon Gruenler, “Romans” in *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1989), 925.

<sup>77</sup>F. David and Ralph P. Martin, “Romans” in *The New Bible Commentary*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970), 1013.

Ephesians 2:10 (NIV), “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” However, many evangelicals fail to do the good works to which they were called. They are extreme in their belief of the slogan “justification by faith alone” but neglect the teaching of social issues, which are not the means of salvation but rather the fruits of the Christian faith. For this reason, evangelicals should be strong in faith while, at the same time, having a healthy approach to social issues. In order to do so, this segment of research aims at exploring what Paul’s teaching meant to his original audience and then what it means to us. The exegetical study of this section (3:21-28), it is hoped, will help Myanmar evangelicals to better understand Paul’s “justification by faith alone” and how his faith relates to good works.

### Paul’s Theology of Faith

As we read in Acts 22:3, Paul is a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, and thoroughly trained in the law under Rabbi Gamaliel. Thus, there is no doubt that his theology was influenced by Old Testament (OT) concepts. For this reason, we need to look at how justification or righteousness was understood in the OT in order to better understand Paul’s theology of faith. According to E. R. Achtemeier, we learn that, “Righteousness is, in the OT, the fulfillment of the demands of a relationship, whether that relationship be with men or with God. When God or man fulfills the conditions imposed upon him by a relationship, he is, the OT terms, righteous.”<sup>78</sup> This concept is clearly found, for example, in Genesis 38:26. Tamar was declared righteous for fulfilling the demands of the levirate law,<sup>79</sup> while Judah failed to fulfill the law by not giving his third son to her in marriage.<sup>80</sup> In this case, it is evident that Tamar is called righteous or just because of fulfilling the levirate law. In this manner, a person was declared righteous, or just, by fulfilling or conforming to the law. The idea of OT righteousness is fundamental to the New Testament (NT) righteousness because Paul’s idea of *δικαιοσύνη* is rooted in צדק,<sup>81</sup> which means righteousness that is

<sup>78</sup>E. R. Achtemeier, “Righteousness” in *Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1962), 80.

<sup>79</sup>George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, rev. ed. D. A. Hagner (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993), 481.

<sup>80</sup>Norman H. Snaith, *The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, n.d.), 92-93.

<sup>81</sup>Achtemeier, 80. Achtemeier wrote, “The Septuagint frequently translates צדק with δίκαιο (verb) with δίκαιοσ (noun) with δικαιοσύνη.”

conformity to a rule.<sup>82</sup> Thus, it is clear that, if conformity to a norm is required for a person to be righteous in OT times, the same is true with sinners in NT times to conform to the righteousness of God in order to be saved.

Now let us examine how Paul deals with justification in the New Testament. In Romans 1:18 to 3:20, he speaks of the wrath of God and His judgment on both Jews and Gentiles; then beginning from 3:21, he speaks of how God demonstrates His saving righteousness in Christ. The revelation of God's wrath in 1:18 is answered by God's saving righteousness in Chapter 3.<sup>83</sup> In 3:21, Paul says, "But now apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets" (NASB). James R. Edwards writes, "'But now' is an exclamation of hope which marks the transition from wrath (1:18) to righteousness (1:17)."<sup>84</sup> Accordingly, 3:21 indicates a significant transition, a contrast to what Paul had said in 1:18-3:20.<sup>85</sup> That transition was inaugurated by the coming of Jesus. Thus, this context shows us that Paul is teaching God's righteousness; His saving act is fulfilled in Jesus Christ.<sup>86</sup>

Regarding *δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ* in Romans 3:21-26, Douglas J. Moo observes, "It occurs four times (vv. 21, 22, 25, 26 ['his righteousness' in the last two]), while the related verb *δικαιῶ* 'justify' is found twice (vv. 24, 26) and the adjective *δίκαιος* 'just' once (v. 26)."<sup>87</sup> There are interpretations regarding *δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ*. Scholars like James R. Edwards, Robert H. Mounce, and James Dunn are in favor of interpreting it as an objective genitive.<sup>88</sup> They argue that righteousness is what God offers to sinners, that it is the act of God as he sent Jesus to die for the sin of the world so that He can declare righteousness to anyone who believes in Jesus. This argument, I think, is rather weak

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<sup>82</sup>P. Van Imschoot, *Theology of the Old Testament*. Translated by Kathryn Sullivan, R. S.C.J. and Fidelis Buck, S. J. (Tournai: Desclee Company, 1954), 67.

<sup>83</sup>A. H. Leitch, "Righteousness," in *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, ed. Merrill Tenney (Grand Rapids: MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), 113.

<sup>84</sup>James R. Edwards, *Romans: New International Biblical Commentary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1992), 98.

<sup>85</sup>James D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8: Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 38 (Dallas, TX: Word Books Publisher, 1988), 164.

<sup>86</sup>A. H. Leitch, 114.

<sup>87</sup>Moo, "Romans," 219.

<sup>88</sup>Edwards, 100. Edwards argues that *δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ* is not the attribute of God but is the righteousness with which God is treating humanity. Mounce states that the righteousness of God is of what God offers to the ungodly. See *Romans: The New American Commentary*, vol. 27 (USA: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 114; Dunn notes that the righteousness of God is something he does. See Dunn, 41.

because by what criterion God justifies is in question. As noted above, OT sinners became just or righteous by conforming to the existing criteria. In the same way, NT sinners need to be justified by conforming to the criterion that will be dealt with in the following pages.

In contrast to the objective genitive, Douglas Moo, Brendan Byrne, C. K. Barrett, and Leon Morris argue that *δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ* is the personality of God—that He is just and righteous.<sup>89</sup> This idea holds that God—who is being right—justifies sinners according to His righteousness. In favor of this subjective genitive argument, Charles Hodge explains that “*δικαιω* ‘to justify’ is not simply to pardon but is a forensic term expressing the act of a judge.”<sup>90</sup> From a judicial point of view, “Yahweh needs to be propitiated because of human sin (cf., e.g., Isaiah 43:22-25).”<sup>91</sup> With that in mind, there must be a sacrifice to Yahweh. And since no animal or human sacrifice qualifies to appease God, the work of Christ is employed<sup>92</sup> because, “It is the Person of Christ crucified as a means of propitiation or expiation, by whose blood God’s wrath is averted and his mercy dispensed in a total remission of past sin.”<sup>93</sup> In this manner, on behalf of sinners, Jesus the Lamb of God by his sacrificial death met the requirement—i.e., conforming to the righteousness of God as the OT people did to the law. Thus, anyone who believes in Jesus Christ is justified. This subjective genitive argument is preferable in this particular context, for the righteousness of God stands as a criterion by which He justifies sinners.

Moreover, Mounce rightly contends, “The righteousness God provides has its origin in what God did, not in what people may accomplish. It is received, not earned.”<sup>94</sup> It is totally apart from the law,

<sup>89</sup>Moo, “Romans,” 126. Moo asserts that is the righteousness “by which God acts to put people in right relationship with himself.”; Byrne implies that righteousness of God is His integrity by which He judges the human beings. See *Romans: Sacra Pagina Series*, vol. 6, ed. Daniel J. Harrington (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1996), 123; C. K. Barrett wrote the righteousness of God “includes the quality of being right.” See *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (London: A & C Black, 1991), 69; Leon Morris asserts that it is the righteousness which originates in God. See *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 103.

<sup>90</sup>Charles Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), 81-82.

<sup>91</sup>Verlyn D. Verbrugge, ed., “*Ἰλασκομαι*” in *The NIV Theological Dictionary of New Testament Words*, ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 603.

<sup>92</sup>William G. T. Shedd, *A Critical and Doctrinal Commentary on the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans* (Minneapolis, MN: Klock & Klock Christian Publishers, 1978), 75.

<sup>93</sup>Matthew Black, *Romans: New Century Bible Commentary*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1973), 57.

<sup>94</sup>Mounce, 114.

as Paul uses the words *χωρίς νομου*.<sup>95</sup> Therefore, Paul's use of *δωρεαν* corresponding to the Hebrew "חַנּוּן," strongly emphasizes that righteousness is not earned but is a gift of God's grace or favor.<sup>96</sup> Grace is crucial in the sense that the supreme God makes salvation available to the lowest sinners.<sup>97</sup> Thus, Brendan Byrne rightly argues, "The righteousness of God is something entirely 'apart from law,' not being based upon fulfillment of the law's requirement ('works of law,' v.20)."<sup>98</sup> Accordingly, Mounce further avers "No human being can be brought into a right standing with God on the basis of doing what the law requires."<sup>99</sup> Concerning human beings, Edwards makes it clear that "*σάρξ* 'flesh' (3:20) means the moral nature which is the willing instrument of sin."<sup>100</sup> This explanation indicates that a sinner is incapable of living morally right before God and fulfilling the demands of the law. The fallen condition of human beings necessitates the atonement of Jesus for right standing (being justified) before God.

Jesus died for the sin of the world by conforming to God's standard of righteousness as He became the "atonement cover"<sup>101</sup> corresponding to the Hebrew sacrificial system. God's justice requires the shedding of Jesus' blood so that sinners can have forgiveness of their sins (Hebrews 9:22). Thus, anyone who believes in Jesus is forgiven, justified, and free from judgment because Jesus' sacrifice not only satisfies the demand of justice, but also appeases the wrath of

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<sup>95</sup>Shedd, 74-75. Shedd wrote that "*χωρίς* 'apart,' or separate from: entire separation is intended. "*νόμος* is anarthrous, to denote law generally, whether written or unwritten. The law is here put for the 'works of the law,' or obedience."

<sup>96</sup>The word "חַנּוּן" means without cause or compensation (#2855); See Terence E. Fretheim, *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, vol. 2, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997), 203; Here the word "*δωρεάν*" used as an adverb corresponds to the Hebrew חַנּוּן *חַנּוּן*; it describes the manner of their justification as that of a free gift, gratis." See C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, vol. 1 (New York, NY: T & T Clark, 1975), 206.

<sup>97</sup>Moo, "Romans," 228. Moo wrote that in the LXX, *χάρις* occurs over 190 times. Of those with a Hebrew equivalent (only about 70), most translate חַנּוּן. This word has the special connotation of the 'assistance' rendered to a weaker person by a stronger.

<sup>98</sup>Byrne, 124.

<sup>99</sup>Mounce, 110-11.

<sup>100</sup>Edwards, 93; Dunn suggests that "*πᾶσα σὰρξ* 'all flesh' could be taken simply as a variant translation of the Hebrew כּוֹלֵי חַיִּים, 'all living' since it is in fact synonymous with כּוֹלֵי בְּצִיּוֹר, 'all flesh.'" See Dunn, 155.

<sup>101</sup>Verbrugge, 603. Verbrugge wrote, "The LXX uses *ἱλαστήριον ἡλιαστῆριον* 20x for Heb. חַטֹּאת־כּוֹפֵרֶת, which may be rendered propitiatory or mercy seat, or atonement cover (e.g., Exod. 25:17-22; 31:7; 35:12; Lev. 16:2, 13-15; Num. 7:89).

God.<sup>102</sup> Therefore, there is no righteousness without Jesus Christ because, “He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2 NIV).

Strictly, “Righteousness is given only through faith in Jesus Christ.”<sup>103</sup> For this reason Moo states, “Paul highlights faith as the means by which God’s justifying work becomes applicable to individuals.”<sup>104</sup> Moreover, Dunn argues that, “Faith is the human condition or attitude which is set in contrast to works of the law (3:20-22, 27-28).”<sup>105</sup> In this case, it is obvious that man is only the instrument of sin and is helpless to work for his own salvation. Thus, it demands that God impute His righteousness to sinners.

From the judicial perspective, Schaeffer states, “God does not infuse us with righteousness, God makes a legal declaration; on the basis of the finished work of Christ, God can declare us to be justified.”<sup>106</sup> Therefore, it is clear that justification is declared to a person who believes in the finished work of Christ. As mentioned earlier, righteousness is not earned but imputed (i.e., transferred) in the sense that a sinner is justified by *πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*, who is the end of the law (Romans 10:4). Similar to the OT law,<sup>107</sup> NT people are declared righteous by believing in Jesus, who fulfilled the law (Matthew 5:17). He died on the cross to fulfill the requirement of the law, conforming His life to God’s criterion of justifying sinners. Thus, Paul says that a sinner is justified by faith in Jesus Christ apart from works of the ritual law. It is clear now that Paul is strongly against the works of law as a means of salvation, because faith in Christ is the only way for a sinner to be righteous.

Regarding *πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*, we need to examine by whose faith a sinner is saved.<sup>108</sup> The interpretation of this phrase differs among scholars. For example, N. T. Wright supports the genitive subjective

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<sup>102</sup>Charles Hodge, *Romans: The Crossway Classic Commentaries* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1993), 89.

<sup>103</sup>Wilhelm Pauck, trans., and ed. *Luther: Lectures on Romans* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, Nd), 109.

<sup>104</sup>Moo, “Romans,” 224.

<sup>105</sup>Dunn, 166.

<sup>106</sup>Francis A. Schaeffer, *The Truth of Romans 1-8: The Finished Work of Christ* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1998), 76.

<sup>107</sup>As mentioned already, OT people were declared righteous by conforming to the law. NT people become righteous by faith in Jesus who, by his death, conforms to the righteousness of God.

<sup>108</sup>Luke Timothy Johnson, *Reading Romans: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1997), 53.

that this "faith" is Christ's faithfulness to his death on the cross.<sup>109</sup> On the other hand, Matthew Black argues that "It is the believer's faith in Christ which is the ground of the newly manifested righteousness."<sup>110</sup> Neutrally, Byrne holds that, despite the fact that the subjective genitive "Jesus' own faith" is acceptable, the whole idea of Paul's thought (especially Galatians 2:16) through the passage refers to the objective genitive "believers' faith in Jesus."<sup>111</sup> In favor of Byrne, integrating the two opposite views (i.e., faith *in* Christ and faith *of* Christ), Morris thoughtfully puts it this way:

We should bear in mind that Paul is here not describing Christ, but outlining what Christ has done in bringing about salvation, so that we must understand, at least part of the meaning, the objective genitive. *Faith in Jesus Christ* is certainly in mind. But there would be no place for the exercise of this faith were it not for "the faithfulness of Jesus Christ" and for "God's faithfulness shown in Jesus Christ." The right standing God gives is connected with his faithfulness and that of Christ, and it certainly is linked with the faith of believers in Christ.<sup>112</sup>

I agree with Morris in this case because, if the faithfulness of Christ were not involved, there would be no cross through which the righteousness of God is revealed. On the other hand, if it were only by the faith of Christ, then no one needs to believe. Everybody in the world would be saved automatically. Therefore, I believe that, for the salvation of a sinner, there are three elements involved—the righteousness of God, Christ's faithfulness to the Father, and believers' faith in Jesus Christ.

### Observation

Paul, who once strictly held to the Jewish law but now believes in Jesus Christ, sharply argues against observing the ritual law as a way of achieving salvation or justification, because he himself had received the salvation of God by direct intervention of the Lord Jesus on the road to

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<sup>109</sup>N. T. Wright, *Justification: God's Plan and Paul's Vision* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), pp. 117, 203.

<sup>110</sup>Black, 58.

<sup>111</sup>Byrne, 124; See Mounce, 114. Mounce argued, "πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ is objective genitive ('faith in Jesus Christ') rather than subjective ('faithfulness of Jesus Christ')."

<sup>112</sup>Morris, 175.

Damascus. Before his conversion, he believed that righteousness was earned by obeying the ritual law (i.e., doing works of the law). Contrarily, his experience with the Lord helped him to realize that justification comes through faith in Christ. Therefore, “he was combating those who said that salvation comes by keeping the works of the Mosaic Law.”<sup>113</sup> He taught the Romans to believe in Jesus who is the end of the law, apart from works of the law for justification. The righteousness of God is revealed in Jesus Christ, so that anyone who believes in Him is righteous, or just, before God.

Robertson is right in stating that “Paul, in his contrast between faith and works, has in mind the Jewish doctrine of works as a means of salvation.”<sup>114</sup> So too, Paul strongly emphasizes justification by faith alone, in contradiction of the Jews’ demand that “circumcision was essential to the salvation of the Gentiles, that Christianity alone was not sufficient but must be supplemented by Judaism.”<sup>115</sup> In this case, we need to understand that Paul does not oppose merciful Christian deeds, but he does oppose those good works (the works of law) as a means of attaining salvation. Thus he said, “For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.” (3:27 NIV).

### **Comparison Between Works and Faith**

Having examined James’ theology of works and Paul’s theology of faith, I believe the following comparison of these two perceptions will help one clearly see the differences and thus recognize the original intent of “works and faith.”

#### **James 2:24 (ASV)**

Ye see that by works a man is justified, and not only by faith.

#### **Romans 3:28 (ASV)**

We reckon therefore that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law.

#### **James 2:21 (KJV)**

Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?

#### **Romans 4:2 (NIV)**

If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about— but not before God.

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<sup>113</sup>Draper, 86.

<sup>114</sup>A. T. Robertson, *Studies in the Epistle of James* (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, n.d.), 93.

<sup>115</sup>Ibid., 91.

Our study shows that James and Paul deal with the issue of works and faith from different angles. James looks at the one side of the coin called faith, while Paul looks at the other side. Or stated another way, James explains the active side of faith and Paul the passive side.<sup>116</sup> Here, in short, are the differences—"Paul begins with the Christian life at its very commencement: we are saved by faith alone (Romans 3:28) with no reliance on the works of the law (Galatians 2:16). James begins with the professing Christians who have fallen into wrongheaded ways and need genuine faith."<sup>117</sup>

There is no doubt that James and Paul are working together for genuine and healthy Christianity. This is evidenced by how they look at Abraham. "James looked to the Abraham story to show how genuine faith operates; Paul looked to the Abraham story to show how God is predisposed to forgive sinners."<sup>118</sup> Thus, Paul is concerned for "justification by faith," while James is concerned for "good works as the result of faith."

The interpretation of the Greek *εργα* is of great help to see how James and Paul work in unity, not in contradiction. In this regard, Nystrom observed, "Paul often employs *εργα* to mean 'works of the law;' for James *εργα* means 'deeds of Christian righteousness.'"<sup>119</sup> Although the vocabulary is the same, the way it is used is different. When Paul argues that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law (Romans 3:28), he does not mean Christians' good deeds. At the same time, when James argues that faith without works is dead (James 2:26), he does not mean the works of law. As a result, James is not against Paul's faith and Paul is not against James' good works; however, James condemns the dead-faith Christians just as Paul condemns the Christians who trust in the works of the law for salvation.

Likewise, when James speaks of justification by works, not by faith (2:24), he is concerned with the Christian deeds that demonstrate one's justification. And by the words "not by faith", he means the kind of faith that does not produce good fruits. James does not oppose the kind of faith that Paul claims for salvation. Therefore, as Robertson argues, "It is not personal trust in Christ that James ridicules but an empty theological tenet that does not stand the test of actual life."<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>116</sup>Kistemaker, 87.

<sup>117</sup>Martin, 82.

<sup>118</sup>Richardson, 140.

<sup>119</sup>Nystrom, 148.

<sup>120</sup>Robertson, 94.

Nystrom agrees, “Both Paul and James see faith as a confidence in God’s saving act along with the effect of that act in the lives of the followers of Jesus Christ.”<sup>121</sup>

Now it is clear that, although the English vocabularies look different, the intent of the original sense is the same. Both James and Paul are pointing in the same direction—the salvation or justification of mankind. The idea of works in James speaks of merciful Christian good deeds, and the faith he opposed is a dead faith. Accordingly, the idea of works Paul opposes is the works of the law, not Christians’ good deeds.

It is crucial that one not misunderstand these two theologies, because James’s “works of faith” are not at all what Paul meant by “works of law.”<sup>122</sup> “Paul in Romans 3:28 is speaking of salvation as a past event; nothing human beings can do can earn God’s forgiveness. But James, when speaking of deeds, has in mind present activity.”<sup>123</sup> Here, I believe that James is dealing with the fruit of salvation, while Paul is dealing with how salvation is achieved. Motyer (1985:113) beautifully illustrates the relation between faith and works this way—Faith is a senior partner, and works is a junior partner, both working together. Thus, good works are the fruit of living faith, while dead faith produces only empty words.

### **Significance for Myanmar’s Evangelical and non-Evangelical Christians in Dialogue**

From our study, we learn that there is no theological contradiction between Paul and James, both of them working for the salvation of mankind. The great confusion relative to their theologies came from the erroneous interpretation of “faith” and “works.” Our exegetical work clearly reveals that James is arguing against “a dead faith,” one that lacks potential to motivate a person to do merciful deeds. The works with which James dealt is the fruit of living faith.

In contradiction to James’ idea, Myanmar non-evangelical Christians erroneously understand works to be a means of salvation. As a result, they focus on Christian charities and social endeavors in order to secure their souls’ salvation. They believe that performance of

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<sup>121</sup>Nystrom, 148.

<sup>122</sup>Richardson, 128.

<sup>123</sup>Nystrom, 158.

deeds deserves spiritual blessing.<sup>124</sup> Doing good deeds in and of itself is not wrong, but trusting good deeds for salvation is totally against God's will. Thus, both James and Paul are opposed to such dead faith and works of the law. Non-evangelical Christians need to move beyond the doing of good works to meet their spiritual needs.

On the other hand, Paul emphasized faith. Although he is not against Christian merciful works, he strongly opposes works that supposedly bring about salvation. Many evangelicals in Myanmar are mistakenly content with their "salvation by faith" and neglect Christian merciful deeds. It is not wrong to be content with our salvation by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ; but if people are truly born again and truly a part of God's family, they must intuitively desire to do good works, which James argues is the result of saving, or living, faith. Such faith will produce love, compassion, etc., for others. Therefore, evangelicals should not be confined in their comfort zones, but rather they should step into the world to not only give witness about the love of God, but also exercise Christian deeds as children of God.

In summary, Paul is dealing with justification by faith as essential for the beginning of one's spiritual life, while James is dealing with the importance of Christian deeds as outward demonstrations of being a genuine Christian. Thus, Myanmar non-evangelical Christians need to seek God for a solution first to their spiritual needs, met only by the blood of Jesus; and the evangelicals need to put their faith into action.

## **Conclusion**

Christianity is not a religion that seeks to appease gods by meritorious deeds. In Christianity, we know that God seeks sinners and imputes righteousness (by employing the completed work of Jesus Christ) to anyone who believes in Him. Myanmar Christians should know that there is no other way by which a sinner can be saved. Only faith in Jesus can secure salvation for their souls. Thus, relying on the performance of good deeds for salvation is deceiving oneself, as the non-evangelical Christians do. On the other hand, Christians should not be selfish as some evangelicals are, neglecting the good works God entrusts to us (Ephesians 2:10).

It is important for Myanmar Christians to keep in mind what Nystrom states, "In the New Testament generally, and in Paul in particular, salvation is a threefold experience: it is an accomplished

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<sup>124</sup>I often hear people say that they will go to heaven because they are good people and are active both in their church and in charitable activities.

fact: we have been saved (see Ephesians 2:8). It is a present experience: we are being saved (see 1 Corinthians 1:18; Philippians 2:12). It is a future hope: we will be saved (see Roman 13:11; Philippians 3:20).”<sup>125</sup> With that in mind, the theologies of Paul and James, in terms of faith and works, teach us that we need to have such a saving faith, one that always motivates us as children of God to do Christian deeds to the people around us. We should not only focus on the spiritual needs of people, but also be concerned about merciful deeds to the poor and the needy.

Moo reminds us that, “Paul is attacking people who think that salvation can be earned. James is attacking people who think that salvation brings no responsibility.”<sup>126</sup> For this reason, Myanmar evangelicals need to move forward to the exercise of their faith in doing Christian charities. At the same time, the non-evangelical Christians need to go beyond doing Christian charities to meet the spiritual needs of the people. Only then will these two groups be able to cooperate in spreading the gospel for the furtherance of the kingdom of God on earth.

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<sup>125</sup>Nystrom, 158.

<sup>126</sup>Moo, “James,” 1157.

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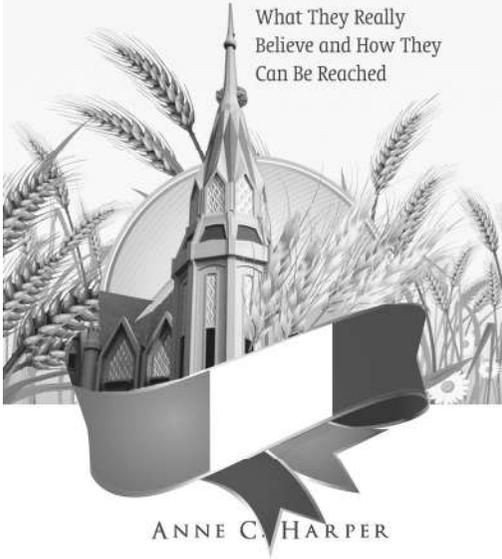
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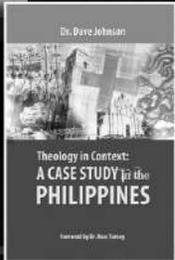
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Dave Johnson, D-Miss, has been an Assemblies of God (USA) missionary to the Philippines since 1974 and has conducted extensive research on lowland Filipino culture. He is also the author of *Led by the Spirit: The History of the American Assemblies of God Missions in the Philippines* and is the managing editor of the *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies*, the *Theological Journal of the Asia Pacific Theological Seminary in Baguio City, Philippines*. He can be contacted at [www.aptsp.edu](http://www.aptsp.edu) or through his own website, [www.davejohnsonbiblejournal.com](http://www.davejohnsonbiblejournal.com).

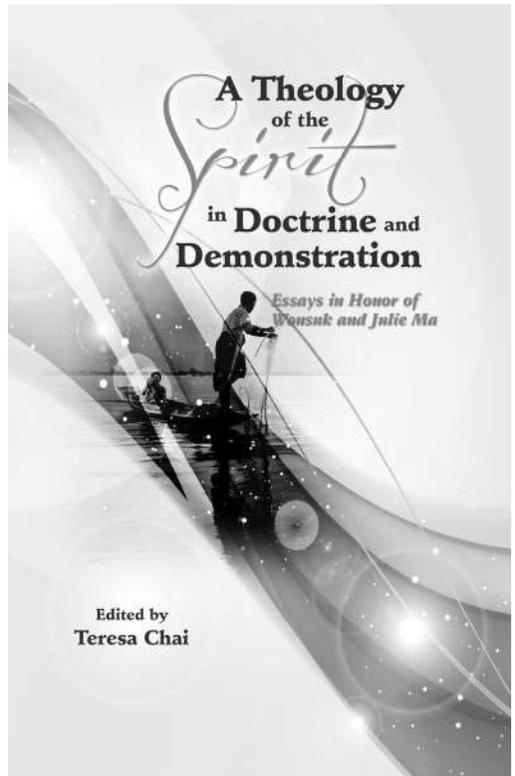
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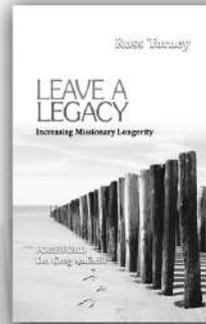


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THE ANIMISTIC ASPECTS IN THE CHINESE  
*ZHONG YUAN* FESTIVAL

by Daniel Liu

**Introduction**

Animistic phenomena exist everywhere in this world; animism does not merely dominate the belief in tribal societies, it also hides behind major religions around the world during their indigenous process.<sup>1</sup> Actually, animism has even become an influential and prominent component in many cultures. The *Zhong Yuan* Festival is considered one of the most important festivals to the Chinese people. Regarding the characteristics of animism and the significance in the *Zhong Yuan* Festival, this paper will attempt to demonstrate the animistic aspects in this Chinese traditional festival; the reasons for “why Chinese people do what they do in the *Zhong Yuan* Festival” will be illuminated. In addition, a Pentecostal response to the specific animistic aspects in this Chinese *Zhong Yuan* Festival will also be formulated in this paper.

**The Definition of Animism and Its Characteristics**

In order to perceive and demonstrate the animistic aspects of the Chinese *Zhong Yuan* Festival precisely and accurately, a definition of animism and its characteristics are necessary. The term animism started to be used in the latter part of the nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup> Different scholars have diverse definitions. Gailyn Van Rheenens defines animism as “the belief that personal spiritual beings and impersonal spiritual forces have power over human affairs and, consequently, that human beings must discover what beings and forces are influencing them in order to determine future action and, frequently, to manipulate their power.”<sup>3</sup> Rheenens perceives animism as a belief system in which an

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<sup>1</sup>Gailyn Van Rheenens, *Communicating Christ in Animistic Contexts* (Pasadena, California: William Carey Library, 1991), 11.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>3</sup>Van Rheenens, 20.

interaction exists between human beings and supernatural power: the power seems to be able to control human affairs and humans try to seek and manipulate the power.<sup>4</sup>

Philip M. Steyne states that there are four foundational beliefs in animism, which are holism, spiritualism, power, and community.<sup>5</sup> A broader scope of animistic beliefs is formulated by Dave Johnson; he addresses seven tenets in animistic belief. These seven tenets are provided in this paper in order to analyze the specific animistic practice in the Chinese *Zhong Yuan* Festival. They are:

1. Animism is holistic.
2. Animism is spiritual.
3. Animism is amoral.
4. Animism is a religion of power.
5. Animism is socially oriented.
6. Animism is pervasive and attractive.
7. Animism tends to breed nominalism.<sup>6</sup>

These seven tenets are also considered as the characteristics of animistic belief in this paper. Even though animism has these prominent characteristics, at a certain time in the last century some missiologists began to believe that animism would disappear; “they presumed that participants of animistic rites would forsake these rites to become participants of world religion.”<sup>7</sup> However, the fact is that “animism has not died, in many cases it has extended itself.”<sup>8</sup> Today, animism continuously influences this world at four levels: 1) Level one—animism dominates religion; 2) Level two—animism has a significant effect on religion (such as folk Catholicism and Folk Islam); 3) Level three—religious practice is claimed to be orthodox, but it is not pure; animism still provides answers; 4) Level four—religious practice is orthodox and has very little animistic influence.<sup>9</sup> Are there any animistic aspects in the Chinese *Zhong Yuan* Festival? If there are, to which level do these aspects belong? In this paper, Rheenen’s definition of animism and Johnson’s seven tenets will be used to analyze and prove whether there are animistic aspects in the Chinese *Zhong Yuan* Festival.

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 20-21.

<sup>5</sup>Philip M. Steyne, *Gods of Power: A Study of the Beliefs and Practices of Animists* (Columbia, South Carolina: Impact International Foundation, 1996), 58-63.

<sup>6</sup>Dave Johnson, “Lecture #3: The Seven Tenets of Animism.” Lecture at Asia Pacific Theological Seminary (Baguio, Philippines, October 9, 2014).

<sup>7</sup>Van Rheenen, 23.

<sup>8</sup>Van Rheenen, 24.

<sup>9</sup>Steyne, 46-47.

### The Ritual in the Chinese *Zhong Yuan* Festival

China has a 5000 year long history; many traditions and customs have remained from generation to generation. Today, these traditions and customs still influence Chinese people's lives; whether they live in China mainland, Hong Kong, Taiwan or Singapore. The majority of Chinese people celebrate eight ancient major festivals, according to the Chinese lunar calendar.<sup>10</sup> The *Zhong Yuan* Festival is one of these eight major festivals. In this paper, the term *Chinese people* specifically refers to the major population of Han people in China mainland and overseas. The term *ancestor* mostly represents the soul or the spirit of the ancestor whose name is still in the family genealogy or is lost.

The *Zhong Yuan* Festival is celebrated on the fifteenth day of the seventh Chinese lunar month, usually in late August, according to the regular calendar.<sup>11</sup> There are twenty-four time periods all year round on account of the lunar calendar; *Zhong Yuan* is the thirteenth time period in a Chinese lunar year. In some areas of China and Singapore, the *Zhong Yuan* Festival is celebrated for thirty days through the whole seventh month.<sup>12</sup> However, the most important day is still the fifteenth day in the seventh month. During this festival, Chinese practitioners celebrate with specific activities and ceremonies. In order to gather some more details and updated information about the *Zhong Yuan* Festival, this author has interviewed a practitioner in mainland China who is aware of the whole ritual of this festival. In addition, this author also experienced the *Zhong Yuan* Festival in his childhood and teenage years. The following information about the practice in the *Zhong Yuan* Festival is mainly from both the interviewee and this author.<sup>13</sup>

On the fourteenth day of the seventh month, people start to prepare good food, such as chicken, pork and fish, to receive their ancestors' souls, because people believe that on this day their ancestors will come back to take an offering from the living generation. The weather on that day becomes cool, compared with the days before the fourteenth day. People believe this is a sign of their ancestors' coming back because the festival is celebrated in early autumn when the weather is still hot. Of course, the souls of the ancestors will stay a day and a night with the living generation. A short ceremony is performed before each meal on

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<sup>10</sup>*Chinese Customs and Festivals in Singapore* (Singapore: Singapore Federation of Chinese Clan Association, 1989), 15.

<sup>11</sup>Henry Schuman, *Chinese Festivals* (New York: Wolfram Eberhard, 1952), 129.

<sup>12</sup>*Chinese Customs and Festivals in Singapore*, 62.

<sup>13</sup>Liu Jing Yang. Interview by Daniel Liu. Phone interview. From APTS campus to Mainland China, November 13, 2014.

the fourteenth day and fifteenth day. All the good food is placed in bowls or plates on the table and people pray and appeal to the ancestors to sit down and eat first. At this time no one else is allowed to touch the table. By this means, people show respect and honor to their ancestors. Afterward, family members will start to eat. The whole family believes they are living with their invisible ancestors together in their house; therefore, they are very careful and sensitive about their words and behaviors during these two days, lest they offend their ancestors and lose blessings from them. People also prepare extra food for the homeless souls so that these homeless and hungry souls may not trouble their family in the future. (Translation mine)<sup>14</sup>

On the fifteenth day, the ancestors will return to Hades which is called *Yin Jian* in Chinese. The night time, especially after supper, is considered as the most prominent moment in the *Zhong Yuan* Festival.

When night comes, people start to give offerings or gifts to their ancestors to take back to *Yin Jian*. In the villages and townships, usually people use plaster to make circles on the ground in which gifts and offerings are distinguished for different ancestors, so that each ancestor will not mistake the other's gifts or offerings. In order to prevent the homeless souls from taking the gifts or offerings from their ancestor's share or disturb the ritual, people also make extra circles and prepare some extra gifts or offerings for the homeless souls. Today the Chinese people have new offerings and gifts. Together with the traditional, people offer modern gifts. The traditional offerings are paper money, paper silver and paper gold. The paper money is made of traditional grass paper with the previous money's design on it. Paper silver is shaped into Chinese treasure with silver colored paper and paper gold is made with golden colored paper. The idea behind the traditional offerings or gifts is that the living generation tries to make sure their ancestors have enough money to use in *Yin Jian*.

Because of their experience of the fast economic development in mainland China, people wish that their ancestors could enjoy the same modern rich material life in *Yin Jian*. Thus, people make all kinds of models of cars, televisions, refrigerators and even high-rises, which mostly are made of paper. Regarding modern society's perspective of money transfer, people also specifically make a type of *Yin* money, which is considered to be authorized from the *Yin Bank* by the Emperor of *Yin Jian*, *Yan Wang*, who is in charge of all the souls and devils in *Yin Jian*. On this *Yin* money, people can write and issue them to specific ancestors and they trust that the ancestors can receive the

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<sup>14</sup>*Chinese Customs and Festivals in Singapore*, 64.

amount according to the names on the *Yin* money. This type of money is almost like a check in modern society.

When all gifts and offerings are dedicated to the different ancestors, the next step is to burn the gifts and offerings so that the ancestors can take them away and use them in *Yin Jian*. While burning all the gifts and offerings, practitioners from families will pray and appeal to the ancestors to bless the family wealth, health and prosperity, which include their businesses, promotions, babies' births, children's education, physical health, and much more. They will eagerly ask ancestors to protect family members from all evils and disasters so that they can live a peaceful and harmonious life. Of course, they also wish their ancestors can have a happy and enjoyable life in *Yin Jian*, too. With the fire burning, family members say farewell to their ancestors. Today, some rich families even use fireworks or firecrackers to send their ancestors back towards the end of the ritual. When people return home, they expect a year of prosperity and peace to come as they requested from their ancestors.

In cities, it is not easy or convenient for residents to burn the modern and traditional gifts or offerings in the *Zhong Yuan* Festival. Some may simplify the ritual and practice it in their apartments or houses. However, some still try to burn some gifts or offerings along the streets. The morning following the fifteenth day, people can see the marks on the sidewalk, which were left by the burning from the night before. The Communist government in mainland China tries to restrain residents in big cities from burning things in the *Zhong Yuan* Festival because of the pollution. But the Singapore government respects the tradition of *Zhong Yuan*; in a proper way, the government specifically opens some public spaces and provides some iron containers to let people perform the ritual. More than that, people gather together to have ceremonies and parades along the streets.<sup>15</sup> In South China, there is another way to send their ancestors back; on the fifteenth night people place paper-made lantern boats in the rivers to take the ancestors home. The lantern boats "drift down the river, a beautiful sight in the early autumn night, until they sink, one by one."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>*Chinese Customs and Festivals in Singapore*, 66.

<sup>16</sup>Schuman, 133.

### **Are There Animistic Aspects in the *Zhong Yuan* Festival?**

During the *Zhong Yuan* Festival Chinese people believe there is spiritual power from their ancestors and this power can affect human affairs. They practice the ritual to gain and use the power. This fits Van Rheenen's definition of animism. The practice of the ritual in the *Zhong Yuan* Festival also meets the seven tenets (characteristics) of animistic belief:

- 1) Animism is holistic. The *Zhong Yuan* Festival encompasses the Chinese people, including both the deceased and living generations, the visible world and the invisible, *Yin Jian*, the filial spirit and fearful feelings, etc. This is totally holistic.
- 2) Animism is spiritual. The practice of the ritual completely involves the spiritual world; the two realms of man and ancestors obviously interact with each other. People encounter both the spirits of their ancestors and homeless spirits. Therefore, the *Zhong Yuan* Festival is also called the Ghost Festival.
- 3) Animism is a religion of power. Chinese people zealously seek supernatural power—ancestors' protection and blessings. They desire to earn the power to influence their life.
- 4) Animism is socially oriented. The *Zhong Yuan* Festival is one of the eight major Chinese festivals; its celebration has become one of the most important Chinese identities. People from villages to cities, from Mainland to overseas, participate in this festival. Therefore, the ritual of the *Zhong Yuan* festival is truly socially oriented.
- 5) Animism is amoral. People are well aware of their ancestors' moral standards: enough offerings or gifts can bribe their ancestors, to protect the living family members; otherwise, ancestors will be offended and will not protect or bless the family members.

Animism tends to breed nominalism. Even though people show some respect to their ancestors in the festival, their purpose of investment in the ritual is to get more blessings and protection from their ancestors, not to sincerely honor them. Furthermore, people do not want to treat the homeless souls equally with their ancestor's souls, in this way again revealing their real lack of honor toward the ancestors. This vividly and obviously proves that people's motivation and purpose in the ritual reveals nominalism.

- 6) Animism is pervasive and attractive. Because the practice of the ritual is so nominalistic and utilitarian, each year the *Zhong Yuan* Festival attracts numerous Chinese people. Though communism and atheism greatly influence people in China's mainland, the belief of ancestors and practice in the *Zhong Yuan* Festival is resuscitating.

The rituals and Chinese peoples' behavior in the *Zhong Yuan* Festival are indicative of all the seven characteristics of animism. Therefore, a conclusion can be drawn that animistic aspects are proven to truly exist in this festival. Meanwhile, all the rituals during the *Zhong Yuan* Festival are almost completely related to animism. The animistic aspects in this festival are categorized to the animistic first level of influence (animism dominates religion).

Now the next step is to dig out the reason why Chinese people practice such prominent animistic aspects in this festival before a biblical perspective is provided to respond the animistic aspects.

### **A Worldview Perspective to the Animistic Aspect in the *Zhong Yuan* Festival**

#### What is Culture and Worldview?

Since the *Zhong Yuan* Festival is considered as a culture, maybe an analysis of culture itself could respond and interpret the animistic aspects in *Zhong Yuan* Festival. This paper attempts to use a worldview perspective to illuminate the reason that why Chinese people participate the animistic ritual in *Zhong Yuan* Festival.

Culture is the synthesis of human civilization, which takes into account visible and invisible systems of religion, economy, tradition, politics, food, philosophy, history and many other diverse things. David J. Hesselgrave addresses one of the characteristics that "culture is an integrated whole, all the parts of which function in such a way to affect each other and contribute to the totality."<sup>17</sup> Hesselgrave's theme can be interpreted as: 1) there are different parts in a cultural entirety; 2) these parts affect each other and contribute to the totality. Regarding Hesselgrave's theme, a few questions could be brought up: how many parts are in a cultural entirety, what are they, and which part is most crucial? G. Linwood Barney's model of culture can wonderfully answer these questions. Barney's model of culture is:

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<sup>17</sup>David J. Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 100.

- 1) People's behaviors—what people do in their life?
- 2) Institutions—Annual religious rites and festivals.
- 3) Values— a) Religious: what religion do people follow, including those that follow none at all; b) Social (guilt/shame/honor based cultures).
- 4) Worldviews—Worldview drives culture and, therefore, is its most important aspect.<sup>18</sup>

In regard to Barney's model, an entirety of culture consists of four components: people's behaviors, institutions, values and worldviews. Worldview is the most crucial aspect in the entirety. Barney's four patterns of culture are just like four layers of an onion; studying these four patterns in order is just like peeling an onion's layers to the core.<sup>19</sup>

These four patterns of culture can lead people to perceive culture from the easily recognizable to the deep and complex.<sup>20</sup> Barney's model clearly indicates that only when people reach the worldview level, the core level of culture, can they answer the questions which relate to the other three patterns, because worldview drives culture.<sup>21</sup>

Then what is worldview? Charles H. Kraft has a close perception of culture as Barney's explanation does and he states that worldview is a deep level of culture that links to "largely unconscious and invisible assumptions;" the surface level of culture is people's behavior patterns.<sup>22</sup> Kraft illustrates: ". . . if we observe people wearing clothes, we would guess that this surface-level custom relates to some deep-level assumption that wearing clothing is proper, right, even moral."<sup>23</sup> Hesselgrave defines a worldview as "the way people see or perceive the world, the way they 'know' it to be."<sup>24</sup> Following Kraft's and

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<sup>18</sup>Dave Johnson, "Lecture #2." Lecture at Asia Pacific Theological Seminary (Baguio, Philippines, October 2, 2014). Adapted from G. Linwood Barney, "The Supracultural and The Cultural in The Gospel and Frontier Peoples: A Report of A Consultation December 1972. ed. R. Pierce Beaver, 48-55 (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library), 49-50.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Dave Johnson, "Lecture #2." Lecture at Asia Pacific Theological Seminary (Baguio, Philippines, October 2, 2014). Adapted from G. Linwood Barney, "The Supracultural and The Cultural in The Gospel and Frontier Peoples: A Report of A Consultation December 1972. ed. R. Pierce Beaver, 48-55 (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library), 49-50.

<sup>22</sup>Charles H. Kraft, *Christianity With Power* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf&Stock Publishers, 1989), 53.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 53.

<sup>24</sup>Hesselgrave, 197.

Hesselgrave's definitions, people can understand the function of worldview, which shapes and drives a whole entirety of culture.

How to analyze animistic aspects in a cultural activity through worldview perspective is emphasized and valued by people now. Dave Johnson stresses that "the deepest assumptions and belief about reality lie at the worldview level."<sup>25</sup> Van Rheenen specifically emphasizes the necessity and importance of using worldview perspectives to understand animism. He states that "animistic perspectives become comprehensible to a missionary only when he understands the worldview that validates and integrates cultural values and behaviors."<sup>26</sup>

Therefore, since worldview functions to shape and drive a culture and people value and emphasize it for analyzing animistic aspects in cultures, the following is how to use worldview perspective to analyze the animistic aspects in the *Zhong Yuan* Festival.

#### Reasons for Animistic Aspects in the *Zhong Yuan* Festival

Hesselgrave characterizes different worldviews in terms of people's basic understanding of supernature, nature, man, and time.<sup>27</sup> This means that people view their world around them basically through these four elements, supernature, nature, man, and time. Thus, as long as these four elements of worldview and the relationships among them are understood, people can grasp and master a certain type of worldview in a specific culture. After understanding the worldview, naturally, people will completely and entirely get to know the other three layers of a culture.

Because of this, how to understand the animistic aspects in the *Zhong Yuan* Festival is based on understanding Chinese people's perception of the supernature, nature, man, and time. Originally, Chinese culture was based on Confucianism and Daoism; these two ideologies have been tremendously influential in Chinese society and individual lives. A common modern Chinese people's worldview is still essentially formed by Confucianism and Daoism (although not by religious Daoist belief). In regard to Confucianism and Daoism, the following are Chinese people's basic perception of supernature, nature, man and time

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<sup>25</sup>Dave Johnson, *Theology in Context: A Case Study In The Philippines* (Philippines, APTS Press, 2013), 45.

<sup>26</sup>Van Rheenen, 33.

<sup>27</sup>Hesselgrave, 202.

1. Supernature. Chinese cosmology believes that the universe was made in Tao and by Tao. (Translation mine)<sup>28</sup> Tao controls the whole universe and Tao is the essence of life and everything was made within Yin and Yang in Tao.<sup>29</sup> Yin and Yang operate as the “two great opposing forces . . . Associated with Yang are the positive elements, such as heaven, light, heat, masculinity, strength, life, etc. Yin includes the opposite elements: earth, darkness, cold, femininity, weakness, death, etc.”<sup>30</sup> However, Yin and Yang can change into each other: good to bad, and bad to good; light to darkness, and darkness to light . . . This changeable attribute of Yin and Yang has produced some specific animistic phenomenon in the *Zhong Yuan* Festival. Even though people died, they still have desires just as living human beings do. When ancestors receive gifts and offerings, they are willing to protect or bless their living family members; otherwise, they will not. This means the ancestors are amoral; they can be either good or bad according to how many gifts and offerings are made to them.

2. Nature. To Chinese people, the whole universe is structured as three realms of existence: heaven, earth and hell. “Heaven, which is ruled by an Emperor with numerous *shen* [gods] to assist him, belongs to Yang. Hell, which is the world of devils and dead souls ruled by an Emperor of Hades, is considered Yin. The earth contains both Yin and Yang.”<sup>31</sup> Chinese people believe when they die, their soul or spirit will leave their flesh, but still be alive with the same awareness as living human beings on earth. They also believe there are different *shen* in the universe and Tian (Shang Di) is the highest one who is also God of Tao. (Translation mine)<sup>32</sup> To a Chinese, supernature is composed of a variety of deities, devils (*kui*), and spirits.<sup>33</sup> Souls or spirits can also exist on earth with human beings; this is the reason that in the *Zhong Yuan* Festival ancestors can come out of Yin Jian and stay with their living family members. At the same time, the evil ghosts and *kui*, and good *shen* from heaven can also stay with human beings on earth, which means good and bad can live together on earth.

Another doctrine Daoism has been advocating is to “live a good life and be at peace with the universe, one needs to be in harmony with

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<sup>28</sup>Kam-lun Edwin Lee, *China Today from Her Cultural Roots: A Theological Interpretation of Chinese History*. (Hong Kong: CMI Publishing Co. Ltd., 2010), 110.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, 99-100.

<sup>30</sup>Hesselgrave, 257.

<sup>31</sup>*Chinese Customs and Festivals in Singapore*, 19.

<sup>32</sup>Elisha Wu, Rev., ed., *Five Great World Religions* (Hong Kong: The Christian Literature Service, 1981), 96.

<sup>33</sup>Hesselgrave, 263.

Tao.”<sup>34</sup> In order to have a peaceful and harmonious life with the world, including both visible material nature and invisible spiritual world, Chinese people also want to stay harmonious with the ghosts, *kui*, and their ancestors.<sup>35</sup> They know that the evil ghosts and *kui* come up from *Yin Jian* (Hades) and would bother their daily life; therefore, they offer food and gifts to their ancestors and the ghosts and *kui* as well in the *Zhong Yuan* Festival.

3. Man. Confucianism greatly values and encourages filial piety. Honoring and respecting parents is considered as one of Five Cardinal Relationships in society. “The family unit is viewed as the key of a successful and united nation. Filial piety is viewed as the greatest of all virtues (community and family before self)”<sup>36</sup> It claims that people should serve the deceased in the same way they serve their parents while they were living. (Translation mine)<sup>37</sup> Children are required to obey and submit to parents. Due to this strong filial piety, Chinese people spend as much money as they can for the ritual during the *Zhong Yuan* Festival. Besides the *Zhong Yuan* Festival, Chinese people also engage in ancestral worship in the Spring Festival and the Tomb Festival to show their filial piety to their ancestors. They perceive that all the souls and spirits have spiritual power to overcome living people, therefore, people pray and appeal to ancestors to get blessed or protected. People perceive the interaction with spirits in almost the same way they perceive social life between living people. Thus, if people do not offer food and gifts, it is understandable that ancestors will not protect or bless them.

4. Time. While Chinese people emphasize the present time, they also tend to look back. “The spirits of the dead join the ancestors. Therefore history past is extremely important. . . . People must take advantage of the present with its opportunities for human achievement and advancement.”<sup>38</sup> This kind of punctuality precisely influences Chinese people’s feelings and emotions; they always tend to dwell in the past and focus on previous things. This occupation with the past becomes one of the reasons why Chinese people focus so much on the ancestors, but at the same time, they also want to take advantage of the present to try to get blessings and protection from ancestors in the *Zhong Yuan* Festival. Focusing on today and ignoring tomorrow is a very common philosophy for many Chinese people.

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<sup>34</sup>Daniel Tong, *A Biblical Approach to Chinese Traditions and Beliefs* (Singapore: Genesis Books, 2003), 20.

<sup>35</sup>*Chinese Customs and Festivals in Singapore*, 17.

<sup>36</sup>Tong, 12.

<sup>37</sup>Wu, 107.

<sup>38</sup>Hesselgrave, 264.

Regarding the analysis of these four basic elements of worldview, supernature, nature, man, and time, the reason why Chinese people participate in the rituals in the *Zhong Yuan* Festival has been demonstrated. This worldview perspective also proves the seven tenets of animism in the animistic aspects of the *Zhong Yuan* Festival. With this fundamental worldview perspective, the animistic aspects hiding behind the other three layers of the cultural onion will also clearly be defined; worldview perspective is able to interpret the *Zhong Yun* Festival's religious origin, which is the second layer of the cultural onion, according to Barney's model of culture.

### **A Worldview Perspective Regarding the Religious Origin of the *Zhong Yuan* Festival**

#### The Daoist Origin of the *Zhong Yuan* Festival

Regarding Daoist belief (A clarification: the religious Daoism here is different from the ideology Daoism), it is believed that on fifteenth day of the seventh month "the god of earth visits the heavens and reports on the good and bad deeds of men. On that day the hungry ghosts are allowed to leave the gate of hell. These ghosts have to be pacified and so most Chinese families make offerings of joss and *Yin* money to the wondering ghosts."<sup>39</sup> Another story about the origin of the *Zhong Yuan* Festival in regard to Daoism is that

the gates of hell are open on the first day of the seventh lunar month. This allows the *kui* (uncared for spirits or spirits under judgment that are locked in hell) to roam the earth to eat their fill before being locked up for another year. The belief is that once the gates are open, the *kui* will come out to look for food and if no one has prepared any offerings for them, they will go into homes to help themselves. Fear[ful] of such visits, people are generally quick to make offerings to appease and ward off the hungry ghosts.<sup>40</sup>

Regarding worldview perspective, though the date for the hungry ghosts or *kui* to come out of hell is different, one is July 1<sup>st</sup>, the other one July 15<sup>th</sup>, the significance is almost the same: 1) hungry ghosts or *kui* are from hell; 2) hungry ghosts and *kui* will disrupt people's lives if

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<sup>39</sup>Evelyn Lip, *Chinese Practices and Beliefs* (Torrance, California: Heian International, Inc., 2000), 26.

<sup>40</sup>Tong, 40.

they cannot get their food or offerings; 3) people fear the hungry ghosts and *kui*; 4) there are gods in charge of the hungry ghosts and *kui*. All these elements are based on Chinese peoples' worldview. This Daoist origin of the *Zhong Yuan* Festival also shows that Chinese people believe in heaven and hell in this universe and that there are also spirits and gods on earth who are able affect people's lives.

### The Buddhist Origin of the *Zhong Yuan* Festival

According to Buddhist belief, there are two similar stories about the origin of the *Zhong Yuan* Festival. These two similar stories portray a filial son with the name Mu Lian. One story goes that after Mu Lian's mother died, he

dreamt one night that she was in hell. In the dream, his mother appeared and said to him, "I am hungry; I am not being taken care of and am poorly treated." *Mu Lian* was so moved and touched by this dream that he decided to bring food down to hell to feed his mother. To do so, he had to endure many trials and difficulties in an attempt to gain favour from various gods. After much hardship, he ultimately reached hell and was "reunited" with his mother. This story is told to encourage filial piety towards parents and elders.<sup>41</sup>

The other story says that

Mu Lian was able to locate his dead mother in Hades after many trials and tribulations. When he tried to feed his starving mother, however, the food was invariably grabbed by other hungry ghosts. It was only through the intercession of Buddha, who was touched by Mu Lian's love and devotion to his mother, that the filial son finally succeeded in providing relief for his mother. To commemorate Mu Lian's filial act, Buddhists make it a practice to offer prayers to the dead on *Zhong Yuan* Festival.<sup>42</sup>

Both stories vividly tell why people want to offer food or gifts to ancestors—they want their ancestors to have enough food and an enjoyable life in Yin Jian. At the same time, as the second story tells, they do not want the hungry ghosts to bother their ancestors while receiving the food and offerings. The Buddhist origin is obviously

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<sup>41</sup>Tong, 41.

<sup>42</sup>*Chinese Customs and Festivals in Singapore*, 65.

colored with Buddhist belief; Mu Lian's successful filial act was favored by Buddha or other gods. It is undoubtedly true that the Chinese *Zhong Yuan* Festival is a mixture of Daoism and Buddhism. However, the Chinese worldview perspective still adequately provides all the explanation for the Buddhist origin, especially why people show filial piety to ancestors.

The worldview perspective not only deeply illuminates animistic aspects, but it also shows social filial piety in the religious origin of the *Zhong Yuan* Festival. Therefore, through the Chinese worldview perspective, people can get an entire understanding of the animistic aspects in the *Zhong Yuan* Festival.

### **Perspectives on the Animistic Aspects in the *Zhong Yuan* Festival**

#### Historical Controversy on Rituals in China

A historical controversy surrounding the Chinese rituals began in 1633; the closure was not seen until 1937.<sup>43</sup> This famous controversy lasted a few centuries. The core argument was about whether Chinese converts were allowed to perform Confucian rituals (the main part of Confucian rituals was ancestral worship) and how to use the right terms to address God.<sup>44</sup> The controversy started among Catholic missionaries, as "the Roman Catholic Society of Jesus (Jesuits) advocated the acceptability of ancestral tablets and the offering joss sticks," while the opposite group, such as "Dominicans and Franciscans did not advocate any accommodation to the Chinese culture and beliefs."<sup>45</sup> Meanwhile, many Protestants advocated a total rejection of the rituals because of some kind of pride and prejudice without serious study of the Chinese cultural context.<sup>46</sup>

The essence of this controversy is about how to make Christianity indigenized in the Chinese cultural context. Either totally accepting Confucian rituals or totally denying them are both dogmatic attitudes, a result of ignoring the real context. Even though a decision was made in 1935 by the Catholics, nothing was mentioned about the spiritual issues behind Confucian rituals.<sup>47</sup> Animistic aspects in the Confucian rituals were completely ignored in the history of controversy of rituals.

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<sup>43</sup>Tong 4.

<sup>44</sup>Huen Hoo Wing, Joseph 184. *Chinese Christianity History in Pictures* (Hong Kong: Tien Dao Publishing House, Ltd., 2011), 184. Translated from Chinese.

<sup>45</sup>Tong 3-4.

<sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>47</sup>George Minamiki, S.J. *The Chinese Rites Controversy: from Its Beginning to Modern Times* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1985), 218-219.

In contemporary times there are still different voices on the rituals in China. One voice, Yu Ping, perceives ancestor worship is biblical, according to the fifth commandment; however, Henry Smith, says that there is no religious meaning left in the rituals, but that it is only secular customs and another voice, Daniel Hung, states people should keep the cultural filial activities but stop the ancestor worship.<sup>48</sup>

#### A Pentecostal Perspective on the Animistic Aspects of the *Zhong Yuan* Festival

However, Pentecostal churches or missionaries, compared to Catholics and Evangelicals, have a different perspective with which to approach the Chinese people who are involved in the animistic aspects of the *Zhong Yuan* Festival.

First, according to a biblical worldview, Pentecostal missionaries or churches should be aware that the animistic aspects of the *Zhong Yuan* Festival are abhorrent to God because people offer sacrifices not to their ancestors, but to demons (Deuteronomy 32:17; 18:9-14). Since animistic aspects are spiritual, dealing with them becomes spiritual warfare and must depend on the power of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 6:10-18). This Pentecostal perspective is distinguished from Evangelical and Catholic perspectives. Besides power encounter, Pentecostal missionaries and churches also need to use other approaches to reach the Chinese people who are involved in the animistic rituals of the *Zhong Yuan* Festival. Johnson's "Four Encounter Paradigm for Ministering in Majority World Contexts" is inspiring and practical.<sup>49</sup> The significance of this pattern is that through biblical truth, power encounter and love encounter people can be converted to accept Jesus as a personal Savior or new believers can transfer their allegiance from their animistic practices to God, so that they can become committed Christians.

Second, to a new believer who used to participate in the ritual during the *Zhong Yuan* Festival, it is not easy to break the relation from the past emotionally or spiritually; it cannot be done in a day or one month; it is a process. Therefore, a healthy church needs to implement some plans to help and guide new converts to change or shift their thoughts and minds to commit to God. Regarding Christian Swartz's

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<sup>48</sup>Rheenen, 263.

<sup>49</sup>Dave Johnson, "Lecture #12: Johnson's Four Encounter Paradigm for Ministering in Majority World Contexts." Lecture at Asia Pacific Theological Seminary (Baguio, Philippines, November, 2014).

eight characteristics of a healthy church,<sup>50</sup> inspiring services and small groups are especially effective for a Chinese convert who has experienced the rituals during the *Zhong Yuan* Festival. An inspiring church service can lead a believer to meet God spiritually each time. He or she can shift from feelings and emotions of ancestors to concentrate on God. Small groups fit well in the Chinese cultural context. Through Bible study, prayer meetings or fellowship, a new believer can feel accepted and establish a new social relationship instead of the old animistic relations. Leading new believers to seek God's power and presence themselves is one of the goals of discipleship.

Third, there is still a good aspect to the *Zhong Yuan* Festival. The filial piety should not be ignored when missionaries approach the Chinese people. In history, filial piety served as the cornerstone of all morality in Chinese society.<sup>51</sup> Today, this filial piety is still valued as one of the cardinal virtues in China. Thus, Chinese people's filial feelings should be respected by missionaries or churches. Now, more and more Chinese people are open to Western Mother's Day and Father's Day. Therefore, the church can have activities to celebrate these holidays. The Chinese also have an Old Generation Day. The Church should provide special services to help new believers honor their parents and grandparents. At the same time, through the similarity of honoring and respecting parents in the Bible (Deuteronomy 5: 15) and Chinese filial piety, missionaries and churches can use the contextual approach to share the Gospel with Chinese people.

### Conclusion

Animism exists in many cultures and affects people's lives deeply. So does the Chinese traditional *Zhong Yuan* Festival. The Chinese people's worldview determines their ritual practice and the implications of the *Zhong Yuan* Festival. Through different approaches and specific kinds of church involvement, a church or missionary can win more Chinese people who used to practice ancestral worship in the *Zhong Yuan* Festival. A successful Christian indigenization is based on the power of the Gospel and proper social contextualization, which is

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<sup>50</sup>Dave Johnson, "Lecture #13 and #14: The Eight Essential Characteristics to Having Healthy Churches." Lecture at Asia Pacific Theological Seminary (Baguio, Philippines, November, 2014.) Taken from Christian Swarz, *Natural Church Development* (St. Charles, IL: Church Smart Resources, 1996): 15-38.

<sup>51</sup>Minamiki, 4.

biblical and is also one part of the diversity of contemporary successful Pentecostal globalization.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>52</sup>Wonsuk Ma, Veli-Matti Karkkainen, and J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, eds., *Pentecostal Mission and Global Christianity* (United Kingdom, Regnum Books International, 2014), 3.

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COMPARISON OF THE MANIFESTATION OF THE BAPTISM  
IN THE HOLY SPIRIT WITH THE  
SPIRITUAL TATTOO IN THAILAND

By Anattiphong Phanon

**Introduction**

Identification of the Issue

*Tattoo* is an “art” that has been a part of Thai culture for centuries. To the Thai people, tattoo not only is a mystic art of pattern, shape, and design, but it also reflects religious beliefs and traditions.

In Thailand, the “spiritual tattoo” is called *Sak-Yant*. In the Thai dictionary, *Sak* means to pierce the skin with a long needle to make a permanent picture or words.<sup>1</sup> *Yant* has a spiritual implication through the ‘sacred geometry’ that contains the alphabet and picture(s). Through rituals, spirits are transferred into the tattoo by shamans when they draw *Yant* on the skin, a cloth, or the surface of things. Thus, spiritual tattooing functions as the bridge or instrument that connects the tattoo wearer with gods or ‘wild spirits’ in the spiritual realm in order to help him/her.<sup>2</sup>

For the Thai, there are two kinds of spiritual tattoos—one, called *Meta Maha Saneh*, is for charming or prosperity; the other, called *Kong Krapan*, is for immortality.<sup>3</sup> According to Thai culture, the spiritual tattoo is different from the “fashion tattoo” because it can become possessed by the wild spirits, which require the wearer to have strong

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<sup>1</sup>Robert Lawlor and Lindisfarne Association, *Sacred Geometry: Philosophy and Practice* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1982), 5–6; L. R. Chawdhri, *Secrets of Yantra, Mantra & Tantra* (Sterling, n.d.), 3–4.

<sup>2</sup>Allan, and Blackwell, (translated by Anna Kardec), *The Spirits’ Book: The Principles of Spiritist Doctrine* (Lake-Libraria Allan Kardec Editora Ltda., n.d.), 69.

<sup>3</sup>“Traditional Thai Tattoos,” *Tattoo Thailand*, <http://www.tattoo-thailand.com/traditional-thai-tattoos.html>.

faith and belief. It is to be put not only onto the skin, but also on amulets, cloth, or other things in order to bless and protect the owners.<sup>4</sup>

#### Examples of the Issue's Prevalence

On August 22, 2011, at the New Hope International Church camp in Washington State, USA, the church's senior pastor, upon finishing his sermon, had an altar call. As he prayed, many young believers became overwhelmed with the presence of the Holy Spirit and reacted by crying, laughing, jumping, running and being "slain in the Spirit." Afterward, one of my Buddhist friends who believes in spiritual tattoo compared what she had just witnessed with spiritual tattoo manifestations.<sup>5</sup>

At another time during my research, I happened to interview at Bangkhae Church in Bangkok a female Christian who has been a devotee of Thai animism, especially the spiritual tattoo. She disclosed having experienced spiritual warfare the day she accepted Jesus Christ as her savior. Immediately after praying to receive Christ Jesus, she asked the pastor to pray for her back. As he and some elders were doing so, she fell down unconscious. Although she believed that she had been "slain in the Spirit," I learned that they had changed from praying for her back to casting out evil spirits.<sup>6</sup> When I asked how her Christian life was since she accepted Jesus, she admitted to often having strange symptoms, such as screaming, body shaking, jumping, and trying to turn over wooden benches during a worship service. Surprisingly, she had never talked to her pastor about those frightening manifestations. I, of course, encouraged her to immediately do so.<sup>7</sup>

#### Purpose/Application of This Research

With *Sak-Yant* (i.e., spiritual tattoo) so popular among Thai Buddhists, many of them question the baptism in the Holy Spirit in Pentecostal and Charismatic churches, since both share a similar "spiritual empowerment." This issue is also often raised by new Christians who have spiritual tattoos and who used to participate in the

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<sup>4</sup>Chawdhri, *Secrets of Yantra, Mantra & Tantra*, 4.

<sup>5</sup>Tanya Suwan, interviewed by Anattiphong Phanon, Seattle, WA, August 22, 2011.

<sup>6</sup>See [www.youtube.com/watch?v=mf5Gdxh27CE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mf5Gdxh27CE) [at 1:38:00]

<sup>7</sup>Mimi-jaiko (pseudonym in [www.pantip.com](http://www.pantip.com)), The Spiritual Possession for Christian Who Has Spiritual Tattoo, September 25, 2014, <http://pantip.com/message/5422bc7d961fl252098b47d2> (under maxlife's account).

spiritual tattoo ritual, since demonic manifestations mirror their spiritual experiences and sensitivity.

Thus, the intent of the research presented here is to compare the differences between the baptism in the Holy Spirit and the spiritual tattoo, particularly relative to the area of resulting manifestations between those associated with the Holy Spirit and those associated with the tattoo. It is hoped that “the truth of the matter” revealed by this research will help new Christians who had previously been under the influence of the spiritual tattoo ritual to avoid confusion and to seek release from its effects.

## **Historical Background**

### Origin of Spiritual Tattoo

The purpose of tattooing has varied from culture to culture and generation to generation throughout history. This section will address the background and arrival of the spiritual tattoo in Thailand and the elements involved.

The spiritual tattoo is an art that has a profound background mixed with integrated religious beliefs and practices.<sup>8</sup> To trace that background, one needs to know first the roots of Brahmanism-Hinduism during the Vedic Period, and then the history of *Tantrism*, which is expressed in the concepts of *Tantra*, *Yantra*, and *Mantra*. *Tantrism* developed the sacred geometry that later became known in Thailand as spiritual tattoo.<sup>9</sup> Indian black magic, with its spelling, rituals, and charms that were used in the spiritual tattoo, was developed by Brahmanism, which produced the rituals, doctrines, and numerous sacred texts and literature.<sup>10</sup> These “sciences” were called *Tantric* and *Vajrayana*, which included *Yantra* and *Mantra*.<sup>11</sup>

Spiritual tattooing, specifically, originated during the reign of the Khmer empire, which in the 9th to the 13th centuries encompassed Laos, Vietnam, and parts of Thailand. The sciences of *Tantric* were

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<sup>8</sup>Prasert Chutindharo. 2008. “*An Analytical Study of the Occultism and Buddhism According to Phra Dhammapitaka*.” Master's thesis, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, 2008, 15–16.

<sup>9</sup>Pisnupol Suwannaroopo. 2012. “*A Study of Buddha Dhamma and Value as Appeared in Lanna Yuntian: A Case Study of Amphur Muang, Lampang Province*.” Master's thesis, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, 25.

<sup>10</sup>“Vedic Period,” *Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia*, March 17, 2014, [http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Vedic\\_period&oldid=589943270](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Vedic_period&oldid=589943270).

<sup>11</sup>Suwannaroopo, 20.

incorporated into Buddhism, folk religion, and shamanism. During World War II and the Vietnam conflict, Thai soldiers covered themselves with the spiritual tattoo and other amulets for protection.<sup>12</sup> Doing so purportedly guaranteed that the warriors would not receive any physical harm as long as they observed the proscribed taboos and rules, such as keeping the precepts of Buddhism in order to please the spirits.<sup>13</sup> This practice continues to be popular today.

### Aim and Objects of the *Tantric*

To understand spiritual tattooing in Thailand, *Sak-Yant* has to be divided into two parts. *Sak* in Thai means only the tattoo, which could be graphics and/or words. *Yant* is the sacred geometry connected to spirituality and religious beliefs. It is basically the science of *Tantric*, which consists of *Tantra*, *Mantra*, and *Yantra*.<sup>14</sup> In the spiritual tattooing ceremony, *Tantric* is used by Brahmin or Buddhist monks to empower the tattoo, making *Tantra*, *Mantra*, and *Yantra* important to the comprehension of spiritual tattooing in Thailand.

### *Tantra*

*Tantra* is the mystical formula necessary for the attainment of supernatural powers. The art of *Tantra* is the act used in the ritual involving *chakra* (meditation), which means inner force.<sup>15</sup> *Tantra* is the method of being united with the universe through five elements—sense of smell, water with taste, fire with vision, air with touch, and ether with sound.<sup>16</sup> The aim of *Tantra* is to realize the cosmos and the power of the spiritual being.<sup>17</sup> It is the method by which one discovers and uses the hidden powers of various types in *Yantra*.

Before the tattooing ceremony, *Tantra* is used to increase the Brahmins' *chakra* to empower the spiritual tattoo and to protect the tattoo wearers from the wild spirit's harmful manipulation.<sup>18</sup> During the

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<sup>12</sup>Spencer Littlewood, "Sak Yant Buddhist Tattoos: Sacred Geometry, Magic Spells, Animal Possession," n.d., 7.

<sup>13</sup>Niels Mulder, *Inside Thai Society: An Interpretation of Everyday Life* (Bangkok, Thailand: Editions Duang Kamol : Chatchamnāi dōi Dūang Kamon Samai, 1990), 47.

<sup>14</sup>Suwannaroopo, 14; Chawdhri, 122.

<sup>15</sup>Chawdhri, 125.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 132.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 125.

<sup>18</sup>Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche and Mark Dahlby, *Healing with Form, Energy, and Light: The Five Elements in Tibetan Shamanism, Tantra, and Dzogchen* (Snow Lion Publications, 2002), 83–84.

ceremony, the wearers will use the *Tantra* to meditate and to control their concentration.<sup>19</sup> The more they meditate, the more the tattoo is empowered. However, if they lose their concentration during meditation, they can be harmed and manipulated by the wild spirit instead of controlling it.

### *Mantra*

*Mantra* (also called *Kata* in Thailand) is a Sanskrit word meaning “prayer;” but it is also used as a chant or hymn to the deities in different combinations and contexts with *Tantra* and *Yantra*.<sup>20</sup> Hindus believe that chanting the right *Mantra* helps bring about good health or victory over enemies.<sup>21</sup> The users have to learn how to pronounce *Mantras* properly as well as understand their meaning in order not to be afflicted. Without faith and belief, *Mantras* are to be avoided.<sup>22</sup>

To practice *Mantra*, users must concentrate and meditate with pure thoughts but without any stress or strain on the brain or body.<sup>23</sup> This is one reason why Buddhism, which is to realize the meaning of life so that one can experience peace of mind, fits with *Tantric*, because Buddhism “paths” will attain peace of mind and reduce mental strain. Practicing *Mantra* is supposed to produce a peace and stillness that cannot be described. *Mantra* meditation, in depth, will let the user see and control the light, which Thai Buddhists call “soul,” in various forms, such as light ball or light beams.

### *Yantra*

*Yantra* is an instrument, an apparatus, a talisman, or mystical diagrams that include geometry, signs, and writings. *Yantras* are drawn in different sacred geometric forms so as to connect with different deities and different *Mantras*.<sup>24</sup> The five basic element symbols of Earth, Water, Air, Fire and Sky are related to *Yantra* in order to control nature for one’s own advantage plus to remove evil’s effects and increase any beneficial aspects.<sup>25</sup> In general, to use *Yantra* is to draw a particular design on the surface of something. The sacred geometric lines for good luck and good purpose are drawn and/or written from

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<sup>19</sup>Littlewood, 335–336.

<sup>20</sup>Robert A Yelle, *Explaining Mantras: Rhetoric, the Dream of a Natural Language, and the Efficiency of Ritual* (New York; London: Routledge, 2003), 90.

<sup>21</sup>Chawdhri, 75.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>23</sup>Chutindharo, 24.

<sup>24</sup>Chawdhri, 3.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 4.

east to west in the early morning, and the lines for harming are drawn and/or written from west to east in the evening.<sup>26</sup> *Mantra* and *Tantra* are inter-linked since they are expressed through the medium of Yantra. To connect with different deities, different *Yantras* are combined with different *Mantras*. The *Mantras* recited perfectly by the tattoo wearer will increase the effectiveness of the *Yantra*.<sup>27</sup>

*Yantra* has six purposes—control a person or deity, cure diseases and ward off the evil spirits, protect from the evil spirits, make one attractive to others, distract the enemies and harm others (including killing them). To use *Yantra*, there are conditions, rules and taboos that the users have to follow without error; otherwise, they will pay for their mistakes with their lives.<sup>28</sup>

### Comparison and Analysis

#### Attributes of the Spirits in Spiritual Tattoo

The crucial question for Thai Christians is, How do the spirits possessed in the tattoo differ from the Holy Spirit? The spiritual tattoo wearers say there is no difference between the spiritual possession through tattoo and the baptism in the Holy Spirit. In response, it is important that we provide a comparison of the attributes of the Holy Spirit to those of other spirits in order to distinguish the differences.<sup>29</sup>

Most spiritual tattoo wearers would agree with Littlewood that their tattoos are not only magical, but also empowered by both natural and wild spirits.<sup>30</sup> Jeff Watt provides a rather thorough general understanding of gods and deities (i.e., supernatural beings or forces) that live outside of normal reality and who have the power to interact for good or ill in personal reality through spiritual connection, ritual, or curses in a cause-effect relationship.<sup>31</sup>

In Thailand, animism emphasizes two kinds of spirits—domesticated and non-domesticated.<sup>32</sup> “Domesticated spirits” (called *Saksit*) are vast invincible forces that can conform themselves to

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 10.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 4–5.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 12–13.

<sup>29</sup>Tanya Suwan, interviewed by Anattiphong Phanon, Seattle, WA, August 22, 2011.

<sup>30</sup>Littlewood, 117–123.

<sup>31</sup>Jeff Watt, “Himalayan Buddhist Art 101: Gods and Deities in *Tantric* Buddhism,” Tricycle Foundation, <http://www.tricycle.com/blog/himalayan-buddhist-art-101-gods-and-deities-Tantric-buddhism>, May 9, 2012.

<sup>32</sup>Mulder, 41.

objects or places in order to fulfill personal interests, such as guardian spirits for protection or blessing.<sup>33</sup> According to Mulder, their power is limited to a specific territory, such as a spirit house.<sup>34</sup> “Non-domesticated spirits” appear as wild spirits, Mulder defining them as being unpredictable and essentially malevolent.<sup>35</sup> He further explains that the larger ones influence the smaller ones and the good ones overwhelm the bad; also they have their own interest and volition, such as to cause harm, illness, death, or destruction.<sup>36</sup>

Both domesticated and non-domesticated spirits are considered as “wind;” they can, however, be controlled by using the larger forces of the cosmos through the science of *Tantric*.<sup>37</sup> Although both can possess objects through the *Tantric*, the ones possessed in tattoos are most likely non-domesticated because the ritual used for spiritual tattoos is different than the ritual used for domesticated spirits. This is why spiritual tattoo wearers who cover themselves with wild spirits have to pay homage to them lest the wearers be harmed by their negligent behavior.<sup>38</sup>

#### Attributes of the Holy Spirit (Pneumatology)

Although the *Tantric*'s sacred texts and Thai documents about spiritual tattoo barely mention the attributes of the spirits that are spelled in sacred geometries, most Thais recognize them as being wild spirits.<sup>39</sup> The Bible, on the other hand, has much to say about the attributes of the Holy Spirit, who is a Divine Person, being one with the Father and the Son. So how should the concept of the Holy Spirit be understood? His personhood does not relate to physical appearance, for as R. A. Torrey explains, “The marks of personality are knowledge, feeling, and will, and any being who knows, thinks, feels, and wills is a person whether he has a body or not.”<sup>40</sup> Craig Keener suggests that the Bible revealed the personality (and thus, attributes) of the Holy Spirit through Jesus, who portrayed Him as being “another Counselor” (Jn.

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 23–24.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 43.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 47.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 47–48.

<sup>37</sup>Chutindharo, 20–21.

<sup>38</sup>Mulder, 47–48.

<sup>39</sup>Wirat Chantako. 2008. “*An Analytical Study of Aesthetic Values in the Art of Tattoos*.” Master’s thesis, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, 27–29.

<sup>40</sup>Reuben Archer Torrey, *The Person and Work of The Holy Spirit* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2011), 16–17.

14:16-17);<sup>41</sup> while, according to Gordon Fee, the apostle Paul explored the personality of the Spirit in many verses, including 1 Corinthians 2:10-13, 3:16; Romans 8:11; and Galatians 4:6; 5:18).<sup>42</sup>

The equality that exists within the Trinity (or Godhead) further suggests the Spirit's divine attribute. Can one be three and three be one? Keener presents the concept of the Trinity whereby Christians today recognize God in the different aspects via the process of salvation.<sup>43</sup> In salvation, the Holy Spirit reveals Christ in believers, to know Christ is to know the Spirit (Jn. 16:14; Rom. 8:9), and to know the Father is to know Christ (1 Jn. 2:23).<sup>44</sup> If the Holy Spirit is described as the Third Person of the Trinity, does this indicate inferior status? John Rae notes that both Matthews 28:19 and John 16:9 draw a distinction among the three Persons as being separate personalities; so there is no question that the Spirit is divine and an equal part of the Trinity (Isa. 40:13, 48:16, 63:10-11).<sup>45</sup>

Stanley Horton reminds us that the Holy Spirit is associated with God's creative activity (Gen. 1:1-2).<sup>46</sup> Other Bible passages also make mention of the Spirit's divine characteristics, such as the One who knows the thoughts of God, who is able to instruct people (1 Cor. 2:10, Jn. 14:26), and who performs the works and miracles that God initiates (Ps. 104:30, Matt. 12:28). Rea distinguishes the Spirit's personal supremacy, superior knowledge, and spiritual insight as being manifestly different from other purported spirits and forces, and that He shares the same feelings and emotions as human beings (Isa. 63:10; Eph. 4:30).<sup>47</sup>

### Roles of the "Tattoo Spirits" Versus the Holy Spirit in Human Life

Comparison of the attributes and manifestations of the spirits in the spiritual tattoo and those of the Holy Spirit in the life of humans shows their roles to be vastly different. The spiritual tattoo is anthropocentric,

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<sup>41</sup>Craig S Keener, *Gift & Giver: The Holy Spirit for Today* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2001), 20.

<sup>42</sup>Gordon D. Fee, *Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God*, Reprint edition (Baker Academic, 1995), 27.

<sup>43</sup>Keener, 19–20.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, 22–23.

<sup>45</sup>John Rea, *The Holy Spirit in the Bible: All the Major Passages About the Spirit : a Commentary* (Lake Mary, Fla.: Creation House, 1990), 20.

<sup>46</sup>Stanley M. Horton, *What the Bible Says About the Holy Spirit: Revised Edition*, Revised edition (Gospel Publishing House, 2012), 17.

<sup>47</sup>Rea, *The Holy Spirit in the Bible*, 20.

which means that it is rooted in the belief that mankind, not God or animals, is the central element of existence. Thai Buddhist monk Chantako says that the sacred tattoo is to be “valued” by people based on its functional use;<sup>48</sup> Marie Tania agrees, saying that the tattoo is utilized “in the way we choose.”<sup>49</sup> Although many devotees insist the primary reason for having a spiritual tattoo is to maintain one’s spiritual life through rules and taboos, Chutindharo (another Buddhist monk) tends to disagree. He depicts the science of spirituality and superstition in Thailand as the act of faith without logical comprehension regarding the original belief.<sup>50</sup> The implication is that people look at spiritual tattooing as a means of fulfilling their personal wants, without considering spiritual values.

The role of the wild spirits in the tattoo is normally viewed as providing the desires of the wearers, with no love and mercy being involved. However, the wearers must please these spirits by offerings and/or keeping rules and taboos, otherwise, they will pay for their “unfaithfulness” via non-diagnostic sicknesses or accidents.<sup>51</sup> Since the spirits can cause either good or evil, there is no sense of morality involved.<sup>52</sup>

In what way, then, does the above compare to the attributes and thus role of the Holy Spirit as revealed in the Scriptures? The Bible declares that God is the center of all. But does he want to be that center because of dictatorship, domination, or self-centeredness? Genesis 1:26-31 reads, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness”...“And God saw everything that he had made, it was very good,” which shows that He created man to be unique and different from the other creatures he created and gave man not only authority over those creatures, but also the ability to have a relationship with him. But because of Adam’s sin, that relationship was disconnected, and human beings fell from God’s glory. Although the sin is from one person, God’s grace and justice are prepared for all (1 Cor. 15:12-28). John 3:16-17 says, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”

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<sup>48</sup>Chantako, 83–84.

<sup>49</sup>Tania Marie, *Spiritual Skin - Sacred Tattoos: More than Skin Deep*, 389–390, Kindle.

<sup>50</sup>Chutindharo, 15–16.

<sup>51</sup>Pierce C. Salguero, *Spiritual Healing of Traditional Thailand* (Findhorn: Findhorn Press, 2006), 78.

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*, 78–79.

Why this passage is so significant is because it reveals the characteristics of God in contrast to those of the spirit of tattoo. It describes God's role in people's lives as one of caring about and loving them, the ultimate expression of that love, of course, being God the Son dying for us "while we were yet sinners" (Rom. 5:6-8).<sup>53</sup> He further proved his care and love by giving us the Holy Spirit to help and be with us (Rom. 5:5; Eph. 3:16-19). Keener emphasizes, "The Holy Spirit has come into our hearts and now points to the cross, assuring us with his love."<sup>54</sup> Therefore, we can be reconciled in our relationship with God through Jesus (Jn. 14:6; Rom. 5:8), whose resurrected life confirms that we are his children (Jn. 1:12).

The Holy Spirit's priority concern is about restoration and reconciliation of the relationship of God with humans. In the Old Testament, we see God's re-creating and restoring work toward mankind illustrated in the interrelatedness of his forgiveness and the return of his people (the Jews) from exile (Isa. 40:1-2; Jer. 31:31-40; Ezek. 36:24-28, 37:21-23; Dan. 9:16-19). In the New Testament, to receive the Holy Spirit is to be empowered for mission, just as the Father had anointed the Son with the Spirit for mission (Lk. 4:18; cf. Acts 10:38). Colossians 1:16 says, "All things had been created by him and for him," indicating that Jesus is the center because all things are created through his power and ability *for* him,<sup>55</sup> and Revelation 1:8 further declaring, "I am the Alpha and the Omega . . . who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 that believers are the temple of God where he can live in us forever and continue in intimate relationship with us.<sup>56</sup> Moreover, his love toward humans is eternal. John 14:15-17 reads, "If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you." This significant passage is the promise Jesus gave to believers that he would send a "helper" to be with them forever. It indicates that, after they accept Jesus as their savior, believers belong to the Holy Spirit, who will be with them and

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<sup>53</sup>Keener, 26–27.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid.

<sup>55</sup>Richard R. Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture (New American Commentary)* (Holman Reference, 1991), 182.

<sup>56</sup>Keener, 30.

love them forever. God is immutable, and his love has been upon humans since the beginning and will be until the end (2 Tim. 1:9; Eph. 1:4).

The aim of abiding in the Holy Spirit is to encourage believers that they belong to God, again, forever—"If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal 3:29). Whereas, for the spiritual tattoo wearer, the presence of those spirits is only temporary—i.e., for as long as the devotees keep the rules. The purpose of baptism in the Holy Spirit is to give, to receive, and to deposit the gift of the Spirit in believers through faith until the Lord's second coming, when they will be taken up to their permanent residence (Jn. 14:16, 16:12-13).<sup>57</sup> Unlike the tattoo spirits, the Holy Spirit's role is to interact with and point persons to Christ. Therefore, to grow in their relationship with God, believers are to cooperate with the Spirit, who dwells them and cultivates that relationship. He will guide believers into God's ways through faith and obedience, not through intellectual knowledge (1 Jn. 4:7-10).

#### Aims of the Spiritual Manifestation

A significant issue among many Christians in Thailand with regard to spiritual tattooing is the matter of *Wai Kru*, which is a ritual that involves the exhibiting of manifestations when spirits enter the tattoo through incantations of the monks. Originally, *Wai Kru* was an annual ceremony in Thai schools where students showed appreciation and respect to their teachers by presenting them with flowers and prostrating themselves at the teachers' feet.<sup>58</sup> An *Ajarn* (or guru) adopted the *Wai Kru* so spiritual tattoo wearers would show their respect to those masters who tattooed them.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>*The baptism of the Holy Spirit* is part of the gift of the Holy Spirit that Jesus promised to His disciple (Acts 1:5, 11:15-16). It is the basis of the filling of the Holy Spirit – The ministries of the Holy Spirit. Merrill F. Unger, *The Baptism and Gifts of the Holy Spirit*, New Edition edition (Moody Publishers, 1974), 153–154.

<sup>58</sup>*Sak-Yant Thai Temple Tattoos, "Wai Kroo Festival,"* <http://sak-yant.com/samnak-sak-yant/wat-bang-phra/wai-kroo-festival/#.Uvj-aUKSxCM>.

<sup>59</sup>To show the respect to the master is one of the rules for devotees to maintain the power of the spirits possessed in tattoos.

During the ceremony, sometimes spirits manifest themselves (i.e., *Khong Khuen*)<sup>60</sup> in the tattoo wearers, especially in those who keep their lives in a way that's pleasing to the spirits. *Khong Khuen* is a phenomenon that remains unexplained to the day. Upon hearing the chant of *Mantra* from the *Ajarn*, the wearers enter a trance state, which expresses itself in various ways, depending on the spirits.<sup>61</sup> Commonly, the expressions seem to be imitations of a Himapant animal (from Brahmanism legend) or a divine being, such as an ancient hermit.<sup>62</sup> These often-violent manifestations include thrashing, jumping, running, and screaming with hands outstretched clawing at the air like a tiger, squealing like a wild boar, or slithering on the floor like a snake or alligator. The possessed person is completely unable to control what is happening.<sup>63</sup>

Sadly, the response of too many Christians (including Pentecostals) to the *Wai Kru* and the *Khong Khuen* is that they see little, if any, difference between spiritual tattoo possession and the baptism in the Holy Spirit.<sup>64</sup> Some devotees claim that the concept of *Khong Khuen* is similar to Holy Spirit baptism. For Pentecostals, it is critical that this issue be clarified and the differences explained.

#### Contrast of Spiritual Empowerments

Devotees of spiritual tattoo believe that *Khong Khuen* is a way to initially empower—and later “recharge”—spirits, to maintain the wearers' faith in their tattoos, to encourage them to bear witness to the tattoo's power, and to prove an *Ajarn's* spiritual power and magical ability.<sup>65</sup> Sometime, the *Ajarn* speaks in a godly language and prophecies during the *Khong Khuen* ceremony.<sup>66</sup> Can these phenomena be considered similar to the signs and wonders in Pentecostal perspective?

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<sup>60</sup>*Khong Khuen* is an unexplainable event which occurs with devotees of *Sak Yant* tattooing. The word *Khong Khuen* refers to magical and mysterious forces arising through the devotee entering trance. Littlewood, 28.

<sup>61</sup>*Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>64</sup>Tanya Suwan, interviewed by Anattiphong Phanon, Seattle, WA, August 22, 2011.

<sup>65</sup>Littlewood, 28–30.

<sup>66</sup>The reason of using the term “godly languages” is because devotees and *Ajarn* intend to communicate with deities by speaking in the inapprehensible languages, which they claim those are the deities' languages.

Robert Menzies defines the soteriology that embodies believers in Christ (1 Cor. 12:13) and the missiology that empowers believers for service (Acts 1:8) as the theology of the baptism in the Holy Spirit.<sup>67</sup> Therefore, the differences between spiritual empowerment evidenced in spiritual tattoo and the Holy Spirit baptism are substantial. The aim of the latter is to empower believers to reach out to the world, not for their sake but for Christ's; whereas the empowerment of spiritual tattoo is both narcissistic and temporary. The Bible thus warns us, "Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings, for the heart is to be strengthened by grace, not by food" (Heb. 13:7-9). F.F. Bruce suggests the need to focus on the spiritual world, not on the physical world, and on eternity, not temporality.<sup>68</sup>

From a Pentecostal perspective, the baptism in the Holy Spirit "serves as a sign that the calling and power of the apostolic church are valid for contemporary believers."<sup>69</sup> The aim of signs and wonders indicates the mission is to declare salvation in Christ alone to all nations. The Holy Spirit is the source of the spiritual empowerment in believers to be effective witnesses.<sup>70</sup> The manifestation of the Spirit through the signs and wonders is endorsed in believers' hearts as power evangelism, which emphasizes fearless and bold witness of Christ in the face of difficulties (Lk.12:8-12; Acts 4:31).<sup>71</sup> Stephen is a good example of such a fearless and bold witness, even though he was accused of being a blasphemer of God. Acts 6:8-10 says:

Now Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, performed great wonders and signs among the people. Opposition arose, however, from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called)—Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria as well as the provinces of Cilicia and Asia—who began to argue with Stephen. But they could not stand up against the wisdom the Spirit gave him as he spoke.

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<sup>67</sup>Robert Menzies, *Pentecost: This Story Is Our Story* (GPH, 2013), 893–894, Kindle.

<sup>68</sup>F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Revised edition (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1990), 680.

<sup>69</sup>Menzies, 998.

<sup>70</sup>William W. Menzies and Robert P. Menzies, *Spirit and Power* (Zondervan, 2011), 3080–3081, Kindle.

<sup>71</sup>*Ibid.*, 3264–3266.

Stephen knew that the Holy Spirit was with him, not only because of the performance of wonders and signs, but also because of the Spirit's leading. He was aware that what he had said was through the wisdom that the Spirit had provided, although he was overwhelmed by fear.

The Holy Spirit not only empowers believers to have a bold witness, but also enables them to "declare the wonders of God" via a language that they had never learned.<sup>72</sup> In 1 Corinthians 12:7, Paul introduces the gifts of the Spirit and their purpose thusly—"The manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good." Fee comments, "Thus each 'gift' is a 'manifestation,' a disclosure of the Spirit's activity in their midst."<sup>73</sup> Further, Paul emphasizes that these gifts are for building the community up as a whole, not for the individual's benefit (1 Cor. 12:13-14), that the Holy Spirit joins all believers as one body with Christ as the head (Eph. 1:22-23; 1 Co. 12:12-27),<sup>74</sup> and yet the Spirit uses believers individually according to his will for his ministries (Rom. 12:3-8).

Keener says, "The process of transformation does not depend on our self-discipline as much as it depends on our willingness to embrace God's help."<sup>75</sup> The Holy Spirit's role in believers is not to keep an eye on us, but to help us (1 Cor. 12:7-11; Jn. 14:16, 26, 15:26). He transforms us into new creations in God's image (Eph. 4:24; 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15); thereby believers receive God's holy nature, which includes morality and character. One "consequence" of being a new creature in God is to have confidence while living in this world. Peter and John before the Sanhedrin is a good example. When told to stop speaking and teaching about Jesus, Peter did not exhibit his former cowardly characteristic of running away and denying Christ (Matt. 26:69-75). Rather, the Sanhedrin saw a new Peter, sealed and transformed by the Holy Spirit not only via the signs and wonders he performed, but also because of the resurrection and all the promises of Jesus (Acts 4:8-20).

God wants human beings' hearts, not their attention. Because the Holy Spirit is fully God and shares all the attributes of the Godhead, he brings a godlike character or atmosphere to any situation in which he is active, resulting in conviction of sin, righteousness, and judgment (Jn.

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<sup>72</sup>Ibid., 1042.

<sup>73</sup>Gordon D Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1987), 589.

<sup>74</sup>Merrill F. Unger, 22–23.

<sup>75</sup>Keener, 72–73.

16:8–11).<sup>76</sup> Because God is love, the Holy Spirit pours that love into our hearts (Rom. 5:5; 15:30; Col. 1:8), and often his strongly manifested presence will create an atmosphere of love. God is “not a author of confusion but of peace” (1 Cor. 14:33), and it’s the Holy Spirit who brings that peace into situations—“The kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 14:17; cf. Gal. 5:22),<sup>77</sup> this verse also teaching us that he imparts an atmosphere of joy (see also Acts 13:52; 1 Thess. 1:6). Paul summarized many of the godlike qualities that the Holy Spirit produces when he listed the various manifestations of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22–23.

To review, then, the atmosphere of the Holy Spirit’s manifestation differs vastly from the phenomena of *Khong Kuen* because the Spirit points to salvation in Christ, which frees humankind from sin. Therefore, the aim of the manifestation of God is to reconcile a broken relationship through Christ, the Lord and Savior (Lk. 10:21-24), which results in an eternal peace that the world—and *Khong Kuen*—cannot give. The Holy Spirit also provides the assurance and the confidence in salvation through encountering God, bearing witness “with our spirits that we are children of God” (Rom. 8:16). Plus, he gives evidence of the work of God within believers—“And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit which He has given us” (1 Jn. 3:24, 4:13). Besides witnessing to believers who are God’s children, he also witnesses that God abides in His people and they abide in him. More than the intellect is involved; rather the Spirit works to give assurance at the subjective level of spiritual and emotional perception.<sup>78</sup> The sign of abiding in God is the promise of salvation, which empowers believers not only to be confident (1 Jn. 4:17), but also to love one another (1 Jn. 4:11).

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

### Tattoo Spirits vs. the Holy Spirit: Attributes and Purposes

The appropriate response to spiritual tattoo wearers’ claim of no difference between the manifestations of the spirits in the *Wai Kru*

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<sup>76</sup>Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, New Edition edition (Zondervan, 2009), 562.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., 562.

ceremony and the Holy Spirit in the baptism in the Holy Spirit involves distinguishing the differences in both attributes and purposes. While these spirits behind the manifestations may appear similar, they are far from being so. The spirits inserted in the tattoo are clearly evil spirits, having as their basic characteristic and intent to destroy, steal, and kill (Jn. 10:10). Instead of controlling those spirits, the tattoo wearer is instead controlled by them (2 Tim. 2:26), which they do by attracting the wearer to materialism and by perverse spiritual manifestations. While these evil spirits control people with taboos and kill them spiritually, the Holy Spirit, on the other hand, comes to give life (Jn. 10:10).

Often accompanying the baptism in the Holy Spirit are signs and wonders, such as speaking in tongues, being slain in the Spirit, the casting out of demons, or healings. Such phenomena serve to empower believers to bear witness that Christ is Savior and to become more Christ-like. Thus, the purpose of the baptism in the Holy Spirit is to declare salvation in Christ, who is the center of all. Jesus is looking for reconciliation with all believers because he cares for and loves them, not to satisfy their fleshly wants. Luke 15:3-7 depicts just how much he loves his people:

Then Jesus told them this parable: “Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn’t he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders <sup>6</sup>and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’ I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

Besides illustrating Jesus’ love, this passage also shows the depth of our worth to him. 1 Corinthians 6:20 says, “You were brought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.” Jesus, who intends for the salvation of all, wants us to respond to his love by sharing with others—1 John 3:16 saying, “This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.”

The Holy Spirit in his role as helper will manifest himself in all believers in order to empower them to share Jesus’ love with everyone. Although believers may face trials or obstructions, that is often the

process through which they learn to trust God and allow him to work in their lives. The result is not to satisfy their needs but to become mature in their relationship with Christ.

### The Kingdom of Light vs. The Kingdom of Darkness

In Thailand, many Christians are disturbed and afflicted by evil spirits because of the charms or amulets that remain in their homes. These spirits can still affect a believer's life through the *Yant* in idols or tattoos. While charms and amulets can be gotten rid of, unfortunately the spiritual tattoo engraved on one's body is a different matter. Although tattoos can now be removed via laser technology, the procedure is often too expensive for many people. In addition, because the "sacred geometry" of spiritual tattoo functions as the bridge or connector between the spiritual world and the physical world, a very real question for Christians so tattooed is—can they, in fact, be possessed by spirits other than the Holy Spirit? Those believers especially need to know how to deal with evil spiritual influences and how God protects his people.

In Luke 10:17-20, Jesus says, "I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemies, and nothing shall hurt you." This passage makes clear that the power of the spiritual tattoo will *not* be able to overcome believers because of the authority that Jesus has given to them. Now being in Christ, who defeated Satan at the cross, they are protected from evil spirits. According to Thais' general understanding of the spiritual rule, those spirits who have more power will defeat those with less power. This understanding should help Thai Christians because God, who created the heaven and the earth, has all power and authority, has defeated Satan, and has overcome the world through Christ Jesus (1 Jn. 5:4).

Jesus promised the protection of believers by the Holy Spirit (Mk. 16:16-18), that they will fear no evil and harm because he is with them. However, since Satan's aim is to destroy believers (Jn. 10:10; 1 Pe. 5:8), they have been provided and are to put on the "full armor of God" (Eph. 6:10-18), cooperate with the Holy Spirit, stand firm in their faith, and be ready for spiritual warfare.

In order to prevent the confusion between spiritual tattoo manifestations and the baptism in the Holy Spirit, one must understand that there are two kinds of "spiritual kingdoms" in this world—the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness. The King of the kingdom of light is Jesus Christ, while the prince of the kingdom of

darkness is Satan (Jn. 12:31), and every human being “belongs” to one or the other. Opal Reddin explains that the Christ rejecters belong to Satan’s kingdom, that they are “possessed by him.”<sup>79</sup> When sinners accept Jesus as their savior, they are possessed by Christ and are set free from the chain of sin, all connections with the kingdom of darkness being cut by the blood of Christ.

This is the sensitive area that cannot be taken lightly. Believers are not in the realm of flesh but rather in the realm of the Spirit, and anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Christ (Rom. 8:9). So to whom then do those who do not have the Spirit of Christ belong? They belong to Satan, whom the Bible identifies as “The father of this world” (Jn. 8:39-47). The important point is that, when one becomes a “citizen” of the kingdom of light, he/she cannot be possessed by Satan as Paul confirms in Romans 8:38-39:

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

In other words, when it comes to the two spiritual kingdoms, there is no such thing as “joint ownership,” because it is impossible for Satan to repossess what Christ possesses. So long as Christians continue to abide in Christ, the enemy of their souls cannot occupy them; he can only tempt, accuse, and try to undermine their faith. That’s why the reminder to believers is to, “Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (1 Pet. 5:8). Reddin notes, “Satan may cause him (the believer) to stumble; Satan may influence his behavior; but Satan cannot ‘possess’ him!”<sup>80</sup> To reiterate, once believers belong to the kingdom of light, Satan has lost the power over them—including all of the instruments and connectors, such as the spiritual tattoo.

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<sup>79</sup>Opal L. Reddin ed., *Power Encounter: A Pentecostal Perspective*, Revised Edition edition (Springfield, MO: Central Bible College Press, n.d.), 161.

<sup>80</sup>*Ibid.*, 163.

### In Conclusion

There are two spiritual worlds, which appear to be both similar but are vastly different. Although Thai people believe in the power of the spiritual tattoo that can ostensibly protect them and provide whatever they want, they have to maintain that spiritual power by attending the *Wai Kru* ceremony and by keeping the taboos and rules. For Christians, the manifestation of baptism in the Holy Spirit reveals how much they are loved by God, who sent his Son to die in order to redeem them from their sins. God is concerned not only about their physical lives in this world, but also their spiritual lives after this world. His plans for us are greater than just to satisfy our temporal needs, but to prepare us for His eternal Kingdom.

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Dynnice Rosanny D. Engcoy, *Pentecostal Pioneer: The Life and Legacy of Rudy Esperanza in the Early Years of the Assemblies of God in the Philippines* (Baguio City, Philippines: APTS Press, 2014), paperback, xii + 204 pp., ISBN: 978-971-8942-12-3.

The many personalities, the crucial events and the significant dates are made alive by Dynnice Rosanny D. Engcoy in her research on the life and times of Rev. Rodrigo “Rudy” Esperanza, who was an organizer, an ecumenist, a leader, and the first General Superintendent of the Philippines General Council of the Assemblies of God (PGCAG). Originally written as a Ph.D. dissertation for the Asia Graduate School of Theology, Dr. Engcoy’s informative research appreciates the role of the Filipino Pentecostal pioneers, especially Rudy Esperanza. Engcoy’s work is legitimate. Her work is necessary. Besides the Fuller Theological Seminary M.R.E. thesis of Trinidad C. Esperanza-Seleky, younger sister of Rudy, who was a denominational leader herself for many years, there is no other reliable and detailed written academic work that exists about the origins of the PGCAG. Mrs. Seleky’s “Assemblies of God in the Philippines” was completed in 1965. The other writings on the beginnings of the PGCAG are generally based on the work of Seleky. Finally, after nearly 50 years Engcoy’s book is published. In *Pentecostal Pioneer: The Life and Legacy of Rudy Esperanza in the Early Years of the Assemblies of God in the Philippines*, Engcoy presents fresh research on Esperanza and the Filipino Pentecostals’ early years. Engcoy should be thanked for providing this invaluable work. The innovative insights she articulates about the PGCAG beginnings are still applicable for today. The author’s significant awareness of the complexity of the study of the pioneering days of the Filipino Pentecostals makes her dissertation interesting to read. Her analysis of the initial accomplishments of the PGCAG through the leadership of Esperanza offers the reader suitable and reliable impressions about what is in the future of Pentecostalism in the Philippines. The publication of *Pentecostal Pioneer* is worth the waiting. Engcoy furnishes a reflective and sensitive narrative of the early Filipino Pentecostals.

After the preliminaries, Engcoy, in her first chapter, convincingly presents the importance of studying the “impact” of Esperanza on the contemporary growth of the PGCAG. The reviewer fully agrees with the penetrating arguments given by Engcoy on why her study is indispensable to be written as a dissertation. PGCAG is “the largest evangelical body in the predominantly Roman Catholic Asian

Country.” (2-3) This contention is true. However, from the beginning pages of her book, she already states that “three major conflicts—the split of the Manila Bethel Temple in 1965, the split of the denomination in 1973, and a further split in 1980—hampered the phenomenal growth of the Assemblies of God.” (4, see also 51 and 150-159, cf. 147-150, 167-168, 169-171) In other words, Engcoy is not intending to sanitize the historical data available for her to evaluate. Since *Pentecostal Pioneer* is a Ph.D. dissertation the typical format of the introductory chapter is obvious. The statement of the problem and the research purpose are specifically expressed in terms of appreciating the growth of the PGCAG in connection with the roles of the pioneers. The importance of the investigation as well as the limits and method of the study in terms of the Filipino viewpoint and resources available are clearly mentioned. She also notes her use of oral history and literature research. The field research of the author is also crucial for the success of writing this title. For a reviewer who is well aware of Pentecostalism in the Philippines, he is immediately intellectually engaged in the introductory challenges presented by Engcoy as he begins to read her *Pentecostal Pioneer*.

It is expected in this kind of research for Engcoy to provide the necessary consideration of the circumstances accounting the “Background and Birth of the Assemblies of God USA” in chapter 2, “Background and Birth of PGCAG” in chapter 3 and “Esperanza’s Background” in chapter 4. She makes it evident that the Filipinos themselves were the ones who made the Assemblies of God grow in the Philippines and not the American missionaries. The study of the settings where both the Assemblies of God grew due to missionary zeal and Esperanza’s development as a leader is not only indispensable in understanding the PGCAG history but also provides a significant perspective on the attitude and the spirituality of the Filipino Esperanza. Although he was a migrant to the United States, his burden for the Filipino people led him to go back to the Philippines to share the Pentecostal experience to his countrymen. Engcoy reports the salient points of the background of Esperanza. Then she uses this reconstructed background of Esperanza to show how he took his job as a Pentecostal leader of the Filipinos. Her narrative is delightful to read, especially Esperanza’s story when he was a boy, his academic achievements and his call into the ministry while in the United States. (53-61) Subsequently, the next four chapters are meant to examine Esperanza’s involvement among the Pentecostals in the Philippines. Thus, Engcoy clearly itemizes these chapters in terms of Esperanza’s

“Foundational Roles in the PGCAG” in the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter and his work as “District Secretary and General Superintendent” in the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter. Afterwards she depicts his spirituality in “Personal Leadership Qualities” in the 7<sup>th</sup> chapter and his attitude as a “Visionary Leader” in the 8<sup>th</sup> chapter. Finally, in the second to the last chapter, “Assessment of Esperanza’s Leadership Role and Influence,” she comes up with Esperanza’s evaluation within the context of his time. The last chapter is a reflection of a doctoral dissertation formality of giving “Conclusions and Recommendations.” It should also be noted that the endnotes and bibliography are not only extensive but also balanced, helpful and an encouragement indeed for the reader to do further readings.

At this point it is essential to recognize the strength of Engcoy’s work as a whole. Her employment of the oral history from interviews of reliable and helpful people is a forte. At the same time, her utilization of the written sources from the United States and the Philippines is not only what is expected but also harmonizes the oral history that she presents in a very lively Pentecostal context. Through the wise and strategic use of oral and written information available for her, Engcoy is able to historically describe her answer to the statement of the problem on why PGCAG has grown so much in the midst of denominational problems. Esperanza and his leadership style worked well. Likewise, the purpose of the dissertation is successfully articulated in showing that besides the training schools and the published literature, the company of spiritual trailblazers, men with visions, such as Esperanza made the Filipino Pentecostals grow exponentially by the power of the Holy Spirit. Another major strength is the presentation of the materials. The outline is well organized. The chapters can easily be perceived as divided into 3 parts. Part 1 is seemingly the first four chapters which are basically the background study of Esperanza and his times. The succeeding chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 are the materials that specifically deal with Esperanza’s positive contributions and great impact to the Pentecostals in the Philippines that is comparable to a second part. The remaining chapters, 9 and 10, resemble a part 3, which evaluates issues and concludes views concerning Esperanza’s legacy as a leader. In addition, Engcoy’s critical insight is appreciated. Based on her data she judiciously reckons that:

. . . speaking in tongues as the initial physical evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit was not yet taught among Filipino

AG churches, although many AG members spoke in tongues. It seems that Esperanza did not write about speaking in tongues. Instead, his writings emphasize salvation, healing, the second coming, and the empowering of the Holy Spirit without mentioning the doctrine of speaking in tongues as “initial physical evidence.” The early teachings of Filipino AG support Allan Anderson’s stand that describing Pentecostalism using the “four-fold pattern,” which includes *glossolalia* as the initial physical evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, “can only be neatly applied to ‘classical Pentecostalism’ in North America.” (50)

It should not be forgotten to mention that the book is very readable. The author’s style of writing is dynamic and enjoyable to read with a light touch. Lastly, if there is any weakness to be pointed out, then, it is the brevity of the book. There is so much more to know regarding the early Filipino Pentecostals, the origins of the PGCAG and Rudy Esperanza. The reviewer wants more to read about Pentecostalism in the Philippines. But perhaps, it is fitting to finish this review by saying that although the limited pages of *Pentecostal Pioneer* is wanting, which may be taken as a flaw, in reality it is the very strength of Engcoy’s work because the reviewer wants to read some more.

R.G. dela Cruz

Melba Padilla Maggay (Editor), *The Gospel in Culture: Contextualization Issues Through Asian Eyes*, (Manila, Philippines: OMF Literature Inc., 2013). 520 pp. Php350/\$ 8.49 paperback.

Melba Padilla-Maggay is a social anthropologist and the co-founder and President of the Institute for Studies in Asian Church and Culture which makes her an excellent person to edit this book. She has managed to gather many Filipino Evangelical theological scholars to contribute towards the success of this book. Briefly here are the writers:

1. E. Acoba who works in Southern Philippines with several ethnic Muslim groups. He is an advocate of the 'insider-paradigm' approach.
2. Lorenzo C. Bautista is a medical doctor with theological degrees. He is the Chair of the Theology faculty in Asian Theological Seminary (ATS). His varied study interests include local theology, church history and social development.
3. Mona P Bias, an *Ibaloy-Kankaney* tribe member of the Benguet Province, is an Old Testament scholar. She uses her various disciplines as a grid to exegete her own tribal background.
4. Edgar Battad Ebojo completed his PhD at the University of Birmingham, UK in New Testament and as a textual historian. He is the Translations Manager of the Philippine Bible Society.
5. Timoteo D. Gener is a pastor-theologian, who is the President of ATS.
6. Adonis Abelard O. Gorospe, also with ATS as the Academic Dean and Associate Professor for Theology, Spirituality and Church History.
7. Athena E. Gorospe, another Associate Professor at ATS, teaches in the Old Testament with contemporary application as to how the Scriptures address philosophy, culture and the social context of the Philippines.
8. David S. Lim serves as the Executive Trustee/CEO of the Asian School for Development and Cross-cultural Studies and the President of China Ministries International-Philippines. His area of discipline is New Testament Theology.
9. Jonathan M. Nambu is a Japanese-American who has lived in the Philippines for the past twenty-three years. He is the executive director of Samaritana Transformation Ministries

- that serve women survivors of prostitution and trafficking, engaging his expertise in Transformational Urban Leadership.
10. Narry F. Santos is the Senior Pastor of Greenhills Christian Fellowship, Toronto and the Executive Pastor of Greenhills Christian Fellowship, Canada. He is a church-planter as well as an Adjunct Professor at Tyndale University, College and Seminary, with two earned doctorates in New Testament and Philippine Studies.
  11. Amanda Shao Tan hails as a faculty of Hermeneutics and Biblical Interpretation at ATS. However, she is also involved in counseling, discipling and speaking at the seminary. She is of Chinese ethnicity and has a special interest in physical disabilities and what the Scriptures say about it and how Scriptures speak to Chinese culture.
  12. Federico G. Villanueva is the publications secretary of Asia Theological Association and the general editor of the Asia Bible Commentary series. He is also a Bible translator and part-time consultant with the Philippine Bible Society. His area of study has been the Old Testament.

The book is organized into three parts after the *Introduction*. Part I is about *Christianity in Culture: Historical Appropriations*, Part II is entitled *The Text in Context: Hermeneutical Explorations* and finally Part III is called *The Gospel in Context: Communicating in a Pluralized Context*. In the *Introduction*, Maggay sets the tone by explaining *The Task of Contextualization* especially highlighting the *Issues of Reading, Appropriating and Transmitting the Faith*. A main pitfall of contextualization is without a doubt “syncretism.” She deals with this issue in the very beginning and assures her readers that the contributors to this book have very skillfully not fallen into such a pit. Instead they have used their “insiders” perspective to give us a fresh view of the Gospel in Culture in the spirit of the title of the book.

Stated clearly by Maggay is “A main thesis of this book is that the church communities appropriate the Gospel always within the terms of their own cultural narratives.” (p 9) The contributors of the first part do their appropriations in the framework of historical contexts with application to contemporary settings. At times though, there seems to be a reading into the context chosen, such as in the chapter by Gorospe that focuses on Origen, who Gorospe claims to give contemporary theologians the methodology to engage with secularism and Asian religions. That would probably be a historical stretch as Origen was in

another time and space from the present situation. The second part is more standard in dealing with the interpretive task of the Church while also theologizing the Text in Context. The third and final part deals with contextualization in specific situations such as Chinese religions, Islam and globalization.

This book is so rich and fresh in its approach. There is great insight into the Filipino way of looking at things as well as a general Asian way of looking at things. As such, it was easy for this reviewer to identify with many of the summations of the different authors. If a Westerner were reading this book, it will be helpful to them as they would be able to understand the Filipino and Asian culture better, which may make them more effective in presenting the Gospel in this context. I personally found Chapter 12 most helpful in *Contextualizing the Gospel in Ancestor-Venerating Cultures* (pp 377-415) where the distinction was made between “worship” and “veneration” as this is the stigma for those who come from such backgrounds to remain filially pious and yet also not deny the principles from the Bible. Lim makes it clear that if the disciple of Christ is clear, then he or she will not be sinning against their own conscience.

However, as a Pentecostal, I would have hoped that Chapter Three on *Spirits, Scribes and Scriptures* could have been written by a Filipino Pentecostal who may have given a better insider’s view on this topic of ‘spiritual warfare’ in reading the New Testament texts. The scholarship is there but not with the Pentecostal experience. I would heartily recommend this book to missionaries and theologians for their further study on contextualizing theology, especially in the Filipino context.

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Peter A. Sutcliffe, *Is There an Author in This Text?: Discovering the Otherness of the Text* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2014), paperback, x + 430 pp., ISBN: 978-1-62032-823-1, US\$ 48.00.

Originally completed and passed as a Ph.D. thesis for the University of Wales, Bangor (now University of Bangor) in the United Kingdom in 2012 with the title “Is There An Author In This Text?: A Re-evaluation of Authorial Intent Pursued as Ontological Disclosing the Being of the Entity of the Composition in Understanding an Author’s Communication,” Peter A. Sutcliffe sought to provide an alternative route of viewing the scriptural text, deviating from the postmodern approaches. This is a courageous work. An innovation which shows clarity in evaluating the current debates on interpreting the biblical text. He gives thoughtful attention to the “ontological route” in dealing with texts and not merely on the language which they employ. (See especially 244-264 and 265-300.) He also cuts through the philosophical approaches to hermeneutics. Sutcliffe brings into this research his Pentecostal background without embarrassment. He is coming from the perspective “that God continues to speak to any present reader by means of the [scriptural] text those [biblical] authors had written.” (vii) He is concerned to clarify the nature of authorial “intentionality,” to categorize the “being” of personal composition and to consider the process of interpretive “task.” (vii-viii) For Sutcliffe, “the aim must be disclosure of the hermeneutical task, not the justification of a point of view.” (ix) The preceding concern is clearly expressed in the original subtitle of the thesis. The nature of text as composition cannot be separated from the author of composition as purposely intentional. (13-14)

In his revised and expanded doctoral work that is now published with the same title *Is There an Author in This Text?* Sutcliffe has put an emphasis on *Discovering the Otherness of the Text* by using it as a subtitle. (cf. chapters 12-13) The contemporary trend in viewing texts has inclination to follow the postmodern ideas, and especially on the question of textual meaning. A willingness of a reader to examine his argument on its merits would not just challenge the postmodern assertions but all in all the issue of ontological argument that he raises for the justification of authorial intent should convince a reader that Sutcliffe’s case is worthy of serious consideration. He presents a logically valid rationale for re-establishing a valid presupposition and an unambiguous understanding of authorial intent. (140-157 and 186-207) Moreover, an ontological approach could move things in a

different direction, which for the reviewer is critical in addressing the legitimate understanding of the scriptural text for the future of biblical hermeneutics. Sutcliffe has rigorously developed this significant concept of the 'ontological being' of the composition of the text. Hence, he rightfully takes the ontological argument in dealing with the authorial intent. Sutcliffe's work could lead to a new direction that would have a positive effect on hermeneutics. Therefore, *Is There an Author in This Text?*, which upholds the view of authorial intentionality in reading the composition written into text, is worth analyzing carefully. (cf. 236-264)

Using thirteen chapters, Sutcliffe deals with the issues of authorial centered hermeneutics, the arguments of author's demise perspective, the existence of the being of the text and the necessary otherness of the text. Accordingly, he places the interpreter in the model of "the task unfolds as a task" as a facilitator of understanding and not the determiner of understanding. (416) What Sutcliffe emphasizes then is "that understanding occurs at the level of existence." (416) He astutely reasons out that:

The issue of hermeneutics is a consideration of *intentioned-being*, which itself is given being by authorial intent, in order that the interpreter can understand, or see, what the author understood, or saw. What is understood can be assimilated inwardly deriving meaning, which determines selfhood as expressed in life. Meaning is therefore the impact of what is understood, and understanding is the encounter of *otherness*. Meaning should not begin with self, but with understanding in the encounter of *otherness*. The view of interpretation as sameness of meaning is incredible. True interpretation as equivalence of understanding is credible. (418)

In his first chapter Sutcliffe places the context of his research in the postmodern setting of interpreting written texts. Then, in the next three chapters, he deals with the "conundrum" and "paradox" of the authorial intention of the author in his composition, which is presented into a text. Citing the view of N. T. Wright, he sees the important acknowledgment that "aesthetics and belief, though subjective, are part of knowing, then an author and interpreter must connect with this knowledge." (26) Sutcliffe even coined the word "pistology" (from *pistis* – "faith" and *logos* – "word") in "dealing with belief knowledge" rather than using the common word theology so that he can stress in

“pistology” the idea of belief as something general to all people. (27) He also argues that “the nature of the authorial intent” is that of “an antecedent and precursor of the written text.” (47) Thus, in chapter 5 he describes how “The Reports of the Author’s Death Have Been Greatly Exaggerated.” Afterwards in the 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> chapters, Sutcliffe defined, explored and upheld the notion of the authorial intention in connection to an existing text. And in the last three chapters, he further presents the concepts of the “being of the text” and the “otherness of the text,” as well as a reevaluation of the perception of “meaning” and “understanding.”

What Sutcliffe makes unmistakable about his argument for the necessity of the authorial intent in understanding a written text is the idea that what the author “saw” is that which what the author wants the reader to see. (70) He is avoiding the appeal of linguistics for an answer to the conundrum of the meaning of the text. “The authorial intent, in acting as the antecedent of the text (i.e., it is what the text refers back to), is what preceded the text and acted as the cause of its being as text.” (70) It is a good decision for Sutcliffe and a major strength of the book that he employs many of his illustrations to argue a point using biblical references and examples. His Pentecostal background reflects well in his illustrations. It is also helpful for him to summarize and engage with the most influential philosophers of hermeneutics. His interest in the British academic Anthony Thiselton, the American scholar Kevin Vanhoozer, and the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur are immediately notable in his work. He cites and engages mainly with these three and other prominent thinkers such as Gadamer, Derrida, Heidegger, Barthes, Schleiermacher, Wittgenstein, Hegel, Stendhal, Wolterstorff with biblical exegetes like Fee and Marshall, theologians such as Pannenberg and Erickson, Pentecostal scholars like Tate and Dempster, and many others like Fish, Hirsch, Bultmann, Beardsley and Wimsatt, *etcetera*, that are involved in these complex and intricate debates in interpreting texts. Sutcliffe’s research scope has a clear focus. Commitment to authorial intent in interpreting the text is second to nothing. It is a *sine qua non*. The author is the antecedent of the text. It is worth quoting Sutcliffe in full when he concludes that:

The concept of an autonomous text has failed to take account of the retention of the authorial intent in the act of *parole*. The argument that detachment results in autonomy is not compelling. The recognition of the transformation of authorial

intent in the act of *parole* was not recognized, and sight of the author was lost. The primary reason for this is the failure to recognize the entity of the composition in its relationship to the entity of the text. The current theory on the entity of the text has resulted in the compositions concealment and therefore also the concealment of authorial intent; but despite this concealment the current theory has no way in which to contend and deal with the logic of its existence. (139)

His discussion on *parole* or the actual words expressed by people (contrasted to *langue*) is helpful. He correctly argues that with every postmodern theory currently existing, making the text autonomous and emphasizing the notion of reader's response in the hermeneutical process, the sensibleness of the presence of the authorial intent in the being of the composition that is written in the text fails to address the ontological relationship of the composition and the text. Postmodern theories killed the text. Sutcliffe revives the text. The being of the composition brings life to the text. Thus, the author of the text is made alive. *Is There an Author in This Text?* is not only providing an alternative hermeneutical perspective to the contemporary postmodern views, but it also gives a penetrating argument for the case of authorial intention in dealing with the text. Sutcliffe rightly argues from the angle of the being of the composition with the antecedent of the necessary intent of the author placing the reader in a place to see what the author saw.

R. G. dela Cruz

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# *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies*

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### **Listening to Asia's Younger Scholars**

For the first time in our eighteen year history, every article in this edition is written by an Asian. Also, to the best of my knowledge, this is the first edition ever done where all of the authors are currently associated with APTS. First, Herman Dionson, is a junior faculty member. Second, Luan Thang and Anattiphong (K) Phanon, are MTh students. The other Daniel Liu, is in the Master of Divinity program. For more information on these programs, please visit [www.pts.edu](http://www.pts.edu).

To celebrate this event, we've invited our dear friend and one of the founders of this Journal, Dr. Wonsuk Ma, to write a special editorial to give his perspective on why we need to listen to Asia's younger scholars. To allow his voice to be clearly heard and, in the spirit of this completely Asian edition, I will reserve my own reflections on this vital subject for another time.

Herman Dionson's article regarding a theology of encouragement leads off this edition. Here, Dionson claims that Paul intended 1 Timothy 4:6-16 as both a challenge and an encouragement to Timothy, his son and protégé in the faith, challenging him to preach sound doctrine and lead a correct life. Dionson sees this as a model for older Filipino pastors and challenges them to mentor the younger generation of leaders who will soon take their place.

Luan Thang then adds a new twist to the age old debate between Paul and James' views on the relationship between faith and works by applying it to the ecclesiastical situation in his native Myanmar (Burma). Thang contends that the difference between Paul and James is complementary rather than contradictory because Paul is contending with those who hold that faith is necessary to salvation and James contending with those who believe that saving faith bears no social responsibility. According to Luan, this relates directly to the situation in Myanmar where the older, more liberal churches focus on the practical needs of people while ignoring their spiritual needs while the newer, more evangelical churches do the reverse. Both groups, according to Luan, need to change and reflect a more holistic and biblical view.

Daniel Liu exegetes Chinese culture as well as the Scriptures in grappling with a biblical approach to the *Zhong Yuan Festival* in his part of Mainland China. Liu explains that the purpose of the festival is to honor the ancestors. Can Christians participate in at least some of the aspects of the festival? If not, what might they do to honor their ancestors without worshiping them? Liu provides some excellent reflections on these and other related questions.

Anattiphong (K) Phanon concludes this edition with an attempt to clear up the confusion that, he holds, exists among believers regarding the Baptism in the Holy Spirit and the practice of spiritual tattooing done among folk Buddhists in his part of northeastern Thailand. According to Phanon, these spiritual tattoos are infested with local spirits whom Phanon describes as “Wild spirits.” How does one know the difference between these spirits and the Spirit of God? Phanon answers this question and a number of related questions in order to help local believers have a better understanding of what it means to be “Filled with the Spirit.”

Our regular readers will notice that this edition is smaller than normal with only four articles. This stems from the fact that Debbie and I have been in transition for the last few months and are now home in the States for itineration—visiting our supporters. In the hustle and bustle of preparing to leave Baguio and getting settled here in the States, I failed to notice this shortage. Please accept my apologies and know that we will resume our normal size again with the next edition. And, yes, we will return to Baguio once we have completed our itineration cycle.

I would also like to acknowledge my debt to the Reverend Frank McNelis, our senior editor, who is serving as the acting director of our publishing ministries while we are home, and is making a tremendous contribution. Any mistakes, however, are my responsibility.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact me through the APTS website, [www.pts.edu](http://www.pts.edu).

Your partner for Asia,

Dave Johnson  
Managing Editor

## AJPS AND GLOBAL CHRISTIANITY

The publication of each issue of a journal is a reason for celebration. There are at least two good reasons to do so. First, the mortality rate of academic journals is extremely high, especially in the first few years. Everyone begins with a clear vision and mission, often aligned with those of the institution that sponsors the journal. The Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies (AJPS) was not an exception: it once had a period where its death, even in its “teen” years, was rather apparent. To a founding editor, it was hard to watch. Its “resurrection,” therefore, came with much rejoicing. Second, each issue is different from all others. The character of the journal remains constant, but its content is always different. (For this issue, I will speak more below). The institution’s decision to make the journal content available online is an expression of missional generosity.

AJPS is an Asian journal on Pentecostal studies, not a journal of Asian Pentecostalism. The name of the journal points to a distinct Asian perspective for a wide range of Pentecostal subjects, while it aims to serve broader constituencies. Its global awareness is therefore to be celebrated. At the same time, the journal has been a source of rare studies on Asian Pentecostalism for almost two decades. In many academic books on Pentecostal topics, “AJPS” is a regular entry in the list of abbreviations. The world turns to this journal when researchers look for Pentecostal thoughts and voices in Asia. For example, when a ground breaking book was recently published on Pentecostal creation care, the most important voice among Asian Pentecostals was found from the journal. Agustinus Dermawan began his Indonesian reflection among Indonesian Pentecostals on creation care (or the lack thereof) as a class paper at the Asia Pacific Theological Seminary. After a considerable revision, the study was published in the journal.<sup>1</sup> His study received extensive attention as a crucial Asian Pentecostal voice.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Agustinus Dermawan, “The Spirit in Creation and Environmental Stewardship: A Preliminary Pentecostal Response toward Ecological Theology,” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 6:2 (2003): 199-217.

<sup>2</sup>A. J. Swoboda, *Tongues and Trees: Toward a Pentecostal Ecological Theology* (Blandford Forum, UK: Deo Publishing, 2013), 187-88.

Today, there is another important reason why the watchers of global Christianity focus on Asian Pentecostal Christianity. There are credible data proving that Christianity throughout its two-millennium history has not yet grown beyond the one-third wall of the world population. One exception, according to the *Atlas of Global Christianity*, was the record rate of 34.8% in the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>3</sup> The historic Edinburgh Missionary Conference (1910) was perhaps a brilliant moment to mark this unprecedented point of Christian history. The participants of this first-ever gathering of world mission leaders (although it was really “Western”) firmly believed that “Evangelisation of the world in our [their] generation” was a possible reality. At the height of western colonialism, a vast part of the world was under “Christian” domination. But within that generation, two world wars brought devastations and destruction that human history had never experienced. This time, destruction of lives numbered millions, not thousands. We just marked the seventieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War, which occurred with a blazing fire of atomic bombs in Asia. When the centenary of the Edinburgh conference was held with a smaller number than was at the original gathering, the mood was obviously different. Since the early 1980s, more Christians have lived in the three southern continents. Today, almost two-thirds of the world’s Christians live and witness in what is now called the “Global South.”<sup>4</sup> At the same time, the world Church had learned hard lessons. At that point, world Christianity was under 33.3% of the world’s population, in spite of historic gains in Africa (that is, almost a 42-fold growth of Christianity in one hundred years!).

Asia has been the prime suspect for this “under 1/3 saga” of global Christianity with its massive population (close to 60% of today’s world population). Christianity is about 1/3 of the world average, that is, about 15.5% of the Asian population. When Asia grows, this will definitely impact the world scene. When Christianity in the two “billion club” nations (that is, China and India) begins to grow, we know Asian Christianity will increase. Furthermore, that is happening in our time. There is one last important key: about one half of Asian Christians are of a Pentecostal/Charismatic type, open to the dynamic work of the Holy Spirit. That means the most logical answer to the quest is Asian Pentecostals, who can cause this “1/3 wall” to finally be broken and

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<sup>3</sup>Todd M. Johnson and Kenneth R. Ross, eds., *Atlas of Global Christianity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 59.

<sup>4</sup>Johnson and Ross, *Atlas of Global Christianity*, 51.

keep global Christianity on the other side of the wall in a sustained manner. This was not a role which the journal perceived when it began at the end of the last century.

Four main studies of this particular issue well exemplify what Asian Pentecostals offer to the world. Again, the range and contextual engagement of each study provides a good possibility that Asian Christianity can be a mile wide and a mile deep. First, Dionson's exegetical study is significant in two ways. The first is the ministry of encouragement that is crucial for any ministry, and the study is addressed to both mentors and mentorees. Its second importance is the very fact that Pentecostal faith and life is firmly grounded in the Word and this study demonstrates just that. Indeed, Pentecostals have been known as "people of the book" and only when a biblical principle is confidently laid can a robust contextual engagement can take place. Thang now brings his own Myanmar Christianity into discussion, which is divided between the "work" and "faith" lines or evangelical and mainline churches. He brings this contemporary challenge in a serious engagement with two key passages of the New Testament, which each camp may base their emphasis on. It is not only a careful exegetical study, but also a self-critical and constructive proposal for both to see each other as members of the same body of Christ, and commonly called to reach the vast nation still not touched by the transforming power of the gospel. Phanon's study on Thai spiritual tattoo is another splendid example of a Pentecostal engagement with the socio-religious realities of societies in Asia. Amidst the widespread spirit-related practices, Asian Pentecostals are called to bring a clear gift of God's salvation and freedom from bondage, while countering spiritual forces, beliefs and practices that have permeated deeply the social psyche and life. Liu takes up his own Chinese cultural festival, Zhong Yuan, and contends that there is a strong animistic and religious aspect to it. His exploration of a Pentecostal response to the animistic aspect of the festival is particularly impressive. It is important to remember the pervasiveness of animism, especially in Asia. Anthropological analysis of the festival concludes that it has strong animistic and religious components and Liu provides a practical guide for ministering to people who are involved in the festival.

In my editorial experience of this particular journal, I have noticed that many contributors had their first published studies appear in the pages of *AJPS*. This proves its unique service to new thinker-practitioners. At the same time, it is expected some studies may lack scholarly nuances and refined choice of terms, especially those by non-

English-speaking authors. This is exactly where the journal provides a rare space for such “first-time” thinkers to share their thoughts and experiences with the world. It is clear that all these and other studies in this journal exemplify originality, engagement with cultural and contemporary social issues and deep commitment to the Word and the Spirit. This is the unique call of this journal and I am proud to have been part of this unique ministry in the beginning years.

*Wonsuk Ma*

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Founding co-editor (1998-2006) of the *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies*

1 TIMOTHY 4:6-16: TOWARDS A THEOLOGY OF  
ENCOURAGEMENT

By Herman Dionson

**Introduction**

The gravity of the problem in the Ephesian church has led the Apostle Paul to neglect the conventional ancient letter-writing style. He wastes no time in directing Timothy to a course of action that must be followed in order to address this pressing problem in the congregation. Its seriousness has prompted Paul to use searing words to awaken the senses of those who read them. If the purpose of 1 Timothy 1:9-10 was to appeal to those who are spreading the false doctrines, then they are “lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for the sexual immoral, for those practicing homosexuality, for slave traders and liars and perjurers.”<sup>1</sup> Paul’s deviation from conventional letter-writing brings an intensity to 1 Timothy 4:6-16 that at first may seem out of place. But in light of the seriousness of the situation, such deviation might well be an important aspect of Paul’s writing to Timothy, who at this particular moment likely needs more than just orders on how to navigate the church through the problem; he also needs a mentor’s comforting words. Thus, this exegesis paper will consider the above verses, the purpose of which is to provide encouragement and a personal challenge to Timothy.

The Pauline Epistles were not written in a vacuum but are curtailed with issues that erupted in the churches (or individuals, in the case of Philemon). And the element of encouragement, which is often overlooked, is perhaps best exemplified in this passage.

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<sup>1</sup>Holy Bible, *New International Version*, Belfast: Biblical Europe, 2011.

## Background

### The Author and Authenticity

Dibelius and Conzelman turned the argument around when they stated that the burden of proof lies with those who hold to the Pauline authorship,<sup>2</sup> which had not been in question until Schleiermacher cast doubt on it.<sup>3</sup> Dibelius and Conzelman claim that the Pastoral Epistles were written “around the turn of the century, suggesting that the author aimed to revive Pauline teaching for his day or to compose a definitive and authoritative Pauline manual for denouncing heresy in the post-apostolic church.”<sup>4</sup> The arguments were that: (1) external evidence does not authenticate it, nor did the early fathers mention the letters; (2) the Pauline Epistles are not similar to the Pastoral Epistles; (3) the Book of Acts account displaces the Pastoral Epistles; (4) the church structure identified in the Pastoral Epistles was more suited to turn-of-the-century situations; (5) the middle-class audience is contrary to the early church assembly; and (6) the words used were foreign to other Pauline works.<sup>5</sup>

There are two other hypotheses regarding the question of authenticity. One suggests that a fragment of an authentic Pauline letter was used, especially in the personal statements; the other suggests the use of an amanuensis (i.e., a secretary) who was given the liberty to write, thus providing an answer to the differences mentioned above. This theory, though, still supports the contention that the Pastoral Letters are not what tradition says they are.<sup>6</sup>

On the contrary, Gordon Fee posits that external evidence is available that Irenaeus (about 180 A.D.) and Polycarp (135 A.D.) might have an idea of the material. The strongest clue, however, to the traditional view would be in the language and style of the letters.<sup>7</sup> Fee demonstrates that: (1) the purpose and occasion of the writing would require a “genius” to bring the loose ends in the setting, (2) the situation in the Ephesian church is similar to that of the later problems

<sup>2</sup>Martin Dibelius and Hans Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Fortress Press, 1972), 4.

<sup>3</sup>Raymond F. Collins, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, 1st ed. (Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 3.

<sup>4</sup>Philip H. Towner, “1-2 Timothy & Titus,” *The IVP New Testament Commentary Series 14* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 15.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>6</sup>Dibelius and Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 4–5.

<sup>7</sup>Gordon D. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, ed. W. Ward Gasque (Hendrickson Publishers / Paternoster Press, 1995), 23–24.

mentioned above; and (3) this genius writer did not have to write three letters—thus, the traditional view of Pauline authorship still holds.<sup>8</sup>

Theories of pseudepigraphy, therefore, must reconstruct a historical situation in the time of the pseudepigrapher, in this case about A.D. 90-110, that accounts for the data of these letters as addressing the “author’s” situation while still making them plausible as belonging to the alleged historical situation of the letters themselves. Right here is where the difficulties arise.<sup>9</sup>

Furthermore, considering that the correspondence was with two closely related individuals, it can be argued that a different dynamic in writing can surface, as opposed to the other letters directed to the churches. Reading the Pastoral Letters should take this into account. Also, it would be incongruent to church ethics that, indeed, a material being passed on to them purporting to be Paul’s was, in fact, not his.<sup>10</sup>

### The Recipient

Timothy would first surface in Acts 16:1,2, being described as a young man from Lystra, where he was highly regarded. His relationship with Paul is defined in Acts as becoming Paul’s “itinerant apostolic delegate.”<sup>11</sup> He would also be prominently mentioned in most of the Pauline letters, even as a co-author. Paul considers him *γνησίῳ τέκνῳ ἐν πίστει* (1 Timothy 1:2), indicating that close relationship, since *γνησίῳ* “conveys both intimacy and authority.”<sup>12</sup> Such a close relationship is also evident as Paul writes, “You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings—what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endure” (2 Timothy 2:10-11). Paul has sent Timothy on great tasks, which indicates that Paul saw him as strong rather than weak.<sup>13</sup> Fee suggests that him being relatively young (about 30 years

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 25–26.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 6.

<sup>10</sup>Walter L. Liefeld, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus* (Zondervan, 2008), 28.

<sup>11</sup>William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, ed. Ralph P. Martin and Lynn A. Losie, vol. 46, Word Biblical Commentary (Thomas Nelson, 2000), lviii.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 46:8.

<sup>13</sup>Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*.

old) and facing a grave church problem were factors in Paul's words of advice in 4:12.<sup>14</sup>

#### The Occasion and Purpose

It is not known where Paul was when he wrote his first letter to Timothy. It is clear, however, that he was not in prison. The mention of Macedonia and Ephesus (1:3) helps place the letter's recipient as being in Ephesus, with Paul indicating his plans on getting there (3:14, 4:13). This would put into question when he possibly wrote it and the occasion of its writing.

Although it has been suggested that Paul wrote 1 Timothy around the same time as his travels mentioned in the Book of Acts, that supposition would face problems, since the events in Acts would not coincide with the available data mentioned. For instance, in Acts 20:1, Paul's travel would be from Ephesus to Macedonia, with Timothy having already been sent ahead and left in Ephesus (*cf.* Acts 19:22, 1 Timothy 1:3). There are other possibilities from where in Acts this would appear, but such would be more illogical, thus supporting the conclusion that Paul must have been released from prison after what was recorded in Acts 28:30.<sup>15</sup> This will likewise be supported via the early works of Clement mentioning "limits in the West," the Muratorian Canon noting Paul going to Spain, and Eusebius suggesting Paul's second visit to Rome to face death under Nero.<sup>16</sup> With the evidence provided, 1 Timothy can be dated at about 62 A.D.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, it would be for that very purpose Paul wrote the letter, which is to issue to Timothy directives in handling the affairs of the church. Further discussion regarding the problem of that church is discussed in the following exegesis.

#### Exegesis of 1 Timothy 4:6-16

Several books that provided an outline of the whole of 1 Timothy show puzzlement about what header to ascribe to 1 Timothy 4:6-16. Towner ("More instructions to Timothy"),<sup>18</sup> Guthrie ("Methods of

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<sup>14</sup>Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 2.

<sup>15</sup>George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles (New International Greek Testament Commentary)*, ed. I. Howard Marshall and W. Ward Gasque (William. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 15.

<sup>16</sup>Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 46:lv.

<sup>17</sup>Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles (New International Greek Testament Commentary)*, 54.

<sup>18</sup>Towner, "1-2 Timothy & Titus," 36.

dealing with false teaching”),<sup>19</sup> and Liefeld (“Further specifics as to Timothy’s assignment”)<sup>20</sup> are examples that indicate there is no clear identification to this particular part of the letter. Guthrie points out that, as a character of the letter, some areas can be clearly outlined, whereas others are a combination of church advice and church doctrines.<sup>21</sup> Mounce presents a better alternative, arguing that, through the lens of their relationship, “Personal notes to Timothy” makes for a better reading.<sup>22</sup>

Paul pens direct messages to Timothy in the following verses—1:3, 18; 3:14; 4:6-16; 5:21-25; and 6:11-14, 20.<sup>23</sup> Fee, however, finds our pericope as the “thanksgiving” that is missing from the conventional ancient letter writing.<sup>24</sup> The gravity of the error in the church intensifies the need for a personal address of encouragement to Timothy.

#### Part 1 (verses 6-10)

##### *Unconditional encouragement (verse 6)*

The first words *Ταῦτα ὑποτιθέμενος* can also be translated by adding “if”—thus, “if you point out” or “if you instruct.” Yet that might not be the direction toward which Paul would want to encourage Timothy. With regard to the problem being faced by the Ephesian church, there is a requirement for Timothy to uphold the teachings (*Ταῦτα*, referring to the previous commands). It would mean that, by pointing these commands to the brothers, Timothy will have discharged the work of a good servant.<sup>25</sup> The phrase *τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς* indicates that the recipient of the instruction is the whole church. Timothy as a good servant is connected not to the conditions set but on his *ἐντρέφόμενος* (i.e., “being nourished” or “since you are nourished”<sup>26</sup>), glued both to faith and to good teaching. Although *παρηκολούθηκας* would be

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<sup>19</sup>Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Inter-Varsity Press, 1990), 63.

<sup>20</sup>Liefeld, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, 39.

<sup>21</sup>Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles: An Introduction and Commentary*, 18.

<sup>22</sup>Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 46:cxxxv.

<sup>23</sup>Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles (New International Greek Testament Commentary)*, 4.

<sup>24</sup>Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 102.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>Barth Campbell, “Rhetorical Design in 1 Timothy 4,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 154, no. 614 (1997): 197.

conveniently translated regarding Timothy's Christian family, it is rather conformity to the Gospel.<sup>27</sup>

*Maximum training (verses 7-9)*

In Acts 20:30, Paul prophesied that false teachers will be found among the members of the church in Ephesus. This might have come to fulfillment in the heretical problem that Timothy is facing. Paul earlier described these heresies as “myths and endless genealogies . . . [which] promote controversial speculations” (v. 1:4)—heresies that “involved spiritualizing the resurrection and promoting ascetic practices relating to Jewish elements. This ascetic syncretism led to the errorists' gross speculation, false knowledge, and immoral behavior.”<sup>28</sup>

As opposed to the myths characterized by the ascetic practices (4:3), Paul picks a tangible image, the *Γύμναζε*, to encourage Timothy toward *εὐσέβειαν*. It is with care not to put extra meaning to *Γύμναζε* as pertaining to the root of it; literally it means “exercise naked” or “train in athletic discipline;” for it can also be “of mental and spiritual training and discipline control oneself, exercise self-control.”<sup>29</sup> Judging from the context of verses 7-10 and 6:12, it definitely provides for the idea of the athletic discipline applied to the quest for godliness. In addition, verse 8 added *σωματικῇ το γυμνασία* enhancing the action, although it is of little value (*πρὸς ὀλίγον ἐστὶν ὠφέλιμος*). This emphasizes then on the *εὐσέβεια* to provide a benefit to the present as well as the future with a parallelism between “physical exercise” and “godliness,” the former of little benefit, with all benefits coming from the latter.<sup>30</sup>

Verse 9 intensifies the message with the expanded *Πιστὸς ὁ λόγος* formula, which appears three times in 1 Timothy. While a degree of uncertainty exists as to how this formula works, one suggestion is that it serves as a marker of sorts; but even so, it leaves no clue as to how it operates.<sup>31</sup> Mounce took pains in identifying that the literary device

<sup>27</sup>Towner, “1-2 Timothy & Titus,” 105–106.

<sup>28</sup>David A. Mappes, “The Heresy Paul Opposed in 1 Timothy,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 156, no. 624 (1999): 458.0

<sup>29</sup>Timothy Friberg, Barbara Friberg, and Neva F. Miller, “Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament,” *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, Baker's Greek New Testament Library (Grand Rapids Mich.: Baker Books, 2000), 102.

<sup>30</sup>Liefeld, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, 158.

<sup>31</sup>R. Alistair Campbell, “Identifying the Faithful Sayings in the Pastoral Epistles,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 54 (1994): 77.

refers to verse 10.<sup>32</sup> But the whole idea of verses 7-9 (and even 10) is the encouragement of Timothy to *εὐσέβεια*, in which the quest requires toiling in the present, hoping in the future, and focusing on salvation.<sup>33</sup>

*Living God and Soteriology (verse 10)*

Again, the *Εἰς τοῦτο γάρ* refers back to verse 8, pointing to *εὐσέβεια* as the goal<sup>34</sup> that provides for the security of the believer with the present and eschatological life.<sup>35</sup> Then, *ὄνειδιζόμεθα*<sup>36</sup> points back to the athletic imagery in verse 7. With the *ἠλπίζομεν ἐπὶ θεῷ ζῶντι*, the hope is set on what is not just in the future; but because God is a living God, that hope is available.<sup>37</sup> Goodwin recognizes that Pauline element of *θεῷ ζῶντι* yet exercises logical gymnastics, pointing to a non-Pauline authorship, although he does provide an agreeable conclusion that “Paul toiled and strove because he was an apostle of the living God, sent by the living God as the instrument of divine salvation. Paul’s hope in the living God was a hope based on his personal experience of call and commission.”<sup>38</sup>

The soteriological significance of verse 10 needs to be recognized, especially in the atonement debate. Erickson finds the significance of this verse in relation to a universal atonement.<sup>39</sup> In 2:4-6, salvation is clearly stated as available to all but that its context should not be equated with what Paul is saying in verse 10, where he can ascribe a different meaning to the word.<sup>40</sup> Fee interprets this then as “Our hope rests in him, because, *he is the Savior of all men*, that is, he would save (give life to) all people, but his salvation is in fact effective *especially for those who believe* (emphasis in original).”<sup>41</sup>

<sup>32</sup>Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 46:246–248.

<sup>33</sup>Collins, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, 126–127.

<sup>34</sup>Dibelius and Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 68.

<sup>35</sup>Mark J. Goodwin, “The Pauline Background of the Living God as Interpretive Context for 1 Timothy 4.10,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 61 (1996): 69.

<sup>36</sup>For detailed discussion on the textual variant see Appendix 1.

<sup>37</sup>Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles: An Introduction and Commentary*, 108; Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 46:256.

<sup>38</sup>Goodwin, “The Pauline Background of the Living God as Interpretive Context for 1 Timothy 4.10,” 84–85.

<sup>39</sup>Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Baker Academic, 1998), 846.

<sup>40</sup>Steven M. Baugh, “‘Savior of All People’: 1 Tim 4:10 in Context,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 54, no. 2 (1992): 340.

<sup>41</sup>Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 106.

## Part 2 (verses 11-16)

*Drama in two verses (verses 11-12)*

A certain demand is asked of Timothy in *Παράγγελλε ταῦτα καὶ δίδασκε* (repeated again in 6:2b)—a call to command and teach these things to the elders of the church but contrasted with his youthfulness.<sup>42</sup> Liefeld says that “This contrast is not a passing phenomenon but expresses the heavy plot (if one can call it that way in a letter) of gleaming truth opposing dark error with a relatively young warrior leading the change, wielding a sword given to him by the aging apostle.”<sup>43</sup> Youth (*νεότητος*) may be someone about 30 years old<sup>44</sup> (perhaps even 40<sup>45</sup>). But despite the age difference relative to the elders to *καταφρονεῖτω*, the challenge is nonetheless for Timothy to excel in the outward (*λόγῳ* and *ἀναστροφῇ*) and inner life (*ἀγάπῃ, πίστει, ἀγνείᾳ* [Textus Receptus adds *ἐν πνεύματι*, but the shorter reading is best attested by various texts]<sup>46</sup>), which Guthrie believes youth lacks.<sup>47</sup> Perhaps greater weight can be placed on the notion that those same character qualities are lacking in the false teachers. Nevertheless, one with godly character can always be looked up to and emulated.<sup>48</sup> He becomes the *τύπος*, a model for the whole church.

*Focus on the Church (verses 13-14)*

As to the present problem, Timothy is persuaded to continue with the task pending Paul’s arrival, *Ἔως ἔρχομαι*. Verse 13 identifies three aspects of that task—*τῇ ἀναγνώσει, τῇ παρακλήσει, and τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ*, all accompanied by the definite article, which implies that the work is to be done as a unit. In fact, Mounce observes the order—i.e., “Timothy is to immerse himself in the biblical text, to encourage

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<sup>42</sup>Dibelius and Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 70.

<sup>43</sup>Liefeld, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, 165.

<sup>44</sup>Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 107.

<sup>45</sup>Walter Lock, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles (I & II Timothy and Titus)* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1924), 52.

<sup>46</sup>Bruce M. Metzger and United Bible Societies, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, Second Edition a Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies’s Greek New Testament, (4th Rev. Ed.)* (London; New York: United Bible Societies, 1994), 574.

<sup>47</sup>Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles: An Introduction and Commentary*, 109.

<sup>48</sup>Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 107.

people to follow the text, and to teach its doctrine.”<sup>49</sup> He is still to continue the *τύπος* in verse 12.

The institutionalized ordination was not practiced around this time; in fact, the “laying of hands” might be done by colleagues rather than by superiors.<sup>50</sup> It was not viewed as a mystical practice of power being transferred through the hands,<sup>51</sup> but perhaps was likely more akin to the present day Pentecostal “laying on of hands.” The *χαρίσματος* were first received *διὰ προφητείας* accompanied then *μετὰ ἐπιθέσεως* by the body of elders. The crucial element (also in 2 Timothy 1:6-7) is the work of the Holy Spirit, who provides this *χαρίσματος*, not the human actions.<sup>52</sup> Timothy is encouraged further to practice them, putting to memory by not neglecting (*Μὴ ἀμέλει*) the *χαρίσματος* (a gift that is received graciously).<sup>53</sup>

#### *Great motivations (verses 15-16)*

“If you do not combine godliness with proper doctrine in your life, you will give the lie to your own claim to salvation and be a hindrance to others who seek to be saved.”<sup>54</sup> That is putting negatively what Paul stresses in the final two verses of this pericope. Four imperatives appear here that are directed towards Timothy’s own conduct, rather than towards the church or the false teachers. In verse 15, *Ταῦτα μελέτα* can be translated “meditate on” or “give careful thought on” these things. The NIV translates it as “be diligent in these things,” or it can also be translated “practice these things,” which refers back to the athletic imagery.<sup>55</sup> The phrase *ἐν τούτοις ἴσθι* also elicits different translations that try to capture its essence of “immerse yourself in them.”<sup>56</sup> The language Paul uses can be that of a coach prodding his protégé, with *ἵνα* providing a clause of result, i.e., that all will be able to observe of Timothy’s progress—*σου ἡ προκοπή φανερά ἢ ἐν πᾶσιν*, referencing again his being young (verse 12) and the fact that ministers are public figures.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>49</sup>Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 46:260.

<sup>50</sup>Liefeld, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, 167–168.

<sup>51</sup>Dibelius and Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 70–71.

<sup>52</sup>Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 108.

<sup>53</sup>Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles (New International Greek Testament Commentary)*, 208.

<sup>54</sup>Liefeld, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, 168–169.

<sup>55</sup>Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 108.

<sup>56</sup>Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 46:263.

<sup>57</sup>Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles: An Introduction and Commentary*, 110–111.

Verse 16 amplifies the same call in verse 15. Timothy is to *Ἐπεχε* (i.e., “give attention to”<sup>58</sup> or “watch”), with *σεαυτῶ* referring to one’s own self, which is rendered then to “give attention to yourself (or life) and doctrine.” It is true that “the teacher and the teaching are intimately linked.”<sup>59</sup> Adding to that *Ἐπίμενε αὐτοῖς*, which means to “be persistent in them”<sup>60</sup> or “persevere.”<sup>61</sup> One then should “continually be evaluating his life so that both aspects—his life and teaching—might maintain a right course. Sound doctrine is essential for great preaching . . . Such a relentless examining of one’s theology is absolutely necessary if one’s preaching is to be effective.”<sup>62</sup>

The final charge closes with “rapid-fire exhortations,”<sup>63</sup> ending not with the negative motivation (above) but rather one that closes with salvation. What greater motivational tool than a reminder to his personal salvation and that of other people—*σεαυτὸν σώσεις καὶ τοῦς ἀκούοντάς σου*.

### Toward Encouragement

There are possible two levels of communication in the 1 Timothy 4:6-16 passage—one is from verses 6-11, the other from verses 12-16. The first level starts and ends with encouraging Timothy to fully teach the things that were given to him, to “point these things out” (v. 6) and to “command and teach these things” (v. 11), highlighting the teachings he has to follow, not fables but spiritual disciplines, appealing to the physical training. The second level, which is connected to the first, provides a detailed account of what to train for. Verse 12 deals with having the confidence and setting a high example; verse 13 outlines the pastoral duty; verse 14 is a reminder to exercise spiritual gifting; verse 15 encourages having the attitude of a learner; and verse 16 presents a recap, such that salvation is achieved for Timothy and the church.

As to the problem that Paul has dealt with head on in 1:3, the purpose of 4:6-16 is to encourage Timothy to focus not just on correct doctrine but also on correct life. The problem coming from within prompts Paul to encourage Timothy to build up strong character so that he sets himself apart from those who are “hypocritical liars” (4:2). Paul

<sup>58</sup>Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles (New International Greek Testament Commentary)*, 210.

<sup>59</sup>Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles: An Introduction and Commentary*, 111.

<sup>60</sup>Mounce, *Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 46, Pastoral Epistles*, 265.

<sup>61</sup>Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles (New International Greek Testament Commentary)*, 210.

<sup>62</sup>S. J. Lawson, “The Passion of Biblical Preaching: An Expository Study of 1 Timothy 4:13-16,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 159, no. 633 (2002): 93.

<sup>63</sup>Collins, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, 132.

uses the athletic metaphor (4:8) and keeps referring to it, implying that the journey will not be easy. One thing that can be deduced is that it is a shared (i.e., private) image (*σωματική γυμνασία* = “bodily training”), which both easily understand, not to mention a shared Ephesian culture, much like men today can talk about basketball and be fully aware of the shared imagery it can provide. In essence, Paul’s encouragement is to exercise in spiritual training with same amount of energy and discipline as in physical training. His words ring out to Timothy like an athletic coach.

The affinity between Paul and Timothy is better understood in this passage. As is common to the letters of Paul that address certain issues of the church, in this letter he provides Timothy with guidelines in his leadership to the issues that were at hand. Taken from the distance, this passage provides a breath of fresh air to those issues (or perhaps the whole of the issues of the New Testament church) as Paul brings into the conversation that affinity (i.e., strong Christian bond) that both have in their service for Christ and His church.

### **Applying 1 Timothy 4:6-16 to Today**

It is to this particular segment of the whole Scripture that many young people have found courage to face their calling in life. At camps, youth meetings, Bible studies, etc., the Joshua Generation has received a mandate to be strong. “Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith, and in purity” (v. 12). Words that outlined the life that young people ought to live provide the gist of the whole Christian life.

The call in the Philippines is not just for the Timothys, but also for the Pauls—those leaders who will assume the responsibility of helping develop lives at deeper levels. We need Filipino pastors who are committed in the ministry to raising up and entrusting Timothys in the ministry. We need:

- I. Pauls who are trainers of healthy Timothys unconditionally.  
(v. 6)
- II. Pauls who are coaches of trained Timothys to godliness  
(vv. 7-9)
- III. Pauls who are promoters of the godly life to the Timothys  
(v. 10)

- IV. Pauls who are inspirers of young Timothy to be models (vv. 11-12)
- V. Pauls who are believers in the gifts of the Timothy for ministry (vv. 13-14)
- VI. Pauls who are motivators of Timothy toward evangelism (vv. 15-16)

Unfortunately, many of the mentors in the Philippines travel to America and other “greener pastures,” leaving the Timothy all alone and afraid to make calls in the churches. With the technology available, we can still help redeem and make the Pauls to rise up and write, chat, or visit to encourage the new generation of Philippine church workers, ensuring that the churches will not become hostile to the Gospel they have received.

The call of 1 Timothy 4:6-16 is for Timothy to rise to the occasion and to enrich his life so that, instead of leaders who are in error taking their positions, he provides a better example. Paul’s reminders to him as a good and godly minister makes this passage stand out.

### **Conclusion**

The reading of 1 Timothy 4:6-16 is a direct effort of Paul to encourage Timothy to serve in faithfulness with his doctrine and the life that he lives. Paul’s careful use of imagery both challenges and points to mutual affinity. We meet in this passage a Paul who knows a “true son in the faith,” a Paul who is a coach that motivates, and a Paul who believes in and challenges a Timothy with the huge task that lies ahead.

## Appendix 1

Problem Text: 1 Timothy 4:10

εις τουτο γαρ κοπιωμεν και αγωνιζομεθα οτι ηλπικαμεν επι θεω ζωντι ος εστιν σωτηρ παντων ανθρωπων μαλιστα πιστων

Particular Problem:

Reading: αγωνιζομεθα

Variant: ονειδιζομεθα

UBS indicated that the textual problem is a contentious one. Variant text is supported by most minuscules, on the other hand, the text used has more readings and have an older text being a\*. The scholars chose αγωνιζομεθα, although only with hesitation, and reasoning that it has slightly better bearing and provides a better translation for the context.

*Αγωνιζομεθα* means “we contest” in contrast to *ονειδιζομεθα* means “we suffer” I think harder reading would be former.

In this consideration, I would go with *αγωνιζομεθα*.

(1) literally, of public games *engage in a contest, contend for a prize* (1C 9.25); figuratively, of any heroic effort *strive earnestly, make every effort, try very hard* (CO 1.29); (2) of fighting with weapons, literally *fight, struggle* (JN 18.36); figuratively, of great nonphysical effort and struggle *strive earnestly, do one’s very best* (CO 4.12)<sup>64</sup>

Translation of the text:

For in this we labor and we contest as we hoped on the Living God who is the Savior of all men, especially of trustful men.

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<sup>64</sup>Friberg, Friberg, and Miller, “Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament,” 34.

**Appendix 2**  
**Translation**  
**1 Timothy 4:6-16**

- 6 In pointing these things to the church you will be a good servant of Jesus Christ, since you are nourished to the words of faith and the good teaching which you have followed.
- 7 Moreover, have nothing to do with the profane and old wives myths, but you exercise godliness.
- 8 For exercise is of little benefit, but godliness is very beneficial in the present and the future [life].
- 9 These words are true and worthy to be accepted.
- 10 For in this we labor and we strive to do our best having our hope in the Living God, the Savior of all people, especially those who are faithful.
- 11 Command and teach these things!
- 12 Let no one look down on your being young, but be a model of the faithful in words, behavior in love, in faith, and in purity.
- 13 Until I come, pay attention to the reading [of the Scriptures], the encouragement [of the church], and to teaching [of the doctrine].
- 14 Do not neglect the gift that is in you which was given to you through prophecies and laying on of hands by the elders.
- 15 Meditate on these, be fully immersed [in them], in order that your progress might be evident to all.
- 16 Persevere fully yourself in the teaching, remain in them, because in doing this you will save both yourself and the ones hearing you.

- 6 Ταῦτα ὑποτιθέμενος τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς καλὸς ἔση διάκονος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ, ἐντρέφόμενος τοῖς λόγοις τῆς πίστεως καὶ τῆς καλῆς διδασκαλίας ἧ̄ παρηκολούθηκας·
- 7 τοὺς δὲ βεβήλους καὶ γραώδεις μύθους παραιτοῦ. Γύμναζε δὲ σεαυτὸν πρὸς εὐσέβειαν·
- 8 ἡ γὰρ σωματικὴ γυμνασία πρὸς ὀλίγον ἐστὶν ὠφέλιμος, ἡ δὲ εὐσέβεια πρὸς πάντα ὠφέλιμός ἐστιν ἐπαγγελίαν ἔχουσα ζωῆς τῆς νῦν καὶ τῆς μελλούσης.
- 9 πιστὸς ὁ λόγος καὶ πάσης ἀποδοχῆς ἄξιος·
- 10 εἰς τοῦτο γὰρ κοπιῶμεν καὶ ἀγωνιζόμεθα, ὅτι ἠλπίκαμεν ἐπὶ θεῷ ζῶντι, ὃς ἐστὶν σωτὴρ πάντων ἀνθρώπων μάλιστα πιστῶν.
- 11 Παράγγελλε ταῦτα καὶ δίδασκε.
- 12 Μηδεὶς σου τῆς νεότητος καταφρονεῖτω, ἀλλὰ τύπος γίνου τῶν πιστῶν ἐν λόγῳ, ἐν ἀναστροφῇ, ἐν ἀγάπῃ, ἐν πίστει, ἐν ἀγνεΐᾳ.
- 13 ἕως ἔρχομαι πρόσεχε τῇ ἀναγνώσει, τῇ παρακλήσει, τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ.
- 14 μὴ ἀμέλει τοῦ ἐν σοὶ χαρίσματος, ὃ ἐδόθη σοὶ διὰ προφητείας μετὰ ἐπιθέσεως τῶν χειρῶν τοῦ πρεσβυτερίου.
- 15 ταῦτα μελέτα, ἐν τούτοις ἴσθι, ἵνα σου ἡ προκοπὴ φανερὰ ᾖ πᾶσιν.
- 16 ἔπεχε σεαυτῷ καὶ τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ, ἐπίμενε αὐτοῖς· τοῦτο γὰρ ποιῶν καὶ σεαυτὸν σώσεις καὶ τοὺς ἀκούοντάς σου.

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IMPACTING THE FUTURE OF THE ASIA-PACIFIC CHURCH

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF JAMES' "WORKS" AND PAUL'S  
"FAITH" FOR EVANGELICAL AND NON-EVANGELICAL  
CHRISTIANS IN MYANMAR: AN EXEGETICAL STUDY OF  
JAMES 2:14-26 AND ROMANS 3:21-28

By Khaw Thang

The purpose of this research is to find out how works and faith relate in the writings of James and Paul. Special attention will be given to the original texts, and an exegetical work, in order to better understand the purposes of James and Paul for Christians in the nation of Myanmar today.

**Introduction**

Roman Catholic missions began in Myanmar (formerly called Burma) in 1554, with Protestant Christianity coming in 1807. According to Myanmar church history, Christians began to divide into two groups following a revival that occurred in the 1970s. Some, mainly from the mainline churches, began to focus on social ministry at the expense of meeting the spiritual needs of the people, based on James 2:26 (NIV): ". . . so faith without works is dead." As a result, non-believers have little opportunity to hear the gospel from those churches. On the other hand, the evangelical Christians emphasized being saved by faith alone, based on Romans 3:28 (NIV): "For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law," and are less concerned about "doing" Christian charity. This lack of social concern tends to result in non-believers being uninterested in evangelical Christianity. According to the teaching of the Scripture, these two "schools of thought" need to be addressed. Only then will Myanmar Christians be instrumental in advancing the gospel.

The research presented here attempts to address the issue of how to synthesize these widely divergent views. Thus, the path we have taken is to do an exegetical study of both James 2:14-26 and Romans 3:21-

28. The goal is to provide a proper understanding of how faith and works relate, which former Myanmar Christian leaders failed to teach succeeding generations. To realize that goal, our investigation needs to dig out from the original texts what Paul and James actually meant when writing to their original readers and then the implication of those texts for us today. For the sake of space, what is presented here will be limited to the contemporary issues among the evangelical and non-evangelical Christians in Myanmar.

### **Definitions of Evangelical and Non-Evangelical**

The term “Evangelical” has been defined in various ways. In the Myanmar context, however, it means those Christians who believe “in the infallibility and the authority of Scripture, the virgin birth of Christ, the atoning death of Christ for the salvation of human kind, his bodily resurrection, his second coming and personal salvation by faith through grace”.<sup>1</sup> For evangelicals, evangelism is the primary task and social ministry is secondary. Evangelical Christians have no attachment to the ecumenical movement in Myanmar.<sup>2</sup>

The term “non-Evangelical” in the Myanmar context means those Christians who do not share the same statement of faith with the evangelical Christians. Rather, they embrace the ecumenical movement, which is “so dominated by the theologically liberal denominations,”<sup>3</sup> the adherents are generally nominal Christians.<sup>4</sup> Khai wrote, “The ecumenical movement in Myanmar, represented by the Myanmar Council of Churches (known also as the Conciliar Movement), includes nearly all the mainline churches. They emphasize the priority of the cultural mandate over that of the evangelistic mandate.”<sup>5</sup> In other words, they advocate a social ministry rather than a spiritual one.

In summary, strictly speaking, those Christians who experience the new birth (John 3:5) are evangelicals, whereas anyone who has never experienced the new birth, yet consider themselves Christians, are considered non-evangelical. In this paper, I will use the terms “non-

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<sup>1</sup>Chin Khua Khai, “Dynamics of Renewal: A Historical Movement Among the Zomi in Myanmar” (Ph.D. diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 1999), 24.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Kawl Thang Vuta, “A Brief History of the Planting and Growth of the Church in Burma” (D.Miss. diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 1983), 264.

<sup>4</sup>Khai, “Dynamics of Renewal: A Historical Movement Among the Zomi in Myanmar,” 25.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 24-25.

evangelical” and “nominal” interchangeably because they are synonyms in the Myanmar context.

### **Background of Myanmar Christianity**

Myanmar is predominantly an animistic country.<sup>6</sup> It is generally assumed that Buddhism took root there in the first century; however, not until the 11<sup>th</sup> century, during the reign of King Anaw-Rahta, did Buddhism become well known.<sup>7</sup> Buddhism was made the state religion in 1961.<sup>8</sup> Christianity entered the country through the efforts of several missionaries, notably a French Franciscan and a Roman Catholic from Portugal, in 1554<sup>9</sup>. Later James Charter, Richard Mardon, and Felix Carey (eldest son of William Carey), Baptists from England in 1807, began mission work in Rangoon, now Yangon and the former capital of Myanmar.<sup>10</sup>

Six years later, the first American Baptist missionaries to Burma, Adoniram and Ann Judson, arrived in Rangoon.<sup>11</sup> Their labor among the Myanmar people was exceptional, the first Burmese Bible being one of the products of their assiduous work.<sup>12</sup> The Myanmar Institute of Theology (formerly Myanmar Divinity School), founded in 1927, became the most prestigious Baptist seminary from which former and present Christian leaders received their theological and ministerial training.

Pentecostalism came to existence in Myanmar long after the mainline churches were well established. The Lisu people, who had emigrated to Myanmar's Kachin State from southwest China, were the first recipients of Pentecostalism. In 1930, Clifford and Lavada Morrison, Assemblies of God missionaries to southwest China, had

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<sup>6</sup>Nat worship was already in existence before Theravada Buddhism became the religion of Myanmar. See, Maung Htin Aung, *Folk Elements in Burmese Buddhism* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1962), 1-2.

<sup>7</sup>Hla Pe, *Burma: Literature, Historiography, Scholarship, Language, Life, and Buddhism* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985), 189.

<sup>8</sup>“Burma,” in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. II (1967): 901.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Chin Khua Khai, *The Cross Among the Pagodas: A History of the Assemblies of God in Myanmar* (Baguio City: APTS Press, 2003), 40.

<sup>11</sup>Maung Shwe Wa, *Burma Baptist Chronicle* (Rangoon: Burma Baptist Convention, 1963), 1-4.

<sup>12</sup>Vuta wrote in his dissertation that Adoniram Judson dedicated his Burmese Bible to God in January 31, 1834, and it was printed in December 29, 1835 (1983).

ministered to the Lisu in China before they emigrated.<sup>13</sup> The next year, Yong Paul and Esther, a married couple from southwest China, were sent to the Lisu in Kachin State, making that couple the first Assemblies of God missionaries to Myanmar.<sup>14</sup> In November 1938, the Lisu in Myanmar began to experience the baptism of the Holy Spirit, one of whom spoke in English, which he had never learned.<sup>15</sup> According to Saw Tint San Oo, in 1940, the Morrisons and Mrs. Jean Wagner first visited the Assemblies of God churches in Kachin State, ministering to more than 500 members in their first service.<sup>16</sup>

A study of Myanmar church history shows that Christianity first entered among the minority tribal people groups.<sup>17</sup> Today, the need to evangelize the typical Bamas<sup>18</sup> is enormous. Although a number of mission organizations worked in Myanmar from the 1800s to the 1900s, the Baptist mission was most successful.<sup>19</sup> As a result, “Today, the Baptists are the largest single denomination in the country and among the Zomis as well,”<sup>20</sup> with Baptist missions and churches found almost everywhere in the country. Three-fourths of Myanmar Christians identify themselves as Baptists, according to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Factbook.<sup>21</sup> The denomination celebrated its bicentennial in 2013.

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<sup>13</sup>Adele Flower Dalton, “How Pentecost Reached Burma,” *Mountain Movers* (September 1980): 10.

<sup>14</sup>Saw Tint Sann Oo, “The Indispensable Mission: The History of the Assemblies of God Theological Education in Myanmar” (Th.M. thesis, Asia Pacific Theological Seminary, 2003), 20. See note, 48.

<sup>15</sup>Dalton, 10.

<sup>16</sup>Oo, 22.

<sup>17</sup>Most Christians are from the minority ethnic groups such as the Chin, Karen, Lisu, Kachin, and Lahu. See “Christianity in Burma,” [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity\\_in\\_Burma](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity_in_Burma) (accessed August 6, 2014).

<sup>18</sup>The Bamas are the majority people group with strong Buddhist adherence. There is a saying that “to be a Myanmar citizen is to be a Buddhist.” They are considered the hosts of the land of Myanmar where ethnic people groups are considered guests. The Bamas are in control of the systems of the government of Myanmar.

<sup>19</sup>Lunminthang Haokip recorded that out of the 4% Christians, 3% of the total population of the Union of Myanmar are said to be Baptist. See “Christianity in Myanmar,” [http://e-pao.net/epSubPageExtractor.asp?src=leisure.Essays.Lunminthang\\_Haokip.Christianity\\_In\\_Myanmar](http://e-pao.net/epSubPageExtractor.asp?src=leisure.Essays.Lunminthang_Haokip.Christianity_In_Myanmar) (accessed August 5, 2014).

<sup>20</sup>Khay, “Dynamics of Renewal: A Historical Movement Among the Zomi in Myanmar,” 129. The Zomis are one of the ethnic people groups who reside in northern part of Chin State. In general, they are known as Chins because of their location in Chin State.

<sup>21</sup>The 4% of the population of Myanmar is Christian (Baptist 3%, Roman Catholic 1%). See “Christianity in Burma.”

## **The Theological Debate between Faith and Works in Myanmar**

The majority of Christian leaders in Myanmar are graduates of the liberal Baptist seminary.<sup>22</sup> Because of the influence of the seminary's liberal theology, these leaders (including Hau Lian Kham<sup>23</sup>) became liberal. As a result, "By the 1960s, mainline churches were more inclined to theological liberalism than toward evangelistic priorities."<sup>24</sup> Concerning liberalism, Saw Gler Taw wrote, "And because of liberalism in the theological schools in Burma today, their graduates who serve in various churches seem to lose the vision for the mission of the church, and their congregations gradually become nominal, losing their zeal and vitality in outreach."<sup>25</sup> In this case, it is obvious that these Christians are spiritually dead, having no experience of the new birth (John 3:5). In other words, they are nominal, or non-evangelical, Christians.

The nominal Christians believe in the teaching of "salvation by faith plus good works."<sup>26</sup> The Burma Council of Churches<sup>27</sup> "does not encourage the evangelical efforts of evangelical churches and parachurch ministries" (Vuta 1983), but rather "Professional ministries encouraged social works; but all the while, the church declined and became spiritually lukewarm" (Khai 1999). For these reasons, the church lost the biblical directive of preaching the gospel. Therefore, the nominal Christians, both ministers and lay persons, need a renewal of salvation knowledge.

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<sup>22</sup>This seminary is the largest Baptist seminary where the former and present Christian leaders received their theological training. It has become a liberal Baptist seminary since 1960. See Chin Khua Khai, "Legacy of Hau Lian Kham (1944-1995): A Revivalist, Equipper, and Transformer for the Zomi-Chin People of Myanmar," *Asian Journal Pentecostal Studies* 4(1) (2001):102. See note 7.

<sup>23</sup>Khai wrote that Hau Lian Kham earned his Bachelor of Religious Education from the liberal Baptist seminary. Fortunately, Kham abandoned his liberal bent when he came to faith in the Lord and accepted the whole of Scripture as the word of God sometime in 1970. Later, he became the great preacher of the gospel (2001).

<sup>24</sup>Khai, *The Cross Among the Pagodas: A History of the Assemblies of God in Myanmar*, 192.

<sup>25</sup>Saw Gler Taw, "A Renewal Strategy of the Karen Baptist Church of Myanmar (Burma) for Mission" (Th.M. thesis, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1992), 127. See note

<sup>26</sup>Khai, "Dynamics of Renewal: A Historical Movement Among the Zomi in Myanmar," 318. The term 'nominal teaching' in Myanmar context is a teaching that "in order to be saved, one must believe Christ, do good works, take water baptism, and go to church" (Khai 1999).

<sup>27</sup>The Burma Council of Churches with its adherent of nominal Christians is more concerned about social gospel than meeting the spiritual needs of the people.

In the midst of such spiritual laxity, God raised up evangelists for a renewal movement. In the early 1960s, Lal Than Liana, founder of the Evangelical Free Church in Burma, began preaching the gospel with a born-again message, but only a few responded to that message.<sup>28</sup> According to Khai, in the 1970s, Hau Lian Kham, who was senior pastor of Cope Memorial Baptist Church in Tedim (Chin State), began preaching a renewal or salvation message. The Baptist church, being spiritually dead,<sup>29</sup> rejected his new found faith and dismissed him not only from his position, but also from Baptist membership. Those who accepted his renewal message joined him to start the Evangelical Baptist Convention for the advancement of God's kingdom.<sup>30</sup> Despite the opposition, many people got saved through his preaching. Consequently, a number of them became evangelists who are now serving the Lord effectively. Through these efforts, more members were added to the evangelical faith.

The renewal message of Hau Lian Kham marked the dawning of the evangelical movement<sup>31</sup> among the Zomis—a movement that later spread over the whole country. Since the Zomis were the first recipients of the evangelical faith, they now form the highest percentage of Christians among all the ethnic groups,<sup>32</sup> even though they are a minority in population.<sup>33</sup> Since many Zomis are involved in evangelical Christian organizations and missionary outreaches

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<sup>28</sup>Khuang Nawni, *The History and Growth of the Churches in Chin State* (Th.M. thesis, Fuller Theological Seminary, June 1990), 69.

<sup>29</sup>The Christian leaders in those days saw no need to engage in evangelistic outreach. Vuta wrote: "The Baptist missionaries and national leaders did not understand the charismatic characteristics of the new converts during the revival years (1946-50)." See Vuta, 210; Khai also recorded: "There existed among the Zomi Christians a moral laxity and a lack of salvation knowledge." See "Legacy of Hau Lian Kham (1944-1995): A Revivalist, Equipper, and Transformer for the Zomi-Chin People of Myanmar," 100.

<sup>30</sup>Khai, "Legacy of Hau Lian Kham (1944-1995): A Revivalist, Equipper, and Transformer for the Zomi-Chin People of Myanmar," 101.

<sup>31</sup>Khai wrote, "The evangelical stream emerged as a return to biblical faith when the conciliar stream embraced liberal theology in the 1950s." See "Dynamics of Renewal: A Historical Movement Among the Zomi," 314.

<sup>32</sup>According to IRIN: Asia Myanmar, Myanmar is a majority Buddhist country but more than 80 percent of the people in Chin State are Christian. See "Myanmar Chin State," <http://www.irinnews.org/report/87352/myanmar-chin-state-a-mountain-of-trouble> (accessed September 8, 2014). God uses the Chins (Zomis) in the present generation for the advancement of His kingdom; as a result there is a Zomi missionary in every part of the country.

<sup>33</sup>Ethnic Composition in Burma (rough estimate) as of August 6, 2014, is as follows: Bamar 68%, Shan 9%, Karen, 7%, Rakhine 3.5%, Chinese 2.5%, Mon 2%, Kachin 1.5%, Indians 1.3%, Chin 1%, Kayah 0.8%, Other groups 5%. See "Burma," <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Burma#Religion> (accessed August 6, 2014).

throughout Myanmar, it is obvious that God is using them in a great way in this present generation. They are, indeed, instrumental in preaching the evangelical message throughout the country

From the above discussion, it is now obvious that there are two kinds of Christians in Myanmar—the evangelicals and non-evangelicals. The evangelical Christians are involved in doing ministries in which the evangelistic gospel is of primary concern, whereas the non-evangelicals focus on the social gospel (Khai 1999).

Today, biblical teaching about salvation is an urgent need in order for people to get salvation knowledge, which has long been neglected by many church leaders both in the past and in the present. The non-evangelical leaders teach a mixture of faith and works, quoting “faith without deeds is dead” (James 2:26) as a proof text for their teaching and advocate a social gospel without including a salvation message. They build hospitals, orphanages, and schools as part of their community development work, and they teach people to do good works without meeting their spiritual needs. They think that their good works merit the favor of God for salvation, and they consider faith alone as passive, often criticizing others for neglecting social issues. On the mission field, evangelists are often confronted by non-evangelical Christian leaders who accuse them of “stealing their sheep.”<sup>34</sup> Thus, non-evangelical teaching has indeed become a roadblock for the advancement of God’s kingdom in Myanmar.

On the other hand, evangelicals are focused on justification by faith alone and concerned about the spiritual needs of people. They do evangelistic crusades, church planting, teaching seminars, and missionary works. While these are indeed crucial, evangelicals should not neglect “good works” or forget the social benefits of those works. That is why the research presented here is essential for understanding the relationship between faith and works.

### **An Exegetical Study of James 2:14-26**

Relative to this issue of faith and works, an exegetical study of this passage is of great importance because, “Some have imagined that there is a quarrel between James and Paul on this fundamental matter.”<sup>35</sup> In this respect, “The real problem began when Luther

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<sup>34</sup>Nawni, 87.

<sup>35</sup>Guy H. King, *A Belief that Behaves: An Exegetical Study of the Epistle of James* (Fort Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade, 1941), 53.

concluded that the difference in this case was a contradiction.”<sup>36</sup> Martin Luther called the Epistle of James an “epistle of straw” or a “right strawy epistle.”<sup>37</sup> As a result, “The close association of “faith” and “works” has led interpreters going back to Luther in the 6<sup>th</sup> century to view James as in direct conflict with Paul.”<sup>38</sup> James wrote his letter to encourage and exhort those Jews who had fled from persecution and lived outside Palestine.<sup>39</sup> He admonishes them to be strong in the faith; and at the same time, he exhorts the rich people not to neglect their fellow poor Christians. Particularly in this passage, James deals with the static faith of Christians who fail to do Christian charity. He strongly encourages his readers “to be doers of the Word.”<sup>40</sup>

The issue of faith and works is a big theological problem among the Christians in Myanmar. To make matters worse, there is a Buddhist teaching outwardly similar to James’ words, “A person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone” (2:24 NIV). Buddhism is a do-it-yourself religion, which teaches that a person must earn his own salvation by meritorious deeds. Since Myanmar is a Buddhist country, this teaching has had a strong influence. As a result, the nominal Christians mistakenly understood the idea of works as a means of earning salvation. Therefore, an exegetical study of James 2:14-26 should help Myanmar Christians to better understand how James relates works with justification.

### James’ Theology of Works

As Martin discovered, 2:14-26 is James’ judgment on the danger of a self-deceiving attitude.<sup>41</sup> In this regard, Douglas J. Moo asserts, “James is combating some false teachers who were setting forth an

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<sup>36</sup>Luke Timothy Johnson, “*The Letter of James*,” *In the New Interpreter’s Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), 197; T. Carson states, “This is the celebrated passage which was a stumbling-block to Martin Luther. He considered it impossible to reconcile Paul and James.” See “James,” in *The International Bible Commentary*, eds. F.F. Bruce, H. L. Ellison and G. C. D. Howley (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), 1541.

<sup>37</sup>Sharyn Dowd, “Faith That Works: James 2:14-26,” *Review and Expositor* 97 (2000):195.

<sup>38</sup>Ralph P. Martin, “*James: Word Biblical Commentary*,” vol. 48 (Waco, TX: Word Books, Publisher, 1988), 80.

<sup>39</sup>Douglas Moo, “James” in *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1989), 1151.

<sup>40</sup>Ronald A. Ward, “James” in *The New Bible Commentary*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970), 1222.

<sup>41</sup>Martin, 79.

incorrect view of faith.”<sup>42</sup> In this passage, the word *πιστις* “faith” occurs only once (v.14), whereas *ἡ πίστις* occurs eight times. The *πιστις* without the article *ἡ* introduces a new idea.<sup>43</sup>

In relation to the word *πιστις*, New Testament scholars like Peter H. Davids, Martin, and others<sup>44</sup> agree that, in verse 14, James raises a rhetorical question for which he expected a negative answer. Concerning “rhetorical question,” Donald W. Burdick and Simon J. Kistemaker are in agreement that there are two ironic questions.<sup>45</sup> With regard to the first, Kurt A. Richardson observes, “*οὐ φελοῦς* ‘advantage’ or ‘use’ is employed in a startling way in the text.”<sup>46</sup> Davids also agrees that a negative answer is expected, adding, “The second rhetorical question (‘Can such faith save him?’) begins with the Greek *μη*, which introduces questions expecting a negative answer.”<sup>47</sup> In favor of Davids, Joseph B. Mayor writes, “*μη* expects a negative answer, and *ἡ πίστις* is not faith absolutely, but ‘such faith.’”<sup>48</sup> Therefore, Chris A. Vlachos rightly argues, “James’s illustration in

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<sup>42</sup>Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter of James: The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985), 99; Martin also states, “James appears to be combating some form of misunderstanding that has developed in the church.” See Martin, 79.

<sup>43</sup>James Hardy Ropes, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle Of St. James* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991), 203.

<sup>44</sup>Peter H. Davids wrote, “The question is purely rhetorical, for the form of the question implies James’s expectation of a negative answer. No good at all!” See *James: A Good News Commentary* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1983), 37; Martin observed that “V. 14 is composed of two questions, both rhetorical and both constructed to expect answers of no (*μη*). He goes on to say that “The phrase *τί τὸ οφελος* signals the beginning of an argumentative style that resembles a diatribe. James appears to be combating some form of misunderstanding that has developed in the church. See Martin, 79.

<sup>45</sup>Donald W. Burdick wrote, “James first states his proposition interrogatively. The two questions posed in this verse (2:14) actually declare that faith not accompanied by good deeds is of no saving value whatsoever.” See “James,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 12, edited by Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 182; Simon J. Kistemaker wrote, “James began by posing two direct questions which the reader can answer only with a negative reply.” See *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Epistle of James and the Epistles of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1986), 87.

<sup>46</sup>Kurt A. Richardson, *James: The New American Commentary*, vol. 36 (U.S.A.: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1997), 128.

<sup>47</sup>“*τί τὸ οφελος* is a regularly occurring phrase in such a dialogical style always expecting a negative answer.” See Peter H. Davids, *The Epistle of James: A Commentary the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), 120.

<sup>48</sup>Joseph B. Mayor, *The Epistle of St. James: The Greek Text with Introduction Notes and Comments*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1978), 93.

vv.15-16 answers the question raised in v.14: failure to provide for an obvious need calls into question the faith of the one who fails to act (cf. Matthew 25:42-43).<sup>49</sup>

In this respect, *πιστις* and *ἡ πιστις* are clearly defined by Martin, who argues, “The faith of v. 14a is useless for salvation, and the *πιστις* of 14b refers to the ‘workless’ faith of v. 14a.”<sup>50</sup> He adds, “[There is] No salvation for anyone who has the type of faith described in vv. 15-16a.”<sup>51</sup> With that in mind, we can see that *πιστις* without the article that introduces a new idea (Rope 1991:203) is fully understood; for *ἡ πιστις* “such faith” is a dead faith as opposed to authentic or living faith, like that of Abraham and Rahab, in this context. Thus, the expected negative answer to the second question (“Can such dead faith save?”) is fully met; and the new idea is to be understood in light of “such dead faith cannot save.”

According to Martin, “*λεγειν* and *εχειν* indicate a repeated claim: ‘if a person keeps on saying he or she has faith but keeps on having no works.’”<sup>52</sup> With that in mind, the word *λεγειν*<sup>53</sup> is crucial to our understanding of the preceding *πιστις*, which a man claims to have without actually possessing it. Thus, he is never motivated to act by what he claims to have. His “claimed faith” never motivates him to take action to do good works. Thus, James is right in saying, “Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead” (2:17). Such claimed faith cannot be accompanied by action nor can it produce good works, for it is fraudulent and barren.

Concerning faith, King observed that, for James, there are two kinds of belief—head-belief and heart-belief.<sup>54</sup> When James deals with the issue “not by faith only” (2:24), he means the faith of just a head-belief,<sup>55</sup> which is a static faith.<sup>56</sup> Accordingly, I agree with J. A. Motyer that, in verses 19 and 23, we learn about both “false faith” by which the devils produce fear, and the “genuine faith of Abraham,” which made

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<sup>49</sup>Chris A. Vlachos, *James: Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishing Group, 2013), 89.

<sup>50</sup>Martin, 81. Martin adds the *πιστις* with article ‘such faith’ (NIV) indicates the previous *πιστις*.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., 80.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid.

<sup>53</sup>Vlachos, 86. Vlachos notes that James’s use of *λεγειν* of *λέγω* rather than in the first half of the protasis is likely significant; at issue are empty boasts.

<sup>54</sup>King, 50.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., 53.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., 52.

him the friend of God.<sup>57</sup> Now in this context, we can see that the second question, which expects a negative answer, is fully met because a workless faith is static and dead; as a result, such head-belief cannot confer salvation. Head-belief is described as "faith of the devil" (Mark 1:24; 26-27), and such does not motivate the devils to love and worship God. Satan did not commit to worship God (Matthew 4:10-11). Similarly, if a person professes that he has faith but has no potential of doing good works, his faith is only a head-belief. Thus, the word ὀφελός used in a surprising way, fits the idea of dead faith. "How can such dead faith profit a man and save him?" (2:14).

Now we need to examine what saving faith is. Theodore H. Epp states, "James maintained that, if you have true faith, you will have some works as the outward evidence of the inward salvation."<sup>58</sup> In this regard, Richardson argues that James does not mean the deeds of faith are effective for salvation, but rather, "The deeds of faith demonstrate the validity of the claim to be a believer."<sup>59</sup> Thus, Burdick rightly contends, "Faith is an attitude of the inner man, and it can only be seen as it influences the actions of the one who possesses it."<sup>60</sup> This is evidently seen in Abraham's faith, as PHEME PERKINS theologically argues, "The sacrifice of Isaac constitutes the work that demonstrates the faith of Abraham (Hebrews 11:17)."<sup>61</sup> In favor of Perkins, Moo states, "Faith without works does not justify (2:24)."<sup>62</sup> However, Moo's argument may lead to misunderstanding of works as necessary for justification. That is why David makes it clear that, "Works are not 'an added extra' to faith, but are an essential expression of it."<sup>63</sup> Thus, good works is the fruit of living faith.

It is clear, then, that saving faith is the heart-belief that produces good works in its widest sense. By the saving or true faith, a genuine Christian possesses the potential of doing good works. Again, I agree with what Motyer says, "It [genuine faith] is the root from which good works (James. 2:22; Titus 3:8) grow."<sup>64</sup> Thus, genuine faith produces

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<sup>57</sup>J. A. Motyer, *The Message of James: The Test of Faith* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1997), 112.

<sup>58</sup>Theodore H. Epp, *James: The Epistles of Applied Christianity* (Lincoln, Nebraska: Back to the Bible, 1980), 135-6.

<sup>59</sup>Richardson, 129.

<sup>60</sup>Burdick, 183.

<sup>61</sup>PHEME PERKINS, "James," *Interpretation: First and Second Peter, James, and Jude* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1995), 113.

<sup>62</sup>Moo, *The Letter of James: The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, 108.

<sup>63</sup>Peter H. Davids, *The Epistle of James: A Commentary the Greek Text*, 121.

<sup>64</sup>Motyer, 106.

love for God and a heart to live in integrity. In other words, a man of integrity is not lacking good works. This can be seen in a person whose life has been transformed. For example, when a wicked person truly accepts Jesus Christ as his Savior and Lord, by the power of the Holy Spirit he begins to live a life of worshiping God and not doing wicked things. Genuine faith intrinsically motivates believers to live not only to please God but also to be a blessing to others.

#### Observation

James T. Draper observed that James wrote his letter to the scattered church, which went through trials and testings.<sup>65</sup> The church then was composed of Jewish Christians who had been ousted from Palestine into the Gentile world.<sup>66</sup> Draper argues that James strongly defines works as doing Christian charity because there were poor people (2:16-17) in the Christian community. Thus, in his letter, James dealt with the problem of neglecting the poor.<sup>67</sup> Robertson contends that, “The antithesis in James is not, in reality, between faith and works but between living faith and dead faith.”<sup>68</sup> Accordingly, Ropes agrees that, as with Paul, James deals with the problem as being between a living faith and a dead faith (1991:207). Thus, James’ argument is not the “works of the law,” but explicitly the works of faith (Johnson 1998:197) against the empty words.

With regard to living faith, it is not meant for salvation, for as Richardson points out, “Active faith is not that which saves... only the implanted Word is able to save (James 1:21).”<sup>69</sup> Living faith is meant for good works. To emphasize this issue, E. M. Sidebottom writes, “Works are the outward expression of faith: the two go together like the obverse and reverse of a coin.”<sup>70</sup> Thus, there is no genuine faith without works, for works are the results of genuine faith.

Obviously, the so-called Christians with dead faith in James’ day claimed that salvation and works were separate. For lack of such saving faith, they were not able to exercise Christian charities to the poor.

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<sup>65</sup>James T. Draper, *Faith That Works: Studies in James* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1971), 12.

<sup>66</sup>A. T. Robertson, *Studies in the Epistle of James* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, n.d.), 28.

<sup>67</sup>Draper, 13.

<sup>68</sup>Robertson, 93.

<sup>69</sup>Richardson, 129.

<sup>70</sup>E. M. Sidebottom, *The New Century Bible Commentary: James, Jude, 2 Peter* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), 43.

Therefore, James “was refuting a heresy claiming that salvation has no bearing on how we live,”<sup>71</sup> wrote Draper. In favor of that point, Nystrom states, “Righteousness that is true will always compel the righteous to acts of mercy and kindness (Romans 2:7).”<sup>72</sup> Now, we can see that a true Christian (i.e., one has been regenerated by a saving faith) will no longer stand with his hands folded but rather will delight in doing charity to those who are in need. Thus Draper is saying, “Works is the works of love, obedience, kindness, graciousness—i.e., our obedience to God based upon our love for God.”<sup>73</sup> James does not teach that works of Christian charity bring about salvation. Salvation belongs to God, for as Richardson argues, “Neither profession of faith nor deeds of faith actually ‘save’ anyone; only God saves.”<sup>74</sup> Nevertheless, although James is deeply concerned with salvation in the last judgment, in this particular portion of his letter, he is not dealing with salvation but rather is challenging people who have such useless faith. For this reason, he strongly opposes the dead faith that does not motivate people to do merciful deeds of charity (Davids 1982).

### **An Exegetical Study of Romans 3:21-28**

Since the 16<sup>th</sup> century in Martin Luther’s time, the doctrine of justification by faith has been at the heart of Protestant thinking.<sup>75</sup> Faith, according to Paul, is crucial in terms of salvation—“For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law” (3:28 NIV). Thus, Paul, in this particular passage, is “challenging judgmental Jewish pride (chapters 2-4).”<sup>76</sup> He teaches that the Jews also need salvation by grace through faith in Jesus. With that in mind, he wrote Romans so that “the Roman church might apprehend the greatness of divine grace and the wideness of God’s mercy.”<sup>77</sup>

Holding the idea of justification by faith alone, Myanmar evangelicals are, to some extent, neglecting social issues. Paul wrote in

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<sup>71</sup>Draper, 86.

<sup>72</sup>David P. Nystrom, *James: The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997), 154.

<sup>73</sup>Draper, 87.

<sup>74</sup>Richardson, 129.

<sup>75</sup>James D. G. Dunn, and Alan M. Suggate, *The Justice of God: A Fresh Look at the Old Doctrine of Justification by Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993), 5.

<sup>76</sup>Royce Gordon Gruenler, “Romans” in *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1989), 925.

<sup>77</sup>F. David and Ralph P. Martin, “Romans” in *The New Bible Commentary*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970), 1013.

Ephesians 2:10 (NIV), “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” However, many evangelicals fail to do the good works to which they were called. They are extreme in their belief of the slogan “justification by faith alone” but neglect the teaching of social issues, which are not the means of salvation but rather the fruits of the Christian faith. For this reason, evangelicals should be strong in faith while, at the same time, having a healthy approach to social issues. In order to do so, this segment of research aims at exploring what Paul’s teaching meant to his original audience and then what it means to us. The exegetical study of this section (3:21-28), it is hoped, will help Myanmar evangelicals to better understand Paul’s “justification by faith alone” and how his faith relates to good works.

### Paul’s Theology of Faith

As we read in Acts 22:3, Paul is a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, and thoroughly trained in the law under Rabbi Gamaliel. Thus, there is no doubt that his theology was influenced by Old Testament (OT) concepts. For this reason, we need to look at how justification or righteousness was understood in the OT in order to better understand Paul’s theology of faith. According to E. R. Achtemeier, we learn that, “Righteousness is, in the OT, the fulfillment of the demands of a relationship, whether that relationship be with men or with God. When God or man fulfills the conditions imposed upon him by a relationship, he is, the OT terms, righteous.”<sup>78</sup> This concept is clearly found, for example, in Genesis 38:26. Tamar was declared righteous for fulfilling the demands of the levirate law,<sup>79</sup> while Judah failed to fulfill the law by not giving his third son to her in marriage.<sup>80</sup> In this case, it is evident that Tamar is called righteous or just because of fulfilling the levirate law. In this manner, a person was declared righteous, or just, by fulfilling or conforming to the law. The idea of OT righteousness is fundamental to the New Testament (NT) righteousness because Paul’s idea of *δικαιοσύνη* is rooted in צדק,<sup>81</sup> which means righteousness that is

<sup>78</sup>E. R. Achtemeier, “Righteousness” in *Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1962), 80.

<sup>79</sup>George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, rev. ed. D. A. Hagner (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993), 481.

<sup>80</sup>Norman H. Snaith, *The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, n.d.), 92-93.

<sup>81</sup>Achtemeier, 80. Achtemeier wrote, “The Septuagint frequently translates צדק with δίκαιο (verb) with δικαιοσύν (noun) with δικαιοσύνη.”

conformity to a rule.<sup>82</sup> Thus, it is clear that, if conformity to a norm is required for a person to be righteous in OT times, the same is true with sinners in NT times to conform to the righteousness of God in order to be saved.

Now let us examine how Paul deals with justification in the New Testament. In Romans 1:18 to 3:20, he speaks of the wrath of God and His judgment on both Jews and Gentiles; then beginning from 3:21, he speaks of how God demonstrates His saving righteousness in Christ. The revelation of God's wrath in 1:18 is answered by God's saving righteousness in Chapter 3.<sup>83</sup> In 3:21, Paul says, "But now apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets" (NASB). James R. Edwards writes, "'But now' is an exclamation of hope which marks the transition from wrath (1:18) to righteousness (1:17)."<sup>84</sup> Accordingly, 3:21 indicates a significant transition, a contrast to what Paul had said in 1:18-3:20.<sup>85</sup> That transition was inaugurated by the coming of Jesus. Thus, this context shows us that Paul is teaching God's righteousness; His saving act is fulfilled in Jesus Christ.<sup>86</sup>

Regarding *δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ* in Romans 3:21-26, Douglas J. Moo observes, "It occurs four times (vv. 21, 22, 25, 26 ['his righteousness' in the last two]), while the related verb *δικαιῶ* 'justify' is found twice (vv. 24, 26) and the adjective *δίκαιος* 'just' once (v. 26)."<sup>87</sup> There are interpretations regarding *δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ*. Scholars like James R. Edwards, Robert H. Mounce, and James Dunn are in favor of interpreting it as an objective genitive.<sup>88</sup> They argue that righteousness is what God offers to sinners, that it is the act of God as he sent Jesus to die for the sin of the world so that He can declare righteousness to anyone who believes in Jesus. This argument, I think, is rather weak

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<sup>82</sup>P. Van Imschoot, *Theology of the Old Testament*. Translated by Kathryn Sullivan, R. S.C.J. and Fidelis Buck, S. J. (Tournai: Desclee Company, 1954), 67.

<sup>83</sup>A. H. Leitch, "Righteousness," in *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, ed. Merrill Tenney (Grand Rapids: MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), 113.

<sup>84</sup>James R. Edwards, *Romans: New International Biblical Commentary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1992), 98.

<sup>85</sup>James D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8: Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 38 (Dallas, TX: Word Books Publisher, 1988), 164.

<sup>86</sup>A. H. Leitch, 114.

<sup>87</sup>Moo, "Romans," 219.

<sup>88</sup>Edwards, 100. Edwards argues that *δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ* is not the attribute of God but is the righteousness with which God is treating humanity. Mounce states that the righteousness of God is of what God offers to the ungodly. See *Romans: The New American Commentary*, vol. 27 (USA: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 114; Dunn notes that the righteousness of God is something he does. See Dunn, 41.

because by what criterion God justifies is in question. As noted above, OT sinners became just or righteous by conforming to the existing criteria. In the same way, NT sinners need to be justified by conforming to the criterion that will be dealt with in the following pages.

In contrast to the objective genitive, Douglas Moo, Brendan Byrne, C. K. Barrett, and Leon Morris argue that *δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ* is the personality of God—that He is just and righteous.<sup>89</sup> This idea holds that God—who is being right—justifies sinners according to His righteousness. In favor of this subjective genitive argument, Charles Hodge explains that “*δικαιω* ‘to justify’ is not simply to pardon but is a forensic term expressing the act of a judge.”<sup>90</sup> From a judicial point of view, “Yahweh needs to be propitiated because of human sin (cf., e.g., Isaiah 43:22-25).”<sup>91</sup> With that in mind, there must be a sacrifice to Yahweh. And since no animal or human sacrifice qualifies to appease God, the work of Christ is employed<sup>92</sup> because, “It is the Person of Christ crucified as a means of propitiation or expiation, by whose blood God’s wrath is averted and his mercy dispensed in a total remission of past sin.”<sup>93</sup> In this manner, on behalf of sinners, Jesus the Lamb of God by his sacrificial death met the requirement—i.e., conforming to the righteousness of God as the OT people did to the law. Thus, anyone who believes in Jesus Christ is justified. This subjective genitive argument is preferable in this particular context, for the righteousness of God stands as a criterion by which He justifies sinners.

Moreover, Mounce rightly contends, “The righteousness God provides has its origin in what God did, not in what people may accomplish. It is received, not earned.”<sup>94</sup> It is totally apart from the law,

<sup>89</sup>Moo, “Romans,” 126. Moo asserts that is the righteousness “by which God acts to put people in right relationship with himself.”; Byrne implies that righteousness of God is His integrity by which He judges the human beings. See *Romans: Sacra Pagina Series*, vol. 6, ed. Daniel J. Harrington (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1996), 123; C. K. Barrett wrote the righteousness of God “includes the quality of being right.” See *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (London: A & C Black, 1991), 69; Leon Morris asserts that it is the righteousness which originates in God. See *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 103.

<sup>90</sup>Charles Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), 81-82.

<sup>91</sup>Verlyn D. Verbrugge, ed., “*Ἰλασκομαι*” in *The NIV Theological Dictionary of New Testament Words*, ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 603.

<sup>92</sup>William G. T. Shedd, *A Critical and Doctrinal Commentary on the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans* (Minneapolis, MN: Klock & Klock Christian Publishers, 1978), 75.

<sup>93</sup>Matthew Black, *Romans: New Century Bible Commentary*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1973), 57.

<sup>94</sup>Mounce, 114.

as Paul uses the words *χωρίς νομου*.<sup>95</sup> Therefore, Paul's use of *δωρεαν* corresponding to the Hebrew "חַנּוּן," strongly emphasizes that righteousness is not earned but is a gift of God's grace or favor.<sup>96</sup> Grace is crucial in the sense that the supreme God makes salvation available to the lowest sinners.<sup>97</sup> Thus, Brendan Byrne rightly argues, "The righteousness of God is something entirely 'apart from law,' not being based upon fulfillment of the law's requirement ('works of law,' v.20)."<sup>98</sup> Accordingly, Mounce further avers "No human being can be brought into a right standing with God on the basis of doing what the law requires."<sup>99</sup> Concerning human beings, Edwards makes it clear that "*σάρξ* 'flesh' (3:20) means the moral nature which is the willing instrument of sin."<sup>100</sup> This explanation indicates that a sinner is incapable of living morally right before God and fulfilling the demands of the law. The fallen condition of human beings necessitates the atonement of Jesus for right standing (being justified) before God.

Jesus died for the sin of the world by conforming to God's standard of righteousness as He became the "atonement cover"<sup>101</sup> corresponding to the Hebrew sacrificial system. God's justice requires the shedding of Jesus' blood so that sinners can have forgiveness of their sins (Hebrews 9:22). Thus, anyone who believes in Jesus is forgiven, justified, and free from judgment because Jesus' sacrifice not only satisfies the demand of justice, but also appeases the wrath of

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<sup>95</sup>Shedd, 74-75. Shedd wrote that "*χωρίς* 'apart,' or separate from: entire separation is intended. "*νόμος* is anarthrous, to denote law generally, whether written or unwritten. The law is here put for the 'works of the law,' or obedience."

<sup>96</sup>The word "חַנּוּן" means without cause or compensation (#2855); See Terence E. Fretheim, *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, vol. 2, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997), 203; Here the word "*δωρεάν*" used as an adverb corresponds to the Hebrew חַנּוּן *חַנּוּן*; it describes the manner of their justification as that of a free gift, gratis." See C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, vol. 1 (New York, NY: T & T Clark, 1975), 206.

<sup>97</sup>Moo, "Romans," 228. Moo wrote that in the LXX, *χάρις* occurs over 190 times. Of those with a Hebrew equivalent (only about 70), most translate חַנּוּן. This word has the special connotation of the 'assistance' rendered to a weaker person by a stronger.

<sup>98</sup>Byrne, 124.

<sup>99</sup>Mounce, 110-11.

<sup>100</sup>Edwards, 93; Dunn suggests that "*πᾶσα σὰρξ* 'all flesh' could be taken simply as a variant translation of the Hebrew כּוֹלֵי חַיִּים, 'all living' since it is in fact synonymous with כּוֹלֵי בְּצִיּוֹר, 'all flesh.'" See Dunn, 155.

<sup>101</sup>Verbrugge, 603. Verbrugge wrote, "The LXX uses ἱλαστήριον ἡλιαστῆριον 20x for Heb. חַטֹּאת־כּוֹפֵרֶת, which may be rendered propitiatory or mercy seat, or atonement cover (e.g., Exod. 25:17-22; 31:7; 35:12; Lev. 16:2, 13-15; Num. 7:89).

God.<sup>102</sup> Therefore, there is no righteousness without Jesus Christ because, “He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2 NIV).

Strictly, “Righteousness is given only through faith in Jesus Christ.”<sup>103</sup> For this reason Moo states, “Paul highlights faith as the means by which God’s justifying work becomes applicable to individuals.”<sup>104</sup> Moreover, Dunn argues that, “Faith is the human condition or attitude which is set in contrast to works of the law (3:20-22, 27-28).”<sup>105</sup> In this case, it is obvious that man is only the instrument of sin and is helpless to work for his own salvation. Thus, it demands that God impute His righteousness to sinners.

From the judicial perspective, Schaeffer states, “God does not infuse us with righteousness, God makes a legal declaration; on the basis of the finished work of Christ, God can declare us to be justified.”<sup>106</sup> Therefore, it is clear that justification is declared to a person who believes in the finished work of Christ. As mentioned earlier, righteousness is not earned but imputed (i.e., transferred) in the sense that a sinner is justified by *πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*, who is the end of the law (Romans 10:4). Similar to the OT law,<sup>107</sup> NT people are declared righteous by believing in Jesus, who fulfilled the law (Matthew 5:17). He died on the cross to fulfill the requirement of the law, conforming His life to God’s criterion of justifying sinners. Thus, Paul says that a sinner is justified by faith in Jesus Christ apart from works of the ritual law. It is clear now that Paul is strongly against the works of law as a means of salvation, because faith in Christ is the only way for a sinner to be righteous.

Regarding *πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*, we need to examine by whose faith a sinner is saved.<sup>108</sup> The interpretation of this phrase differs among scholars. For example, N. T. Wright supports the genitive subjective

<sup>102</sup>Charles Hodge, *Romans: The Crossway Classic Commentaries* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1993), 89.

<sup>103</sup>Wilhelm Pauck, trans., and ed. *Luther: Lectures on Romans* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, Nd), 109.

<sup>104</sup>Moo, “Romans,” 224.

<sup>105</sup>Dunn, 166.

<sup>106</sup>Francis A. Schaeffer, *The Truth of Romans 1-8: The Finished Work of Christ* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1998), 76.

<sup>107</sup>As mentioned already, OT people were declared righteous by conforming to the law. NT people become righteous by faith in Jesus who, by his death, conforms to the righteousness of God.

<sup>108</sup>Luke Timothy Johnson, *Reading Romans: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1997), 53.

that this "faith" is Christ's faithfulness to his death on the cross.<sup>109</sup> On the other hand, Matthew Black argues that "It is the believer's faith in Christ which is the ground of the newly manifested righteousness."<sup>110</sup> Neutrally, Byrne holds that, despite the fact that the subjective genitive "Jesus' own faith" is acceptable, the whole idea of Paul's thought (especially Galatians 2:16) through the passage refers to the objective genitive "believers' faith in Jesus."<sup>111</sup> In favor of Byrne, integrating the two opposite views (i.e., faith *in* Christ and faith *of* Christ), Morris thoughtfully puts it this way:

We should bear in mind that Paul is here not describing Christ, but outlining what Christ has done in bringing about salvation, so that we must understand, at least part of the meaning, the objective genitive. *Faith in Jesus Christ* is certainly in mind. But there would be no place for the exercise of this faith were it not for "the faithfulness of Jesus Christ" and for "God's faithfulness shown in Jesus Christ." The right standing God gives is connected with his faithfulness and that of Christ, and it certainly is linked with the faith of believers in Christ.<sup>112</sup>

I agree with Morris in this case because, if the faithfulness of Christ were not involved, there would be no cross through which the righteousness of God is revealed. On the other hand, if it were only by the faith of Christ, then no one needs to believe. Everybody in the world would be saved automatically. Therefore, I believe that, for the salvation of a sinner, there are three elements involved—the righteousness of God, Christ's faithfulness to the Father, and believers' faith in Jesus Christ.

#### Observation

Paul, who once strictly held to the Jewish law but now believes in Jesus Christ, sharply argues against observing the ritual law as a way of achieving salvation or justification, because he himself had received the salvation of God by direct intervention of the Lord Jesus on the road to

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<sup>109</sup>N. T. Wright, *Justification: God's Plan and Paul's Vision* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), pp. 117, 203.

<sup>110</sup>Black, 58.

<sup>111</sup>Byrne, 124; See Mounce, 114. Mounce argued, "πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ is objective genitive ('faith in Jesus Christ') rather than subjective ('faithfulness of Jesus Christ')."

<sup>112</sup>Morris, 175.

Damascus. Before his conversion, he believed that righteousness was earned by obeying the ritual law (i.e., doing works of the law). Contrarily, his experience with the Lord helped him to realize that justification comes through faith in Christ. Therefore, “he was combating those who said that salvation comes by keeping the works of the Mosaic Law.”<sup>113</sup> He taught the Romans to believe in Jesus who is the end of the law, apart from works of the law for justification. The righteousness of God is revealed in Jesus Christ, so that anyone who believes in Him is righteous, or just, before God.

Robertson is right in stating that “Paul, in his contrast between faith and works, has in mind the Jewish doctrine of works as a means of salvation.”<sup>114</sup> So too, Paul strongly emphasizes justification by faith alone, in contradiction of the Jews’ demand that “circumcision was essential to the salvation of the Gentiles, that Christianity alone was not sufficient but must be supplemented by Judaism.”<sup>115</sup> In this case, we need to understand that Paul does not oppose merciful Christian deeds, but he does oppose those good works (the works of law) as a means of attaining salvation. Thus he said, “For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.” (3:27 NIV).

### **Comparison Between Works and Faith**

Having examined James’ theology of works and Paul’s theology of faith, I believe the following comparison of these two perceptions will help one clearly see the differences and thus recognize the original intent of “works and faith.”

#### **James 2:24 (ASV)**

Ye see that by works a man is justified, and not only by faith.

#### **Romans 3:28 (ASV)**

We reckon therefore that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law.

#### **James 2:21 (KJV)**

Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?

#### **Romans 4:2 (NIV)**

If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about— but not before God.

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<sup>113</sup>Draper, 86.

<sup>114</sup>A. T. Robertson, *Studies in the Epistle of James* (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, n.d.), 93.

<sup>115</sup>*Ibid.*, 91.

Our study shows that James and Paul deal with the issue of works and faith from different angles. James looks at the one side of the coin called faith, while Paul looks at the other side. Or stated another way, James explains the active side of faith and Paul the passive side.<sup>116</sup> Here, in short, are the differences—"Paul begins with the Christian life at its very commencement: we are saved by faith alone (Romans 3:28) with no reliance on the works of the law (Galatians 2:16). James begins with the professing Christians who have fallen into wrongheaded ways and need genuine faith."<sup>117</sup>

There is no doubt that James and Paul are working together for genuine and healthy Christianity. This is evidenced by how they look at Abraham. "James looked to the Abraham story to show how genuine faith operates; Paul looked to the Abraham story to show how God is predisposed to forgive sinners."<sup>118</sup> Thus, Paul is concerned for "justification by faith," while James is concerned for "good works as the result of faith."

The interpretation of the Greek *εργα* is of great help to see how James and Paul work in unity, not in contradiction. In this regard, Nystrom observed, "Paul often employs *εργα* to mean 'works of the law;' for James *εργα* means 'deeds of Christian righteousness.'"<sup>119</sup> Although the vocabulary is the same, the way it is used is different. When Paul argues that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law (Romans 3:28), he does not mean Christians' good deeds. At the same time, when James argues that faith without works is dead (James 2:26), he does not mean the works of law. As a result, James is not against Paul's faith and Paul is not against James' good works; however, James condemns the dead-faith Christians just as Paul condemns the Christians who trust in the works of the law for salvation.

Likewise, when James speaks of justification by works, not by faith (2:24), he is concerned with the Christian deeds that demonstrate one's justification. And by the words "not by faith", he means the kind of faith that does not produce good fruits. James does not oppose the kind of faith that Paul claims for salvation. Therefore, as Robertson argues, "It is not personal trust in Christ that James ridicules but an empty theological tenet that does not stand the test of actual life."<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>116</sup>Kistemaker, 87.

<sup>117</sup>Martin, 82.

<sup>118</sup>Richardson, 140.

<sup>119</sup>Nystrom, 148.

<sup>120</sup>Robertson, 94.

Nystrom agrees, “Both Paul and James see faith as a confidence in God’s saving act along with the effect of that act in the lives of the followers of Jesus Christ.”<sup>121</sup>

Now it is clear that, although the English vocabularies look different, the intent of the original sense is the same. Both James and Paul are pointing in the same direction—the salvation or justification of mankind. The idea of works in James speaks of merciful Christian good deeds, and the faith he opposed is a dead faith. Accordingly, the idea of works Paul opposes is the works of the law, not Christians’ good deeds.

It is crucial that one not misunderstand these two theologies, because James’s “works of faith” are not at all what Paul meant by “works of law.”<sup>122</sup> “Paul in Romans 3:28 is speaking of salvation as a past event; nothing human beings can do can earn God’s forgiveness. But James, when speaking of deeds, has in mind present activity.”<sup>123</sup> Here, I believe that James is dealing with the fruit of salvation, while Paul is dealing with how salvation is achieved. Motyer (1985:113) beautifully illustrates the relation between faith and works this way—Faith is a senior partner, and works is a junior partner, both working together. Thus, good works are the fruit of living faith, while dead faith produces only empty words.

### **Significance for Myanmar’s Evangelical and non-Evangelical Christians in Dialogue**

From our study, we learn that there is no theological contradiction between Paul and James, both of them working for the salvation of mankind. The great confusion relative to their theologies came from the erroneous interpretation of “faith” and “works.” Our exegetical work clearly reveals that James is arguing against “a dead faith,” one that lacks potential to motivate a person to do merciful deeds. The works with which James dealt is the fruit of living faith.

In contradiction to James’ idea, Myanmar non-evangelical Christians erroneously understand works to be a means of salvation. As a result, they focus on Christian charities and social endeavors in order to secure their souls’ salvation. They believe that performance of

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<sup>121</sup>Nystrom, 148.

<sup>122</sup>Richardson, 128.

<sup>123</sup>Nystrom, 158.

deeds deserves spiritual blessing.<sup>124</sup> Doing good deeds in and of itself is not wrong, but trusting good deeds for salvation is totally against God's will. Thus, both James and Paul are opposed to such dead faith and works of the law. Non-evangelical Christians need to move beyond the doing of good works to meet their spiritual needs.

On the other hand, Paul emphasized faith. Although he is not against Christian merciful works, he strongly opposes works that supposedly bring about salvation. Many evangelicals in Myanmar are mistakenly content with their "salvation by faith" and neglect Christian merciful deeds. It is not wrong to be content with our salvation by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ; but if people are truly born again and truly a part of God's family, they must intuitively desire to do good works, which James argues is the result of saving, or living, faith. Such faith will produce love, compassion, etc., for others. Therefore, evangelicals should not be confined in their comfort zones, but rather they should step into the world to not only give witness about the love of God, but also exercise Christian deeds as children of God.

In summary, Paul is dealing with justification by faith as essential for the beginning of one's spiritual life, while James is dealing with the importance of Christian deeds as outward demonstrations of being a genuine Christian. Thus, Myanmar non-evangelical Christians need to seek God for a solution first to their spiritual needs, met only by the blood of Jesus; and the evangelicals need to put their faith into action.

## **Conclusion**

Christianity is not a religion that seeks to appease gods by meritorious deeds. In Christianity, we know that God seeks sinners and imputes righteousness (by employing the completed work of Jesus Christ) to anyone who believes in Him. Myanmar Christians should know that there is no other way by which a sinner can be saved. Only faith in Jesus can secure salvation for their souls. Thus, relying on the performance of good deeds for salvation is deceiving oneself, as the non-evangelical Christians do. On the other hand, Christians should not be selfish as some evangelicals are, neglecting the good works God entrusts to us (Ephesians 2:10).

It is important for Myanmar Christians to keep in mind what Nystrom states, "In the New Testament generally, and in Paul in particular, salvation is a threefold experience: it is an accomplished

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<sup>124</sup>I often hear people say that they will go to heaven because they are good people and are active both in their church and in charitable activities.

fact: we have been saved (see Ephesians 2:8). It is a present experience: we are being saved (see 1 Corinthians 1:18; Philippians 2:12). It is a future hope: we will be saved (see Roman 13:11; Philippians 3:20).”<sup>125</sup> With that in mind, the theologies of Paul and James, in terms of faith and works, teach us that we need to have such a saving faith, one that always motivates us as children of God to do Christian deeds to the people around us. We should not only focus on the spiritual needs of people, but also be concerned about merciful deeds to the poor and the needy.

Moo reminds us that, “Paul is attacking people who think that salvation can be earned. James is attacking people who think that salvation brings no responsibility.”<sup>126</sup> For this reason, Myanmar evangelicals need to move forward to the exercise of their faith in doing Christian charities. At the same time, the non-evangelical Christians need to go beyond doing Christian charities to meet the spiritual needs of the people. Only then will these two groups be able to cooperate in spreading the gospel for the furtherance of the kingdom of God on earth.

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<sup>125</sup>Nystrom, 158.

<sup>126</sup>Moo, “James,” 1157.

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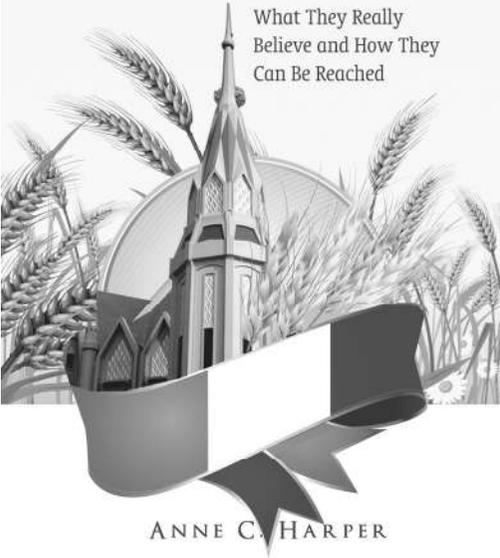
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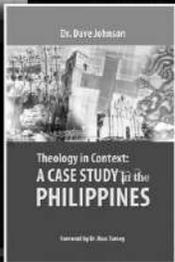
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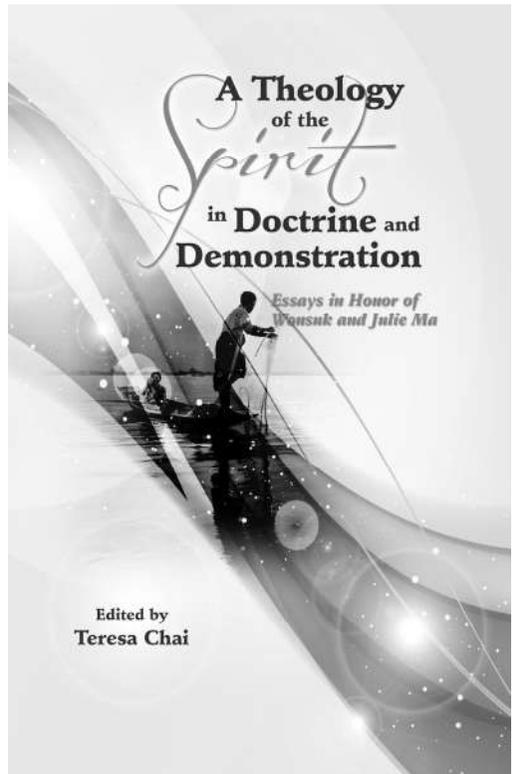
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THE ANIMISTIC ASPECTS IN THE CHINESE  
*ZHONG YUAN* FESTIVAL

by Daniel Liu

**Introduction**

Animistic phenomena exist everywhere in this world; animism does not merely dominate the belief in tribal societies, it also hides behind major religions around the world during their indigenous process.<sup>1</sup> Actually, animism has even become an influential and prominent component in many cultures. The *Zhong Yuan* Festival is considered one of the most important festivals to the Chinese people. Regarding the characteristics of animism and the significance in the *Zhong Yuan* Festival, this paper will attempt to demonstrate the animistic aspects in this Chinese traditional festival; the reasons for “why Chinese people do what they do in the *Zhong Yuan* Festival” will be illuminated. In addition, a Pentecostal response to the specific animistic aspects in this Chinese *Zhong Yuan* Festival will also be formulated in this paper.

**The Definition of Animism and Its Characteristics**

In order to perceive and demonstrate the animistic aspects of the Chinese *Zhong Yuan* Festival precisely and accurately, a definition of animism and its characteristics are necessary. The term animism started to be used in the latter part of the nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup> Different scholars have diverse definitions. Gailyn Van Rheenens defines animism as “the belief that personal spiritual beings and impersonal spiritual forces have power over human affairs and, consequently, that human beings must discover what beings and forces are influencing them in order to determine future action and, frequently, to manipulate their power.”<sup>3</sup> Rheenens perceives animism as a belief system in which an

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<sup>1</sup>Gailyn Van Rheenens, *Communicating Christ in Animistic Contexts* (Pasadena, California: William Carey Library, 1991), 11.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>3</sup>Van Rheenens, 20.

interaction exists between human beings and supernatural power: the power seems to be able to control human affairs and humans try to seek and manipulate the power.<sup>4</sup>

Philip M. Steyne states that there are four foundational beliefs in animism, which are holism, spiritualism, power, and community.<sup>5</sup> A broader scope of animistic beliefs is formulated by Dave Johnson; he addresses seven tenets in animistic belief. These seven tenets are provided in this paper in order to analyze the specific animistic practice in the Chinese *Zhong Yuan* Festival. They are:

1. Animism is holistic.
2. Animism is spiritual.
3. Animism is amoral.
4. Animism is a religion of power.
5. Animism is socially oriented.
6. Animism is pervasive and attractive.
7. Animism tends to breed nominalism.<sup>6</sup>

These seven tenets are also considered as the characteristics of animistic belief in this paper. Even though animism has these prominent characteristics, at a certain time in the last century some missiologists began to believe that animism would disappear; “they presumed that participants of animistic rites would forsake these rites to become participants of world religion.”<sup>7</sup> However, the fact is that “animism has not died, in many cases it has extended itself.”<sup>8</sup> Today, animism continuously influences this world at four levels: 1) Level one—animism dominates religion; 2) Level two—animism has a significant effect on religion (such as folk Catholicism and Folk Islam); 3) Level three—religious practice is claimed to be orthodox, but it is not pure; animism still provides answers; 4) Level four—religious practice is orthodox and has very little animistic influence.<sup>9</sup> Are there any animistic aspects in the Chinese *Zhong Yuan* Festival? If there are, to which level do these aspects belong? In this paper, Rheenen’s definition of animism and Johnson’s seven tenets will be used to analyze and prove whether there are animistic aspects in the Chinese *Zhong Yuan* Festival.

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 20-21.

<sup>5</sup>Philip M. Steyne, *Gods of Power: A Study of the Beliefs and Practices of Animists* (Columbia, South Carolina: Impact International Foundation, 1996), 58-63.

<sup>6</sup>Dave Johnson, “Lecture #3: The Seven Tenets of Animism.” Lecture at Asia Pacific Theological Seminary (Baguio, Philippines, October 9, 2014).

<sup>7</sup>Van Rheenen, 23.

<sup>8</sup>Van Rheenen, 24.

<sup>9</sup>Steyne, 46-47.

### The Ritual in the Chinese *Zhong Yuan* Festival

China has a 5000 year long history; many traditions and customs have remained from generation to generation. Today, these traditions and customs still influence Chinese people's lives; whether they live in China mainland, Hong Kong, Taiwan or Singapore. The majority of Chinese people celebrate eight ancient major festivals, according to the Chinese lunar calendar.<sup>10</sup> The *Zhong Yuan* Festival is one of these eight major festivals. In this paper, the term *Chinese people* specifically refers to the major population of Han people in China mainland and overseas. The term *ancestor* mostly represents the soul or the spirit of the ancestor whose name is still in the family genealogy or is lost.

The *Zhong Yuan* Festival is celebrated on the fifteenth day of the seventh Chinese lunar month, usually in late August, according to the regular calendar.<sup>11</sup> There are twenty-four time periods all year round on account of the lunar calendar; *Zhong Yuan* is the thirteenth time period in a Chinese lunar year. In some areas of China and Singapore, the *Zhong Yuan* Festival is celebrated for thirty days through the whole seventh month.<sup>12</sup> However, the most important day is still the fifteenth day in the seventh month. During this festival, Chinese practitioners celebrate with specific activities and ceremonies. In order to gather some more details and updated information about the *Zhong Yuan* Festival, this author has interviewed a practitioner in mainland China who is aware of the whole ritual of this festival. In addition, this author also experienced the *Zhong Yuan* Festival in his childhood and teenage years. The following information about the practice in the *Zhong Yuan* Festival is mainly from both the interviewee and this author.<sup>13</sup>

On the fourteenth day of the seventh month, people start to prepare good food, such as chicken, pork and fish, to receive their ancestors' souls, because people believe that on this day their ancestors will come back to take an offering from the living generation. The weather on that day becomes cool, compared with the days before the fourteenth day. People believe this is a sign of their ancestors' coming back because the festival is celebrated in early autumn when the weather is still hot. Of course, the souls of the ancestors will stay a day and a night with the living generation. A short ceremony is performed before each meal on

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<sup>10</sup>*Chinese Customs and Festivals in Singapore* (Singapore: Singapore Federation of Chinese Clan Association, 1989), 15.

<sup>11</sup>Henry Schuman, *Chinese Festivals* (New York: Wolfram Eberhard, 1952), 129.

<sup>12</sup>*Chinese Customs and Festivals in Singapore*, 62.

<sup>13</sup>Liu Jing Yang. Interview by Daniel Liu. Phone interview. From APTS campus to Mainland China, November 13, 2014.

the fourteenth day and fifteenth day. All the good food is placed in bowls or plates on the table and people pray and appeal to the ancestors to sit down and eat first. At this time no one else is allowed to touch the table. By this means, people show respect and honor to their ancestors. Afterward, family members will start to eat. The whole family believes they are living with their invisible ancestors together in their house; therefore, they are very careful and sensitive about their words and behaviors during these two days, lest they offend their ancestors and lose blessings from them. People also prepare extra food for the homeless souls so that these homeless and hungry souls may not trouble their family in the future. (Translation mine)<sup>14</sup>

On the fifteenth day, the ancestors will return to Hades which is called *Yin Jian* in Chinese. The night time, especially after supper, is considered as the most prominent moment in the *Zhong Yuan* Festival.

When night comes, people start to give offerings or gifts to their ancestors to take back to *Yin Jian*. In the villages and townships, usually people use plaster to make circles on the ground in which gifts and offerings are distinguished for different ancestors, so that each ancestor will not mistake the other's gifts or offerings. In order to prevent the homeless souls from taking the gifts or offerings from their ancestor's share or disturb the ritual, people also make extra circles and prepare some extra gifts or offerings for the homeless souls. Today the Chinese people have new offerings and gifts. Together with the traditional, people offer modern gifts. The traditional offerings are paper money, paper silver and paper gold. The paper money is made of traditional grass paper with the previous money's design on it. Paper silver is shaped into Chinese treasure with silver colored paper and paper gold is made with golden colored paper. The idea behind the traditional offerings or gifts is that the living generation tries to make sure their ancestors have enough money to use in *Yin Jian*.

Because of their experience of the fast economic development in mainland China, people wish that their ancestors could enjoy the same modern rich material life in *Yin Jian*. Thus, people make all kinds of models of cars, televisions, refrigerators and even high-rises, which mostly are made of paper. Regarding modern society's perspective of money transfer, people also specifically make a type of *Yin* money, which is considered to be authorized from the *Yin Bank* by the Emperor of *Yin Jian*, *Yan Wang*, who is in charge of all the souls and devils in *Yin Jian*. On this *Yin* money, people can write and issue them to specific ancestors and they trust that the ancestors can receive the

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<sup>14</sup>*Chinese Customs and Festivals in Singapore*, 64.

amount according to the names on the *Yin* money. This type of money is almost like a check in modern society.

When all gifts and offerings are dedicated to the different ancestors, the next step is to burn the gifts and offerings so that the ancestors can take them away and use them in *Yin Jian*. While burning all the gifts and offerings, practitioners from families will pray and appeal to the ancestors to bless the family wealth, health and prosperity, which include their businesses, promotions, babies' births, children's education, physical health, and much more. They will eagerly ask ancestors to protect family members from all evils and disasters so that they can live a peaceful and harmonious life. Of course, they also wish their ancestors can have a happy and enjoyable life in *Yin Jian*, too. With the fire burning, family members say farewell to their ancestors. Today, some rich families even use fireworks or firecrackers to send their ancestors back towards the end of the ritual. When people return home, they expect a year of prosperity and peace to come as they requested from their ancestors.

In cities, it is not easy or convenient for residents to burn the modern and traditional gifts or offerings in the *Zhong Yuan* Festival. Some may simplify the ritual and practice it in their apartments or houses. However, some still try to burn some gifts or offerings along the streets. The morning following the fifteenth day, people can see the marks on the sidewalk, which were left by the burning from the night before. The Communist government in mainland China tries to restrain residents in big cities from burning things in the *Zhong Yuan* Festival because of the pollution. But the Singapore government respects the tradition of *Zhong Yuan*; in a proper way, the government specifically opens some public spaces and provides some iron containers to let people perform the ritual. More than that, people gather together to have ceremonies and parades along the streets.<sup>15</sup> In South China, there is another way to send their ancestors back; on the fifteenth night people place paper-made lantern boats in the rivers to take the ancestors home. The lantern boats "drift down the river, a beautiful sight in the early autumn night, until they sink, one by one."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>*Chinese Customs and Festivals in Singapore*, 66.

<sup>16</sup>Schuman, 133.

### **Are There Animistic Aspects in the *Zhong Yuan* Festival?**

During the *Zhong Yuan* Festival Chinese people believe there is spiritual power from their ancestors and this power can affect human affairs. They practice the ritual to gain and use the power. This fits Van Rheenen's definition of animism. The practice of the ritual in the *Zhong Yuan* Festival also meets the seven tenets (characteristics) of animistic belief:

- 1) Animism is holistic. The *Zhong Yuan* Festival encompasses the Chinese people, including both the deceased and living generations, the visible world and the invisible, *Yin Jian*, the filial spirit and fearful feelings, etc. This is totally holistic.
- 2) Animism is spiritual. The practice of the ritual completely involves the spiritual world; the two realms of man and ancestors obviously interact with each other. People encounter both the spirits of their ancestors and homeless spirits. Therefore, the *Zhong Yuan* Festival is also called the Ghost Festival.
- 3) Animism is a religion of power. Chinese people zealously seek supernatural power—ancestors' protection and blessings. They desire to earn the power to influence their life.
- 4) Animism is socially oriented. The *Zhong Yuan* Festival is one of the eight major Chinese festivals; its celebration has become one of the most important Chinese identities. People from villages to cities, from Mainland to overseas, participate in this festival. Therefore, the ritual of the *Zhong Yuan* festival is truly socially oriented.
- 5) Animism is amoral. People are well aware of their ancestors' moral standards: enough offerings or gifts can bribe their ancestors, to protect the living family members; otherwise, ancestors will be offended and will not protect or bless the family members.

Animism tends to breed nominalism. Even though people show some respect to their ancestors in the festival, their purpose of investment in the ritual is to get more blessings and protection from their ancestors, not to sincerely honor them. Furthermore, people do not want to treat the homeless souls equally with their ancestor's souls, in this way again revealing their real lack of honor toward the ancestors. This vividly and obviously proves that people's motivation and purpose in the ritual reveals nominalism.

- 6) Animism is pervasive and attractive. Because the practice of the ritual is so nominalistic and utilitarian, each year the *Zhong Yuan* Festival attracts numerous Chinese people. Though communism and atheism greatly influence people in China's mainland, the belief of ancestors and practice in the *Zhong Yuan* Festival is resuscitating.

The rituals and Chinese peoples' behavior in the *Zhong Yuan* Festival are indicative of all the seven characteristics of animism. Therefore, a conclusion can be drawn that animistic aspects are proven to truly exist in this festival. Meanwhile, all the rituals during the *Zhong Yuan* Festival are almost completely related to animism. The animistic aspects in this festival are categorized to the animistic first level of influence (animism dominates religion).

Now the next step is to dig out the reason why Chinese people practice such prominent animistic aspects in this festival before a biblical perspective is provided to respond the animistic aspects.

### **A Worldview Perspective to the Animistic Aspect in the *Zhong Yuan* Festival**

#### What is Culture and Worldview?

Since the *Zhong Yuan* Festival is considered as a culture, maybe an analysis of culture itself could respond and interpret the animistic aspects in *Zhong Yuan* Festival. This paper attempts to use a worldview perspective to illuminate the reason that why Chinese people participate the animistic ritual in *Zhong Yuan* Festival.

Culture is the synthesis of human civilization, which takes into account visible and invisible systems of religion, economy, tradition, politics, food, philosophy, history and many other diverse things. David J. Hesselgrave addresses one of the characteristics that "culture is an integrated whole, all the parts of which function in such a way to affect each other and contribute to the totality."<sup>17</sup> Hesselgrave's theme can be interpreted as: 1) there are different parts in a cultural entirety; 2) these parts affect each other and contribute to the totality. Regarding Hesselgrave's theme, a few questions could be brought up: how many parts are in a cultural entirety, what are they, and which part is most crucial? G. Linwood Barney's model of culture can wonderfully answer these questions. Barney's model of culture is:

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<sup>17</sup>David J. Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 100.

- 1) People's behaviors—what people do in their life?
- 2) Institutions—Annual religious rites and festivals.
- 3) Values— a) Religious: what religion do people follow, including those that follow none at all; b) Social (guilt/shame/honor based cultures).
- 4) Worldviews—Worldview drives culture and, therefore, is its most important aspect.<sup>18</sup>

In regard to Barney's model, an entirety of culture consists of four components: people's behaviors, institutions, values and worldviews. Worldview is the most crucial aspect in the entirety. Barney's four patterns of culture are just like four layers of an onion; studying these four patterns in order is just like peeling an onion's layers to the core.<sup>19</sup>

These four patterns of culture can lead people to perceive culture from the easily recognizable to the deep and complex.<sup>20</sup> Barney's model clearly indicates that only when people reach the worldview level, the core level of culture, can they answer the questions which relate to the other three patterns, because worldview drives culture.<sup>21</sup>

Then what is worldview? Charles H. Kraft has a close perception of culture as Barney's explanation does and he states that worldview is a deep level of culture that links to "largely unconscious and invisible assumptions;" the surface level of culture is people's behavior patterns.<sup>22</sup> Kraft illustrates: ". . . if we observe people wearing clothes, we would guess that this surface-level custom relates to some deep-level assumption that wearing clothing is proper, right, even moral."<sup>23</sup> Hesselgrave defines a worldview as "the way people to see or perceive the world, the way they 'know' it to be."<sup>24</sup> Following Kraft's and

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<sup>18</sup>Dave Johnson, "Lecture #2." Lecture at Asia Pacific Theological Seminary (Baguio, Philippines, October 2, 2014). Adapted from G. Linwood Barney, "The Supracultural and The Cultural in The Gospel and Frontier Peoples: A Report of A Consultation December 1972. ed. R. Pierce Beaver, 48-55 (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library), 49-50.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Dave Johnson, "Lecture #2." Lecture at Asia Pacific Theological Seminary (Baguio, Philippines, October 2, 2014). Adapted from G. Linwood Barney, "The Supracultural and The Cultural in The Gospel and Frontier Peoples: A Report of A Consultation December 1972. ed. R. Pierce Beaver, 48-55 (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library), 49-50.

<sup>22</sup>Charles H. Kraft, *Christianity With Power* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf&Stock Publishers, 1989), 53.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 53.

<sup>24</sup>Hesselgrave, 197.

Hesselgrave's definitions, people can understand the function of worldview, which shapes and drives a whole entirety of culture.

How to analyze animistic aspects in a cultural activity through worldview perspective is emphasized and valued by people now. Dave Johnson stresses that "the deepest assumptions and belief about reality lie at the worldview level."<sup>25</sup> Van Rheenen specifically emphasizes the necessity and importance of using worldview perspectives to understand animism. He states that "animistic perspectives become comprehensible to a missionary only when he understands the worldview that validates and integrates cultural values and behaviors."<sup>26</sup>

Therefore, since worldview functions to shape and drive a culture and people value and emphasize it for analyzing animistic aspects in cultures, the following is how to use worldview perspective to analyze the animistic aspects in the *Zhong Yuan* Festival.

#### Reasons for Animistic Aspects in the *Zhong Yuan* Festival

Hesselgrave characterizes different worldviews in terms of people's basic understanding of supernature, nature, man, and time.<sup>27</sup> This means that people view their world around them basically through these four elements, supernature, nature, man, and time. Thus, as long as these four elements of worldview and the relationships among them are understood, people can grasp and master a certain type of worldview in a specific culture. After understanding the worldview, naturally, people will completely and entirely get to know the other three layers of a culture.

Because of this, how to understand the animistic aspects in the *Zhong Yuan* Festival is based on understanding Chinese people's perception of the supernature, nature, man, and time. Originally, Chinese culture was based on Confucianism and Daoism; these two ideologies have been tremendously influential in Chinese society and individual lives. A common modern Chinese people's worldview is still essentially formed by Confucianism and Daoism (although not by religious Daoist belief). In regard to Confucianism and Daoism, the following are Chinese people's basic perception of supernature, nature, man and time

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<sup>25</sup>Dave Johnson, *Theology in Context: A Case Study In The Philippines* (Philippines, APTS Press, 2013), 45.

<sup>26</sup>Van Rheenen, 33.

<sup>27</sup>Hesselgrave, 202.

1. Supernature. Chinese cosmology believes that the universe was made in Tao and by Tao. (Translation mine)<sup>28</sup> Tao controls the whole universe and Tao is the essence of life and everything was made within Yin and Yang in Tao.<sup>29</sup> Yin and Yang operate as the “two great opposing forces . . . Associated with Yang are the positive elements, such as heaven, light, heat, masculinity, strength, life, etc. Yin includes the opposite elements: earth, darkness, cold, femininity, weakness, death, etc.”<sup>30</sup> However, Yin and Yang can change into each other: good to bad, and bad to good; light to darkness, and darkness to light . . . This changeable attribute of Yin and Yang has produced some specific animistic phenomenon in the *Zhong Yuan* Festival. Even though people died, they still have desires just as living human beings do. When ancestors receive gifts and offerings, they are willing to protect or bless their living family members; otherwise, they will not. This means the ancestors are amoral; they can be either good or bad according to how many gifts and offerings are made to them.

2. Nature. To Chinese people, the whole universe is structured as three realms of existence: heaven, earth and hell. “Heaven, which is ruled by an Emperor with numerous *shen* [gods] to assist him, belongs to Yang. Hell, which is the world of devils and dead souls ruled by an Emperor of Hades, is considered Yin. The earth contains both Yin and Yang.”<sup>31</sup> Chinese people believe when they die, their soul or spirit will leave their flesh, but still be alive with the same awareness as living human beings on earth. They also believe there are different *shen* in the universe and Tian (Shang Di) is the highest one who is also God of Tao. (Translation mine)<sup>32</sup> To a Chinese, supernature is composed of a variety of deities, devils (*kui*), and spirits.<sup>33</sup> Souls or spirits can also exist on earth with human beings; this is the reason that in the *Zhong Yuan* Festival ancestors can come out of Yin Jian and stay with their living family members. At the same time, the evil ghosts and *kui*, and good *shen* from heaven can also stay with human beings on earth, which means good and bad can live together on earth.

Another doctrine Daoism has been advocating is to “live a good life and be at peace with the universe, one needs to be in harmony with

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<sup>28</sup>Kam-lun Edwin Lee, *China Today from Her Cultural Roots: A Theological Interpretation of Chinese History*. (Hong Kong: CMI Publishing Co. Ltd., 2010), 110.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, 99-100.

<sup>30</sup>Hesselgrave, 257.

<sup>31</sup>*Chinese Customs and Festivals in Singapore*, 19.

<sup>32</sup>Elisha Wu, Rev., ed., *Five Great World Religions* (Hong Kong: The Christian Literature Service, 1981), 96.

<sup>33</sup>Hesselgrave, 263.

Tao.”<sup>34</sup> In order to have a peaceful and harmonious life with the world, including both visible material nature and invisible spiritual world, Chinese people also want to stay harmonious with the ghosts, *kui*, and their ancestors.<sup>35</sup> They know that the evil ghosts and *kui* come up from *Yin Jian* (Hades) and would bother their daily life; therefore, they offer food and gifts to their ancestors and the ghosts and *kui* as well in the *Zhong Yuan* Festival.

3. Man. Confucianism greatly values and encourages filial piety. Honoring and respecting parents is considered as one of Five Cardinal Relationships in society. “The family unit is viewed as the key of a successful and united nation. Filial piety is viewed as the greatest of all virtues (community and family before self)”<sup>36</sup> It claims that people should serve the deceased in the same way they serve their parents while they were living. (Translation mine)<sup>37</sup> Children are required to obey and submit to parents. Due to this strong filial piety, Chinese people spend as much money as they can for the ritual during the *Zhong Yuan* Festival. Besides the *Zhong Yuan* Festival, Chinese people also engage in ancestral worship in the Spring Festival and the Tomb Festival to show their filial piety to their ancestors. They perceive that all the souls and spirits have spiritual power to overcome living people, therefore, people pray and appeal to ancestors to get blessed or protected. People perceive the interaction with spirits in almost the same way they perceive social life between living people. Thus, if people do not offer food and gifts, it is understandable that ancestors will not protect or bless them.

4. Time. While Chinese people emphasize the present time, they also tend to look back. “The spirits of the dead join the ancestors. Therefore history past is extremely important. . . . People must take advantage of the present with its opportunities for human achievement and advancement.”<sup>38</sup> This kind of punctuality precisely influences Chinese people’s feelings and emotions; they always tend to dwell in the past and focus on previous things. This occupation with the past becomes one of the reasons why Chinese people focus so much on the ancestors, but at the same time, they also want to take advantage of the present to try to get blessings and protection from ancestors in the *Zhong Yuan* Festival. Focusing on today and ignoring tomorrow is a very common philosophy for many Chinese people.

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<sup>34</sup>Daniel Tong, *A Biblical Approach to Chinese Traditions and Beliefs* (Singapore: Genesis Books, 2003), 20.

<sup>35</sup>*Chinese Customs and Festivals in Singapore*, 17.

<sup>36</sup>Tong, 12.

<sup>37</sup>Wu, 107.

<sup>38</sup>Hesselgrave, 264.

Regarding the analysis of these four basic elements of worldview, supernature, nature, man, and time, the reason why Chinese people participate in the rituals in the *Zhong Yuan* Festival has been demonstrated. This worldview perspective also proves the seven tenets of animism in the animistic aspects of the *Zhong Yuan* Festival. With this fundamental worldview perspective, the animistic aspects hiding behind the other three layers of the cultural onion will also clearly be defined; worldview perspective is able to interpret the *Zhong Yun* Festival's religious origin, which is the second layer of the cultural onion, according to Barney's model of culture.

### **A Worldview Perspective Regarding the Religious Origin of the *Zhong Yuan* Festival**

#### The Daoist Origin of the *Zhong Yuan* Festival

Regarding Daoist belief (A clarification: the religious Daoism here is different from the ideology Daoism), it is believed that on fifteenth day of the seventh month "the god of earth visits the heavens and reports on the good and bad deeds of men. On that day the hungry ghosts are allowed to leave the gate of hell. These ghosts have to be pacified and so most Chinese families make offerings of joss and *Yin* money to the wondering ghosts."<sup>39</sup> Another story about the origin of the *Zhong Yuan* Festival in regard to Daoism is that

the gates of hell are open on the first day of the seventh lunar month. This allows the *kui* (uncared for spirits or spirits under judgment that are locked in hell) to roam the earth to eat their fill before being locked up for another year. The belief is that once the gates are open, the *kui* will come out to look for food and if no one has prepared any offerings for them, they will go into homes to help themselves. Fear[ful] of such visits, people are generally quick to make offerings to appease and ward off the hungry ghosts.<sup>40</sup>

Regarding worldview perspective, though the date for the hungry ghosts or *kui* to come out of hell is different, one is July 1<sup>st</sup>, the other one July 15<sup>th</sup>, the significance is almost the same: 1) hungry ghosts or *kui* are from hell; 2) hungry ghosts and *kui* will disrupt people's lives if

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<sup>39</sup>Evelyn Lip, *Chinese Practices and Beliefs* (Torrance, California: Heian International, Inc., 2000), 26.

<sup>40</sup>Tong, 40.

they cannot get their food or offerings; 3) people fear the hungry ghosts and *kui*; 4) there are gods in charge of the hungry ghosts and *kui*. All these elements are based on Chinese peoples' worldview. This Daoist origin of the *Zhong Yuan* Festival also shows that Chinese people believe in heaven and hell in this universe and that there are also spirits and gods on earth who are able affect people's lives.

### The Buddhist Origin of the *Zhong Yuan* Festival

According to Buddhist belief, there are two similar stories about the origin of the *Zhong Yuan* Festival. These two similar stories portray a filial son with the name Mu Lian. One story goes that after Mu Lian's mother died, he

dreamt one night that she was in hell. In the dream, his mother appeared and said to him, "I am hungry; I am not being taken care of and am poorly treated." *Mu Lian* was so moved and touched by this dream that he decided to bring food down to hell to feed his mother. To do so, he had to endure many trials and difficulties in an attempt to gain favour from various gods. After much hardship, he ultimately reached hell and was "reunited" with his mother. This story is told to encourage filial piety towards parents and elders.<sup>41</sup>

The other story says that

Mu Lian was able to locate his dead mother in Hades after many trials and tribulations. When he tried to feed his starving mother, however, the food was invariably grabbed by other hungry ghosts. It was only through the intercession of Buddha, who was touched by Mu Lian's love and devotion to his mother, that the filial son finally succeeded in providing relief for his mother. To commemorate Mu Lian's filial act, Buddhists make it a practice to offer prayers to the dead on *Zhong Yuan* Festival.<sup>42</sup>

Both stories vividly tell why people want to offer food or gifts to ancestors—they want their ancestors to have enough food and an enjoyable life in Yin Jian. At the same time, as the second story tells, they do not want the hungry ghosts to bother their ancestors while receiving the food and offerings. The Buddhist origin is obviously

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<sup>41</sup>Tong, 41.

<sup>42</sup>*Chinese Customs and Festivals in Singapore*, 65.

colored with Buddhist belief; Mu Lian's successful filial act was favored by Buddha or other gods. It is undoubtedly true that the Chinese *Zhong Yuan* Festival is a mixture of Daoism and Buddhism. However, the Chinese worldview perspective still adequately provides all the explanation for the Buddhist origin, especially why people show filial piety to ancestors.

The worldview perspective not only deeply illuminates animistic aspects, but it also shows social filial piety in the religious origin of the *Zhong Yuan* Festival. Therefore, through the Chinese worldview perspective, people can get an entire understanding of the animistic aspects in the *Zhong Yuan* Festival.

### **Perspectives on the Animistic Aspects in the *Zhong Yuan* Festival**

#### Historical Controversy on Rituals in China

A historical controversy surrounding the Chinese rituals began in 1633; the closure was not seen until 1937.<sup>43</sup> This famous controversy lasted a few centuries. The core argument was about whether Chinese converts were allowed to perform Confucian rituals (the main part of Confucian rituals was ancestral worship) and how to use the right terms to address God.<sup>44</sup> The controversy started among Catholic missionaries, as "the Roman Catholic Society of Jesus (Jesuits) advocated the acceptability of ancestral tablets and the offering joss sticks," while the opposite group, such as "Dominicans and Franciscans did not advocate any accommodation to the Chinese culture and beliefs."<sup>45</sup> Meanwhile, many Protestants advocated a total rejection of the rituals because of some kind of pride and prejudice without serious study of the Chinese cultural context.<sup>46</sup>

The essence of this controversy is about how to make Christianity indigenized in the Chinese cultural context. Either totally accepting Confucian rituals or totally denying them are both dogmatic attitudes, a result of ignoring the real context. Even though a decision was made in 1935 by the Catholics, nothing was mentioned about the spiritual issues behind Confucian rituals.<sup>47</sup> Animistic aspects in the Confucian rituals were completely ignored in the history of controversy of rituals.

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<sup>43</sup>Tong 4.

<sup>44</sup>Huen Hoo Wing, Joseph 184. *Chinese Christianity History in Pictures* (Hong Kong: Tien Dao Publishing House, Ltd., 2011), 184. Translated from Chinese.

<sup>45</sup>Tong 3-4.

<sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>47</sup>George Minamiki, S.J. *The Chinese Rites Controversy: from Its Beginning to Modern Times* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1985), 218-219.

In contemporary times there are still different voices on the rituals in China. One voice, Yu Ping, perceives ancestor worship is biblical, according to the fifth commandment; however, Henry Smith, says that there is no religious meaning left in the rituals, but that it is only secular customs and another voice, Daniel Hung, states people should keep the cultural filial activities but stop the ancestor worship.<sup>48</sup>

#### A Pentecostal Perspective on the Animistic Aspects of the *Zhong Yuan* Festival

However, Pentecostal churches or missionaries, compared to Catholics and Evangelicals, have a different perspective with which to approach the Chinese people who are involved in the animistic aspects of the *Zhong Yuan* Festival.

First, according to a biblical worldview, Pentecostal missionaries or churches should be aware that the animistic aspects of the *Zhong Yuan* Festival are abhorrent to God because people offer sacrifices not to their ancestors, but to demons (Deuteronomy 32:17; 18:9-14). Since animistic aspects are spiritual, dealing with them becomes spiritual warfare and must depend on the power of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 6:10-18). This Pentecostal perspective is distinguished from Evangelical and Catholic perspectives. Besides power encounter, Pentecostal missionaries and churches also need to use other approaches to reach the Chinese people who are involved in the animistic rituals of the *Zhong Yuan* Festival. Johnson's "Four Encounter Paradigm for Ministering in Majority World Contexts" is inspiring and practical.<sup>49</sup> The significance of this pattern is that through biblical truth, power encounter and love encounter people can be converted to accept Jesus as a personal Savior or new believers can transfer their allegiance from their animistic practices to God, so that they can become committed Christians.

Second, to a new believer who used to participate in the ritual during the *Zhong Yuan* Festival, it is not easy to break the relation from the past emotionally or spiritually; it cannot be done in a day or one month; it is a process. Therefore, a healthy church needs to implement some plans to help and guide new converts to change or shift their thoughts and minds to commit to God. Regarding Christian Swartz's

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<sup>48</sup>Rheenen, 263.

<sup>49</sup>Dave Johnson, "Lecture #12: Johnson's Four Encounter Paradigm for Ministering in Majority World Contexts." Lecture at Asia Pacific Theological Seminary (Baguio, Philippines, November, 2014).

eight characteristics of a healthy church,<sup>50</sup> inspiring services and small groups are especially effective for a Chinese convert who has experienced the rituals during the *Zhong Yuan* Festival. An inspiring church service can lead a believer to meet God spiritually each time. He or she can shift from feelings and emotions of ancestors to concentrate on God. Small groups fit well in the Chinese cultural context. Through Bible study, prayer meetings or fellowship, a new believer can feel accepted and establish a new social relationship instead of the old animistic relations. Leading new believers to seek God's power and presence themselves is one of the goals of discipleship.

Third, there is still a good aspect to the *Zhong Yuan* Festival. The filial piety should not be ignored when missionaries approach the Chinese people. In history, filial piety served as the cornerstone of all morality in Chinese society.<sup>51</sup> Today, this filial piety is still valued as one of the cardinal virtues in China. Thus, Chinese people's filial feelings should be respected by missionaries or churches. Now, more and more Chinese people are open to Western Mother's Day and Father's Day. Therefore, the church can have activities to celebrate these holidays. The Chinese also have an Old Generation Day. The Church should provide special services to help new believers honor their parents and grandparents. At the same time, through the similarity of honoring and respecting parents in the Bible (Deuteronomy 5: 15) and Chinese filial piety, missionaries and churches can use the contextual approach to share the Gospel with Chinese people.

### Conclusion

Animism exists in many cultures and affects people's lives deeply. So does the Chinese traditional *Zhong Yuan* Festival. The Chinese people's worldview determines their ritual practice and the implications of the *Zhong Yuan* Festival. Through different approaches and specific kinds of church involvement, a church or missionary can win more Chinese people who used to practice ancestral worship in the *Zhong Yuan* Festival. A successful Christian indigenization is based on the power of the Gospel and proper social contextualization, which is

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<sup>50</sup>Dave Johnson, "Lecture #13 and #14: The Eight Essential Characteristics to Having Healthy Churches." Lecture at Asia Pacific Theological Seminary (Baguio, Philippines, November, 2014.) Taken from Christian Swarz, *Natural Church Development* (St. Charles, IL: Church Smart Resources, 1996): 15-38.

<sup>51</sup>Minamiki, 4.

biblical and is also one part of the diversity of contemporary successful Pentecostal globalization.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>52</sup>Wonsuk Ma, Veli-Matti Karkkainen, and J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, eds., *Pentecostal Mission and Global Christianity* (United Kingdom, Regnum Books International, 2014), 3.

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COMPARISON OF THE MANIFESTATION OF THE BAPTISM  
IN THE HOLY SPIRIT WITH THE  
SPIRITUAL TATTOO IN THAILAND

By Anattiphong Phanon

**Introduction**

Identification of the Issue

*Tattoo* is an “art” that has been a part of Thai culture for centuries. To the Thai people, tattoo not only is a mystic art of pattern, shape, and design, but it also reflects religious beliefs and traditions.

In Thailand, the “spiritual tattoo” is called *Sak-Yant*. In the Thai dictionary, *Sak* means to pierce the skin with a long needle to make a permanent picture or words.<sup>1</sup> *Yant* has a spiritual implication through the ‘sacred geometry’ that contains the alphabet and picture(s). Through rituals, spirits are transferred into the tattoo by shamans when they draw *Yant* on the skin, a cloth, or the surface of things. Thus, spiritual tattooing functions as the bridge or instrument that connects the tattoo wearer with gods or ‘wild spirits’ in the spiritual realm in order to help him/her.<sup>2</sup>

For the Thai, there are two kinds of spiritual tattoos—one, called *Meta Maha Saneh*, is for charming or prosperity; the other, called *Kong Krapan*, is for immortality.<sup>3</sup> According to Thai culture, the spiritual tattoo is different from the “fashion tattoo” because it can become possessed by the wild spirits, which require the wearer to have strong

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<sup>1</sup>Robert Lawlor and Lindisfarne Association, *Sacred Geometry: Philosophy and Practice* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1982), 5–6; L. R. Chawdhri, *Secrets of Yantra, Mantra & Tantra* (Sterling, n.d.), 3–4.

<sup>2</sup>Allan, and Blackwell, (translated by Anna Kardec), *The Spirits’ Book: The Principles of Spiritist Doctrine* (Lake-Libraria Allan Kardec Editora Ltda., n.d.), 69.

<sup>3</sup>“Traditional Thai Tattoos,” *Tattoo Thailand*, <http://www.tattoo-thailand.com/traditional-thai-tattoos.html>.

faith and belief. It is to be put not only onto the skin, but also on amulets, cloth, or other things in order to bless and protect the owners.<sup>4</sup>

#### Examples of the Issue's Prevalence

On August 22, 2011, at the New Hope International Church camp in Washington State, USA, the church's senior pastor, upon finishing his sermon, had an altar call. As he prayed, many young believers became overwhelmed with the presence of the Holy Spirit and reacted by crying, laughing, jumping, running and being "slain in the Spirit." Afterward, one of my Buddhist friends who believes in spiritual tattoo compared what she had just witnessed with spiritual tattoo manifestations.<sup>5</sup>

At another time during my research, I happened to interview at Bangkhae Church in Bangkok a female Christian who has been a devotee of Thai animism, especially the spiritual tattoo. She disclosed having experienced spiritual warfare the day she accepted Jesus Christ as her savior. Immediately after praying to receive Christ Jesus, she asked the pastor to pray for her back. As he and some elders were doing so, she fell down unconscious. Although she believed that she had been "slain in the Spirit," I learned that they had changed from praying for her back to casting out evil spirits.<sup>6</sup> When I asked how her Christian life was since she accepted Jesus, she admitted to often having strange symptoms, such as screaming, body shaking, jumping, and trying to turn over wooden benches during a worship service. Surprisingly, she had never talked to her pastor about those frightening manifestations. I, of course, encouraged her to immediately do so.<sup>7</sup>

#### Purpose/Application of This Research

With *Sak-Yant* (i.e., spiritual tattoo) so popular among Thai Buddhists, many of them question the baptism in the Holy Spirit in Pentecostal and Charismatic churches, since both share a similar "spiritual empowerment." This issue is also often raised by new Christians who have spiritual tattoos and who used to participate in the

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<sup>4</sup>Chawdhri, *Secrets of Yantra, Mantra & Tantra*, 4.

<sup>5</sup>Tanya Suwan, interviewed by Anattiphong Phanon, Seattle, WA, August 22, 2011.

<sup>6</sup>See [www.youtube.com/watch?v=mf5Gdxh27CE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mf5Gdxh27CE) [at 1:38:00]

<sup>7</sup>Mimi-jaiko (pseudonym in [www.pantip.com](http://www.pantip.com)), The Spiritual Possession for Christian Who Has Spiritual Tattoo, September 25, 2014, <http://pantip.com/message/5422bc7d961fl252098b47d2> (under maxlife's account).

spiritual tattoo ritual, since demonic manifestations mirror their spiritual experiences and sensitivity.

Thus, the intent of the research presented here is to compare the differences between the baptism in the Holy Spirit and the spiritual tattoo, particularly relative to the area of resulting manifestations between those associated with the Holy Spirit and those associated with the tattoo. It is hoped that “the truth of the matter” revealed by this research will help new Christians who had previously been under the influence of the spiritual tattoo ritual to avoid confusion and to seek release from its effects.

## **Historical Background**

### Origin of Spiritual Tattoo

The purpose of tattooing has varied from culture to culture and generation to generation throughout history. This section will address the background and arrival of the spiritual tattoo in Thailand and the elements involved.

The spiritual tattoo is an art that has a profound background mixed with integrated religious beliefs and practices.<sup>8</sup> To trace that background, one needs to know first the roots of Brahmanism-Hinduism during the Vedic Period, and then the history of *Tantrism*, which is expressed in the concepts of *Tantra*, *Yantra*, and *Mantra*. *Tantrism* developed the sacred geometry that later became known in Thailand as spiritual tattoo.<sup>9</sup> Indian black magic, with its spelling, rituals, and charms that were used in the spiritual tattoo, was developed by Brahmanism, which produced the rituals, doctrines, and numerous sacred texts and literature.<sup>10</sup> These “sciences” were called *Tantric* and *Vajrayana*, which included *Yantra* and *Mantra*.<sup>11</sup>

Spiritual tattooing, specifically, originated during the reign of the Khmer empire, which in the 9th to the 13th centuries encompassed Laos, Vietnam, and parts of Thailand. The sciences of *Tantric* were

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<sup>8</sup>Prasert Chutindharo. 2008. “*An Analytical Study of the Occultism and Buddhism According to Phra Dhammapitaka*.” Master's thesis, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, 2008, 15–16.

<sup>9</sup>Pisnupol Suwannaroopo. 2012. “*A Study of Buddha Dhamma and Value as Appeared in Lanna Yuntian: A Case Study of Amphur Muang, Lampang Province*.” Master's thesis, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, 25.

<sup>10</sup>“Vedic Period,” *Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia*, March 17, 2014, [http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Vedic\\_period&oldid=589943270](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Vedic_period&oldid=589943270).

<sup>11</sup>Suwannaroopo, 20.

incorporated into Buddhism, folk religion, and shamanism. During World War II and the Vietnam conflict, Thai soldiers covered themselves with the spiritual tattoo and other amulets for protection.<sup>12</sup> Doing so purportedly guaranteed that the warriors would not receive any physical harm as long as they observed the proscribed taboos and rules, such as keeping the precepts of Buddhism in order to please the spirits.<sup>13</sup> This practice continues to be popular today.

### Aim and Objects of the *Tantric*

To understand spiritual tattooing in Thailand, *Sak-Yant* has to be divided into two parts. *Sak* in Thai means only the tattoo, which could be graphics and/or words. *Yant* is the sacred geometry connected to spirituality and religious beliefs. It is basically the science of *Tantric*, which consists of *Tantra*, *Mantra*, and *Yantra*.<sup>14</sup> In the spiritual tattooing ceremony, *Tantric* is used by Brahmin or Buddhist monks to empower the tattoo, making *Tantra*, *Mantra*, and *Yantra* important to the comprehension of spiritual tattooing in Thailand.

### *Tantra*

*Tantra* is the mystical formula necessary for the attainment of supernatural powers. The art of *Tantra* is the act used in the ritual involving *chakra* (meditation), which means inner force.<sup>15</sup> *Tantra* is the method of being united with the universe through five elements—sense of smell, water with taste, fire with vision, air with touch, and ether with sound.<sup>16</sup> The aim of *Tantra* is to realize the cosmos and the power of the spiritual being.<sup>17</sup> It is the method by which one discovers and uses the hidden powers of various types in *Yantra*.

Before the tattooing ceremony, *Tantra* is used to increase the Brahmins' *chakra* to empower the spiritual tattoo and to protect the tattoo wearers from the wild spirit's harmful manipulation.<sup>18</sup> During the

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<sup>12</sup>Spencer Littlewood, "Sak Yant Buddhist Tattoos: Sacred Geometry, Magic Spells, Animal Possession," n.d., 7.

<sup>13</sup>Niels Mulder, *Inside Thai Society: An Interpretation of Everyday Life* (Bangkok, Thailand: Editions Duang Kamol : Chatchamnāi dōi Dūang Kamon Samai, 1990), 47.

<sup>14</sup>Suwannaroopo, 14; Chawdhri, 122.

<sup>15</sup>Chawdhri, 125.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 132.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 125.

<sup>18</sup>Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche and Mark Dahlby, *Healing with Form, Energy, and Light: The Five Elements in Tibetan Shamanism, Tantra, and Dzogchen* (Snow Lion Publications, 2002), 83–84.

ceremony, the wearers will use the *Tantra* to meditate and to control their concentration.<sup>19</sup> The more they meditate, the more the tattoo is empowered. However, if they lose their concentration during meditation, they can be harmed and manipulated by the wild spirit instead of controlling it.

### *Mantra*

*Mantra* (also called *Kata* in Thailand) is a Sanskrit word meaning “prayer;” but it is also used as a chant or hymn to the deities in different combinations and contexts with *Tantra* and *Yantra*.<sup>20</sup> Hindus believe that chanting the right *Mantra* helps bring about good health or victory over enemies.<sup>21</sup> The users have to learn how to pronounce *Mantras* properly as well as understand their meaning in order not to be afflicted. Without faith and belief, *Mantras* are to be avoided.<sup>22</sup>

To practice *Mantra*, users must concentrate and meditate with pure thoughts but without any stress or strain on the brain or body.<sup>23</sup> This is one reason why Buddhism, which is to realize the meaning of life so that one can experience peace of mind, fits with *Tantric*, because Buddhism “paths” will attain peace of mind and reduce mental strain. Practicing *Mantra* is supposed to produce a peace and stillness that cannot be described. *Mantra* meditation, in depth, will let the user see and control the light, which Thai Buddhists call “soul,” in various forms, such as light ball or light beams.

### *Yantra*

*Yantra* is an instrument, an apparatus, a talisman, or mystical diagrams that include geometry, signs, and writings. *Yantras* are drawn in different sacred geometric forms so as to connect with different deities and different *Mantras*.<sup>24</sup> The five basic element symbols of Earth, Water, Air, Fire and Sky are related to *Yantra* in order to control nature for one’s own advantage plus to remove evil’s effects and increase any beneficial aspects.<sup>25</sup> In general, to use *Yantra* is to draw a particular design on the surface of something. The sacred geometric lines for good luck and good purpose are drawn and/or written from

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<sup>19</sup>Littlewood, 335–336.

<sup>20</sup>Robert A Yelle, *Explaining Mantras: Rhetoric, the Dream of a Natural Language, and the Efficiency of Ritual* (New York; London: Routledge, 2003), 90.

<sup>21</sup>Chawdhri, 75.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 83.

<sup>23</sup>Chutindharo, 24.

<sup>24</sup>Chawdhri, 3.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 4.

east to west in the early morning, and the lines for harming are drawn and/or written from west to east in the evening.<sup>26</sup> *Mantra* and *Tantra* are inter-linked since they are expressed through the medium of Yantra. To connect with different deities, different *Yantras* are combined with different *Mantras*. The *Mantras* recited perfectly by the tattoo wearer will increase the effectiveness of the *Yantra*.<sup>27</sup>

*Yantra* has six purposes—control a person or deity, cure diseases and ward off the evil spirits, protect from the evil spirits, make one attractive to others, distract the enemies and harm others (including killing them). To use *Yantra*, there are conditions, rules and taboos that the users have to follow without error; otherwise, they will pay for their mistakes with their lives.<sup>28</sup>

### Comparison and Analysis

#### Attributes of the Spirits in Spiritual Tattoo

The crucial question for Thai Christians is, How do the spirits possessed in the tattoo differ from the Holy Spirit? The spiritual tattoo wearers say there is no difference between the spiritual possession through tattoo and the baptism in the Holy Spirit. In response, it is important that we provide a comparison of the attributes of the Holy Spirit to those of other spirits in order to distinguish the differences.<sup>29</sup>

Most spiritual tattoo wearers would agree with Littlewood that their tattoos are not only magical, but also empowered by both natural and wild spirits.<sup>30</sup> Jeff Watt provides a rather thorough general understanding of gods and deities (i.e., supernatural beings or forces) that live outside of normal reality and who have the power to interact for good or ill in personal reality through spiritual connection, ritual, or curses in a cause-effect relationship.<sup>31</sup>

In Thailand, animism emphasizes two kinds of spirits—domesticated and non-domesticated.<sup>32</sup> “Domesticated spirits” (called *Saksit*) are vast invincible forces that can conform themselves to

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 10.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 4–5.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 12–13.

<sup>29</sup>Tanya Suwan, interviewed by Anattiphong Phanon, Seattle, WA, August 22, 2011.

<sup>30</sup>Littlewood, 117–123.

<sup>31</sup>Jeff Watt, “Himalayan Buddhist Art 101: Gods and Deities in *Tantric* Buddhism,” Tricycle Foundation, <http://www.tricycle.com/blog/himalayan-buddhist-art-101-gods-and-deities-Tantric-buddhism>, May 9, 2012.

<sup>32</sup>Mulder, 41.

objects or places in order to fulfill personal interests, such as guardian spirits for protection or blessing.<sup>33</sup> According to Mulder, their power is limited to a specific territory, such as a spirit house.<sup>34</sup> “Non-domesticated spirits” appear as wild spirits, Mulder defining them as being unpredictable and essentially malevolent.<sup>35</sup> He further explains that the larger ones influence the smaller ones and the good ones overwhelm the bad; also they have their own interest and volition, such as to cause harm, illness, death, or destruction.<sup>36</sup>

Both domesticated and non-domesticated spirits are considered as “wind;” they can, however, be controlled by using the larger forces of the cosmos through the science of *Tantric*.<sup>37</sup> Although both can possess objects through the *Tantric*, the ones possessed in tattoos are most likely non-domesticated because the ritual used for spiritual tattoos is different than the ritual used for domesticated spirits. This is why spiritual tattoo wearers who cover themselves with wild spirits have to pay homage to them lest the wearers be harmed by their negligent behavior.<sup>38</sup>

#### Attributes of the Holy Spirit (Pneumatology)

Although the *Tantric*'s sacred texts and Thai documents about spiritual tattoo barely mention the attributes of the spirits that are spelled in sacred geometries, most Thais recognize them as being wild spirits.<sup>39</sup> The Bible, on the other hand, has much to say about the attributes of the Holy Spirit, who is a Divine Person, being one with the Father and the Son. So how should the concept of the Holy Spirit be understood? His personhood does not relate to physical appearance, for as R. A. Torrey explains, “The marks of personality are knowledge, feeling, and will, and any being who knows, thinks, feels, and wills is a person whether he has a body or not.”<sup>40</sup> Craig Keener suggests that the Bible revealed the personality (and thus, attributes) of the Holy Spirit through Jesus, who portrayed Him as being “another Counselor” (Jn.

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 23–24.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 43.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 47.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 47–48.

<sup>37</sup>Chutindharo, 20–21.

<sup>38</sup>Mulder, 47–48.

<sup>39</sup>Wirat Chantako. 2008. “*An Analytical Study of Aesthetic Values in the Art of Tattoos*.” Master’s thesis, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, 27–29.

<sup>40</sup>Reuben Archer Torrey, *The Person and Work of The Holy Spirit* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2011), 16–17.

14:16-17);<sup>41</sup> while, according to Gordon Fee, the apostle Paul explored the personality of the Spirit in many verses, including 1 Corinthians 2:10-13, 3:16; Romans 8:11; and Galatians 4:6; 5:18).<sup>42</sup>

The equality that exists within the Trinity (or Godhead) further suggests the Spirit's divine attribute. Can one be three and three be one? Keener presents the concept of the Trinity whereby Christians today recognize God in the different aspects via the process of salvation.<sup>43</sup> In salvation, the Holy Spirit reveals Christ in believers, to know Christ is to know the Spirit (Jn. 16:14; Rom. 8:9), and to know the Father is to know Christ (1 Jn. 2:23).<sup>44</sup> If the Holy Spirit is described as the Third Person of the Trinity, does this indicate inferior status? John Rae notes that both Matthews 28:19 and John 16:9 draw a distinction among the three Persons as being separate personalities; so there is no question that the Spirit is divine and an equal part of the Trinity (Isa. 40:13, 48:16, 63:10-11).<sup>45</sup>

Stanley Horton reminds us that the Holy Spirit is associated with God's creative activity (Gen. 1:1-2).<sup>46</sup> Other Bible passages also make mention of the Spirit's divine characteristics, such as the One who knows the thoughts of God, who is able to instruct people (1 Cor. 2:10, Jn. 14:26), and who performs the works and miracles that God initiates (Ps. 104:30, Matt. 12:28). Rea distinguishes the Spirit's personal supremacy, superior knowledge, and spiritual insight as being manifestly different from other purported spirits and forces, and that He shares the same feelings and emotions as human beings (Isa. 63:10; Eph. 4:30).<sup>47</sup>

### Roles of the "Tattoo Spirits" Versus the Holy Spirit in Human Life

Comparison of the attributes and manifestations of the spirits in the spiritual tattoo and those of the Holy Spirit in the life of humans shows their roles to be vastly different. The spiritual tattoo is anthropocentric,

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<sup>41</sup>Craig S Keener, *Gift & Giver: The Holy Spirit for Today* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2001), 20.

<sup>42</sup>Gordon D. Fee, *Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God*, Reprint edition (Baker Academic, 1995), 27.

<sup>43</sup>Keener, 19–20.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, 22–23.

<sup>45</sup>John Rea, *The Holy Spirit in the Bible: All the Major Passages About the Spirit : a Commentary* (Lake Mary, Fla.: Creation House, 1990), 20.

<sup>46</sup>Stanley M. Horton, *What the Bible Says About the Holy Spirit: Revised Edition*, Revised edition (Gospel Publishing House, 2012), 17.

<sup>47</sup>Rea, *The Holy Spirit in the Bible*, 20.

which means that it is rooted in the belief that mankind, not God or animals, is the central element of existence. Thai Buddhist monk Chantako says that the sacred tattoo is to be “valued” by people based on its functional use;<sup>48</sup> Marie Tania agrees, saying that the tattoo is utilized “in the way we choose.”<sup>49</sup> Although many devotees insist the primary reason for having a spiritual tattoo is to maintain one’s spiritual life through rules and taboos, Chutindharo (another Buddhist monk) tends to disagree. He depicts the science of spirituality and superstition in Thailand as the act of faith without logical comprehension regarding the original belief.<sup>50</sup> The implication is that people look at spiritual tattooing as a means of fulfilling their personal wants, without considering spiritual values.

The role of the wild spirits in the tattoo is normally viewed as providing the desires of the wearers, with no love and mercy being involved. However, the wearers must please these spirits by offerings and/or keeping rules and taboos, otherwise, they will pay for their “unfaithfulness” via non-diagnostic sicknesses or accidents.<sup>51</sup> Since the spirits can cause either good or evil, there is no sense of morality involved.<sup>52</sup>

In what way, then, does the above compare to the attributes and thus role of the Holy Spirit as revealed in the Scriptures? The Bible declares that God is the center of all. But does he want to be that center because of dictatorship, domination, or self-centeredness? Genesis 1:26-31 reads, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness”...“And God saw everything that he had made, it was very good,” which shows that He created man to be unique and different from the other creatures he created and gave man not only authority over those creatures, but also the ability to have a relationship with him. But because of Adam’s sin, that relationship was disconnected, and human beings fell from God’s glory. Although the sin is from one person, God’s grace and justice are prepared for all (1 Cor. 15:12-28). John 3:16-17 says, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”

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<sup>48</sup>Chantako, 83–84.

<sup>49</sup>Tania Marie, *Spiritual Skin - Sacred Tattoos: More than Skin Deep*, 389–390, Kindle.

<sup>50</sup>Chutindharo, 15–16.

<sup>51</sup>Pierce C. Salguero, *Spiritual Healing of Traditional Thailand* (Findhorn: Findhorn Press, 2006), 78.

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*, 78–79.

Why this passage is so significant is because it reveals the characteristics of God in contrast to those of the spirit of tattoo. It describes God's role in people's lives as one of caring about and loving them, the ultimate expression of that love, of course, being God the Son dying for us "while we were yet sinners" (Rom. 5:6-8).<sup>53</sup> He further proved his care and love by giving us the Holy Spirit to help and be with us (Rom. 5:5; Eph. 3:16-19). Keener emphasizes, "The Holy Spirit has come into our hearts and now points to the cross, assuring us with his love."<sup>54</sup> Therefore, we can be reconciled in our relationship with God through Jesus (Jn. 14:6; Rom. 5:8), whose resurrected life confirms that we are his children (Jn. 1:12).

The Holy Spirit's priority concern is about restoration and reconciliation of the relationship of God with humans. In the Old Testament, we see God's re-creating and restoring work toward mankind illustrated in the interrelatedness of his forgiveness and the return of his people (the Jews) from exile (Isa. 40:1-2; Jer. 31:31-40; Ezek. 36:24-28, 37:21-23; Dan. 9:16-19). In the New Testament, to receive the Holy Spirit is to be empowered for mission, just as the Father had anointed the Son with the Spirit for mission (Lk. 4:18; cf. Acts 10:38). Colossians 1:16 says, "All things had been created by him and for him," indicating that Jesus is the center because all things are created through his power and ability *for* him,<sup>55</sup> and Revelation 1:8 further declaring, "I am the Alpha and the Omega . . . who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 that believers are the temple of God where he can live in us forever and continue in intimate relationship with us.<sup>56</sup> Moreover, his love toward humans is eternal. John 14:15-17 reads, "If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you." This significant passage is the promise Jesus gave to believers that he would send a "helper" to be with them forever. It indicates that, after they accept Jesus as their savior, believers belong to the Holy Spirit, who will be with them and

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<sup>53</sup>Keener, 26–27.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid.

<sup>55</sup>Richard R. Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture (New American Commentary)* (Holman Reference, 1991), 182.

<sup>56</sup>Keener, 30.

love them forever. God is immutable, and his love has been upon humans since the beginning and will be until the end (2 Tim. 1:9; Eph. 1:4).

The aim of abiding in the Holy Spirit is to encourage believers that they belong to God, again, forever—"If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal 3:29). Whereas, for the spiritual tattoo wearer, the presence of those spirits is only temporary—i.e., for as long as the devotees keep the rules. The purpose of baptism in the Holy Spirit is to give, to receive, and to deposit the gift of the Spirit in believers through faith until the Lord's second coming, when they will be taken up to their permanent residence (Jn. 14:16, 16:12-13).<sup>57</sup> Unlike the tattoo spirits, the Holy Spirit's role is to interact with and point persons to Christ. Therefore, to grow in their relationship with God, believers are to cooperate with the Spirit, who dwells them and cultivates that relationship. He will guide believers into God's ways through faith and obedience, not through intellectual knowledge (1 Jn. 4:7-10).

#### Aims of the Spiritual Manifestation

A significant issue among many Christians in Thailand with regard to spiritual tattooing is the matter of *Wai Kru*, which is a ritual that involves the exhibiting of manifestations when spirits enter the tattoo through incantations of the monks. Originally, *Wai Kru* was an annual ceremony in Thai schools where students showed appreciation and respect to their teachers by presenting them with flowers and prostrating themselves at the teachers' feet.<sup>58</sup> An *Ajarn* (or guru) adopted the *Wai Kru* so spiritual tattoo wearers would show their respect to those masters who tattooed them.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>*The baptism of the Holy Spirit* is part of the gift of the Holy Spirit that Jesus promised to His disciple (Acts 1:5, 11:15-16). It is the basis of the filling of the Holy Spirit – The ministries of the Holy Spirit. Merrill F. Unger, *The Baptism and Gifts of the Holy Spirit*, New Edition edition (Moody Publishers, 1974), 153–154.

<sup>58</sup>*Sak-Yant Thai Temple Tattoos, "Wai Kroo Festival,"* <http://sak-yant.com/samnak-sak-yant/wat-bang-phra/wai-kroo-festival/#.Uvj-aUKSxCM>.

<sup>59</sup>To show the respect to the master is one of the rules for devotees to maintain the power of the spirits possessed in tattoos.

During the ceremony, sometimes spirits manifest themselves (i.e., *Khong Khuen*)<sup>60</sup> in the tattoo wearers, especially in those who keep their lives in a way that's pleasing to the spirits. *Khong Khuen* is a phenomenon that remains unexplained to the day. Upon hearing the chant of *Mantra* from the *Ajarn*, the wearers enter a trance state, which expresses itself in various ways, depending on the spirits.<sup>61</sup> Commonly, the expressions seem to be imitations of a Himapant animal (from Brahmanism legend) or a divine being, such as an ancient hermit.<sup>62</sup> These often-violent manifestations include thrashing, jumping, running, and screaming with hands outstretched clawing at the air like a tiger, squealing like a wild boar, or slithering on the floor like a snake or alligator. The possessed person is completely unable to control what is happening.<sup>63</sup>

Sadly, the response of too many Christians (including Pentecostals) to the *Wai Kru* and the *Khong Khuen* is that they see little, if any, difference between spiritual tattoo possession and the baptism in the Holy Spirit.<sup>64</sup> Some devotees claim that the concept of *Khong Khuen* is similar to Holy Spirit baptism. For Pentecostals, it is critical that this issue be clarified and the differences explained.

#### Contrast of Spiritual Empowerments

Devotees of spiritual tattoo believe that *Khong Khuen* is a way to initially empower—and later “recharge”—spirits, to maintain the wearers' faith in their tattoos, to encourage them to bear witness to the tattoo's power, and to prove an *Ajarn's* spiritual power and magical ability.<sup>65</sup> Sometime, the *Ajarn* speaks in a godly language and prophecies during the *Khong Khuen* ceremony.<sup>66</sup> Can these phenomena be considered similar to the signs and wonders in Pentecostal perspective?

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<sup>60</sup>*Khong Khuen* is an unexplainable event which occurs with devotees of *Sak Yant* tattooing. The word *Khong Khuen* refers to magical and mysterious forces arising through the devotee entering trance. Littlewood, 28.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., 29.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., 28.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., 29.

<sup>64</sup>Tanya Suwan, interviewed by Anattiphong Phanon, Seattle, WA, August 22, 2011.

<sup>65</sup>Littlewood, 28–30.

<sup>66</sup>The reason of using the term “godly languages” is because devotees and *Ajarn* intend to communicate with deities by speaking in the inapprehensible languages, which they claim those are the deities' languages.

Robert Menzies defines the soteriology that embodies believers in Christ (1 Cor. 12:13) and the missiology that empowers believers for service (Acts 1:8) as the theology of the baptism in the Holy Spirit.<sup>67</sup> Therefore, the differences between spiritual empowerment evidenced in spiritual tattoo and the Holy Spirit baptism are substantial. The aim of the latter is to empower believers to reach out to the world, not for their sake but for Christ's; whereas the empowerment of spiritual tattoo is both narcissistic and temporary. The Bible thus warns us, "Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings, for the heart is to be strengthened by grace, not by food" (Heb. 13:7-9). F.F. Bruce suggests the need to focus on the spiritual world, not on the physical world, and on eternity, not temporality.<sup>68</sup>

From a Pentecostal perspective, the baptism in the Holy Spirit "serves as a sign that the calling and power of the apostolic church are valid for contemporary believers."<sup>69</sup> The aim of signs and wonders indicates the mission is to declare salvation in Christ alone to all nations. The Holy Spirit is the source of the spiritual empowerment in believers to be effective witnesses.<sup>70</sup> The manifestation of the Spirit through the signs and wonders is endorsed in believers' hearts as power evangelism, which emphasizes fearless and bold witness of Christ in the face of difficulties (Lk.12:8-12; Acts 4:31).<sup>71</sup> Stephen is a good example of such a fearless and bold witness, even though he was accused of being a blasphemer of God. Acts 6:8-10 says:

Now Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, performed great wonders and signs among the people. Opposition arose, however, from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called)—Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria as well as the provinces of Cilicia and Asia—who began to argue with Stephen. But they could not stand up against the wisdom the Spirit gave him as he spoke.

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<sup>67</sup>Robert Menzies, *Pentecost: This Story Is Our Story* (GPH, 2013), 893–894, Kindle.

<sup>68</sup>F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Revised edition (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1990), 680.

<sup>69</sup>Menzies, 998.

<sup>70</sup>William W. Menzies and Robert P. Menzies, *Spirit and Power* (Zondervan, 2011), 3080–3081, Kindle.

<sup>71</sup>*Ibid.*, 3264–3266.

Stephen knew that the Holy Spirit was with him, not only because of the performance of wonders and signs, but also because of the Spirit's leading. He was aware that what he had said was through the wisdom that the Spirit had provided, although he was overwhelmed by fear.

The Holy Spirit not only empowers believers to have a bold witness, but also enables them to "declare the wonders of God" via a language that they had never learned.<sup>72</sup> In 1 Corinthians 12:7, Paul introduces the gifts of the Spirit and their purpose thusly—"The manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good." Fee comments, "Thus each 'gift' is a 'manifestation,' a disclosure of the Spirit's activity in their midst."<sup>73</sup> Further, Paul emphasizes that these gifts are for building the community up as a whole, not for the individual's benefit (1 Cor. 12:13-14), that the Holy Spirit joins all believers as one body with Christ as the head (Eph. 1:22-23; 1 Co. 12:12-27),<sup>74</sup> and yet the Spirit uses believers individually according to his will for his ministries (Rom. 12:3-8).

Keener says, "The process of transformation does not depend on our self-discipline as much as it depends on our willingness to embrace God's help."<sup>75</sup> The Holy Spirit's role in believers is not to keep an eye on us, but to help us (1 Cor. 12:7-11; Jn. 14:16, 26, 15:26). He transforms us into new creations in God's image (Eph. 4:24; 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15); thereby believers receive God's holy nature, which includes morality and character. One "consequence" of being a new creature in God is to have confidence while living in this world. Peter and John before the Sanhedrin is a good example. When told to stop speaking and teaching about Jesus, Peter did not exhibit his former cowardly characteristic of running away and denying Christ (Matt. 26:69-75). Rather, the Sanhedrin saw a new Peter, sealed and transformed by the Holy Spirit not only via the signs and wonders he performed, but also because of the resurrection and all the promises of Jesus (Acts 4:8-20).

God wants human beings' hearts, not their attention. Because the Holy Spirit is fully God and shares all the attributes of the Godhead, he brings a godlike character or atmosphere to any situation in which he is active, resulting in conviction of sin, righteousness, and judgment (Jn.

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<sup>72</sup>Ibid., 1042.

<sup>73</sup>Gordon D Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1987), 589.

<sup>74</sup>Merrill F. Unger, 22–23.

<sup>75</sup>Keener, 72–73.

16:8–11).<sup>76</sup> Because God is love, the Holy Spirit pours that love into our hearts (Rom. 5:5; 15:30; Col. 1:8), and often his strongly manifested presence will create an atmosphere of love. God is “not a author of confusion but of peace” (1 Cor. 14:33), and it’s the Holy Spirit who brings that peace into situations—“The kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 14:17; cf. Gal. 5:22),<sup>77</sup> this verse also teaching us that he imparts an atmosphere of joy (see also Acts 13:52; 1 Thess. 1:6). Paul summarized many of the godlike qualities that the Holy Spirit produces when he listed the various manifestations of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22–23.

To review, then, the atmosphere of the Holy Spirit’s manifestation differs vastly from the phenomena of *Khong Kuen* because the Spirit points to salvation in Christ, which frees humankind from sin. Therefore, the aim of the manifestation of God is to reconcile a broken relationship through Christ, the Lord and Savior (Lk. 10:21-24), which results in an eternal peace that the world—and *Khong Kuen*—cannot give. The Holy Spirit also provides the assurance and the confidence in salvation through encountering God, bearing witness “with our spirits that we are children of God” (Rom. 8:16). Plus, he gives evidence of the work of God within believers—“And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit which He has given us” (1 Jn. 3:24, 4:13). Besides witnessing to believers who are God’s children, he also witnesses that God abides in His people and they abide in him. More than the intellect is involved; rather the Spirit works to give assurance at the subjective level of spiritual and emotional perception.<sup>78</sup> The sign of abiding in God is the promise of salvation, which empowers believers not only to be confident (1 Jn. 4:17), but also to love one another (1 Jn. 4:11).

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

### Tattoo Spirits vs. the Holy Spirit: Attributes and Purposes

The appropriate response to spiritual tattoo wearers’ claim of no difference between the manifestations of the spirits in the *Wai Kru*

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<sup>76</sup>Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, New Edition edition (Zondervan, 2009), 562.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., 562.

ceremony and the Holy Spirit in the baptism in the Holy Spirit involves distinguishing the differences in both attributes and purposes. While these spirits behind the manifestations may appear similar, they are far from being so. The spirits inserted in the tattoo are clearly evil spirits, having as their basic characteristic and intent to destroy, steal, and kill (Jn. 10:10). Instead of controlling those spirits, the tattoo wearer is instead controlled by them (2 Tim. 2:26), which they do by attracting the wearer to materialism and by perverse spiritual manifestations. While these evil spirits control people with taboos and kill them spiritually, the Holy Spirit, on the other hand, comes to give life (Jn. 10:10).

Often accompanying the baptism in the Holy Spirit are signs and wonders, such as speaking in tongues, being slain in the Spirit, the casting out of demons, or healings. Such phenomena serve to empower believers to bear witness that Christ is Savior and to become more Christ-like. Thus, the purpose of the baptism in the Holy Spirit is to declare salvation in Christ, who is the center of all. Jesus is looking for reconciliation with all believers because he cares for and loves them, not to satisfy their fleshly wants. Luke 15:3-7 depicts just how much he loves his people:

Then Jesus told them this parable: “Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn’t he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders <sup>6</sup>and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’ I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

Besides illustrating Jesus’ love, this passage also shows the depth of our worth to him. 1 Corinthians 6:20 says, “You were brought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.” Jesus, who intends for the salvation of all, wants us to respond to his love by sharing with others—1 John 3:16 saying, “This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.”

The Holy Spirit in his role as helper will manifest himself in all believers in order to empower them to share Jesus’ love with everyone. Although believers may face trials or obstructions, that is often the

process through which they learn to trust God and allow him to work in their lives. The result is not to satisfy their needs but to become mature in their relationship with Christ.

### The Kingdom of Light vs. The Kingdom of Darkness

In Thailand, many Christians are disturbed and afflicted by evil spirits because of the charms or amulets that remain in their homes. These spirits can still affect a believer's life through the *Yant* in idols or tattoos. While charms and amulets can be gotten rid of, unfortunately the spiritual tattoo engraved on one's body is a different matter. Although tattoos can now be removed via laser technology, the procedure is often too expensive for many people. In addition, because the "sacred geometry" of spiritual tattoo functions as the bridge or connector between the spiritual world and the physical world, a very real question for Christians so tattooed is—can they, in fact, be possessed by spirits other than the Holy Spirit? Those believers especially need to know how to deal with evil spiritual influences and how God protects his people.

In Luke 10:17-20, Jesus says, "I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemies, and nothing shall hurt you." This passage makes clear that the power of the spiritual tattoo will *not* be able to overcome believers because of the authority that Jesus has given to them. Now being in Christ, who defeated Satan at the cross, they are protected from evil spirits. According to Thais' general understanding of the spiritual rule, those spirits who have more power will defeat those with less power. This understanding should help Thai Christians because God, who created the heaven and the earth, has all power and authority, has defeated Satan, and has overcome the world through Christ Jesus (1 Jn. 5:4).

Jesus promised the protection of believers by the Holy Spirit (Mk. 16:16-18), that they will fear no evil and harm because he is with them. However, since Satan's aim is to destroy believers (Jn. 10:10; 1 Pe. 5:8), they have been provided and are to put on the "full armor of God" (Eph. 6:10-18), cooperate with the Holy Spirit, stand firm in their faith, and be ready for spiritual warfare.

In order to prevent the confusion between spiritual tattoo manifestations and the baptism in the Holy Spirit, one must understand that there are two kinds of "spiritual kingdoms" in this world—the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness. The King of the kingdom of light is Jesus Christ, while the prince of the kingdom of

darkness is Satan (Jn. 12:31), and every human being “belongs” to one or the other. Opal Reddin explains that the Christ rejecters belong to Satan’s kingdom, that they are “possessed by him.”<sup>79</sup> When sinners accept Jesus as their savior, they are possessed by Christ and are set free from the chain of sin, all connections with the kingdom of darkness being cut by the blood of Christ.

This is the sensitive area that cannot be taken lightly. Believers are not in the realm of flesh but rather in the realm of the Spirit, and anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Christ (Rom. 8:9). So to whom then do those who do not have the Spirit of Christ belong? They belong to Satan, whom the Bible identifies as “The father of this world” (Jn. 8:39-47). The important point is that, when one becomes a “citizen” of the kingdom of light, he/she cannot be possessed by Satan as Paul confirms in Romans 8:38-39:

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

In other words, when it comes to the two spiritual kingdoms, there is no such thing as “joint ownership,” because it is impossible for Satan to repossess what Christ possesses. So long as Christians continue to abide in Christ, the enemy of their souls cannot occupy them; he can only tempt, accuse, and try to undermine their faith. That’s why the reminder to believers is to, “Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (1 Pet. 5:8). Reddin notes, “Satan may cause him (the believer) to stumble; Satan may influence his behavior; but Satan cannot ‘possess’ him!”<sup>80</sup> To reiterate, once believers belong to the kingdom of light, Satan has lost the power over them—including all of the instruments and connectors, such as the spiritual tattoo.

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<sup>79</sup>Opal L. Reddin ed., *Power Encounter: A Pentecostal Perspective*, Revised Edition edition (Springfield, MO: Central Bible College Press, n.d.), 161.

<sup>80</sup>*Ibid.*, 163.

### In Conclusion

There are two spiritual worlds, which appear to be both similar but are vastly different. Although Thai people believe in the power of the spiritual tattoo that can ostensibly protect them and provide whatever they want, they have to maintain that spiritual power by attending the *Wai Kru* ceremony and by keeping the taboos and rules. For Christians, the manifestation of baptism in the Holy Spirit reveals how much they are loved by God, who sent his Son to die in order to redeem them from their sins. God is concerned not only about their physical lives in this world, but also their spiritual lives after this world. His plans for us are greater than just to satisfy our temporal needs, but to prepare us for His eternal Kingdom.

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Dynnice Rosanny D. Engcoy, *Pentecostal Pioneer: The Life and Legacy of Rudy Esperanza in the Early Years of the Assemblies of God in the Philippines* (Baguio City, Philippines: APTS Press, 2014), paperback, xii + 204 pp., ISBN: 978-971-8942-12-3.

The many personalities, the crucial events and the significant dates are made alive by Dynnice Rosanny D. Engcoy in her research on the life and times of Rev. Rodrigo “Rudy” Esperanza, who was an organizer, an ecumenist, a leader, and the first General Superintendent of the Philippines General Council of the Assemblies of God (PGCAG). Originally written as a Ph.D. dissertation for the Asia Graduate School of Theology, Dr. Engcoy’s informative research appreciates the role of the Filipino Pentecostal pioneers, especially Rudy Esperanza. Engcoy’s work is legitimate. Her work is necessary. Besides the Fuller Theological Seminary M.R.E. thesis of Trinidad C. Esperanza-Seleky, younger sister of Rudy, who was a denominational leader herself for many years, there is no other reliable and detailed written academic work that exists about the origins of the PGCAG. Mrs. Seleky’s “Assemblies of God in the Philippines” was completed in 1965. The other writings on the beginnings of the PGCAG are generally based on the work of Seleky. Finally, after nearly 50 years Engcoy’s book is published. In *Pentecostal Pioneer: The Life and Legacy of Rudy Esperanza in the Early Years of the Assemblies of God in the Philippines*, Engcoy presents fresh research on Esperanza and the Filipino Pentecostals’ early years. Engcoy should be thanked for providing this invaluable work. The innovative insights she articulates about the PGCAG beginnings are still applicable for today. The author’s significant awareness of the complexity of the study of the pioneering days of the Filipino Pentecostals makes her dissertation interesting to read. Her analysis of the initial accomplishments of the PGCAG through the leadership of Esperanza offers the reader suitable and reliable impressions about what is in the future of Pentecostalism in the Philippines. The publication of *Pentecostal Pioneer* is worth the waiting. Engcoy furnishes a reflective and sensitive narrative of the early Filipino Pentecostals.

After the preliminaries, Engcoy, in her first chapter, convincingly presents the importance of studying the “impact” of Esperanza on the contemporary growth of the PGCAG. The reviewer fully agrees with the penetrating arguments given by Engcoy on why her study is indispensable to be written as a dissertation. PGCAG is “the largest evangelical body in the predominantly Roman Catholic Asian

Country.” (2-3) This contention is true. However, from the beginning pages of her book, she already states that “three major conflicts—the split of the Manila Bethel Temple in 1965, the split of the denomination in 1973, and a further split in 1980—hampered the phenomenal growth of the Assemblies of God.” (4, see also 51 and 150-159, cf. 147-150, 167-168, 169-171) In other words, Engcoy is not intending to sanitize the historical data available for her to evaluate. Since *Pentecostal Pioneer* is a Ph.D. dissertation the typical format of the introductory chapter is obvious. The statement of the problem and the research purpose are specifically expressed in terms of appreciating the growth of the PGCAG in connection with the roles of the pioneers. The importance of the investigation as well as the limits and method of the study in terms of the Filipino viewpoint and resources available are clearly mentioned. She also notes her use of oral history and literature research. The field research of the author is also crucial for the success of writing this title. For a reviewer who is well aware of Pentecostalism in the Philippines, he is immediately intellectually engaged in the introductory challenges presented by Engcoy as he begins to read her *Pentecostal Pioneer*.

It is expected in this kind of research for Engcoy to provide the necessary consideration of the circumstances accounting the “Background and Birth of the Assemblies of God USA” in chapter 2, “Background and Birth of PGCAG” in chapter 3 and “Esperanza’s Background” in chapter 4. She makes it evident that the Filipinos themselves were the ones who made the Assemblies of God grow in the Philippines and not the American missionaries. The study of the settings where both the Assemblies of God grew due to missionary zeal and Esperanza’s development as a leader is not only indispensable in understanding the PGCAG history but also provides a significant perspective on the attitude and the spirituality of the Filipino Esperanza. Although he was a migrant to the United States, his burden for the Filipino people led him to go back to the Philippines to share the Pentecostal experience to his countrymen. Engcoy reports the salient points of the background of Esperanza. Then she uses this reconstructed background of Esperanza to show how he took his job as a Pentecostal leader of the Filipinos. Her narrative is delightful to read, especially Esperanza’s story when he was a boy, his academic achievements and his call into the ministry while in the United States. (53-61) Subsequently, the next four chapters are meant to examine Esperanza’s involvement among the Pentecostals in the Philippines. Thus, Engcoy clearly itemizes these chapters in terms of Esperanza’s

“Foundational Roles in the PGCAG” in the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter and his work as “District Secretary and General Superintendent” in the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter. Afterwards she depicts his spirituality in “Personal Leadership Qualities” in the 7<sup>th</sup> chapter and his attitude as a “Visionary Leader” in the 8<sup>th</sup> chapter. Finally, in the second to the last chapter, “Assessment of Esperanza’s Leadership Role and Influence,” she comes up with Esperanza’s evaluation within the context of his time. The last chapter is a reflection of a doctoral dissertation formality of giving “Conclusions and Recommendations.” It should also be noted that the endnotes and bibliography are not only extensive but also balanced, helpful and an encouragement indeed for the reader to do further readings.

At this point it is essential to recognize the strength of Engcoy’s work as a whole. Her employment of the oral history from interviews of reliable and helpful people is a forte. At the same time, her utilization of the written sources from the United States and the Philippines is not only what is expected but also harmonizes the oral history that she presents in a very lively Pentecostal context. Through the wise and strategic use of oral and written information available for her, Engcoy is able to historically describe her answer to the statement of the problem on why PGCAG has grown so much in the midst of denominational problems. Esperanza and his leadership style worked well. Likewise, the purpose of the dissertation is successfully articulated in showing that besides the training schools and the published literature, the company of spiritual trailblazers, men with visions, such as Esperanza made the Filipino Pentecostals grow exponentially by the power of the Holy Spirit. Another major strength is the presentation of the materials. The outline is well organized. The chapters can easily be perceived as divided into 3 parts. Part 1 is seemingly the first four chapters which are basically the background study of Esperanza and his times. The succeeding chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 are the materials that specifically deal with Esperanza’s positive contributions and great impact to the Pentecostals in the Philippines that is comparable to a second part. The remaining chapters, 9 and 10, resemble a part 3, which evaluates issues and concludes views concerning Esperanza’s legacy as a leader. In addition, Engcoy’s critical insight is appreciated. Based on her data she judiciously reckons that:

. . . speaking in tongues as the initial physical evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit was not yet taught among Filipino

AG churches, although many AG members spoke in tongues. It seems that Esperanza did not write about speaking in tongues. Instead, his writings emphasize salvation, healing, the second coming, and the empowering of the Holy Spirit without mentioning the doctrine of speaking in tongues as “initial physical evidence.” The early teachings of Filipino AG support Allan Anderson’s stand that describing Pentecostalism using the “four-fold pattern,” which includes *glossolalia* as the initial physical evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, “can only be neatly applied to ‘classical Pentecostalism’ in North America.” (50)

It should not be forgotten to mention that the book is very readable. The author’s style of writing is dynamic and enjoyable to read with a light touch. Lastly, if there is any weakness to be pointed out, then, it is the brevity of the book. There is so much more to know regarding the early Filipino Pentecostals, the origins of the PGCAG and Rudy Esperanza. The reviewer wants more to read about Pentecostalism in the Philippines. But perhaps, it is fitting to finish this review by saying that although the limited pages of *Pentecostal Pioneer* is wanting, which may be taken as a flaw, in reality it is the very strength of Engcoy’s work because the reviewer wants to read some more.

R.G. dela Cruz

Melba Padilla Maggay (Editor), *The Gospel in Culture: Contextualization Issues Through Asian Eyes*, (Manila, Philippines: OMF Literature Inc., 2013). 520 pp. Php350/\$ 8.49 paperback.

Melba Padilla-Maggay is a social anthropologist and the co-founder and President of the Institute for Studies in Asian Church and Culture which makes her an excellent person to edit this book. She has managed to gather many Filipino Evangelical theological scholars to contribute towards the success of this book. Briefly here are the writers:

1. E. Acoba who works in Southern Philippines with several ethnic Muslim groups. He is an advocate of the 'insider-paradigm' approach.
2. Lorenzo C. Bautista is a medical doctor with theological degrees. He is the Chair of the Theology faculty in Asian Theological Seminary (ATS). His varied study interests include local theology, church history and social development.
3. Mona P Bias, an *Ibaloy-Kankaney* tribe member of the Benguet Province, is an Old Testament scholar. She uses her various disciplines as a grid to exegete her own tribal background.
4. Edgar Battad Ebojo completed his PhD at the University of Birmingham, UK in New Testament and as a textual historian. He is the Translations Manager of the Philippine Bible Society.
5. Timoteo D. Gener is a pastor-theologian, who is the President of ATS.
6. Adonis Abelard O. Gorospe, also with ATS as the Academic Dean and Associate Professor for Theology, Spirituality and Church History.
7. Athena E. Gorospe, another Associate Professor at ATS, teaches in the Old Testament with contemporary application as to how the Scriptures address philosophy, culture and the social context of the Philippines.
8. David S. Lim serves as the Executive Trustee/CEO of the Asian School for Development and Cross-cultural Studies and the President of China Ministries International-Philippines. His area of discipline is New Testament Theology.
9. Jonathan M. Nambu is a Japanese-American who has lived in the Philippines for the past twenty-three years. He is the executive director of Samaritana Transformation Ministries

- that serve women survivors of prostitution and trafficking, engaging his expertise in Transformational Urban Leadership.
10. Narry F. Santos is the Senior Pastor of Greenhills Christian Fellowship, Toronto and the Executive Pastor of Greenhills Christian Fellowship, Canada. He is a church-planter as well as an Adjunct Professor at Tyndale University, College and Seminary, with two earned doctorates in New Testament and Philippine Studies.
  11. Amanda Shao Tan hails as a faculty of Hermeneutics and Biblical Interpretation at ATS. However, she is also involved in counseling, discipling and speaking at the seminary. She is of Chinese ethnicity and has a special interest in physical disabilities and what the Scriptures say about it and how Scriptures speak to Chinese culture.
  12. Federico G. Villanueva is the publications secretary of Asia Theological Association and the general editor of the Asia Bible Commentary series. He is also a Bible translator and part-time consultant with the Philippine Bible Society. His area of study has been the Old Testament.

The book is organized into three parts after the *Introduction*. Part I is about *Christianity in Culture: Historical Appropriations*, Part II is entitled *The Text in Context: Hermeneutical Explorations* and finally Part III is called *The Gospel in Context: Communicating in a Pluralized Context*. In the *Introduction*, Maggay sets the tone by explaining *The Task of Contextualization* especially highlighting the *Issues of Reading, Appropriating and Transmitting the Faith*. A main pitfall of contextualization is without a doubt “syncretism.” She deals with this issue in the very beginning and assures her readers that the contributors to this book have very skillfully not fallen into such a pit. Instead they have used their “insiders” perspective to give us a fresh view of the Gospel in Culture in the spirit of the title of the book.

Stated clearly by Maggay is “A main thesis of this book is that the church communities appropriate the Gospel always within the terms of their own cultural narratives.” (p 9) The contributors of the first part do their appropriations in the framework of historical contexts with application to contemporary settings. At times though, there seems to be a reading into the context chosen, such as in the chapter by Gorospe that focuses on Origen, who Gorospe claims to give contemporary theologians the methodology to engage with secularism and Asian religions. That would probably be a historical stretch as Origen was in

another time and space from the present situation. The second part is more standard in dealing with the interpretive task of the Church while also theologizing the Text in Context. The third and final part deals with contextualization in specific situations such as Chinese religions, Islam and globalization.

This book is so rich and fresh in its approach. There is great insight into the Filipino way of looking at things as well as a general Asian way of looking at things. As such, it was easy for this reviewer to identify with many of the summations of the different authors. If a Westerner were reading this book, it will be helpful to them as they would be able to understand the Filipino and Asian culture better, which may make them more effective in presenting the Gospel in this context. I personally found Chapter 12 most helpful in *Contextualizing the Gospel in Ancestor-Venerating Cultures* (pp 377-415) where the distinction was made between “worship” and “veneration” as this is the stigma for those who come from such backgrounds to remain filially pious and yet also not deny the principles from the Bible. Lim makes it clear that if the disciple of Christ is clear, then he or she will not be sinning against their own conscience.

However, as a Pentecostal, I would have hoped that Chapter Three on *Spirits, Scribes and Scriptures* could have been written by a Filipino Pentecostal who may have given a better insider’s view on this topic of ‘spiritual warfare’ in reading the New Testament texts. The scholarship is there but not with the Pentecostal experience. I would heartily recommend this book to missionaries and theologians for their further study on contextualizing theology, especially in the Filipino context.

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Peter A. Sutcliffe, *Is There an Author in This Text?: Discovering the Otherness of the Text* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2014), paperback, x + 430 pp., ISBN: 978-1-62032-823-1, US\$ 48.00.

Originally completed and passed as a Ph.D. thesis for the University of Wales, Bangor (now University of Bangor) in the United Kingdom in 2012 with the title “Is There An Author In This Text?: A Re-evaluation of Authorial Intent Pursued as Ontological Disclosing the Being of the Entity of the Composition in Understanding an Author’s Communication,” Peter A. Sutcliffe sought to provide an alternative route of viewing the scriptural text, deviating from the postmodern approaches. This is a courageous work. An innovation which shows clarity in evaluating the current debates on interpreting the biblical text. He gives thoughtful attention to the “ontological route” in dealing with texts and not merely on the language which they employ. (See especially 244-264 and 265-300.) He also cuts through the philosophical approaches to hermeneutics. Sutcliffe brings into this research his Pentecostal background without embarrassment. He is coming from the perspective “that God continues to speak to any present reader by means of the [scriptural] text those [biblical] authors had written.” (vii) He is concerned to clarify the nature of authorial “intentionality,” to categorize the “being” of personal composition and to consider the process of interpretive “task.” (vii-viii) For Sutcliffe, “the aim must be disclosure of the hermeneutical task, not the justification of a point of view.” (ix) The preceding concern is clearly expressed in the original subtitle of the thesis. The nature of text as composition cannot be separated from the author of composition as purposely intentional. (13-14)

In his revised and expanded doctoral work that is now published with the same title *Is There an Author in This Text?* Sutcliffe has put an emphasis on *Discovering the Otherness of the Text* by using it as a subtitle. (cf. chapters 12-13) The contemporary trend in viewing texts has inclination to follow the postmodern ideas, and especially on the question of textual meaning. A willingness of a reader to examine his argument on its merits would not just challenge the postmodern assertions but all in all the issue of ontological argument that he raises for the justification of authorial intent should convince a reader that Sutcliffe’s case is worthy of serious consideration. He presents a logically valid rationale for re-establishing a valid presupposition and an unambiguous understanding of authorial intent. (140-157 and 186-207) Moreover, an ontological approach could move things in a

different direction, which for the reviewer is critical in addressing the legitimate understanding of the scriptural text for the future of biblical hermeneutics. Sutcliffe has rigorously developed this significant concept of the 'ontological being' of the composition of the text. Hence, he rightfully takes the ontological argument in dealing with the authorial intent. Sutcliffe's work could lead to a new direction that would have a positive effect on hermeneutics. Therefore, *Is There an Author in This Text?*, which upholds the view of authorial intentionality in reading the composition written into text, is worth analyzing carefully. (cf. 236-264)

Using thirteen chapters, Sutcliffe deals with the issues of authorial centered hermeneutics, the arguments of author's demise perspective, the existence of the being of the text and the necessary otherness of the text. Accordingly, he places the interpreter in the model of "the task unfolds as a task" as a facilitator of understanding and not the determiner of understanding. (416) What Sutcliffe emphasizes then is "that understanding occurs at the level of existence." (416) He astutely reasons out that:

The issue of hermeneutics is a consideration of *intentioned-being*, which itself is given being by authorial intent, in order that the interpreter can understand, or see, what the author understood, or saw. What is understood can be assimilated inwardly deriving meaning, which determines selfhood as expressed in life. Meaning is therefore the impact of what is understood, and understanding is the encounter of *otherness*. Meaning should not begin with self, but with understanding in the encounter of *otherness*. The view of interpretation as sameness of meaning is incredible. True interpretation as equivalence of understanding is credible. (418)

In his first chapter Sutcliffe places the context of his research in the postmodern setting of interpreting written texts. Then, in the next three chapters, he deals with the "conundrum" and "paradox" of the authorial intention of the author in his composition, which is presented into a text. Citing the view of N. T. Wright, he sees the important acknowledgment that "aesthetics and belief, though subjective, are part of knowing, then an author and interpreter must connect with this knowledge." (26) Sutcliffe even coined the word "pistology" (from *pistis* – "faith" and *logos* – "word") in "dealing with belief knowledge" rather than using the common word theology so that he can stress in

“pistology” the idea of belief as something general to all people. (27) He also argues that “the nature of the authorial intent” is that of “an antecedent and precursor of the written text.” (47) Thus, in chapter 5 he describes how “The Reports of the Author’s Death Have Been Greatly Exaggerated.” Afterwards in the 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> chapters, Sutcliffe defined, explored and upheld the notion of the authorial intention in connection to an existing text. And in the last three chapters, he further presents the concepts of the “being of the text” and the “otherness of the text,” as well as a reevaluation of the perception of “meaning” and “understanding.”

What Sutcliffe makes unmistakable about his argument for the necessity of the authorial intent in understanding a written text is the idea that what the author “saw” is that which what the author wants the reader to see. (70) He is avoiding the appeal of linguistics for an answer to the conundrum of the meaning of the text. “The authorial intent, in acting as the antecedent of the text (i.e., it is what the text refers back to), is what preceded the text and acted as the cause of its being as text.” (70) It is a good decision for Sutcliffe and a major strength of the book that he employs many of his illustrations to argue a point using biblical references and examples. His Pentecostal background reflects well in his illustrations. It is also helpful for him to summarize and engage with the most influential philosophers of hermeneutics. His interest in the British academic Anthony Thiselton, the American scholar Kevin Vanhoozer, and the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur are immediately notable in his work. He cites and engages mainly with these three and other prominent thinkers such as Gadamer, Derrida, Heidegger, Barthes, Schleiermacher, Wittgenstein, Hegel, Stendhal, Wolterstorff with biblical exegetes like Fee and Marshall, theologians such as Pannenberg and Erickson, Pentecostal scholars like Tate and Dempster, and many others like Fish, Hirsch, Bultmann, Beardsley and Wimsatt, *etcetera*, that are involved in these complex and intricate debates in interpreting texts. Sutcliffe’s research scope has a clear focus. Commitment to authorial intent in interpreting the text is second to nothing. It is a *sine qua non*. The author is the antecedent of the text. It is worth quoting Sutcliffe in full when he concludes that:

The concept of an autonomous text has failed to take account of the retention of the authorial intent in the act of *parole*. The argument that detachment results in autonomy is not compelling. The recognition of the transformation of authorial

intent in the act of *parole* was not recognized, and sight of the author was lost. The primary reason for this is the failure to recognize the entity of the composition in its relationship to the entity of the text. The current theory on the entity of the text has resulted in the compositions concealment and therefore also the concealment of authorial intent; but despite this concealment the current theory has no way in which to contend and deal with the logic of its existence. (139)

His discussion on *parole* or the actual words expressed by people (contrasted to *langue*) is helpful. He correctly argues that with every postmodern theory currently existing, making the text autonomous and emphasizing the notion of reader's response in the hermeneutical process, the sensibleness of the presence of the authorial intent in the being of the composition that is written in the text fails to address the ontological relationship of the composition and the text. Postmodern theories killed the text. Sutcliffe revives the text. The being of the composition brings life to the text. Thus, the author of the text is made alive. *Is There an Author in This Text?* is not only providing an alternative hermeneutical perspective to the contemporary postmodern views, but it also gives a penetrating argument for the case of authorial intention in dealing with the text. Sutcliffe rightly argues from the angle of the being of the composition with the antecedent of the necessary intent of the author placing the reader in a place to see what the author saw.

R. G. dela Cruz

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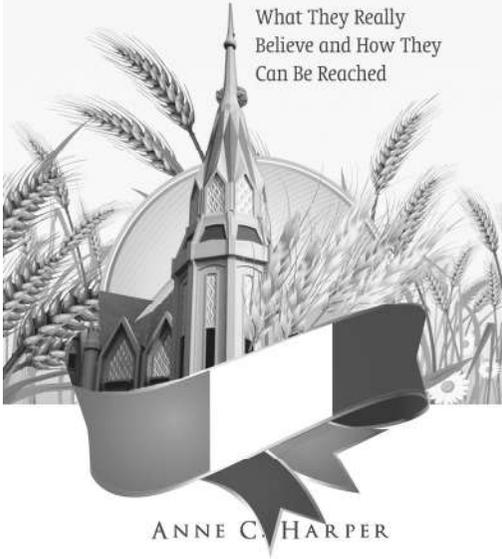
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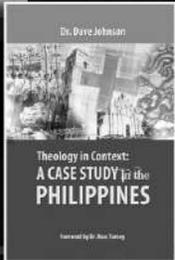
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### About the Author

Dave Johnson, D-Miss, has been an Assemblies of God (USA) missionary to the Philippines since 1974 and has conducted extensive research on lowland Filipino culture. He is also the author of *Led by the Spirit: The History of the American Assemblies of God Missions in the Philippines* and is the managing editor of the *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies*, the *Theological Journal of the Asia Pacific Theological Seminary in Baguio City, Philippines*. He can be contacted at [www.aptsp.edu](http://www.aptsp.edu) or through his own website, [www.davejohnsonbiblejournal.com](http://www.davejohnsonbiblejournal.com).

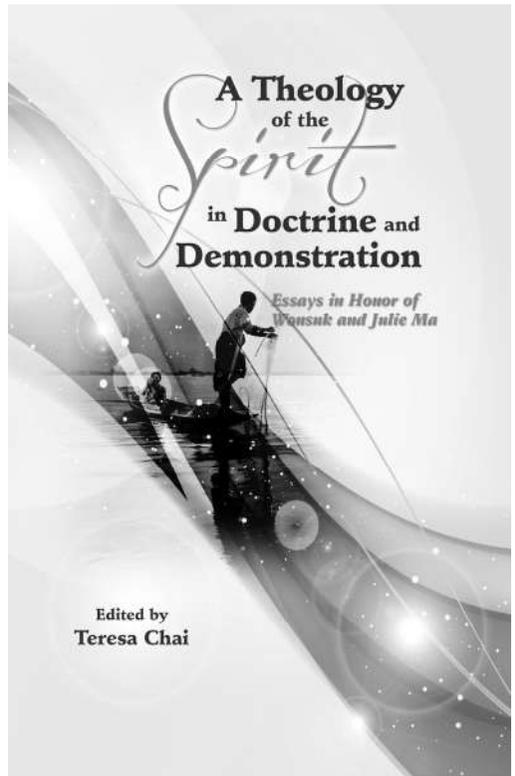
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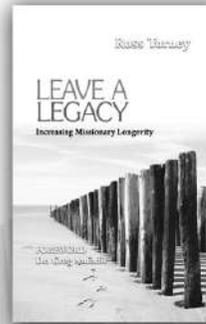
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