

**A Biblical Pneumatological Approach to  
Folk Muslim Evangelism in Indonesia**  
by Claudia Mendoza

**Introduction**

“No one can say ‘Jesus is the Lord’ except by the Holy Spirit”<sup>1</sup> is a causative statement in the Scriptures regarding soteriology. Concerning that, Rick Love affirms that a “power encounter needs to be an essential factor to effectively evangelize folk Muslims and to plant the Church of Christ in their midst.”<sup>2</sup> However, in the same article, he recognizes that the experience of some practitioners is that only around ten percent of Muslims who had experienced divine healing are followers of Jesus, since they were already familiar with healing and “magic” experiences.<sup>3</sup> Pentecostal missionaries generally accept the importance of power encounters in the evangelization of Muslims, yet intervention of the Holy Spirit is broader than an initial experience of his power.

I became interested in this topic two years ago at a missions’ conference. The first day, the preacher prayed for healings and, suddenly, signs, wonders and miracles were manifested. As some of the conferees shared testimonies, a Muslim Iranian family came to the front. With them was their ten-year-old son, who affirmed that he saw a man clothed in blue light walking among the people. This Iranian family, living in Oman, had been watching some revival services on the internet and, being deeply touched by the Holy Spirit, were eager to know more about him. When they heard about a revival meeting in Spain, they flew

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<sup>1</sup>*The Holy Bible: NIV*, 1 Co 12:3.

<sup>2</sup>Rick Love, “Power Encounter Among Folk Muslims: An Essential Key of the Kingdom.” *International Journal of Frontier Missions*, Vol. 13:4, Oct.-Dec. 1966, 192-195. [https://www.ijfm.org/PDFs\\_IJFM/13\\_4\\_PDFs/05\\_Rick%20Love.pdf](https://www.ijfm.org/PDFs_IJFM/13_4_PDFs/05_Rick%20Love.pdf) (accessed 29 April 2020).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 194.

from Oman just to be in one of the services, where they experienced the power of the Spirit.

According to Geertz,<sup>4</sup> most Muslims in Indonesia believe that spiritual powers have influence in this world. He describes the development of Islam in Indonesia this way: “After the implementation of Islam, Indonesian religious orientation . . . remained devoted to local spirits, domestic rituals, and familiar charms.”<sup>5</sup> Thus, the question that emerges is: Could a missionary redress this Muslim perception to present the Holy Spirit as the source to meet the felt needs of individuals as an evangelistic approach?

Based on that question, the thesis statement proposed in this argumentative analysis is this: Beyond a power encounter, a sustained biblical pneumatological approach to folk Muslims in Indonesia, where the Holy Spirit meets their felt needs and is the deliverer and guide to the truth, will produce a long-term allegiance to Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Part of this research is to consider whether, by receiving and being guided by the Holy Spirit, folk Muslims will take the first step in a commitment to respond to the Gospel. This article reviews the apostle Paul’s letter to the Ephesians in order to identify God’s power and the redemptive pneumatological principles to share the Gospel with people who are dominated by the power of darkness. Additionally, given the intimate relationship between Christ and the Holy Spirit, we will consider the biblical teachings on the work of the Holy Spirit as an entrance to lead folk Muslims to Jesus.

Key among the questions that we must answer in order to prevent syncretism or misunderstanding are these:

- What is the spiritual context of folk Islam in Indonesia?
- What is the Muslim view of the Holy Spirit?
- What are the principles of evangelism to folk cultures found in Ephesians that we can be applied in reaching Muslims?

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<sup>4</sup>The New York Times recognizes the works of Geertz as “An Indonesian specialist who is considered by many of his peers to be the leading anthropologist of his generation.” See P. Shenon, “On the Turmoil in Indonesia and Its Roots,” *The New York Times*, May 9, 1999. <https://www.nytimes.com/1998/05/09/arts/of-the-turmoil-in-indonesia-and-its-roots.html> (accessed 21 December 2020).

<sup>5</sup>Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1973), 66.

- What is the redemptive work of the Holy Spirit according to Ephesians?
- What misunderstandings could folk Muslims encounter when they hear about healing, deliverance, and baptism in the Holy Spirit?
- What is the importance of deliverance for folk Muslim practitioners?
- What is the best way to present a biblical pneumatology to folk Muslims, not just as a first power encounter, but beyond that to the Holy Spirit who leads them into salvation through Jesus?

I will focus on the spiritual features of folk Muslims in Indonesia, their view of the Holy Spirit, the biblical example in Ephesians to bring the Gospel in the middle of magic and folk religions—and from that, to consider a pneumatological approach to evangelize these people. Thus, two of the research’s contributions will be to understand the spiritual context of folk Muslims in Indonesia and to suggest a pneumatological approach to lead them to Jesus.

This study admittedly has at least these two limitations. First, it is founded on just the review of literature and not on cases or ethnographic studies. Second, the bibliography available regarding the initial pneumatological approach is limited, and there are no case studies related to it. Nevertheless, this will be useful for cross-cultural workers serving among Muslims to enlarge their understanding about the importance of the work of the Spirit in the soteriological process. It will also provide some tools for practical evangelism.

### **Spiritual Context of Folk Islam in Indonesia**

Most Muslims believe that there are interactions between the spiritual realm and the physical realm in the present world where humans

and *jinn*s (spiritual beings) live together.<sup>6</sup> Samuel Zwemer, the apostle to Muslims in his work among Arabs, identifies that even fundamentalist Muslims who defend monotheism, such as the Wahabi reformers, practice Islamic paganism.<sup>7</sup> His explanation for this phenomenon is that folk Muslims recognize the supremacy of God, but their view is that He is not concerned with their felt needs.<sup>8</sup>

This same pluralism is seen in Indonesia, the largest Muslim country in the world. There are numerous Islamic expressions—from the dogmatic extremist Islam to folk Islam—that have absorbed Hindu, Buddhist, and animist beliefs. One of the reasons for this multicultural expression of Islam is based on the “Pancasila state.” The Pancasila state’s view is that, after the independence proclamation, they believe in “Indonesia, the home of such diverse histories, peoples and cultures, with no majorities and minorities.”<sup>9</sup>

To understand the spiritual context of folk Muslims in Indonesia, it is necessary to analyze the spread of Islam there. Hermansyah affirms that during the propagation of Islam within that multicultural country, the “local elements were used in the process of Islamization.”<sup>10</sup> In order to spread Islam in Indonesia, Sufi missionaries used the peaceful method, which means that Islam walks slowly, adapting itself according to social behaviors based on the concept of universality. This slow process, therefore, makes Islam appropriate for everyone. The principle was *al-muhafazah ‘ala al-qadim al-shalih wa al-akhdz bi al-jadid al-ashlah* (holding on to the old and good one and to the better new one). A further principle, *al ‘adah al-muhakkamah* (customs that could be a basis of the law), was also applied.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Caleb Chul-Soo Kim and Anna Travis, “Relevant Responses to Popular Muslim Piety” in *From Seed to Fruit: Global trends, Fruitful Practices, and Emerging Issues Among Muslims*. Edited by J. Dudley Woodberry (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2011), 240.

<sup>7</sup>Samuel Zwemer, *The Influence of Animism in Islam* (New York, NY: The Macmillan Company, 1920), 4.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>9</sup>Anthony H. Johns, “Indonesia: Islam and Cultural Pluralism” in *Islam in Asia: Religion, Politic & Society*. Edited by John Esposito (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1987), 224.

<sup>10</sup>Hermansyah. “Islam and Local Culture in Indonesia.” *Al Albab—Borneo Journal of Religious Studies (BJRS)*. Vol. 3, No. 1, June 2014, p. 55. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/315908217.55-66> (accessed 8 February 2020).

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*

The Islamic dominion in Indonesia incorporates many Sufi practices, since it is suitable to the Hindu/Buddhist animistic context. According to Parshall, the first Muslim missionaries to East Asia were Sufis, who were less radical than traditional adherents of Islam. The Sufis identified compatible animistic beliefs and ceremonies, resulting in a mixture of religious expression. They simply added elements that they considered helpful, which made the Islamization process smoother and without violence.<sup>12</sup> Regarding that, Geertz notes, “General Southeast Asian folk religion . . . had previously absorbed Indian ones, locking ghosts, gods, *jinn*s, and prophets together into a strikingly contemplative, even philosophical, animism.”<sup>13</sup>

Additionally, the Sufis were broadly welcomed in Indonesia because of their ability to heal, which responded to the community’s felt needs.<sup>14</sup> The traditional healing practices involved invoking the *jinn*s to take over the bodies of the practitioners. This is also a residual animism, which blended with the Sufi’s beliefs. Magic chants also found their origin in the mix of the traditional Sufis’ customs, such as the recitation of certain mantras to call for protection. These practices were adapted using Qur’anic verses. Islamic ceremonies in Indonesia have also been adapted, the main part being an Islamic component but with certain local hues.<sup>15</sup>

Haris admits that the Islamic system in Indonesia is syncretistic and, in reality, reflects monolatry.<sup>16</sup> (Monolatry is the recognition of many gods but with the consistent worship of one deity.) Hermasyah attributes the great success of Islam in Indonesia to the syncretistic adaptability of it with the local beliefs. He claims, “However, all forms of practice of local beliefs that have no conflict with the principles of Islam are retained and even reinforced. Thus the “purity” of Islam remains in typical space and time.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Phil Parshall, *Bridges to Islam: A Christian Perspective on Folk Islam* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1983), 72.

<sup>13</sup>Geertz, 13.

<sup>14</sup>Hermasyah, 62.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>16</sup>Achmad M. Haris, “Indonesian Religious Evolution: Applying Bellah’s Theory in Indonesian Context.” *Jurnal Sosiologi Islam*, Vol. 3, No. 2, October 2013, p. 8 (accessed 10 February 2010).

<sup>17</sup>Hermasyah, 62.

One example is to bestow the origin of the events in life to spiritual beings other than Allah, which are known as *jinn*s or spiritual forces that control the natural world. According to Tenibemas, there are spiritual beings that are considered either useful or harmful in Indonesia. Those beings can be named—*jinn* (spirit), *shaytaan* (satanic being), and *married* (demon).<sup>18</sup> Muslims attribute the cause of their circumstances to the spiritual environment; thus, they must perform ceremonies to keep the *jinn*s calm.

At present, another kind of folk Islam is rising up in Indonesia, one that Achmad Haris calls *Muslim Tanpa Masjid* (Muslim without Mosque).<sup>19</sup> He argues that it's a kind of modern syncretism that's due to the present generation becoming individualistic in searching for its own Islamic expression far away from the mosques. Haris adds that the current influence of yoga is incorporating Hindu's practices and thus is undermining Islamic beliefs.<sup>20</sup>

### **Beliefs in Supernatural Powers and Ancestor Veneration**

One kind of spirit possession that is observed in folk Muslims relates to the belief that ancestors can take permanent dominion over the body of a relative. Musk states that “Ancestors may be reborn in their grandchildren or great grandchildren.”<sup>21</sup> Muslims defend the idea of “generational preservation” through this ancestral possession; that way, spiritual possession is not attributed to an evil cause. Love notes that shamans attribute their supernatural powers to the temporal possession by ancestors' spirits. The inference is that such possession can be considered an attribute related with power control, rather than a spiritual or soul problem.<sup>22</sup>

I realized the transcendence of the exaltation of ancestors during the last earthquake in one of the most fundamentalist Muslim villages where many religious conflicts and riots have originated. Before the earthquake, I had the misconception that the Muslims practice orthodox

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<sup>18</sup>Purmawan Tenibemas. *Folk Islam Among the Sundanese People of Indonesia*” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1996), 305.

<sup>19</sup>Haris, 22.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Musk, 195.

<sup>22</sup>Rick Love, *Muslims, Magic and the Kingdom of God* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2000), 70.

Islam because of their appearance, traditions, and religious practices. However, one afternoon when the prayer call from the minaret started, the people stood before some rocks to pray. After prayer, they explained to me that it was a holy place where their ancestors are buried and that the community had moved there in order to seek the protection of their ancestors during the earthquake.

Daniel Johnson says that, through their traditions, Muslims “connect generations and maintain the memory of their ancestors.”<sup>23</sup> He credits that belief to either traditional animism or the Sufi’s inheritance. He also assures that folk Islam in Indonesia mixes the orthodox Islamic religious system with magic, reincarnation, and ancestor veneration.<sup>24</sup> Muslims believe that a person with an *ilmu* (special gift) is named a *wali ulla* (faithful Islamic practitioner), who can come back to life immediately in a better status. A *wali ulla* is believed to take possession of a relative’s body (usually of the same gender) “as the replacement of the dead.” However, if such a person had behaved evilly, such a person will be born “handicapped” as a pig or another animal.<sup>25</sup>

### **Evil-Spirit Possession and Exorcism**

I have observed some folk beliefs concerning ancestor veneration and spirit possession among Butonese Muslims, the predominant Muslim ethnic group in Ambon.<sup>26</sup> Some time ago, one of my relative’s neighbors died. After the traditional Muslim funeral, her 20-year-old daughter fell into a trance and her voice changed, sounding like that of her aunt. She gave a supposed message for the family to take care of her son. My Butonese neighbor said to me that the spirit of her cousin now reposes in her daughter’s body.

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<sup>23</sup>Daniel Johnson, “Reincarnation in an Islamic Society: Buton Indonesia.” *Melanesian Journal of Theology* 20-1 (2004). <https://www.cltc.ac.pg/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/MJT-20-1.pdf> (accessed 8 February 2020).

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 46.

<sup>26</sup>Aris Ananta, Evi Nurbidaya Arifin, M. Sairi Hasbullah, Nur Budy Handayani and Agus Pramono. *Demography of Indonesia’s Ethnicity* (Singapore, China: Institute of South Asian Studies, 2015), Table 4. 36. <https://books.google.co.id/books> (accessed 16 March, 2019).

Najad and Hardi define spirit possession as the belief that people can be controlled by an alien spirit or parahuman forces that dictate the actions and personality of the ones possessed. In some cases, a possessed person is unconscious and speaks in a different voice or performs strange acts.<sup>27</sup> Musk notes a difference between two kinds of possessions—*Makyus* (temporal possession) or *Majnun* (permanent possession). The temporarily possessed individual does not need any treatment. However, when a *jinn* inhabits a person permanently, either an *azima* (exorcism) is performed by putting tar in the victim’s orifices or the afflicted may be put through a combination of *Baraka* (baths-blessings) plus being led to visit shrines.<sup>28</sup>

Medical scholars Dein and Illaie present a thesis on the influence of *jinn*s on mental sickness based on case studies of Muslims. They emphasize the importance of differentiating between mental diseases and spirit possessions, both of which can be either central or peripheral. The distinction between the two is that mental diseases are related just to traditional practices and not considered pathological, whereas “Peripheral possessions indicate an invasion of evil spirits, undesirable, immoral, and dangerous.”<sup>29</sup>

Dein and Illaie insist on the Qur’anic explanation, which is that *jinn*s are created finite creatures who have their own personalities, beliefs, and moral attributes.<sup>30</sup> The two scholars end their thesis with an interesting conclusion—that a weak person with low self-esteem or who is influenced by an “evil eye” might be possessed by spirits. Their solution is “the recitation of Quran and ingestion of olive oil.”<sup>31</sup> Regarding treatment, they suggest,

The task of a therapist, who must have a very strong faith in Allah, is to expel the jinn. This is usually done in one of three ways—remembrance of God and recitation of the Qur’an

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<sup>27</sup>Najat, Khaliffa, and Hardie Tim. “Possession and Jinn.” *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*. 2005, Aug. (98), 8.

<sup>28</sup>Bill Musk, *The Unseen Face of Islam* (Monrovia, CA: MARC, 1989), 100.

<sup>29</sup>Simon Dein and Abdool Samad. “Jinn and Mental Health: Looking at Jinn Possession in Modern Psychiatric Practice.” *The Psychiatrist*. 37: 290. doi: 10.1192/pb.bp.113.042721 (accessed 1 February 2020).

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, 291.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, 292.



(*dhikr*), blowing into the person's mouth, cursing and commanded the jinn to leave; and seeking refuge with Allah by calling upon Allah, remembering him and addressing his creatures (*ruqyah*). Some faith healers strike the possessed person, claiming that is the jinn that suffer the pain.<sup>32</sup>

In Indonesia, belief in spiritual possession preceded Islam and can be observed in animistic communities that embrace Islam. Hermansyah recognizes the shamanistic practices in Islam in Indonesia thusly: "Today, there are still many Muslims who practice traditional medicine which involves calling for invisible spirits to enter the body of a shaman as a medium . . . This condition is reasonable since the transformation of a society usually requires a relatively long time even takes several generations to complete."<sup>33</sup>

Moreover, Islam accepts spiritual possession since Muhammad himself perhaps experienced it. Gilchrist supports this thesis, noting that the prophet believed in "demonic creatures;" and, at the beginning of his experiences in the cave of Mount Hira, he was in such tribulation thinking that he was possessed by a *jinn*.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, on many occasions, Muhammad was confused about the origin of his revelations to the point that some of the verses he received were later corrected. That he abrogated "satanic verses" in the Qur'an is well known in the tradition, his explanation being that "Satan was always trying to intercept God's revelation."<sup>35</sup> In other words, belief in demonic possession is embraced in Islam because of the experience of its own prophet. That is why, from the beginning, the concept of evil spirits trying to take control of humans was included in Islamic teachings.

Musk maintains that Muslims are constantly concerned about the places where *jinn*s can take possession. Since it usually occurs "between activities of the flesh," these spirits can take dominion over people.<sup>36</sup> For protection, they wear talismans with Qur'an verses or religious sayings,

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>Hermansyah, 60.

<sup>34</sup>John Gilchrist, *Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam* (Mondeor, South Africa: Muslim Evangelism Resource Center of Southern Africa, 1994), 22.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 25.

<sup>36</sup>Musk, 42.

or they put them in their houses in order to reject all evil influences. As examples of protective actions in the worst cases, Muslims seek an imam or a Muslim leader who will “chant some Qur’anic verses, other people burn incense to calm down the possessed people, incense is used to heal people as well.”<sup>37</sup>

### Practitioners and Healings

One of the ways Indonesian Muslims deal with the dark forces that try to interfere with daily activities, by causing illness and tragedies, is to look for the magicians who can connect the spiritual and physical realms. The shamans are called *dukun pandais* (clever shamans), as they are people of power connected with the spiritual world and can ask for protection in farming or fishing. These practitioners can even marry spirits, thus are able to call the spirits to bring disasters or sickness on enemies. Shamans also believe they can command the spirits to bring riches to the person who is powerful enough to control them.<sup>38</sup>

Tenimebas explains that, when practitioners or powerful people die, they will be considered *walis* (saints), and their tombs will be places of pilgrimage called *keramats*. That means folk Muslims in Indonesia believe in people of power, places of power, things of power, and *mantras* (magical sayings).<sup>39</sup> Additionally, Indonesian Muslims believe that there are animals and plants with magic power.

Many people of power in Indonesia are *hajis* or Muslims that have already gone to Mecca. The *hajis* are divided into three categories—the *kuncen*, who is a mediator; the *dukun*, who is a healer-exorcist; and the *pendekar*, who is a protector.<sup>40</sup> He can be “Dukun Jampe (healer or protector) . . . Dukun Ramal (fortune teller) . . . Dukun Gaib (who performs exorcisms) . . . Dukun Teluh (black magic) . . . Dukun Pelet (loving specialist) . . . Dukun Sunat (specialist in circumcision) . . . Dukun Paraji (midwife) . . . Dukun Puhun (agricultural matters).”<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 120.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

<sup>39</sup>Tenimebas, 36.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 37-40.

Tenimebas reports that even high authorities and organizations will seek help from shamans. For instance, the Indonesia's Department of Religious Affairs called four shamans to find a thief who had stolen funds.<sup>42</sup> This is an example that even formal institutions will trust in shamans more than even official protection.

The way that practitioners perform exorcisms and healings is important to consider. Regarding the exorcism process, Islamic author Rahman Fazlur says, "The principle behind the cures of exorcism, which are basically no different from the ordinary cures by amulets and prayers, except that exorcism is much more ritualized: namely, that the *pir* exercises the supernatural powers necessary to exorcise the spirit(s) possessing the patient."<sup>43</sup>

Parshall mentions yet another treatment for sickness and spirit possession—that being the *dhikr*, which is a "continual repetition of the word Allah. . . . The repetition is to be continued until the mind is completely submerged within the divine radiance of almighty God."<sup>44</sup> I remember that kind of repetition, especially during "the night of power" in Ramadan. Throughout the entire night, Muslims spoke the name of Allah over and over. Such could be because they believe that, on the night of power, many miracles take place, so they attempt to connect the rituals, the time of power, and the people of power.

### **Folk Muslims View of the Holy Spirit**

To be able to present the person and work of the Holy Spirit as an evangelistic approach to folk Muslims in Indonesia, it is necessary to identify whether they have a preconception or minimal understanding about who the Holy Spirit is. One starting point is to look for references about the "Spirit of God" in the Qur'an. Folk Muslims are still taught the Qur'an in their mosques or madrasas in order that that they can become more literate in Islamic principles.

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 208.

<sup>43</sup>Rahman Fazlur, *Health and Medicine in the Islamic Tradition: Change and Identity* (Chicago, IL: ABC International Group, 1998), 90.

<sup>44</sup>Phil Parshall, *Bridges to Islam: A Christian Perspective on Folk Islam* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1983), 77.

Steinhaus notices that the name “Holy Spirit” appears four times in the Qur’an and the word “spirit” appears seventeen times.<sup>45</sup> He divides these *ayats* (verses) into the following four groups:<sup>46</sup>

1. Verses that relate the Holy Spirit with the angel Gabriel (Surah 16:102, 17:85, 19:17, 26:193, and 40:15).
2. Verses that equate the Spirit with the breath that gave life to man (5:29, 32:9, and 38:72).
3. Verses that speak of the Spirit as the one who gave strength to Jesus (2:87, 2:253, 32:9, and 38:72).
4. Verses that have a difficult interpretation, since the word “spirit” is followed by the mention of angels (4:171, 12:87, 16:2, 42:52, 66:12, 70:4, 78:38, and 97:4).

Perhaps one of the most controversial verses is Surah 5:110 which states, “I strengthened you with the Holy Spirit.” That verse is followed by a description of Jesus giving life to a clay bird. Jesus also is reported to have healed lepers and blind people, thus a connection between the Holy Spirit and power. The only problem is the Muslims’ popular conception that the Holy Spirit strengthened Jesus and Muhammad. They further believe that, according to Surah 58:22, the Holy Spirit is accessible to all Muslim believers.<sup>47</sup>

In a study among folk Muslims in Bangladesh, Jorgensen explained that the title given to Jesus in the Q’uran is “Spirit of God,” a term that could be used as a dialogue initiator with Muslims.<sup>48</sup> Further, he insists that there are some insights about the Holy Spirit in the Q’uran. For example, Surah 15:29 affirms that man was created from clay and “breathed into him my spirit.”<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>S. Steinhaus. “The Spirit-First Approach to Muslim Evangelism,” *International Journal of Frontier Missions*. Vol 17:4, 2003, 26 (accessed 20 January 2020).

<sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup>Jonas A. Jorgensen, “Word of God and Spirit of God in Christian Islamic Christologies: A Starting Point for Interreligious Dialogue.” *Islam and Christian Relationships*, Routledge Vol. 20, No. 4, 389-407, October 2009. (Department of Systematic Theology, University of Copenhagen, Denmark.).

<sup>49</sup>Abdullah Yusuf Ali. (Translator) *The Qur’an: The Meaning in the Glorious Qur’an*. (Istanbul, Turkey: Asir Media, 2010.).

Another useful concept in the Qur'an is the admission, in Surah 21:4, of the divine and virginal conception of Jesus—"We breathed into her of Our Spirit, and We made her and her sin a sign for all peoples."<sup>50</sup> Although there are many interpretations of the title given to Jesus as *Ruh from Allah* (Spirit of Allah), this verse that says Christ Jesus is the son of Mary and a Spirit proceeding from him could be another bridge to communicate the truth.<sup>51</sup>

Parrinder mentions that the word "spirit" is related to Jesus in seven parts of the Qur'an. The most controversial name given to Jesus is "a spirit from" God. Taking into consideration the exegesis that Muslim scholars give it, some commentaries argue that the meaning of *ruh* (spirit) can be interpreted as "mercy from God."<sup>52</sup> Another explanation is that "spirit" is a reference to inspiration or divine revelation. "This could give the rendering of Jesus as prophesy which God communicated to Mary."<sup>53</sup> However, Milani cites the Muslim scholar Ibn al-Arabi, who interprets the text literally as "the spirit of God", which affirms "As the son of Mary, Jesus is human; but as one who could revive the dead, Jesus was "of God as Spirit".<sup>54</sup> Moreover, Parrinder cites references that indicate folk Muslims in India pray, calling for blessings from Muhammad and naming Jesus as the "Spirit of God . . . Isa the faithful."<sup>55</sup>

The Muslim scholar Ibn Taimiyya argues that the meaning of the Holy Spirit related to Jesus is *Jibril* (the angel Gabriel). "Thus, the Holy Spirit is neither God nor one of His attributes. Moreover, there is nothing in the words of the prophets to indicate that the dependent Attribute of god is called a son or a holy spirit."<sup>56</sup> It would be interesting to further research Islamic exegesis of the verses that mention the angel Gabriel to look for the differences between him and other angels. However, we

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<sup>50</sup>Ibid., 21:91.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., 4:171.

<sup>52</sup>Geoffrey Parrinder, *Jesus in the Qur'an* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1977), 49.

<sup>53</sup>Parrinder, 50.

<sup>54</sup>Milad Milani, "Representation of Jesus in Mysticism: Defining the 'Sufi Jesus'," *Literature & Aesthetics*, Vol. 21, No. 2, December 2011, 45.  
<https://openjournals.library.sydney.edu.au> (accessed 2 December 2020).

<sup>55</sup>Parrinder, 50.

<sup>56</sup>Shaikhul-Islam Ibn Taimiyah, *Answering Those Who Altered the Religion of Jesus Christ*, <https://ia801602.us.archive.org>, p. 114 (accessed 7 February 2020).

should remember that the Qur'an is not the Word of God, and the reason to study these verses is just to know the Muslims' perception of the Holy Spirit in order to make a bridge to bring them to the truth.

Jorgensen claims there are two names that identify Jesus as the Holy Spirit among folk Muslims in Bangladesh—the “Spirit of Allah (*ruh'ullah*)... and the Holy Spirit Isa [is] “ruh-[ul] kudas.”<sup>57</sup> Islamic scholars Badhrulhisham and Mohd defend the idea that the Holy Spirit in the Qur'an corresponds to a creature *Jibril* (angel Gabriel), whose name means “servant of God,” his main task being to bring a revelation of God to his prophets. There is no distinction between him and the Holy Spirit.<sup>58</sup>

Sweetman affirms a misconception—that being *Ruh*, the word used for “spirit” in the Syriac is feminine; thus, some Muslims identify the Holy Spirit with Mary.<sup>59</sup> However, there is yet a bigger misunderstanding regarding identification of the Holy Spirit and Muhammad. Surah 61:6 claims Jesus prophesied that after him will come the “Ahmad,” which is one of the names designated to Muhammad. According to some scholars, the equivalent word for the name Ahmad is “*periklutós*, a misreading for the correct *Parakletos* in John 16:26 . . . where the Comforter or *Paracletos* is identified with the Holy Spirit.”<sup>60</sup>

Classic Islamic scholar Fazlur Rahman resumes the revelation's view of Muslims; and from that, their concept about the Holy Spirit could be deduced.<sup>61</sup> The ancient concept of inspiration in pre-Islamic Arabia was that a spirit could possess a poet to create poetry. Thus, the concept of spirit possession could be the cause of Muhammad's belief about the divine origin of the Qur'an. Rahman defends the thesis of the divine revelation of the Qur'an given to his prophet by a Spirit, saying,<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>Jorgensen, 398.

<sup>58</sup>Adam Badhrulhisham and Khadija Mohd, “Konsep Roh Suci Menurut Islam dan Christian (Concept of Holy Spirit According to Islam and Christianity).” *Afkar*, Vol. 20, Issue 1 (2018): 85-108. <https://doi.org/10.22452/afkar.vol20no1.3> (accessed 17 February 2020).

<sup>59</sup>Windrow, Sweetman, *Islam and Christian Theology: A Study of the Interpretation of Theological Ideas in the Two Religions* (Cambridge, UK: James Clarke & Co., Ltd, Vol.1, 2002), 23.

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>61</sup>Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'an* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press Edition, 2009), 80.

<sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*, 66.

There is no doubt that the agent of Revelation to Muḥammad (PBUH) is this Spirit. The Meccans, as we have seen, often asked of Muḥammad (PBUH) that an "angel be sent down upon him," to which the Qur'ān often replied that angels cannot be sent to humans as prophets . . . It is, therefore, certain that angels did not come to the Prophet—his Revelation came from the Holy Spirit, also described as the "Trusted Spirit" (26.ash-Shu'arā':193).

For Rahman, the angels in the Qur'an are beings created to obey the commandments of God, and they can interact with humans if sent to do so. However, the Qur'an doesn't attribute to these angels' power as agents of revelation, although sometimes they can be the recipients of revelation. Further, he clarifies some of the functions of the Holy Spirit—one being that, in the creation, God breathed his own Spirit into the first man; a second being that the Spirit was sent to strengthen Jesus; a third being that the Spirit was the agent of the Qur'anic Revelation, which is described as the Trusted Spirit; and a fourth being that the Spirit is likely "the highest form of the angelic nature and closest to God."<sup>63</sup>

Thus, in the act of the revelation, Rahman argues thusly that the agent who brings the Qur'an was the Spirit of God:<sup>64</sup>

The Trusted Spirit has brought it [the Qur'ān] down upon your heart, that you should be a warner" (26.ash-Shu'arā':193); this Spirit is identified with Gabriel . . . the Source of all Books including the Qur'ān, is higher than angels as the Qur'ān ordinarily speaks of them . . . This undying and ever renewed Spirit is nothing other than the Agency of all being and life.

According to Muslim beliefs, God never talks directly to humans, but rather in an inaudible voice to the prophets. They can hear the Spirit and the Voice in their minds. Thus, in Muhammad's case, the Spirit of Revelation strengthened him to act according to what was true.<sup>65</sup>

What I realized from these Muslim scholars' arguments regarding the Holy Spirit is that there is not a clear understanding of who the Holy

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<sup>63</sup>Ibid., 67.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., 69.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., 71.

Spirit is. In some way, the Muslims' lack of understanding as to the nature of the Holy Spirit could be used to introduce who the Spirit of God is, which could lead them to the Truth—Jesus.

It is crucial for those who want to serve effectively among Muslims in Indonesia to have a general grasp of a Muslim's view of God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit from Islamic teachings. Here is advice from Zwemer, “the apostle to Islam”:

The Christian missionary should first of all thoroughly know the religion of the people among whom he labours; ignorance of the Koran, the traditions, the life of Mohammed, the Moslem conception of Christ, social beliefs and prejudices of Mohammedans, which are the result of their religion—ignorance of these is the chief difficulty in work for Moslems.<sup>66</sup>

### **The Redemptive Work of the Holy Spirit in Making Disciples among Folk Muslims**

Sometimes the power of the Holy Spirit is relegated to miracles. Of course, a miracle can be a crucial part in a Muslim's initial engagement with the Gospel; however, it is rare that people will commit their lives to follow Jesus just because of a miracle. Although I totally agree we should pray for miracles and signs among Muslims, the work of the Holy Spirit cannot be relegated just to the first experience of a power encounter. The Spirit's power is also given to strengthen believers to witness, even to the point of martyrdom, Stephen being an excellent example of this (see Acts 7: 54-60). This is a crucial role of the Holy Spirit for Muslims, since, after coming to Jesus, they often face persecution, which is why many who become believers in Jesus returned to Islam.

During my first Ramadan (fasting month) in Indonesia, a neighbor lady told me that one afternoon two *jinn*s came to her small shop; and since that time, every afternoon she was not able to see. I explained to her the healing power of *Isa Almasih* (Jesus), after which she allowed me to pray for her. One week later, she called me and happily affirmed that,

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<sup>66</sup>Samuel Zwemer, *The Moslem Christ: An Essay on the Life, Character, and Teachings of Jesus Christ According to the Koran and Orthodox Tradition* (New York, NY: American Tract Society, 1912), 183.



after the prayer, she experienced healing of her eyes. Following that, I started to explain who Jesus was. However, every time I talked about salvation in *Isa Almasih*, she rejected me to the point that she would not talk any more about Jesus. From that experience, it became apparent that, although a power encounter with signs and miracles can prepare the heart to receive the message, it isn't enough to develop an allegiance to Jesus. Rather, it is necessary for Muslims to experience a deep intervention of the Holy Spirit to lead them to the truth.

### Biblical Example of the Ephesians' Power Encounter and the Redemptive Role of the Holy Spirit in Folk Context

There is no better way to search for an evangelistic approach to any unreached people group (UPG) than to study the biblical model. Moreover, in regard to folk Islam, the apostle Paul's letter to the Ephesians provides a strong example of how to lead people to Jesus through the intervention of the Holy Spirit, who can set them free from dark forces, people of power, demonic possession, and magic. The folk Muslim UPGs are considered one of the biggest challenges in missions in terms of church planting.

The hindrances and strongholds that Paul and other early missionaries faced to establish an indigenous church among the Ephesians were enormous because of the spiritual powers that had dominion over them. However, the Church of Ephesus was established through the supremacy of Jesus and the power of the Spirit.

### Similarities Between the Ephesians' Background and Indonesia's Folk Muslims

Ephesus was the worship center for the goddess Artemis (or Diana), who was called Savior, Lord, and Queen of the Cosmos. Thus, her cult following became the main source of economic resources and the heart of Ephesian culture.<sup>67</sup> That means the warfare Paul and his companions faced was not only in the spiritual realm, but also the worldview, behaviors, corruption, and evil that had contaminated all spheres of its

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<sup>67</sup>Clinton Arnold, *Power and Magic: The Concept of Power in Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1992), 21.

society. In the same way, folk Islam is not just a religious system, it's one that permeates all aspects of Muslim communities.

Just as folk Muslims use Qur'an verses as a mantra to ward off the effects of evil forces, the people in Ephesus used the "Ephesians' letters or words of power"<sup>68</sup> to face demons. Referring to these Ephesians' letters, Arnold says, "They could be used either as written amulets or spoken charms . . . instructed those possessed to repeat to themselves the magic words in order to drive the demons out. . . . The words were used in superstitious ways to provide help on special occasions."<sup>69</sup>

One of the similarities between the Ephesians and folk Muslims is that both attempt to find solutions in people of power. Arnold says that the main purpose of a shaman in Ephesus was to identify the source of a person's calamity, alluding to the belief that the cause of the problem was a spirit. After that spirit was identified, the person of power then tried to discover the right traditional rite, amulet, or mantra, "for the manipulation of the spirits in the interest of the individual person."<sup>70</sup> In folk Muslim contexts, the person of power will discern first, the spiritual origin of the troubles and, after that, will offer to use his supernatural power to manipulate the spirit(s) in favor of the individual.

Another parallel between the two contexts is the fear of the demonic realm. In fact, magic for the Ephesians (and also popular for Muslims) was a way to get protection from the spirits' hurts. Arnold explained thusly how it worked for the Ephesians—"Arthemis-Hekate bears the title, 'Deliverer from fear.' . . . As the most powerful ghost-goddess, she can naturally deliver the people from any peril involving spirits."<sup>71</sup>

One more, similarity is the combination of magic and religion that was in the Ephesian context and is observed in folk Muslim communities today. In the ancient times of Christianity and Judaism, there were some syncretistic practices between religion and magic, even though both faiths are monotheistic. The Ephesians include their religion as a legal way to perform their rites, the aim being to protect themselves from evil and to control the spirits for the well-being of the magician.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>68</sup>Ibid., 15.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., 18.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., 25.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., 19.

Analyzing the behaviors of Muslims concerning manipulation of *jinn*s, the people of power are usually *imams* (religious priests). They incorporate religious practices, such as use of verses of the Qur'an, power objects, and amulets with the name of God in Arabic, in much the same way as the Ephesians did in times of the early Church.

One fundamental aspect that may enable believers to reach Muslims for Christ is to discern the evil powers that dominate Islam. McCurry establishes the thesis that Islamic doctrine in the Qur'an fiercely opposes the foundation of the Christian faith. The Qur'an refuses to accept the divine nature of Jesus, denies his crucifixion and resurrection, claims that the Holy Bible is fake, and makes other arguments against Christ. McCurry says, "Behind the system of Islam is a supernatural anti-Christian power . . . that works against the Gospel . . . I believe there is a supernatural intelligence and power behind this resistance."<sup>73</sup> One thing I have been observing is the ease with which Muslims in Indonesia will embrace any kind of current thought, custom, or belief; but anything related to Jesus will face resistance, hostility, even violent opposition.

Arnold notes that, in Paul's letter to the Ephesians, he wants to emphasize "(a) where Christ stands in relation to the powers, and (b) where the believer stands in relation to the powers, both in terms of his/her past life and the life now experienced in Christ"<sup>74</sup> Arnold highlights the idea that, in the first century, the worldview was that the gods and goddesses ruled the "underworld . . . and have authority over the keys of Hades."<sup>75</sup>

That is why Paul demonstrates the victory of Christ in Ephesians 4:8, showing his supremacy over all dominions in the heavens, the earth, the underworld, and even the realm of death.<sup>76</sup> This is a very important statement, especially to those serving in places where demonic dominion can be perceived in the physical realm. The word of hope is that, in the end, all authorities on heaven and earth will be submitted to Jesus—"That in the dispensation of the fullness of times, he might gather

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<sup>73</sup>Don McCurry, *Healing the Broken Family of Abraham: New Life for Muslims* (Colorado Springs, CO: Ministry to Muslims, 2011), 151.

<sup>74</sup>Arnold, 69.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., 56.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., 58.

together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him.”<sup>77</sup>

The summation of this author’s thesis is that, first, the power of God stands against all evil powers by the lordship of Jesus Christ; and second, God fights evil through the authority he has given to the Body of Christ. In other words, the instrument that God is using to fight evil attacks in the present times is the Church. Arnold explains that works through the exegesis of Ephesians 1:22-23; the *pleroma* (fullness), which means the divine power, essence, glory, and presence of Jesus dwells within the Church as his body. The Bible affirms that, “The Christological implication is that Christ provides for the church and fulfills all things.”<sup>78</sup>

The implication of this analysis of the hegemony of Jesus in missions among folk Muslims in Indonesia is that, even in the midst of evil influences, the final result is already known—that being, Christ has overcome all evil. Furthermore, God, in his sovereignty, has included the Church as the agent by which he portrays his love, compassion, and power toward UPGs.

#### Redemptive Role of the Holy Spirit in Reaching Folk Muslims

Although Paul’s letter to the Ephesians does not mention the words “signs and miracles,” Arnold argues that, proportionally to the epistle’s length, it nevertheless incorporated more terminology related to power (16 mentions) than the rest of the New Testament.<sup>79</sup> This means Ephesians implicitly mentions wonders, signs, and miracles. In fact, supra-natural power was contemplated in a deep way in the letter, since Paul’s focus was on the source of power, rather than on just the physical manifestation of it. Evidence of that is the diversity of power terminology that he used. Paul emphasized the word *dunamis*, which means capacity or ability. It is intimately related to *doxa* or God’s glory and *energeia* (my transliteration), which is the realization of power.<sup>80</sup>

The importance of that is, first, to show the contrast between the power of God and the power of the magicians. God’s power cannot be forced by any form of coercion; instead, it is the highest power,

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<sup>77</sup>*The Bible*, KJV. Ephesians 1:10.

<sup>78</sup>*Ibid.*, 83.

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

<sup>80</sup>*Ibid.*, 74.

autonomous and intimately related with his nature. Thus, we can receive the power of God only by faith through a personal relationship with him, not by any kind of chant or magical formula.

On the other hand, the magicians' purpose is to manipulate the spirits without building any allegiance based on faith or love. Their way of acquiring power is via invocations, chants, sacrifices, or the repetition of mantras.<sup>81</sup> In other words, the power given by spirits enslaves people, whereas God's power frees them from evil dominion. God's power also establishes a deep relationship between the source of power and the recipient.

Secondly, although Ephesians implicitly talks in a deep way about the work of the Holy Spirit in signs, wonders, and miracles and observes their impact in the spiritual realm, it goes beyond that to describe the intervention of the Spirit in the lives of unbelievers, who are in the middle of dark forces. Thus, the Holy Spirit's redemptive action is one of the letter's main themes. That is fundamental to the evangelistic approach and discipleship to folk Muslims, for God's power can produce a permanent and genuine allegiance to Christ as their absolute Lord and Savior.

So, what is the redemptive work of the Holy Spirit according to Ephesians? First, it is through the Spirit that an individual gets to know God.<sup>82</sup> Moreover, the revelation of the Spirit is connected with *pneuma sofia* (wisdom). "Paul teaches that the human spirit . . . is unable to know God."<sup>83</sup> Muslims claim that nobody can truly know God, so the only way for them to receive special revelation about him is through the intervention of the Holy Spirit. It is interesting that the importance of wisdom in Ephesians is to recognize God. This opposes the aim of magic's wisdom for Indonesians where the *dukun pandai* (magician, clever shaman) uses it to manipulate spirits, as was explained before.

Another intervention of the Holy Spirit is crucial for people to be delivered from the dark power of Satan (see Ephesians 1:18). Schnackenburg claims that, "Knowledge and becoming cognizant is only possible for people who have been enlightened by the divine Spirit which

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<sup>81</sup>Ibid., 73.

<sup>82</sup>*The Bible, NIV*. Ephesians 1:17.

<sup>83</sup>Arnold, 76.

enables them to see with the ‘eyes of the heart’.”<sup>84</sup> This statement, I think, relates strongly to Paul himself because it is deeply connected with the calling that God had given him—“I am sending you to them, to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God.”<sup>85</sup>

Arnold asserts that the ancient Ephesians believed in an illumination with some rite of initiation that came from intervention of the gods. However, says Arnold, “The author of Ephesians stresses the enlightenment of the innermost being of man brought about by the Spirit of God and directed toward the true knowledge of God.”<sup>86</sup> Drawing a parallel between the calling of the apostle Paul with today’s missionaries who are called to serve among folk Muslims, we see, and must understand, and depend on the premise that the essential work of the Spirit makes the spiritually blind able to see Christ.

Still a further function of the Holy Spirit is as the promised seal of believers’ salvation.<sup>87</sup> Fee affirms that the Spirit assures believers of the fulfillment of salvation’s promise and separates them as God’s possession. “The Holy Spirit . . . has been received by the Gentiles as the seal that they too are God’s possession as the new eschatological age unfolds.”<sup>88</sup> I consider that, for folk Muslims, this function of the Spirit is crucial, since the physical orphanhood of Muhammad was passed on to Muslims as spiritual orphanhood. They do not have a sense of belonging to God, thus to them it looks impossible to have an assurance of salvation.

Zwemer talks about the absence of the “fatherhood of God” in Islamic theology thusly—“In Islam there is not fatherhood of God and not purpose of redemption to soften the doctrine of the decrees.”<sup>89</sup> That is one reason Muslims, to meet their felt need, search for solutions in

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<sup>84</sup>Rudolf Schnackenburg, *Ephesians: A Commentary*, (Edinburgh, Scotland: T&T Clark, 1991), 75.

<sup>85</sup>*The Bible, NIV*. Acts 26:17b-18a.

<sup>86</sup>Arnold, 77.

<sup>87</sup>*The Bible, NIV*. Ephesians 1:13.

<sup>88</sup>Gordon Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrikson Publishers, Inc., 1994), 671.

<sup>89</sup>Samuel Zwemer, *The Moslem Doctrine of God*, (New York, NY: American Track Society, 1905), 100.

magical sources. To them, God is somewhere far away, and to establish a close relationship with him as a father is not possible.

Furthermore, Schnackenburg affirms that believers may have a close relationship with God as a result of the function of the “divine Pneuma.”<sup>90</sup> While ministering among Muslims, I have observed that the idea of nearness to God is inconceivable for them. It is well known that Islamic groups like the Sufis, who seek how to be close to God, are rejected by orthodox Muslims. As Nazir-Ali (cited by Chapman) says, “Islam not only believes in the hiddenness of God, but, more seriously, in the impossibility of ever knowing Him.”<sup>91</sup>

The Spirit of God acts as the constructor of the Church as the temple of God, bringing in unity (see Ephesians 2:21-22). As Fee says, “God by *his Spirit* abides among them . . . by the indwelling of the Spirit, both in the individual and in the community.”<sup>92</sup> So, one of the barriers to reaching Muslims is their strong sense of community. The *Umma* (world Muslim community) gives them a sense of belonging; and many Muslims who have become believers in Christ face the consequence of excommunication from the *Umma*. Thus, the work of the Holy Spirit in making new Muslim-background believers a part of the temple and body of God, in the sense of divine unity, is crucial to helping them be loyal to Jesus.

Schnackenburg highlights the intention of Paul’s prayer in Ephesians 3:16-17 thusly: “(It) is not a transference of strength in a material way. It means rather that Christ takes hold of us through his Spirit and leads us to true freedom and greater glory.”<sup>93</sup> Arnold adds that this prayer seeks for the growth of the knowledge of “the power and love of Jesus” as being essential to achieve the fullness of God.<sup>94</sup> He further emphasizes that, in verse 16, Paul applied the same literary structure of the magical formula the sorcerers used for getting power to establish the fact that God doesn’t use his power for himself, but rather “His riches in glory” are for the enjoyment of believers.<sup>95</sup> Here is Arnold’s conclusion

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<sup>90</sup>Schnackenburg, 119.

<sup>91</sup>Colin Chapman, “Rethinking the Gospel for Muslims” in *Muslim and Christian on the Emmaus Road*. Edited by Dudley Woodberry (Monrovia, CA: MARC, 1989), 119.

<sup>92</sup>Fee, 689.

<sup>93</sup>Schnackenburg, 149.

<sup>94</sup>Arnold, 86.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid, 95.

about the gap between the purpose of magic power and the purpose of God's power:

This perspective in power and love stands in stark contrast to the attitude of the pagan world. In magic, many of the recipes and spells were used for the purpose of gaining advantage over people—winning a chariot race, attracting a lover, winning at dice, etc. God's power enables the believer *to love* after the pattern of Christ. The seemingly impossible demands of this kind of love require divine enablement in order for them to be fulfilled. Scholem<sup>96</sup> has rightly observed that the language of the theurgist is “dominated by the attributes of power and sublimity, not love and tenderness. Christ however, roots and establishes the believer in his own love and strengthens the believer to follow the pattern of that love.”<sup>97</sup>

This statement is crucial in folk Muslim evangelism because it describes their using magic power for egotistic purposes at whatever cost, even causing damage to other people. David Johnson notes, “Witchdoctors know that their power needs to be renewed through periodical rites and rituals. Breaking the taboo means a loss of the power and the spirit's revenge against the practitioners.”<sup>98</sup> That is further evidence of the final cost of the manipulation of evil spirits to get personal benefits and starkly contrasts with the power of God, which is connected indelibly with his love to those who seek him by faith. Therefore, the only way Muslims are able to be embraced by God's love in Jesus is through the redemptive work of the Holy Spirit.

Another work of the Spirit is to clarify the mystery of Christ (see Ephesians 3:4-5,7) regarding the unification of believers to make them “heirs of salvation.”<sup>99</sup> This is a very important aspect as well, since Muslims consider Christianity to be a foreign religion; so, through the

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<sup>96</sup>Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, (London, UK: Thames and Hudson, 1955), 56.

<sup>97</sup>Arnold, 100.

<sup>98</sup>David Johnson, “Animism and Missions” Lecture, Asia Pacific Theological Seminary, Baguio, Philippines, May 17, 2017.

<sup>99</sup>Schnackenburg, 132.



work of the Spirit they may have the sense of belonging, of being part of the body of Christ.

The direction of Ephesians changes in chapter 4, when it talks about the transformation of humans that happens after the indwelling of Christ by the Holy Spirit, who strengthens the believer to “be filled into the total fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:19).<sup>100</sup> In Arnold’s words, the redemptive work of the Spirit is helping believers grow and be empowered in order to “live according to Christian ethics.”<sup>101</sup> This aspect of the Spirit’s work helps folk people to live the result of being transferred from darkness to God’s Kingdom, to be able “to walk in unity, to walk in holiness, to walk in love, to walk in light and to walk in wisdom.”<sup>102</sup> This divine intervention of the Spirit in discipleship transformation is fundamental in the evangelism approach and discipleship for folk Muslims to help them develop a permanent allegiance to Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

The final function of the Holy Spirit, described in Ephesians 6:17, is to empower believers to “not only withstand the enemy’s fiery missiles, but they must take the offensive as well.”<sup>103</sup> Arnold describes the aim of the spiritual battle in terms of an offensive aspect and a defensive aspect. The first, is evil opposition to the advancement of the Gospel. Therefore, the most violent attack against spiritual strongholds is against those who bring the Gospel to those who have never heard about Jesus. The author of Ephesians emphasizes that we use the “sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,” not just as protection, but as an empowered weapon to attack and defeat all hindrances from the enemy.<sup>104</sup>

This aspect of the work of the Holy Spirit is crucial for missions among Muslims, since (as explained earlier) there is an anti-Christian spirit behind Islam that openly affronts the lordship of Jesus. Thus, it is vital for missionaries working among folk Muslims to first realize the spiritual strongholds and evil hindrances that will oppose the advancement of God’s kingdom and, then, to stand firm using what God

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<sup>100</sup>Ibid., 52.

<sup>101</sup>Arnold, 112.

<sup>102</sup>Hoehner Harold W. *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), vii.

<sup>103</sup>Fee, 728.

<sup>104</sup>Arnold, 121.

gives to them to be equipped and empowered, holding the victory of Jesus that has already defeated the kingdom of darkness.

The final, but most important, consideration is to “pray in the Spirit on all occasions” (Ephesians 6:18). Gordon Fee emphasizes the work of the Holy Spirit, which empowers believers to pray, since prayer is the supreme and decisive task in spiritual warfare. He argues that there are two kinds of prayer—these being prayer with the mind, which takes place in community, and prayer in and by the Spirit, which is related to comprehension of who God is. That kind of prayer speaks from our spirit to the Holy Spirit, worshiping and groaning in intercession to him. Moreover, that kind is essential for Gospel proclamation.<sup>105</sup>

The role of prayer in missions among folk Muslims is decisive to break down the spiritual strongholds that captivate them. On the other hand, by the action of the Holy Spirit, folk Muslims will experience the difference of having a prayer in/by the Spirit rather than the memorized chants and vain repetition of *dhikr* (Allah’s names) that they practice.

### **Discipleship Implications of Deliverance, Healings, and Baptism in the Holy Spirit**

What misunderstandings could cross the mind of folk Muslims when they hear about healing, baptism, and deliverance by the Holy Spirit? For folk religions, invocations, manipulation, and possession of spirits are the common practices to meet their felt needs. David Johnson notes that folk people can be confused regarding the Spirit’s supernatural work, thinking that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is a spiritual possession.<sup>106</sup>

Furthermore, he notes the purposes of spirit possession among folk Catholics in the Philippines that involve animistic practices. The features of folk Muslims are very similar to those of folk Catholics, so the conclusions found in a Pentecostal approach to an animistic context could be applied to folk Muslim people as well. Johnson cites, “In Philippine animistic practices, the first purpose of spirit possession is to

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<sup>105</sup>Fee, 731.

<sup>106</sup>David Johnson, “Baptism in the Holy Spirit vs. Spirit Possession in the Lowland Philippines: Some Considerations for Discipleship” in *Theology of the Spirit in Doctrine and Demonstration*. Edited by Teresa Chai. (Baguio, Philippines: APTS Press, 2014), 205.

bring healing; the second is for the purpose of transchanneling messages from the spirit world and is often associated with divination. A third instance of spirit possession is also common—when people become spirit possessed without intending to do so.”<sup>107</sup>

For an evangelistic approach and discipleship for folk Muslims, what is necessary to avoid fear or false assumptions that might end in syncretism? Johnson has contributed significantly to discipleship’s considerations regarding the supra-natural intervention of the Holy Spirit among animistic-background believers in order to avoid misconceptions and syncretism. He argues, “In order for the gospel to really take root . . . it must bring radical transformation. Since worldview drives culture, change must take place at the worldview level.”<sup>108</sup> Thus, it is not enough to replace practices, values, or traditions; instead, what is necessary is a deeper level of transformation so that new beliefs and behaviors will be adopted.

To achieve that, Johnson emphasizes the importance of a message given in the power of the Holy Spirit in order to be heard. However, he states that, “A signs and wonder ministry without proper teaching will only lead to heresy or syncretism.”<sup>109</sup> Aigbe maintains the same idea of “proclaiming and demonstrating the presence and power of the Holy Spirit who satisfies this inner hunger and provides power for living.”<sup>110</sup> He recommends always having in mind the felt needs of the recipients.

Malek adds a second element that’s necessary for a power encounter—the supra-natural manifestation of the Holy Spirit through signs and wonders. “In Muslim evangelism the church faces spiritual warfare of a magnitude unknown in encountering forces of evil in heavenly realms and the powers of this dark world. Nothing less than the

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<sup>107</sup>Ibid., 210.

<sup>108</sup>David M. Johnson, “An Analysis of the Worldview and Religious Beliefs of the Waray People of the Philippines and the Factors Leading to the Growth of the Assemblies of God in the Region with Implications for the Development of a Contextual Theology for the Waray” (D.Miss dissertation). Asia Graduate School of Theology, Philippines, February 2004, 217.

<sup>109</sup>David M. Johnson, “A Study of the Animistic Practices of the Waray People of the Leyte/Samar Region of the Philippines” (Thesis). Asia Pacific Theological Seminary, 2000, 92.

<sup>110</sup>Sunday Aigbe “Pentecostal Mission and Tribal People Groups” in *Called and Empowered: Global Mission in Pentecostal Perspective*. Edited by Murray A. Dempster, Byron Klaus, and Douglas Petersen. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers), 173.

power of the Holy Spirit and the word of the Gospel will be able to defeat these forces.”<sup>111</sup>

Looking at the background of the church in Ephesus, the spiritual challenges that the apostle Paul and the early Church faced in proclaiming the Gospel among the folk Ephesians were the same, or even greater, than what missionaries working among folk Muslims face today. Probably part of the challenges in the discipleship process of the Ephesians was that the new folk-background believers could diminish the nature of the Spirit to a common spirit and confuse the baptism in the Holy Spirit with their previous magical practices. However, what I observe is that the Scriptures—specifically in Acts 19—register the sequence of how Paul dealt with that.

First, Acts 19 records that, as soon as he arrived in Ephesus and met the first believers, Paul explained to them the importance of making a commitment of loyalty to Jesus via the public evidence of water baptism (verses 4-5). This shows the importance of guiding folk Muslims into a radical and public confession of faithfulness to the Lordship of Jesus that will have an impact on the spiritual realm.

Second, regarding establishment of the Ephesian church, the Bible shows that, after their public evidence of loyalty, Paul prayed for them to be baptized in the Holy Spirit, “and they spoke in tongues and prophesied” (verse 6). Third, it remarks about the role of power encounter in evangelism—“God did extraordinary miracles through Paul” (verse 11). Basically, the encounter was manifested in divine healings and deliverances (verse 12). Fourth, the Bible then explains how the manifestation of the Spirit’s power generated a false impression among some exorcism practitioners. They wanted to use Paul’s words as a mantra or magic formula; however, the outcome result was just the opposite (verse 16). And fifth, the evidence of real allegiance to Jesus was that the magicians brought their books of sorcery and burned them publicly, being willing to suffer a great loss of money (verse 19). That is truly an evidence of life transformation!

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<sup>111</sup>Sobhi Malek “Islam Encountering Gospel Power” in *Called and Empowered: Global Mission in Pentecostal Perspective*. Edited by Murray A. Dempster, Byron Klaus and Douglas Petersen. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers), 1991.

This Biblical example establishes a model for planting churches among folk Muslims as well. David Johnson observes that, “Most Filipinos easily understand the connection between spirit possession and spirit power. What is not always obvious for them, mainly because they seldom question it, is the source of that power.”<sup>112</sup> So, he suggests,

The first power encounter they need, however, may be deliverance from the evil spirits . . . regarding the supremacy of Christ over demonic power and this victory needs to be proclaimed both through study of the Word and through demonstration. People that have been involved in animistic practices, especially is they have experienced actual demon possession, need to be set free.<sup>113</sup>

After thirty-two years of ministry among folk Muslims using power encounter as the primary approach, Vivienne Stacy states that, for spiritual deliverance, it is necessary to lead them to renounce their practices and bring their amulets and sorceries to be destroyed. She recommends that “deliverance should be a shared ministry with a team,” also pointing out the importance of a diagnosis or identification of the symptoms’ nature. When dealing with demonic possession, after prayer to receive freedom, systematic teaching of the Word of God must be integrated into the spiritual healing process.<sup>114</sup> Durie agrees with that view and further warns about the spiritual consequences of avoiding renouncing Islam,

When someone leaves Islam, they should specifically reject and renounce the example of Muhammad, together with all curses implied by the *shahada*. This means rejecting the belief that the Quran is the Word of God. If the status of Muhammad as a Messenger is not explicitly renounced, then the curses and threats of the Quran, and Muhammad’s opposition to the death

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<sup>112</sup>Johnson, “Baptism in the Holy Spirit vs. Spirit Possession in the Lowland Philippines: Some Considerations for Discipleship,” 218.

<sup>113</sup>Ibid., 222.

<sup>114</sup>Vivienne Stacey, “The Practice of Exorcism and Healing” in *Muslim and Christian on the Emmaus Road*. Edited by Dudley Woodberry (Monrovia, CA: MARC, 1989), 297.

of Christ and the Lordship of Christ can be a cause of spiritual instability, causing someone to be easily intimidated and breed vulnerability and a lack of confidence as a follower of Jesus.<sup>115</sup>

David Johnson speaks to the importance of the baptism in the Holy Spirit for life transformation and that it “enables believers to be witnesses of God.”<sup>116</sup> He adds that a spiritual manifestation should be observed and compared to the biblical pattern in order to discern if it’s from the Spirit or not. The author notes that, according to the Bible, in the Spirit’s work “the believers never lost consciousness,”<sup>117</sup> the experience of the Spirit might be communal, the believers “remained in control of their physical faculties,”<sup>118</sup> and the manifestation of *glossolalia* (or speaking in tongues) is a power that comes from God. The aim of the baptism of the Holy Spirit and that of spirit possession are utterly opposed. The purpose of the Spirit’s baptism is “to empower the believer to do the work of God . . . and to be his witness.”<sup>119</sup> In addition, it “leads the believer into allegiance to Christ and no other.”<sup>120</sup>

### **Biblical Pneumatological Considerations in Folk Muslim Evangelism**

What is the best way to present a Biblical pneumatology to folk Muslims, not just as a first power encounter but beyond that to introduce the Holy Spirit who leads them into salvation in Jesus? Chapman, in his article "Rethinking the Gospel for Muslims," claims it is fundamental to convey the Word of God in understandable terminology according to their cultural context. He took the example of Paul with the Athenians to suggest the necessity of observing the similarities in order to establish a common ground with Muslims.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>115</sup>Mark Durie. *Liberty to the Captives: Freedom from Islam and Dhimmitudes Through the Cross* (Melbourne, Australia: Deror Books), 109.

<sup>116</sup>Johnson, “Baptism in the Holy Spirit vs. Spirit Possession in the Lowland Philippines: Some Considerations for Discipleship”, 222.

<sup>117</sup>*Ibid.*, 218.

<sup>118</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup>*Ibid.*, 223.

<sup>120</sup>*Ibid.*, 226.

<sup>121</sup>Chapman, 113.

However, the greater enigma is how to get the attention of a Muslim to talk about “the Truth,” since every time the name of Jesus arises, most Muslims will deny his divine nature. So how, then, can witnesses of Christ build conversations that lead them to Jesus without that initial rejection? Steinhaus proposes a way to avoid it, saying, “If we are relying on the Holy Spirit in each stage of our evangelism, can’t we trust him to point those that are interested in him eventually to the Son as well?”<sup>122</sup>

Making a deep analysis of the relationship between Jesus and the Holy Spirit in the Bible, Thiseldon reminds that the Holy Spirit is called “the Spirit of Jesus” in Acts 16:7 and, “the Spirit of Christ” in Romans 8:9, that Peter makes the same statement in 1 Peter 1:11, and that Paul speaks of “the Spirit of Jesus Christ” in Philippians 1:19. From this, Thiseldon defends the argument of the unity between Jesus and the Holy Spirit manifested in the figure of the Paraclete thusly: “The Paraclete is virtually Christ’s second self . . . the Paraclete will glorify Christ, God will send him through Christ, to witness to the deeds and teachings of Christ. Swete comments, “the Spirit in his working was found to be in effect the equivalent of Jesus Christ.”<sup>123</sup>

Thiseldon based his argument on 1 Corinthians 12:3, which reads, “No one can say Jesus is the Lord except by the Holy Spirit.”<sup>124</sup> He also cites several theologians, such as Ambrose of Milan, Augustine, John Zizioulas, the Reformers, and Welker, who defended the idea that “In the person of Christ . . . the Holy Spirit is both universalized and made concrete.”<sup>125</sup> However, even considering the intimate and indivisible soteriological relationship between Jesus and Holy Spirit, I must disagree with Thiseldon regarding the interchange of their roles, since it can be considered as replacement. From the beginning of a pneumatological approach, there must be an intentional final purpose, which is to guide a folk Muslim to Christ.

Related to this concept, Steinhaus states that, in his experience using pneumatological teachings, he found that Muslims do not raise conversational barriers, but rather are open to talk about spiritual

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<sup>122</sup>Steinhaus, 28.

<sup>123</sup>Anthony C. Thiseldon, *A Shorter Guide to the Holy Spirit: Bible, Doctrine, Experience* (Grand Rapids, MN: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2016), 96.

<sup>124</sup>The Bible, NVI, 1 Cor 12:3.

<sup>125</sup>Thiseldon, 98.

aspects.<sup>126</sup> As a result, he proposes the following evangelistic method: “By emphasizing the need to receive the Spirit rather than Jesus, and by not debating our respective religious inheritance, this method undercuts many of the initial problems faced in evangelism presentation and paves the way to open-minded thinking.”<sup>127</sup>

Steinhaus defends his view noting that the pneumatological teachings are Christ-centered as well, for it is through the Holy Spirit that Jesus indwells believers, and through the Spirit that the name of Jesus is glorified. However, I disagree with his concept of replacing acceptance of the lordship of Jesus by receiving the Holy Spirit, because the main focus of developing an allegiance to Jesus can be missed.

### Conclusion

Cross-cultural workers who attempt to reach folk Muslims in Indonesia have to be aware of these people’s spiritual context, which is the result of syncretism between the Islamic faith, Hinduism or Buddhism, and animism. For them, daily life is influenced by spiritual beings that have to be appeased, or otherwise the spirits can injure them. Because of the absence of love and the fatherhood of God in Islamic theology, they look for spiritual sources to meet their felt needs—sources like ancestor veneration, spirit possession, and the role of magic practitioners in healings and exorcism. Thus, the main question is this—could a missionary redress this perception in order to present the Holy Spirit as being that source as an effective evangelistic approach?

The results of this research show that a comprehension of folk Muslims’ view about the Holy Spirit is relevant to introduce them to him and to prevent further misunderstandings about his supra-natural intervention. One especially important conclusion is that folk Muslims do not have a clear concept about who the Holy Spirit is and what he does. Instead, there is a wandering and confused interpretation of the Spirit. Some Muslims claim that the angel Gabriel (*Jibril*) and the Holy Spirit are one in the same, whereas, various Muslim writers make a distinction between the two but nevertheless ascribe to Gabriel the role of “agent of revelation.” If there is this huge misunderstanding among

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<sup>126</sup>Steinhaus, 28.

<sup>127</sup>*Ibid.*, 24



Muslim scholars, we can assume that the discrepancy between folk Muslims is even greater. In some way, this incomprehension of the nature of the Holy Spirit could be used to introduce the Spirit of God and to lead them to the truth in Jesus.

Another question that was contemplated in this research is—What is the redemptive work of the Holy Spirit according to Paul’s letter to the Ephesians? The spiritual background of the people of Ephesus shows many similarities with folk Muslims; for they too were moved by fear and practiced magic, invocations, amulets, and dependence on magic practitioners. In the book of Acts, the power encounter’s manifestations are mentioned as a crucial part of establishment of the Ephesian Church. However, in Paul’s letter, the soteriological functions of the Holy Spirit were explained as essential elements that led to a genuine submission to the lordship of Jesus. Thus, the redemptive work of the Spirit includes the following elements:

- To reveal Jesus.
- To release new believers from spiritual darkness.
- To separate as God’s possession those who experience the fatherhood of God.
- To produce a sense of belonging.
- To provide the power needed to experience the fullness of God.
- To empower the new believer to take both a defensive and an offensive position against darkness through spiritual weapons, prayer, and the proclamation of the Word.

What misunderstandings could cross the mind of folk Muslims when they hear about the supra-natural works of the Holy Spirit (e.g., healings, baptism, deliverance)? Chances are they would have a wrong interpretation, attributing these works to other spiritual forces. For example, the baptism in the Holy Spirit could be interpreted as spiritual possession. Thus, the consistent teaching about the Spirit to develop Christian ethics and maturity, besides deliverance, power encounter, and the baptism, will produce a life transformation evidenced in an allegiance to Jesus.

The importance of deliverance for folk Muslim practitioners stems from the people’s desire to gain freedom from any kind of spiritual

bondage and curses as a result of the covenant to the Islamic faith confession; submission to the morally decadent example of Mohammad; and denial of the incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection and lordship of Christ. Furthermore, folk Muslims must renounce animistic practices, such as mantras, amulets, invocations, etc., in order to guarantee a permanent loyalty to Jesus. Additionally, the baptism in the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues is essential to empower new believers to testify. However, every supra-natural manifestation should be evaluated according to the Scriptures.

Paul's letter to the Ephesians sets a model to follow in evangelism and the discipleship process among folk Muslims, since it evidences the soteriological function of the Holy Spirit and the deep relationship between Jesus and the Spirit. Thus, the Pentecostal approach to folk Muslims should be considered the key intervention to guide unbelievers to Christ. Moreover, the concept of the Holy Spirit as the Comforter, who is close enough to us to respond to our deep needs, is a powerful function of the Spirit that folk Muslims need to experience in order to be rescued from their animism bondages.

Lastly, I presented some biblical considerations of how an initial pneumatological approach can be useful to bring folk Muslims to Jesus, since the function of the *paracletos* is to guide to the absolute truth. Even the titles given to the Holy Spirit (e.g., Spirit of Christ, Spirit of Jesus) affirm the indissoluble divine nature of one triune God. However, proclamation of the divine nature of Jesus, his incarnation, death, and resurrection cannot be omitted or replaced, since these are essential to the Christian faith and salvation. For that reason, beyond a power encounter, a sustained biblical pneumatological approach to folk Muslims in Indonesia (where the Holy Spirit, who meets their felt needs, is the deliverer, and guides them to the Truth) will produce a long-term allegiance to Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

It is my prayer that this research can be useful and fruitful in planting churches among folk Muslims in Indonesia.

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