

## **Baptism in the Holy Spirit vs Spirit Possession in the Lowland Philippines: Some Considerations for Discipleship<sup>1</sup>**

by Dave Johnson

### **Introduction**

If I ask the Lord to baptize me in the Holy Spirit, is it possible that a demon might possess me instead?" This is the question I have heard asked on more than one occasion by Filipinos seeking the Spirit's infilling, highlighting the need for a careful analysis of the Philippine animism as it relates to biblical teaching on the baptism in the Holy Spirit. But what is the Filipino worldview that drives this and other related questions and what are the implications of this worldview for discipleship and teaching regarding Spirit baptism?

Numerous writers have indicated that the Pentecostal/ Charismatic sector of the Body of Christ is the fastest growing, with researchers like Peter Wagner attributing at least some of the growth to the fact that Pentecostalism, with its emphasis on power encounter, is the part of Christianity that best deals with the animistic worldviews that are prevalent throughout the Majority World.<sup>2</sup> This fact further underscores the need for clear biblical teaching that addresses these worldview issues within the cultural framework of animists.

This article will focus on how Filipinos understand the baptism in the Holy Spirit within their cultural framework. It will also include an attempt to contextualize biblical teaching regarding Holy Spirit baptism. To do this, I will attempt to fulfill two components so necessary for contextualization: faithfulness to the biblical text and an accurate

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<sup>2</sup>C. Peter Wagner, "A Church Growth Perspective on Pentecostal Missions," in *Called and Empowered: Global Mission in Pentecostal Perspective* ed. Murray A. Dempster, Byron D. Klaus and Douglas Petersen, 265-284, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 271-272.

exegesis of Filipino culture. Dean Gilliland writes that “contextualization declares that truth, however absolute, cannot be abstracted from the particularity of the context.”<sup>3</sup> The understanding here is that the message of the gospel, including Spirit baptism, must be relevant and understandable within the cultural framework of the receptor because, regardless of how the message is communicated, the receptors will interpret it according to their worldview. If the Gospel message is not conceptualized within that framework, the distortion of the message and the resultant syncretism and heresy are virtually guaranteed.

### **Research Questions**

This study will attempt to answer two simple questions. First, when Filipinos from an animistic background hear about the Spirit baptism, how do they understand it within their worldview? Second, what does the Bible say about the baptism of the Holy Spirit that answers the concerns of Filipinos?

### **Scope and Limitations**

Virtually all writers in the field agree that the similarities between the lowland cultures of the Philippines greatly outweigh the dissimilarities, mainly due to nearly 450 years of Roman Catholicism that has deeply impacted the lowlands. Also, the author’s nearly twenty years of missionary experience in the lowlands confirms that although this field research is limited to the Waray people of Leyte and Samar, this essay is relevant throughout the lowlands.

Much research is available on the Filipino’s view of the spirit world and the activities of the spirit beings that occupy it. Likewise, the literature available on a Pentecostal understanding of the Holy Spirit is numerous. This essay will focus primarily on issues related to Holy Spirit Baptism, which is defined here as subsequent to salvation and is evidenced by speaking in unknown tongues and with the purpose of empowering the believer to live a sanctified life and be an effective witness for Christ.

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<sup>3</sup>Dean Gilliland, ed., *The Word Among Us: Contextualizing Theology for Mission Today*. (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1988), 59.

## **The Filipino Religious Worldview in Relation to Spirit Baptism<sup>4</sup>**

A brief survey of the Filipino religious worldview brings into focus how Filipinos may view Holy Spirit baptism. While most Filipinos are Roman Catholic, the Filipino worldview is heavily animistic, leading one scholar to describe it as “split-level Christianity.”<sup>5</sup> For Melba Maggay, a Filipino social anthropologist, this syncretized Catholicism is mainly a “transaction of powers, between the various spirit beings and humans.”<sup>6</sup> Like animism the world over, Filipinos view gaining, using, channeling and maintaining supernatural power as the primary reason for participation in animistic practices.

### **The Three-Tier Occupants of the Spirit World**

A brief worldview sketch is in order here to give some backdrop to the problems Filipinos may face when they try to understand Spirit baptism biblically. Using Paul Hiebert’s organic, three-tier analogy,<sup>7</sup> Filipinos perceive God alone as at the top, but he is often seen as unapproachable, at least in a direct way. The middle tier is comprised of the Virgin Mary and the Catholic saints who are perceived as much closer to people, attentive to their needs and prayers and interceding before God on their behalf. Virtually every town in the lowlands has an annual fiesta with special masses said in honor of the saints. These fiestas are often accompanied by a religious procession where images of saints are carried in the backs of open vehicles such as pickup trucks and carts. In January, 2014, for example, the annual fiesta and procession of the image of the Black Nazarene in Quiapo drew an estimated crowd of twelve million, according to at least one newscaster. Many surged around the image trying to touch it in belief that it would bring healing or other kinds of blessings. By comparison, the estimated crowd at the World Youth Day in the same area of Manila featuring Pope John Paul II in 1995 drew an estimated international crowd of only four million. This example serves to confirm that the appeal of animism remains strong even after 450 years of Catholicism and must be reckoned with in

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<sup>4</sup>Because of the similarities of the lowland cultures’ worldview, they will be referred to as a singular whole as a simple writing convention.

<sup>5</sup>Jaime Bulatao, S.J., *Split-Level Christianity* (Manila: Ateneo de Manila Press, 1956), n.p.

<sup>6</sup>Melba Maggay, 1999, “Towards Sensitive Engagement with Filipino Indigenous Consciousness.” *International Review of Missions* 87 (346): 362.

<sup>7</sup>Paul Hiebert, “The Flaw of the Excluded Middle,” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, 4th ed. 407-414, (William Carey Library: Pasadena, CA, 2009), 410.

matters of discipleship of believers regarding the Holy Spirit and the spirits.

Besides Mary and the saints, this second tier is also occupied by an army of spirits, including ancestors, whose names and classifications vary from region to region. Some are regarded as always good and others are always perceived to be evil. The vast majority, however, are perceived as amoral and capricious and can be manipulated through sacrifices, incantations and rituals to do either good or evil, depending on the mood of the spirit or the desire of human trying to engage the spirit's attention. *For our study, the most significant issue regarding this second tier is that the Waray people among whom I conducted field research placed the Holy Spirit in this category.*<sup>8</sup> Hiebert's bottom or third tier is occupied by humans, animals and plants.

While these categories can be neatly drawn for descriptive purposes for outsiders, the lines are almost purely academic and are often blurred or non-existent in the minds of the local people. Therefore, one must be careful in drawing the lines too sharply. However, the fact that the Holy Spirit may not be considered to be in the same category as God may be significant to many Filipinos.

#### Spiritual Practitioners and their Spiritual Power

Some understanding of Filipino spiritual practitioners may shed light on how Filipinos might view ministry in the power of the Holy Spirit. There are a multitude of classifications and subclassifications of spirit world practitioners that range from fortunetellers to faith healers and everything in between, most of whom fall outside of the parameters of this study. Yet the primary purpose of all of them is to maintain contact with the spirit world and try to manipulate the spirits through sacrifices, incantations and other rituals to benefit mankind.

One of the ways spiritual practitioners channel spiritual power is through spirit possession, suggesting that when someone speaks of the baptism of the Holy Spirit as an enduement of power, Filipinos easily associate power with spirit possession. In Philippine animistic practice, the first purpose of spirit possession is to bring healing; the second is for the purpose of trans channeling 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.

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<sup>8</sup>Dave Johnson, *A Study of the Animistic Practices of the Waray People of the Leyte-Samar Region of the Philippines*. (M.A. thesis, Asia Pacific Theological Seminary, 2000), 27.

### *Intentional Spirit Possession*

In doing the field work for my master's thesis, several spiritists spoke of going into an altered state of consciousness (ASC) where they would become spirit possessed in order to heal their patients.<sup>9</sup> My assistants and I were able to observe this phenomenon on two separate occasions. One of the spiritists was a medium, who was using a Bible to trans channel messages from the spirit world in a healing meeting and the other was known as a psychic healer. Psychic healers are a sub classification of spiritists that are able to place their hands inside the body of the patient and perform "surgery" without the aid of any medical instrument, but that can only be done in an ASC. Jaime Bulatao reflects the non-dualistic Filipino worldview when he suggests that the ability to go into a trance is a divine gift, allowing the person to step into the spirit world, which really isn't separated from the natural one.<sup>10</sup> Leonardo Mercado adds that after the medium returns to a normal state of consciousness, he or she cannot remember what they said while they were in the ASC, and my research bore this out.<sup>11</sup>

Several spiritists to whom I spoke during my research claimed that a spirit takes possession of them in order to heal people. When the healing session is done, the spirit leaves. All of this raises critical issues related to a theology of the Holy Spirit in the Philippine context. Where these spirits come from and who they work for are questions seldom asked by the Waray, but are critical in light of Scripture.

### *Unintentional Spirit Possession*

As mentioned earlier, spirit possession is not only pursued with purpose, but it also may be unintentional. When asked if people could be controlled by an evil spirit, 79.9 percent (369 out of 462 respondents) of the ordinary Waray people responded affirmatively and 85.4 percent (420 out of 492 respondents) of the AG sample population agreed with them.<sup>12</sup> The difference between the two groups here was not significant, ( $\chi^2=3.09 < F_{crit}. 3.84$ ). What is clear in the responses here is that the belief that demons can possess people is widespread among ordinary

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<sup>9</sup>Johnson, 2000, 88.

<sup>10</sup>Jaime Bulatao, *Phenomena and Their Interpretation: Land Mark Essays, 1597-1989*, (Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1992), 67.

<sup>11</sup>Leonardo Mercado, *Inculturation and Theology*. Manila: Divine Word Publications, 1992, 110.

<sup>12</sup>Dave Johnson, *An Analysis of the Worldview and Religious Beliefs of the Waray People of the Philippine 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, Asian Graduate School of Theology, 2004, 180.

people and believers alike. However, when interviewed about the Waray's opinion of evil spirits, 88.1 percent of the general population and 98.6 percent of the AG said it was bad.<sup>13</sup> When asked why this was so, over 98 percent of the respondents said it was because it gave control of one's body and mind to demons and because it would involve losing one's consciousness and not knowing what was going on while the spirit was in control.<sup>14</sup> Many respondents said that the demon possessed walk and talk differently, describing such things as removing their clothes, talking incoherently with bad words, becoming stronger than normal, mental derangement, loss of consciousness, and going crazy. I personally witnessed this kind of behavior once when a lady at an evangelistic rally we were conducting came up to me, started tugging on my shirt and continually repeating John 14:6 in flawless English. I sensed that there was demonic activity going on, but felt I should wait until later in the evening to deal with it. Later a pastor and I went to her house, but were not allowed inside because she was ranting and raving—which we could clearly hear from outside. We were told that she owed someone a considerable amount of money and when she was unable to pay, the person went to a sorcerer and had a curse put on her. We prayed for her deliverance, but could do nothing more. The next morning the pastor went back to visit and was told that she was delivered from the demon, but had left town.

Fear then, of evil spirits, is widespread and, given the Philippine worldview, understandable. Many Filipinos respond to this fear by wearing an amulet which, in many cases, is seen as more effective if blessed by the local Catholic priest. Others go to the priest or pastor for special prayer, believing that the one who claims to represent God has greater spiritual power than ordinary laymen.<sup>15</sup>

#### How Filipinos View the Holy Spirit and Spirit Baptism

In my master's thesis research, I discovered that the Waray spiritual practitioners regarded the Holy Spirit as one of a number of spirits (in the second tier) that could be used for healing and did not regard him as the Spirit of God who is *sui generis*, wholly other.<sup>16</sup> In my doctoral research I asked members or adherents (known as sympathizers in the Philippines) what they knew about the Holy Spirit before they came to Christ and what they know now.

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 181.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 182.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 177.

<sup>16</sup>Johnson, 2000, 27.

**TABLE 1<sup>17</sup>**  
**BELIEFS ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT**

	<b>Before Christ</b> (477 Resp.)		<b>After Christ</b> (478 Resp.)	
	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
1. I knew little or nothing about the Holy Spirit.	397 (83.2%)	80 (16.8%)	124 (25.9%)	354 (74.1%)
2. That the Holy Spirit is just like the other spirits in that he can heal people through the spiritist.	203 (42.9%)	270 (52.1%)	57 (11.9%)	421 (88.1%)
3. That the Holy Spirit is God.	359 (75.7%)	115 (24.3%)	463 (97.5%)	12 (2.5%)
4. That the Holy Spirit possesses all who trust in God and abides with them forever.	290 (60.8%)	187 (39.2%)	461 (96.6%)	16 (3.4%)
5. That every believer can be baptized in the Holy Spirit and speak in unknown tongues.	133 (27.9%)	344 (72.1%)	438 (91.6%)	40 (8.4%)

Chi-square analysis reveals differences are significant here on questions one through five ( $\chi^2=336.16, p <.001$ ), ( $\chi^2=115.04, p <.001$ ), ( $\chi^2=96.8, p <.001$ ), ( $\chi^2=182.98, p <.001$ ), and ( $\chi^2=403.57, p <.001$ ), respectively. The results are hardly surprising and, again, give evidence of a real paradigm shift in the thinking of the AG people since they became followers of Jesus Christ. How and why this happened will be noted later. It can be noted here that 24.3 percent of non-Christians do not believe that the Holy Spirit is God, but only 2.5 percent of Christians believe the same.

Most of the respondents indicated that they knew little or nothing about the Holy Spirit before coming to Christ and what they did know does not appear to follow any pattern of consistency. The one statistic that is a bit surprising is that so many said that they knew that people could be filled with the Holy Spirit and speak in tongues *before* the respondents themselves became believers. This percentage is higher than in the first question where they indicated that they were not familiar with

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<sup>17</sup>Johnson, 2004, 207.

the person and work of the Holy Spirit before they became believers. How can this be? One explanation may be that witchdoctors and other spiritual practitioners use *orasyons*, prayers that are believed to be in Latin. Maggay holds that this practice may have stemmed from the time when the mass was said in that language and, therefore, unintelligible to the hearer.<sup>18</sup> Perhaps some may confuse this with speaking in other tongues. A second explanation is that these respondents may have had friends and relatives who preceded them into the Assemblies of God who may have related their experience with the Holy Spirit to them.

### **Biblical Teaching on the Holy Spirit, Spirit Baptism and Spirit Possession**

Having looked at several key elements of the Filipino Religious Worldview, one of the critical questions to consider is what enters the mind of the Filipinos when they are taught that the Holy Spirit will come upon them (Ac. 1:8)? When the Holy Spirit comes, does He leave again just like the other spirits? If not, in what ways is he different? A true contextual theology of Spirit baptism will answer these questions and challenge the gospel messengers themselves to live lives “full of the Holy Ghost and of power.” With a basic understanding of cultural issues in mind, these issues can now be looked at in biblical perspective.

#### **What Happens When the Holy Spirit Comes on People?: The OT Prophets and the Day of Pentecost**

Understanding the similarities and differences between Filipino spiritual practitioners and biblical prophets is important to informing any contextualized theology of the Spirit in doctrine for the Philippines. Any number of approaches to understanding the Spirit’s work might be undertaken, however, the focus here will be on how the Spirit of God moved upon people and how they reacted. This will enable us to compare what the Bible teaches about this activity of the Holy Spirit and how it might be perceived by ordinary Filipinos. Even here, however, space constraints do not allow an exhaustive treatment of the subject.

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<sup>18</sup>Melba Maggay, *A Clash of Cultures: Early American Protestant Missions and Filipino*, (Anvil Publishing, 2011), *n.p.*

### *The OT Prophets*

While the instances of the Spirit of God moving on people in the OT are more sporadic than in the NT, they are instructive here. One similarity between Philippine spiritual practitioners and the OT prophets was the apparent impermanence of the Spirit. The Spirit of the Lord would come upon the OT prophets for a purpose and depart when his work was done.

But some drastic differences contrast with this similarity. First, the prophets never lost consciousness, although there may have been cases (i.e. Saul in I Sam. 10:9-11) where they temporarily lost control of the mental faculties. Also, as Roger Stronstad notes, the activity of the Spirit in the OT was mainly prophetic in nature,<sup>19</sup> whereas demonic spirits possess Filipino spiritual practitioners mainly for healing and divination.

More importantly, there was a substantial difference in the Holy Spirit's purpose through the prophets, as opposed to the spirits' purpose through the spiritists. The activities of the spiritists are always anthropocentric, with the devil's motive being to deceive people. On the other hand, the activities of the biblical prophets were always theocentric—focused on God and his purposes, which are diametrically opposed to that of the spiritists and the demons that possess them.

### *The Day Of Pentecost*

Roger Stronstad draws a direct connection between the activity of the Holy Spirit in the OT and Intertestamental period to Lukan pneumatology:

In general terms, Old Testament and Jewish Hellenistic historiography furnished Luke with the model for writing his two-volume history of the origin and spread of Christianity. Moreover, the Charismatic motifs of the Hebrew and Greek Bibles, such as the transfer, sign, and vocational motifs, influence Luke's theology of the Holy Spirit. In addition to the influence of these Charismatic motifs, the Septuagint furnishes Luke with the terminology to describe the activity of the Holy Spirit in the lives of Jesus and His disciples. Finally, Luke-Acts contrasts with the intertestamental belief in the cessation prophetic inspiration; rather, it reports the restoration of prophetic activity after four centuries of silence.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Roger Stronstad, *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1984), 14.

<sup>20</sup>Stronstad, 31-32.

Here, I will examine Lukan pneumatology in general and the Day of Pentecost in specific. Two respected Pentecostal scholars, Roger Stronstad and Robert Menzies, have done some excellent work in this area. For Stronstad, the Holy Spirit is the Charismatic Spirit that endows believers with gifts, specifically the vocal gifts of prophecy and *glossolalia*, or speaking in tongues, for speaking in God's name and for his glory.<sup>21</sup> Menzies essentially agrees, rooting Lukan pneumatology in Joel's prophecy of a great outpouring of the Spirit in the last days. In doing so he makes a compelling argument that speaking in tongues is the initial, physical evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit and should be normative to every believer.<sup>22</sup>

Lukan pneumatology, for Menzies, is also clear in texts such as Luke 11:11-13.<sup>23</sup> I certainly agree with Menzies, but take a slightly different tack when it comes to this particular passage. What is critical to note here is the underlying assumption of God's omnipotence and providence. This promise to receive exactly what is requested is good news to people coming out of an animistic background, who fear that if they ask God for the Holy Spirit they may instead become demon possessed.

Most Pentecostals believe that the baptism of the Holy Spirit empowers the believer to be Christ's witness. Menzies presents a compelling argument that this empowerment is a key reason for the explosive growth of the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement around the world, much of which is taking place among people whose worldviews are heavily animistic. In comparing this to the situation in the Philippines, most Filipinos easily understand the connection between spirit possession and spiritual power. What is not always obvious to them, mainly because they seldom question it, is the source of that spiritual power. This is where Pentecostals rightly part company with animistic spiritual practitioners.

Since the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 provides the most complete story in the NT of the outpouring of the Spirit we will look at it here through the lens of Filipino culture to see parallels and contrasts with the Filipino view of spirit possession. First, the Holy Spirit came upon the believers *en masse*, an experience that was also repeated in Acts 10:44-47 and 19:1-6. I am not arguing that this group experience should be normative, although it is common in Pentecostal circles. By contrast, I simply note that in the animistic practices of which I am aware, only one person at a time becomes possessed.

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<sup>21</sup>Stronstad, 24.

<sup>22</sup>Robert Menzies, *Pentecost: This is Our Story*, (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2013), 35.

<sup>23</sup>Menzies, 91-96.

Second, when the Holy Spirit came on believers they never lost consciousness, whereas animistic practitioners do lose consciousness. While it cannot be said that the believers on the day of Pentecost necessarily understood all that was going on inside of them, they were well aware of their surroundings and knew they were experiencing the arrival of the Holy Spirit as both Joel and Jesus had prophesied (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 1:4-8). They were also well aware of the impact their experience was having on unbelievers outside their door (2:7-14). Furthermore, it is assumed that Luke was writing this somewhere around AD 60-64 and that his information likely came from some of the apostles themselves. Their ability to recall the event in vivid detail thirty years after the fact attests to their clear awareness of what happened that day, although it is possible that Luke may have also had access to those who merely witnessed the disciples speaking in tongues but did not necessarily participate. Nevertheless, the clear awareness of Peter immediately after being baptized in the Spirit, as well as the way Luke writes about the Day of Pentecost sharply contrasts with the experience of Filipino spiritual practitioners. All of my interviews in this regard and all the literature I have reviewed are in agreement that the practitioners *always* go into an altered state of consciousness and do not personally recall what happened while they were spirit possessed. Furthermore, there is nothing in the Acts 2 account that suggests any of the disciples lost consciousness.

Third, not only were the believers mentally cognizant of their surroundings, Acts 2:4 suggests that they remained in control of their physical faculties, moving their own mouths in speaking as the Spirit gave the utterance. While one must be careful to press this too far as some believers, myself included, have testified to losing control of their mouths when baptized in the Spirit, this is in contradistinction to the spiritists who always surrender control of their entire bodies to the spirits to perform healing or deliver oracles through them.

Fourth and most important is the issue of speaking in tongues. When doing my doctoral research, I was surprised to discover that nearly twenty-six AG respondents said they understood that the infilling of the Spirit involved speaking in tongues *before* they became Christians. Unfortunately, the research questionnaire was not designed to ask why this was. I have long pondered how this could be and have come up with two possibilities. One, it's possible, maybe even probable that a family member or friend preceded them into the Pentecostal movement, was baptized in the Holy Spirit and testified about their experience to family members and friends. But another possibility cannot be ignored. Filipino spiritual practitioners across the spectrum use mantras known as *orasyons*, drawn from the Spanish word for prayer, in innumerable

situations. These may be written or spoken and are also known as “Latin prayers.” While I have made no effort to establish their etymology, Melba Maggay, as mentioned earlier, may be correct when she speculates that these unintelligible “prayers” may have come from the time when the Catholic mass was said in Latin.

The function and the use of *orasyons* must be critically assessed here as they function as incantations and are an integral part of numerous animistic rituals. Filipinos believe that if these incantations are said with precise accuracy, the ritual will successfully give the devotee whatever they want or need. The meaning of the actual words is irrelevant because the words themselves are believed to have magical power. If the incantation fails to bring the desired result, it is believed that it was not done correctly.

Setting aside the discussion of *glossolalia* and *xenolalia*, under which these “Latin” prayers might be anthropologically classified, the idea of speaking in an unknown tongue being connected to supernatural power is not difficult for Filipinos to grasp. I must hasten to add, however, that using *orasyons* does normally not require spirit possession and that *orasyons* can be written as well as spoken. The critical difference between the baptism in the Holy Spirit is in the location of the spiritual power and in its purpose or function. For an animist the power is in the words themselves but for the follower of Jesus, the power is in a person, the Holy Spirit. For the animist the incantation itself is an impersonal and amoral spiritual force called magic, but for the believer, the source of power is God himself.

Regarding function, the focus of using incantations is to do the will of the individual, be it good or bad. On the other hand, the purpose of the baptism in the Holy Spirit is to empower believers to do the will of God. One can easily see how Filipinos might be confused on this issue. The need to bring clarity regarding the source and purpose of the baptism in the Holy Spirit is abundantly clear and the implications for discipleship are enormous.

### **Key Teachings Related to the Baptism in the Holy Spirit**

The fulfillment of the Great Commission in Matthew 28:16-20 calls for making disciples. While there are many components involved in do this, most of which are well beyond the confines of this essay, teaching a sound theology in both demonstration and doctrine within the Filipino cultural matrix is vital key to helping people follow Christ.

### Power Encounter: Deliverance and the Purpose of Holy Spirit Baptism

One of the research questions focused on the key components that brought people to Christ. Over forty percent of the of the respondents, who were given the opportunity to say yes or no to each category, indicated that they came to Christ because they were delivered from demons.<sup>24</sup> The baptism in the Holy Spirit is essential and desperately needed by people coming from an animistic background. Former animists need power encounters. The first power encounter they need, however, may be deliverance from evil spirits. The New Testament is replete with examples, both in teaching (i.e. Eph. 1:18-21; Phil. 2:9-11; Col. 1:15-19) and in deed (i.e. Matt. 9:32-33; 17:14-21; Mark 5:1-17; Luke 4:33-37; Acts 5:16; 8:5-8; 16:16-18; 19:11-12) 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 if they have experienced actual demon possession, need to be set free. Amulets, talismans and other animistic paraphernalia need to be destroyed by the user (Acts 19:18-19).

But the second encounter, Spirit baptism, is needed to draw experience oriented people into an experience with God which alters their life purpose. This Spirit baptism is a power encounter that enables believers to be witnesses for Christ (Acts 1:8), a reality that Luke consistently demonstrates in the book of Acts (see Acts 2:1-41; 8:14-25; 10:44-48; 19:1-7). My own life was revolutionized by the Spirit's empowering, drawing me out of the evangelical church in which I had been raised and into the Pentecostal movement. I have now served as an Assemblies of God minister for more than thirty years, most of them in evangelistic ministry in the Philippines that, through the grace and power of the Holy Spirit, has resulted in numerous churches being planted.

#### The Power of the Holy Spirit to Protect Christians from Demons

While former animists need teaching on the power to deliver people from demons and the power and purpose of Spirit baptism, they also need assurance regarding God's protection of Christians against demonic spirits. Questions like "Does God have the power to protect people from demon possession when they are seeking the baptism in the Holy Spirit?" are vitally important. Scriptures like Psalms 91:1-4 and Luke 11:9-13 are

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<sup>24</sup>Johnson, 2004, 211.

incredibly good news and help people deal with their fear of the spirit world. Doctrines like the providence of God and the supremacy of Christ over the powers of darkness (i.e. Col. 2:14-15) are critical to bringing people out of the bondage of animism and into God's glorious light. Even teaching on the Trinity can be helpful, an explanation of the fact that the Holy Spirit is on the same level (Hiebert's first tier) as the Father and the Son, far exceeding power level of the spirits.

#### The Differences Between the Baptism in the Holy Spirit and Demonic Power

Disciples of Christ must be made aware of the critical differences between the baptism in the Holy Spirit and the power used by spiritists for healing and fortunetelling, etc. First, they are different in source. People must be taught about the different sources of supernatural power. Filipinos seldom ask about the spiritists' source of power, but knowing the true power source is critical to understanding the true gospel. The power that possesses the spiritists is from Satan while the power of God is the source of the Holy Spirit baptism.

Second, as mentioned earlier, Spirit baptism and demonic power are diametrically different in purpose. Animists seek spiritual power for anthropocentric reasons such as healing, cursing enemies and especially, through fortunetelling and divination, to control their future. Satan's motives are to draw people away from God through deception. But the purpose of the Holy Spirit is to empower believers to be his witnesses, to walk under the anointing of the Spirit in preaching the gospel, healing the sick, casting out demons, setting the captive free and declaring the arrival of the Kingdom (Matt 10:5, 8; Lk 4:16-18; Ac 1:8). In short, the Spirit empowers us to see men and women drawn to Jesus Christ, the Author and Finisher of our faith. A study of Spirit baptism and the resulting missionary work through Spirit empowered disciples in the book of Acts may help believers to clearly see the passion of God for the lost and the plan and purpose of God for churches and individuals.

Third, the experience of the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the power of the demonic are different. In Filipino animism, only specialists have access to demonic power for healing, divination, etc. But Joel 2:28-29 is clear that the power of the Holy Spirit is available to *every* believer. Bob Menzies brilliantly connects Joel's motif here to Lukan pneumatology, citing passages such as Acts 2:1-4, 16-18, and 2:38-39, making clear that this outpouring is for every believer in every generation.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Menzies, 77-80.

Another difference in experience relates to falling down or “falling under the power.” For years I wondered why some pastors in the Philippines believe that the evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit is being slain in the Spirit. Only recently has it dawned on me that this falling to the floor is what often happens when spiritual practitioners become demon possessed. Apparently these pastors assume that the physical reaction is the same when people become filled with the Holy Spirit. While I have heard accounts of people being slain in Spirit and speaking in tongues at the same time, people need to be taught that being slain in the Spirit is not necessary for and not the same thing as receiving Holy Spirit baptism.

Fourth, another critical difference between Spirit baptism and demonic power is the dynamic of love. Romans 5:5 says, “. . . God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.” The Apostle Paul exhorts believers to be encouraged by the comfort of God’s love, the fellowship of the Spirit and the Lord’s tenderness and compassion in order to love one another and be one in spirit and purpose (Phil. 2:1-2). Jesus taught the great commandments—to love God and others (i.e. Lk 10:27 et al).

One day I asked a spiritist if he loved God. He responded by saying that he loved the people in his community that came to him for healing. After affirming his feelings for the people, I restated my question. He had no answer. Indeed. Not only was he missing the love of God, there is also no love between the spiritists and the spirits that empower them. The relationship is purely utilitarian. Once the spirit has completed his work, it leaves the spiritist. The Spirit of God, however, not only pours the love of God in our hearts, he also abides with the believer forever (Jn 14:16). In other words, the Holy Spirit is *sui generis*, wholly other than the demons that possess the spiritists.

The horizontal love relationships with other believers is just as critical, in part because most animists come from group focused cultures. The fellowship of the Spirit, as mentioned above, encourages a loving unity among believers. When they come to Christ, the animists’ social group of family and friends may turn against them. Incorporating them into the Body of Christ, where they can be nurtured, cared for and be held accountable, is essential to their walk with God.

The final difference between the baptism in the Holy Spirit and the power encounters animists have with the spirits is the issue of allegiance. The allegiance of the spiritist is to his or her possessing spirit. The allegiance of the ordinary people is to the spiritists or spirit that gives them what they want. But the work of the Holy Spirit in general, and the Baptism in the Holy Spirit in particular, points to an allegiance to Jesus Christ whether or not the Lord gives us what we want. This, more than

anything else that has been written here, is where Spirit filled believers part company with animistic spiritual practitioners. The Holy Spirit leads the believer into allegiance to Christ and no other. From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible is abundantly clear that our allegiance to Christ must be absolute. God will tolerate no rivals (i.e. Ex. 20:1-6; Isaiah 45:22, et al), although one must not expect new believers to grasp this immediately as this will likely take some time. People from animistic backgrounds must make a clean break from the past at some point, destroying all animistic paraphernalia and trusting Christ to meet their needs.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this paper has been to demonstrate a theology of Holy Spirit baptism in doctrine as it relates the Philippine animistic context. Looking through the portal of Filipino culture, the concept of spiritual power is well known as is the concept of giving utterances while in contact with the spirit realm. The purposes, however, are vastly different and these differences must be clearly understood in light of God's word.

Teaching regarding deliverance, and the differences regarding sources of power, purpose, experience, love dynamics and allegiance are only some of the many issues that must be dealt with in training believers regarding Holy Spirit baptism. The concepts articulated here call for experiencing the power of God in one's life as well as encountering the truth through diligent study of God's word in the company of other believers with the ultimate goal of giving one's allegiance to Christ alone.