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EXPLORING THE FILIPINO INDIGENOUS RELIGIOUS CONCEPTS OF GOD, SOUL, AND DEATH IN RELATION TO THE SPIRIT WORLD

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INTRODUCTION

The three indigenous religious concepts of God, soul, and death in the realm of the Filipino spirit world are closely connected. For the early Filipinos, especially those before the Spanish contact, the spirit world was populated by God, his created heavenly beings, *anitos*—ancestral spirits and spirits in *kalikasan* (nature)—and lesser spirit beings with spiritual powers.

In this article, the spirit world, which interacts with the human world, will be linked to the early Filipino understanding of the soul, using different terms from the Filipino languages. In addition, this article will study the indigenous concept of death, especially what happens to the soul after death. Thus, this basic question will be explored: What are the views of the early Filipinos on God, soul, and death? These views are

important to understand because they have taken root in the Filipino mindset to the point that they can influence our modern outlook of the spirit world.

Moreover, I will survey the use of the words *God*, *soul*, and *death* found in the Gospel of Mark. Through a reflective conclusion, I will then list the similarities and differences between the Markan usage and Filipino religious concepts regarding these three areas. The similarities can serve as conceptual links and the differences as mind-opening truths, in order to help us interact biblically with the Filipino concepts of God, soul, and death in culturally relevant ways.

EARLY FILIPINOS' CONCEPT OF GOD

According to three early Spanish witnesses—Loarca, Morga, Chirino¹—early Filipinos believed in one principal and supreme God (Alipio 1998, 5). The name of this supreme Creator-God varied according to the language of the people. In Tagalog, God is called *Bathala* or *Maykapal* (Lord of All, the Creator, God the Maker); in Bisayan, *Laon* or *Malaon* (Ancient); in Ilocano, *Kabunian* (God's Small Majesty).

For the Bicolano, God is called *Gugurang*; for the Muslim, *Batala*; for the Bagobo, *Eugpamulak Manobo*; for the Negrito in Panay, *Bulalakaw* (Demetrio 1978, 36); and for the Mangyan, *Mahal na Maka-ako* (Mercado 1991b, 407). According to Chirino (1604), *Bathala* was the chief and superior God of all other gods.

¹The three Spanish witnesses or chroniclers were Miguel Loarca (1580) and Antonio Morga (1600) for the Visayas and Mindanao, and Pedro Chirino (1604) for Luzon. The accounts of these chroniclers are found in E. H. Blair and J. A. Robertson (1903-1909), 5: 34-187 (Loarca); 15:31-387, 16: 27-209 (Morga); 12: 175-321 (Chirino).

For an indigenous religious group called *Kapatirang ang Litaw na Katalinuhan* (Brilliant Knowledge Brotherhood, henceforth cited as K.A.L.K), the name of the supreme God is *Kataas-taasang Ama ng Lupa at Kalangitan* (Highest Father of Earth and Heaven).² This *Kataas-taasang Ama* (Highest Father, henceforth cited as *Ktt. Ama*) is the one and only supreme God of K.A.L.K.

This belief on the *Ktt. Ama* is found in the group's prayer, entitled *Amang Araw: Solo Diyos* (Father Sun: Only God) in their *Aklat-Dasalan* (Prayer Book).³ The first part of the prayer states:

Amang Araw (Solo Diyos)

Amang Araw ng Sangsinukob

Siyang tunay na solo Diyos

At matang nanganganinos

Kami po ay iyong kupkop.

Hari ka ng daigdigan

Na walang nakakapantay

²See Santos (2006a).

³In their *Aklat-Dasalan* (Nuevo 1948), K.A.L.K. stresses praise and adoration to the *Ktt. Ama*. Here is a sampling of such attribution of praise: *Amang Bathala* (Father Lord, 4); *Amang Banal, Amang Maykapal* (Holy Father, Father the Maker of All, 7); *Amang walang kamatayan* (Father without death, 7); *Ama ng Uniberso* (Father of the Universe, 7); *Amang Kamahal-mahalan* (Father great loved and esteemed, 8); *Amang Araw ng Sangsinukob* (Father Sun of the whole earth, 9); *Amang Araw na nagniningning* (Father Sun who shines brilliantly, 9); *Haring Araw, Amang liyag* (King Sun, Beloved Father, 9); *Amang Araw, Poong Bathala* (Father Sun, Lord the Maker, 10); *Amang Pinopoon* (Father Lord, 16); *Amang Makapangyarihan* (Powerful Father, 23); *Amang walang hanggan* (Father without end, 26); and *Dakilang Amang Diyos* (Great Father God, 31).

*Ang ningning ng iyong ilaw
Sa sinukob siyang tanglaw.*⁴

K.A.L.K.'s teaching on the only one supreme God is clear to all the members. Here are some instances of this basic belief: *Ikaw Diyos na iisa at Kataas-taasang Ama* (You, the only one God and Highest Father);⁵ *Sumasampalataya, Sa iisang Diyos, Kataas-taasang Ama* (Putting faith in the only one God, Highest Father);⁶ *Poong Diyos na iisa* (Lord God who is only one);⁷ at *Iisang Diyos ang sandigan* (only one God, the one to lean on).⁸

Thus, the early Filipinos saw God as *Bathala*, the chief and supreme God of all. He is the only one *Ktt. Ama*—no one is as powerful and mighty as this God. However, *Bathala* surrounded himself with three heavenly persons: *Ama* (Father), *Ina* (Mother), and *Anak* (Child).⁹ He also created *arkangheles* (archangels), *bathalang banal* (holy lord), cherubim, and seraphim. These created spirit-beings in the heavenly realm can have interaction with human beings. They are usually sent by *Bathala* to the world to serve as his messengers.

According to K.A.L.K., the *Ktt. Ama* created the *Espiritung Banal* (holy spirit), *Ina*, and *Anak* to be his messengers to

⁴See Nuevo (1948, 9). Here is a rough translation of the poem: “Father Sun of the Universe, the true and only God, whose eyes are fiery with brilliance, we are under your care. You are King of the world, you are without equal, the brightness of your light on earth is our guiding torch.”

⁵See Nuevo (1948, 5).

⁶Ibid., 15.

⁷Ibid., 92.

⁸Ibid., 141.

⁹See S. R. Reyes (2005, 278). The theological concept of *Ama*, *Ina*, and *Anak*, which reflects a similarity to the Christian Trinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, shows a familial concept of the godhead for early Filipinos.

K.A.L.K. and the country. For this indigenous religious group, the *Espiritung Banal* refers to the angels of God who cannot be seen, yet who guide and guard every individual (Nuevo 1960, 5). The *Ina* refers to the *Inang Lupang Tinubuan* (motherland)¹⁰ or *Inang Pilipinas* (Mother Philippines).¹¹ The *Anak* refers to Jose Rizal, the Philippine national hero, who is variously called the *Manunubos ng Pilipinas* (Savior of the Philippines), *Kristong Pilipino* (Filipino Christ), *Sinugong Bayani ng Pilipinas* (Hero who was Sent to the Philippines), and *Ama ng Lahing Pilipino* (Father of the Filipino Race).¹²

In summary, *Bathala* is the chief and supreme God, who dwells in the *kalangitan* or *kaitaasan* (heaven or highest place).¹³ Yet, *Bathala* is seen as remote, distant, and impersonal (Priela 1987, 108),¹⁴ hence the need for secondary deities who can communicate more personally with earthly beings.

EARLY FILIPINOS' CONCEPT OF SECONDARY DEITIES

Aside from the concept of the supreme *Bathala*, the early Filipinos believed in secondary deities. These less remote, lower deities or spirit beings, are called *anito* by the Tagalogs, and are labeled *diwata* by the Visayans. According to Isabelo de los

¹⁰See Nuevo (1948, 74).

¹¹Ibid., 40.

¹²See Nuevo (1960, 5).

¹³*Kalangitan* or *kaitaasan* is the place where the departed souls are destined to go and eventually reside.

¹⁴However, in 1720, Gaspar de San Agustin presented a more personal view of the God-man relationship. See de San Agustin (1903-1909, vol 40 par 48, 230).

Reyes (1909, 249), the belief in *anitos* is called *anitismo* (anitism), which is different from animism. For de los Reyes (277) and Pedro Paterno (1915, 163)¹⁵ *anitismo* comes from *Bathalismo*, which is the traditional belief system of early Filipinos, rooted in our indigenous consciousness.

The *anito* is the spirit power in charge of the *kalikasan* (nature), the mediator between heaven and the people, and the recipient of prayers for blessings in times of hunger, sickness, drought, calamity, or enmity. In the indigenous belief system, the *anitos*' home is the *kalawakan* (sky world), which is the place between *kahupaan* (earth) and *kalangitan* or *kaitaasan* (heaven).

There are basically two kinds of *anito*: *anito* in *kalikasan* and *anito* who are ancestral spirits. The *anitos* in *kalikasan* have assigned domains and functions—one is in charge of the mountains; another of the open country. One *anito* is assigned for the sowed fields; another for the sea or river; still another for the forest.

In other words, these *anitos* are in charge of the affairs of daily life. They control the important aspects of birth, death, sickness, war, weather, agriculture, spiritual relationships, human relationships, protection of the family and village, fishing, hunting, and giving information for difficult decisions (Henry 1986, 14).

In addition to the *anitos* in *kalikasan*, there are also *anitos* that are basically spirits of the *nuno* or *nono* (ancestors or great grandparents). This kind of *anitos* is given much reverence. When relatives are ill, representatives will go to the grave and with much lamentation beg their ancestors for health, protection, and aid. Thus, the ancestral *anitos* are viewed as sympathetic

¹⁵For Paterno (1915), *Bathalismo* is a religious tradition that is of the same level as Buddhism, Brahmanism, Taoism, Islam, and Christianity.

with living family members, as long as the dead relatives are regularly given proper respect through prayer, giving of sacrifices, and paying homage. However, the ancestral *anitos* of an enemy village or family are considered evil and hostile (Rich 1970, 199).

In order not to displease the *anitos*, the early Filipinos offered sacrifices to them. Loarca testified, "When the natives were asked why the sacrifices were offered to the *anito*, and not to Bathala, they answered that Bathala was a great lord, and no one could speak to him. He lived in the sky; but the *anito*... was to Bathala as a minister, and interceded for them" (de Placencia 1975, 102).

So when *Bathala* was angered (as expressed through calamity, sickness, or death), it is the *anitos* that the early Filipinos implored for help so that *Bathala* could be appeased. They offered sacrifices through religious rituals, like rice, fruit, *lana* (coconut oil), or *tuba* (coconut wine). Animals and fowls, like goats, chickens, pigs, and carabaos were used as sacrificial offerings. Along with the sacrifices, prayers were uttered to take away the *gaba* (curse), which was thought to be incurred because of the violation of *Bathala's* will.

To conduct such appeasing sacrifices, the help of a *catalonan*¹⁶ or *babaylan* was employed. The *catalonan* (for Tagalogs) or *babaylan* (for Visayans)¹⁷ was a shaman, male or female, who was especially selected by the spirits to act as a mediator between the spirit world and the world of human beings (Demetrio et al. 1991, 131).

Salazar argues that the basic task of the *babaylan* or *catalonan* was to heal relations between human beings and the

¹⁶Francisco de San Jose (1610), in his *Vocabulario de la Lengua Tagala*, gives the following definition of the *catalonan*: *la sacerdotisa que ofrecia los sacrificios a los dioses* (the priestess who offered sacrifices to the gods).

¹⁷The Tagalogs and the Visayans are major regional groups in the Philippines, each with its own language and dialects.

spirit world, of which they were regarded as the expert in the community (Demetrio 1978, 340). The other tasks of the *babaylan* were as follows: (1) to provide help and information for diagnosis and healing by means of dreams, visions, and impressions, which are accessed through the spirit world (Lieben 1977, 31); (2) to manipulate, obligate, or control the spirit world through rituals involving the use of magical words, devices, designated times, and formulas (Henry, 32); and (3) to achieve psychic balance or equilibrium in the community (Demetrio 1978, 31). In other words, the *catalonan* or *babaylan* fulfills a double function in the community: as a priest and as a physician. As a priest, she guides her people to the right path. As a physician, she cures the sick among her people.¹⁸

EARLY FILIPINOS' CONCEPT OF EVIL SPIRITS

In addition to the concepts of *Bathala* and *anito*, the early Filipinos believed in lesser spirit-beings that possessed evil, spiritual powers. Ramos (1973) describes a long list of evil spirits or creatures of lower mythology, while Demetrio (1978) has a whole volume on Philippine myths, religious symbols, and native religions that are deeply involved in the spirit world.

Here are some examples of these malevolent spirits:

- *Tikbalang*. According to the *kuwentong bayan* (Filipino mythology), this fearsome creature looks like a horse in the upper portion of the body (from the waist to the head) but is like a man in the lower portion (from the waist to the feet). The *tikbalang* seeks to frighten people; however, at times it may wish to go inside the

¹⁸For more information on the *catalonan* or *babaylan* as *nagapamagitan* (mediator), see Santos (2006b).

body, thereby possessing and giving it the strength of a horse.

- *Duwende* (goblin). The goblin lives inside the ground, usually among trees or houses, together with human beings. Although the *duwende* is not seen, it can choose to show itself to those it wishes. The *duwende* can belong to different races (i.e., black, white, or pink). It can be a good and helpful friend, but can also be very mean and vengeful when slighted.
- *Kapre*. This dark, giant-like, powerful being sits on big branches of old trees, with a huge tobacco in its hand, and with its feet swinging back and forth. The *kapre* instills fear on passersby, especially at crossroads or intersections in the dead of the night.
- *Tiyanak*. This small animal-looking creature swiftly goes to the entrance of small houses that have pregnant women in them, then sticks out its long tongue to get the baby from the mother's womb.
- *Aswang*. This creature is a human being that disguises itself as a pig, dog, or ugly person, seeking to frighten people, even pregnant women to induce miscarriages. It also wants to bring fear to those who attend the wake of a dead relative or friend.
- *Demonyo*. According to Christian theology, this evil spirit comes from the fallen angels identified with Satan or Lucifer; thus its acts and motivations are always evil.

Aside from these six lesser spirits, two other terms need explanation:

- *Nuno sa punso*. The abode of a *lamang lupa* (lit., inside or under the ground) or a *nuno* (ancestor) is in the form of a *punso* (mound). If that mound is kicked, the *nuno* takes revenge through a spell called *namamatanda*, in which the person simply stares blankly for a long time.

- *Engkanto*. It is believed that there are creatures that live in palaces located in forests, caves, and under the earth or sea, which at times, abducted human beings and brought them to their enchanted palace. The person is said to be *na-engkanto* when that person is found in a strange and far-away place and when his or her sanity and *ulirat* (sensibility) are lost.

To ward off the negative influence of lesser spirit beings that possessed evil spiritual powers, early Filipinos resorted to amulets called *anting-anting*.¹⁹ These magical objects had the ability to protect oneself against the malevolent spirit world. They also gave power to the person possessing the *anting-anting*, relieving him or her from the fear inflicted by evil spirits (Bulatao 1992, 51).

The *anting-anting* was also called *pangontra* (lit., to counteract) because it countered the ailments caused by evil spirits. One *pangontra* was a bullet shell, which had scrapings from the roots of medicinal trees, small pieces of paper with incantations, and some *lana* (coconut oil). This was usually tied with nylon and worn around the waist. Other *pangontra* items were bracelets, rings, and necklaces made of Chinese gold and canine teeth of the crocodile (Galvez-Tan 1977, 15).

In summary, the concept of God and the spirit world for early Filipinos comprise of *Bathala* (along with his created heavenly spirits), the *anitos* (both in *kalikasan* and ancestral spirits), and the lesser spirits with evil powers. This cosmology is divided into three categories: *kalangitan*, where *Bathala* resides; *kalawakan*, where the *anitos* are at home; and *kalupaan*, where the lesser spirits of spiritual powers are found.

Interaction among the three categories is fluid. This fluidity is summarized by the early Filipinos' basic worldview, that

¹⁹For helpful discussions on *anting-anting*, see Abrera (1992), Covar (1980, 71-78), Pambid (2000), and Santos (2005).

there is an invisible and powerful spirit world, contiguous with and impinging upon the human world; that there are spirits everywhere—deities and environmental or nature spirits; and that all natural events and human activities are subject to the mysterious intervention of gods and spirits (Sitoy 1985, 102).

Present-day Filipinos can be influenced by such a mindset of fluidity. To the Filipino mind, when calamities strike (like a volcanic eruption or severe flooding), seeking to understand the causes for the calamities include the intervention of the spirit world (which is displeased by the actions of human beings). Thus, the Filipino's imploring *Bathala* for mercy and the taking of steps to appease the *Maykapal* are understandable spiritual gestures of connection.

EARLY FILIPINOS' CONCEPT OF SOUL

Related to the indigenous concept of God and spiritual beings in the spirit world is the concept of soul for early and even modern-day Filipinos. The Ibanags of Northern Luzon believed in the *ikararua* (soul), which was seen as the companion of the body (Batan 1982, 123-124). This soul gives direction and wholeness to the person.

On the other hand, the Ilocanos have two terms for the soul. The first term is called the *al-alia* (or, *ar-ria*), which comes from *al-al* (to pant, to breathe in a labored manner); thus, *al-alia* can mean "ghost, specter, apparition, or spirit" (Jocano 1982, 220). The *al-alia*, the companion of the body, comes to the bedside of a dying person, stays in the area after death, and even appears to relatives in dreams or other signs to ask for prayers and forgiveness.

The second Ilocano term for soul is *karkarma* (soul, vigor, energy, strength, power). It stays with the person and leaves the

body through the nose when the person dies. The Ilocanos believe that when a person is afraid, his or her soul strays from the body, resulting in sickness. A medium or medicine person invites the strayed soul to return to the body through a ritual.

In an Ilocano-speaking town in Pangasinan, the word for soul, *karurua* or *kadua*, shows the concept of double entities (Marzan-Deza 1989, 49-60). Both terms mean a double soul or twin. For the Tagalogs, *kaluluwa* refers more to the soul of a deceased person and less to that of a living person. The soul of a living person is his or her *kakambal* (twin or double).

This double, conceived as a gaseous substance, later developed into the *malay*, or “tiny voice,” the consciousness which gives an individual the capacity to think, reason, learn, and have will power (Jocano 1971, 42-43). During the night, the *kakambal* may travel around. However, when it faces troublesome encounters, it causes *bangungot* (nightmare). The double becomes only a *kaluluwa*, or a disembodied spirit, after a person dies.

For the Hanunuo-Mangyans in Mindoro, the word for soul is *karadwa* (like the Ilocano term) or *kalag*. *Kalag* is also the Cebuano Visayan term for soul, referring to the soul after death. When a person is alive, the better term for the double is *kaluha*. According to Salazar (1983, 99), this double is the essence of intellect and moral powers, but it becomes an *anito* or spirit at death.

Apart from *kalag*, the Cebuano term for the life force is *ginhawa* (Hermosisima 1966, 193). In modern Cebuano, it means “stomach, pit of the stomach, breath, lungs, vital spirit, or intestines” (*ginhawaan*). By extension, it can also mean “food (especially a cookie), appetite, disposition (good or bad), character, and condition.”²⁰

²⁰See Wolff (1972, 266) and Salazar (1990, 328-348).

Though it is possible to view *kaluluwa* as coming from the Arabic word *ruh*, which is similar to the Hebrew word *ruach*, meaning “breath, wind, spirit, seat of emotion, mind,”²¹ it is *kaluluwa* which is closer to the root word *duha* (two or double). The prefix *ka-* implies companionship (Manuel 1982, 593-607).

EARLY FILIPINOS’ CONCEPT OF DEATH

Related to the beliefs of early Filipinos on the spirit world and the soul is the intriguing perspective on death and the afterlife. Early Filipinos believed in the afterlife. Death is considered as a passage to another life. In fact, the dead is euphemistically described as *sumakabilang buhay* (having gone to the other life).

Death is an altogether new existence, different from life on earth, yet strangely enough, somewhat similar to life on earth. The difference is expressed in the symbol of a long journey, usually over the waters, or by a descent into the bowels of the earth through a cave under a high mountain (Demetrio 1966, 386-87).

The “other world” is pictured as separated by an obstacle: a river, lake, or mountain, which is guarded by a god who interrogates the new arrival about his or her previous life. The river or body-of-water idea is confirmed by the belief that dreams about a body of water foretell death. To dream of a *banca* (small boat) going to one’s destination means that one of the relatives has died (Mercado 1975, 227).

An example of death as crossing the waters in a boat is seen on the lid of a *Manunggul* jar, which was found as a secondary

²¹See Mercado (1991a, 289). Mercado cites this position of Antoon Postma, who has done some comparative philological study of Philippine languages.

burial jar²² dated 890 B.C. in one of the Manunggul caves at Lipuun Point, Palawan. The jar had a lid cover with a boat depicting two boatmen, one of whom is paddling the boat towards what is presumably the afterworld (Covar 1998, 27-38). The design on the lid can be seen as a metaphor of a bridge between the departure of the soul-spirit from the physical world and its entrance into the spirit world. With this metaphor, a *taga-ilog* (lit., from the river) can be imagined paddling his way from the world of this *katutubo* (native)—or from the *pusod ng dagat* (navel or center of the sea)—to the world of his or her ancestral spirits, that is, the afterlife or spirit world. It can even be surmised that the one paddling represents the *catalonan* or *babaylan*, whose soul has easy access to the Other World, and who transports the soul-spirit of the one sitting in front of the boat towards the spirit world.

Moreover, the early Filipinos gave abundant gold, silver, and other kinds of wealth to accompany their dead into the grave so that the latter can be supplied with money to pay their way into the land of the dead.²³ Since death was seen as a beginning of a long journey,²⁴ the dead were supplied with ferry money (preferably coins) to transport them to the Other World.

It was believed that those who died, having lived a life of goodness on earth, were sent up the summit of a high mountain or entered into a realm where there was plenty of food and game. On the other hand, those who did evil on earth entered

²²A secondary burial jar was the container of the bones of the deceased after the body had been burned or cremated. In secondary burial, only bones were placed in the jar, and the jar itself was not buried.

²³However, Mercado (1975, 226) cites divergent practices, where money and jewels are not placed with the dead body, lest it fails to go to heaven.

²⁴See Jocano (1964, 51-61); Mercado and Flores (1970, 46-60).

into great fires or were made to fetch water endlessly upon death.

The place of food and drink for the dead is significant for early Filipinos. Food and drink were not only served for sympathizers, but also offered as sacrifice for the souls. In farms, food and drink sacrifices were offered to ancestral *anitos* to gain protection and favor for the dead (Hornedo 2001, 145).

CONCEPTS OF GOD, SOUL, AND DEATH IN THE GOSPEL OF MARK

Having surveyed the early Filipinos' concepts on God, soul, and death in relation to the spirit world, I will now summarize the biblical concepts of God, soul, and death in the Gospel of Mark. These Markan concepts will be taken from all the occurrences of the words *theos* (God), *pater* (Father), *huios* (Son), *pneuma* (Spirit), *aggelos* (angels), *psuche* (soul), and *thanatos* (death)/*nekros* (dead).

Use of *Theos* (God)

The word "God" (*theos*) occurs 48 times in the Gospel of Mark.²⁵ In these instances, God is recognized as the only one

²⁵The 48 occurrences of the word *theos* in the Gospel of Mark are found in 1:1, 14, 15, 24; 2:7, 12, 26; 3:11, 35; 4:11, 26, 30; 5:7 [2x]; 7:8, 9, 13; 9:1, 47; 10:9, 14, 15, 18, 23, 24, 25, 27 [2x]; 11:22; 12:14, 17 [2x], 24, 26 [4x], 27, 29, 30, 34; 13:19; 14:25; 15:34 [2x], 39, 43; and 16:19. These 48 instances can be categorized (along with the number of occurrences) into the following expressions that contain the word *theos*: Son of God 3x (1:1; 3:11; 15:39); gospel of God (1:14); kingdom of God 14x (1:15; 4:11, 26, 30; 9:1, 47; 10:14, 15, 23, 24, 25; 12:34; 14:25; 15:43); Holy One of God (1:24); God 16x (2:7, 12; 5:7; 10:9, 18, 27 (2x); 11:22; 12:17 [2x], 26, 29, 30; 13:19; 15:34 [2x]); (house of) God (2:26); will of God (3:35); Son of the Most High God (5:7);

who can forgive (2:7), who is to be praised (2:12), who can be appealed to (5:7), who has the authority to join a man and woman together (10:9), who alone is good (10:18), who can make all things possible (10:27), who desires people's faith (11:22), who desires to be given what is due him (12:17), who has power (12:24), who is the one and only Lord (12:29), who is to be loved completely (12:30), who created the world (13:19), and who is the object of prayer (15:34).

In addition, these occurrences call God "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" (12:26). He is not the God of the dead but of the living (12:27). The gospel of God must be proclaimed (1:14) and the kingdom of God is near (1:15) and will come with power (9:1). The will of God must be done (3:35), his commandment (7:8, 9) and word (7:13) fulfilled, and his way taught in truth (12:14).

Apart from *theos*, God is also recognized as *pater* (Father).²⁶ The heavenly Father will show his future glory in the return of Christ with the holy angels (8:38). As *pater*, God also receives prayer (14:36) and forgives his people from their sins (11:25-26). Only the heavenly Father knows when the end of the age will happen (13:32).

commandment of God 2x (7:8, 9); word of God (7:13); way of God (12:14); power of God (12:24); God of Abraham (12:26); God of Isaac (12:26); God of Jacob (12:26); not God of the dead (12:27); right hand of God (16:19).

²⁶The word *pater* (father) occurs 19 times in the Gospel of Mark. These occurrences are found in 1:20; 5:40; 7:10 [2x], 11, 12; 8:38; 9:21, 24; 10:7, 19, 29; 11:10, 25, 26; 13:12, 32; 14:36; 15:21. Of the 19 instances, 14 refer to an earthly father, while five refer to the heavenly Father (8:38; 11:25, 26; 13:32; 14:36).

Use of *Huios* (Son)

Mark's Gospel describes Jesus as *huios* (Son). Of the 32 references to *huios*,²⁷ 25 refer to Jesus as the Son of God (1:1; 3:11; 15:39); as the beloved Son (1:11; 9:7); as the Son of the Most High God (5:7); as the Son of Man (2:10, 28; 8:31, 38; 9:9, 12, 31; 10:33, 45; 13:26; 14:21 (2X), 41, 62); as the Son of David (10:47, 48; 12:35); as the Son (13:32); and as the Son of the Blessed One (14:61).

As Son of God and beloved Son, Jesus is very close to the heavenly Father. In two key places in Mark, Jesus was confessed as Son of God by unexpected witnesses—evil spirits that bowed down before him (3:11) and the centurion who led the Roman execution team against Jesus (15:39). Even a demon-possessed Gerasene man called Jesus the “Son of the Most High God” (5:7).

As Son of Man, Jesus has the authority to forgive sins (2:10); is the Lord of the Sabbath (2:28); suffered, died, and rose from the dead (8:31; 9:9, 12, 31; 10:33-34; 14:41); came to serve and give his life as ransom for many (10:45); will come back to earth in glory (8:38; 13:26; 14:62).

Moreover, Jesus is authenticated as the “Son of David” (10:47, 48; 12:35), the one who brings mercy as a benevolent king. Finally, Jesus affirmed that he is the “Son of the Blessed One” (14:61-62), signifying his power and authority from on high.

²⁷The 32 occurrences of the word *huios* (son) are found in 1:1, 11; 2:5, 10, 28; 3:11; 5:7; 6:3; 8:31, 38; 9:7, 9, 12, 17, 31; 10:33, 45, 46, 47, 48; 12:6 [2X], 35, 37; 13:26, 32; 14:21 [2X], 14:41, 61, 62; 15:39. Of these occurrences, seven refer to an earthly son (2:5; 6:3; 9:17; 10:46; 12:6 [2X], 37).

Use of *Pneuma* (Spirit)

Aside from *theos*, *pater*, and *huios*, the Gospel also uses the word *pneuma* (spirit), which occurs 23 times.²⁸ Coming from the verb *pneo* (to blow), the word *pneuma* means “wind, spirit, or breath.” Out of the 23 instances, six refer to the Holy Spirit (1:8, 10, 12; 3:29; 12:36; 13:11), ten to an unclean spirit (1:23, 26; 3:30; 5:2, 8; 7:25; 9:17, 20, 25 [2x]), four to evil spirits (1:27; 3:11; 5:13; 6:7), and three to a person’s spirit (2:8; 8:12; 14:38).

The Holy Spirit is the agency or means of Jesus’ baptism (1:8); the one who descends as a dove at Jesus’ baptism (1:10); the one who impels Jesus to the desert (1:12); the one who is not to be blasphemed against (3:29); and the one who empowers his servant David (12:36) and Jesus’ disciples (13:11) to speak.

There are instances in Mark’s Gospel when *pneuma* refers to an unclean or evil spirit. An unclean spirit possessed a man found in a synagogue (1:23), yet it came out of the man after Jesus rebuked the spirit (1:25-26). Another evil spirit possessed a Gerasene man who lived in the tombs, but it left the man after Jesus commanded this legion to come out (5:2, 8-13). Another unclean spirit that possessed the daughter of a Syrophenician woman was exorcised by Jesus (7:25-30). Another evil spirit possessed a boy robbed of his speech, but Jesus cast out the spirit (9:17-26). These show that Jesus can command unclean spirits to come out of the body; they obey him (1:27; 5:13), bow before him, and confess his name (3:11). Jesus even gave authority to his disciples to cast out evil spirits (6:7).

Aside from its reference to the Holy Spirit and evil spirits, the word *pneuma* can also be used for a person’s spirit. Jesus knew in his *pneuma* what others were thinking in their hearts (2:8). He also sighed in his *pneuma* about the disbelief of the

²⁸The 23 instances of *pneuma* are found in 1:8, 10, 12, 23, 26, 27; 2:8; 3:11, 29, 30; 5:2, 8, 13; 6:7; 7:25; 8:12; 9:17, 20, 25 (2x); 12:36; 13:11; and 14:38.

religious leaders (8:12). Jesus also teaches that though a person's *pneuma* may be willing, his flesh might be weak (14:38).

Use of *Aggelos* (Angels) and *Daimonion* (Demon)

Related to the word *pneuma* are the words *aggelos* (angels) and *daimonion* (demon). In Mark's Gospel, there are five instances of the use of *aggelos*, meaning "angels, messengers." The *aggelos* ministered to Jesus during the temptation period (1:13), reside in heaven (12:25; 13:32), will come in glory at Jesus' return (8:38), and will gather God's elect around the world (13:27).

The *aggelos* are used in contrast to the words *daimonion* (demon) and *daimonizomai* (demon-possessed), which occur 17 times in the Gospel.²⁹ The word "demon" is used three times (7:26, 29, 30); "demons" ten times (1:34 [2x], 39; 3:15, 22 [2x]; 6:13; 9:38; 16:9, 17); and "demon-possessed" four times (1:32; 5:15, 16, 18). Jesus drove out *daimonion* (1:34, 39; 5:15, 16, 18; 7:26, 29, 30),³⁰ did not let them speak (1:34), and gave authority to his disciples to cast them out (3:15),³¹ though he was accused by the religious leaders of driving out *daimonion* by the prince of *daimonion* (3:22).

Use of *Psuche* (Soul) and *Thanatos* (Death)

The word *psuche* (soul), which means "soul, breath (or heart or mind)," is used four times in the Gospel (8:36, 37; 12:30; 14:34).

²⁹The 17 instances of *daimonion* and *daimonizomai* are found in 1:32, 34 (2x), 39; 3:15, 22 (2x); 5:15, 16, 18; 6:13; 7:26, 29, 30; 9:38; and 16:9, 17.

³⁰Cf. Mark 1:32.

³¹Cf. Mark 6:13; 9:38; 16:17.

Mark sees *psuche* as being forfeited or lost, when a person's sole ambition is to gain the whole world (8:36). There is nothing a person can give in exchange for his or her *psuche*.

Along with the heart, mind, and strength, a person's *psuche* must also be used in order to love God completely (12:30). In Gethsemane Jesus also revealed that his *psuche* was overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death (14:34).

In addition to *psuche*, Mark talks about the concept of death by using the words *thanatos* (death), *apothnesko* (to die), and *nekros* (dead) in 19 instances.³² Jesus raised Jairus' daughter back to life (5:22-24, 35-43). He also reinforced the Old Testament teaching that anyone who curses one's parents must be put to death (7:10). He also prophesied that some would not see death before they see the kingdom of God come with power (9:1); that he would suffer (14:34, 55, 64), die (10:33; 15:44), and rise from the dead (9:9-10); that the end times would make people betray their relatives to the point of death (13:12); and that there would be a later rising from the dead (12:25-27).

REFLECTIVE CONCLUSION

The quick survey of the biblical concepts of God, soul, and death in the Gospel of Mark brought out some similarities, differences, and points of connection with the early Filipino's concepts of God, soul, and death in the indigenous spirit world. These initial observations can help trigger meaningful conversations between the world of the Bible and the world of Filipino culture. In addition, such conversations can help us

³²The 19 occurrences of *thanatos*, *apothnesko*, and *nekros* are found in 5:21 (2x); 6:14, 19; 7:10; 9:1, 9, 10, 26; 10:33; 12:25, 26, 27; 13:12 (2x); 14:34, 55, 64; 15:4.

discern how these early concepts in the spirit world continue to influence our Filipino thinking today.

Based on the survey of the Filipino and Markan concepts of God, soul, and death in the context of the spirit world, seven observations of similarities can be made:

- the affirmation about a powerful and supreme God
- the presence of good and bad spirits in the spirit world
- the belief in the afterlife
- the physical world being connected to the spiritual world
- the need for a powerful link between both worlds
- the evil spirits' power to bring damage and ruin to people
- the hope for a better future, despite the reality of death

These similarities can be used as common conceptual bridges to reach Filipinos with the biblical concepts of God, soul, spirit, death, and life after death.

On the other hand, the survey of the Filipino and Markan concepts of God, soul, and death yields three major differences, from the perspective of the biblical witness. The three major differences are as follows:

- The biblical God desires to be close to people in meaningful relationships, as a loving father wishes to interact with his children. God is not distant and impersonal.
- The most powerful link between the physical and spiritual worlds is Jesus Christ, the true Mediator between God and people, who casts out evil spirits, brings healing and transformation to the soul, and who raises people from the dead (just as he was raised from the dead by God's resurrection power).

- Death is not a continuing journey, but a final rest with God's eternal presence in heaven for those who are God's children by faith in Jesus.

These three differences can be mind-opening truths that can enable Christians to help more Filipinos know more about the real God they wish to know, to help them find peace for the soul that lasts for eternity, and to discover fullness of life in the presence of God after life here on earth is done.

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