The Holy Spirit in the Teaching of Yonggi Cho: Continuity or Change?*

Allan H. Anderson
| University of Birmingham, Mission and Pentecostal Studies |
| a.h.anderson@bham.ac.uk

Abstract

This paper builds on previous studies to consider a specific aspect of the contextual theology and practice in the ministry of Yonggi Cho: the role of the Holy Spirit in his teaching. This pneumatology cannot be isolated from his context and practical concern for Korean society. The paper begins by discussing how Pentecostalism throughout the world through its emphasis on the Holy Spirit fills an emptiness found in the experiences of people who feel spiritually insecure. Then it outlines how Youngsan’s theology of the Spirit can be considered contextual and how it relates to his social and cultural situation. Finally the paper discusses how Youngsan’s theology of the Spirit relates to his ministry as pastor of the world’s largest church.

* This paper was presented during the 26th Youngsan International Theological Symposium held at Hansei University on May 31, 2018.
I. Introduction: The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Insecurity

I begin by sketching what is now a well-known story throughout the world. Sixty years ago in 1958, a small tent church in an impoverished area of Seoul was started by a young man Yonggi Cho (Youngsan) and his future mother-in-law Jashil Choi. There were only five family members to begin with. Within about fifteen years, growing through three different venues, this had become Yoido Full Gospel Church, the largest single congregation in the world. Such an accomplishment requires a remarkable leader with a remarkable message, and Youngsan was such a person. In this paper I reflect on the teaching on the Holy Spirit that motivated this Christian leader. First, it is important to realise that “theology” is much more than a written, academic theology. The word comes directly from the Greek “theologia”, which in turn is derived from “theos” (God) and “logia” (utterances). Theology means the utterances or words about God. The words about God are also found in the preaching, rituals and practices of churches, which make it understandable to ordinary people. This “enacted theology”, “ordinary theology”, or “theology in practice” is found in Pentecostalism all over the world, and Cho’s theology of the Spirit is no exception. One has to dig deeply into the practices, popular writings, and sermons in order to discover this theology. Because I do not speak Korean, I have only been able to access these works published in English. There is much more to be discovered.

In a previous paper first delivered at the Youngsan Theological Symposium in 2002 and later published, I wrote that Cho’s theology was a contextual theology. Later, at the same symposium in 2009 I gave a paper on his social ministry. I now build on these studies to consider a specific aspect of this theology and practice: the role of the Holy Spirit in the teaching of Yonggi Cho. However, this cannot be isolated from his context and practical concern for Korean society. So I begin by discussing how Pentecostalism throughout the world fills an emptiness found in the experiences of people who feel spiritually insecure. Then I outline how Youngsan’s theology of the Spirit can be considered contextual and how it relates to his social and cultural situation. Finally I discuss his theology of the Spirit and how this relates to his ministry as pastor of the world’s largest church.

In my recent book Spirit-Filled World, I discuss how the study of Pentecostalism leads to further understanding of the relationship between Christianity and culture. Any form of introduced religion, whether Christian or otherwise, involves an encounter with a host culture, with its religious beliefs being the central point of the encounter. This has been going on since time immemorial. In Korea, Confucianism, Buddhism and Christianity have all encountered traditional shamanism and

interacted with it. In Africa, Christianity and Islam have encountered and interacted with ancient religious beliefs in an ever-present spirit world. Theology has been slow in reflecting on the impact of Pentecostalism on culture and in particular, the impact of ancient religious beliefs on Pentecostalism. Here we are exploring Cho’s teaching on the Holy Spirit so as to better understand why Pentecostalism has grown rapidly in the Korean context. Korea, like Africa, has a religious past, and that past involved a religion where the world of the spirits was everywhere. The Christian message must be relevant to the context in which it is found, and answer questions that ordinary people are asking, therefore meeting needs that arise in that context. The answers given by Pentecostal preachers throughout the world are usually contextual ones that relate to the real life situations that people face daily. Swindon and Mowat remind us that “faith exists in specific situations within which the gospel is embodied, interpreted, shaped and performed.”5) The gospel enters a spiritual world with answers to what often appear as inadequacies in that world that might be summed up by the phrase “spiritual insecurity”.6) People need power that will cater for all the necessities of life and protect from the uncertain perils of the world—the power of the Holy Spirit that will produce a life that is full, prosperous, healthy, peaceful and secure.7)

The message that Pentecostal churches propagate worldwide is that this overwhelming need for power is met by the power of the Spirit, who is given to people permanently and unconditionally. The emphasis on the Spirit gives people spiritual security, their overwhelming need. The Pentecostal focus on receiving of the power of the Holy Spirit, a power greater than any of the powers that give spiritual insecurity and threaten human flourishing is good news throughout the world. The all-embracing Spirit is involved in every aspect of individual and community life. This is particularly found in the person of a prophetic or charismatic leader, who is pre-eminently a man or woman of the Spirit. This understanding of the empowering and pervading Spirit becomes one of the most important dimensions of the enacted theology in Pentecostal and Charismatic churches. For most people, action and expression are at least as important as reflection, religion is fundamentally both something you believe or confess, but especially something that you do. An emphasis on the ever present Holy Spirit gives Christianity a new vibrancy and relevance. The Spirit makes it possible for Christians to be involved with God on a daily basis, providing spiritual security where there is none. This involvement, when entered into, absorbs the whole of life and not just the “spiritual” part of it. Pentecostal churches throughout the world have demonstrated how they practice their theology of the power of the Spirit.
II. A Contextual Theology of the Spirit ⁸)

Pentecostalism takes on distinctive forms in different contexts. It has the ability to adapt itself to different cultures and societies and give contextualized expressions to Christianity. That is why Pentecostal churches differ widely in different parts of the world. Korean Pentecostalism is not the same as American Pentecostalism, and it cannot be the same as African or Latin American Pentecostalism. It expresses itself under the guidance of the Holy Spirit as Korean Pentecostalism with its own distinctive patterns and expressions of Pentecostal faith. Like Pentecostalism throughout the world, these contextual expressions are found in its energetic and energizing worship and liturgies, in its music and dance, in its prayer with the free use of the emotions, and in its communities of concerned and committed believers. Of all Christian expressions, Pentecostalism has an ability to transpose itself into local cultures and religions effortlessly, because of its primary emphases on the experience of the Spirit and the spiritual calling of leaders. In particular, the ministry of healing and deliverance and the claims of the miraculous have assisted Pentecostalism in its appeal to a world where supernatural events are taken for granted. It has been able to tap into ancient religious traditions with one eye on the changing world of modernity. This combination of the old with the new, holding both continuity and discontinuity in ten-

sion, has enabled it to attract people who relate to both these worlds.\(^9\)

Scholarly studies about the rapid expansion of Pentecostalism in different regions worldwide have not explored thoroughly what I consider to be a principle reason for its popularity—the extent to which Pentecostalism, through its experience of the Spirit, often unconsciously taps into deep-seated religious and cultural beliefs. Pentecostalism draws from these ancient sources in continuity with them, whilst also simultaneously confronting them in discontinuity. In doing so, it uses a biblical rationale for its beliefs and practices. The Bible remains its source of ultimate authority. There is a certain tension between *continuity* and *discontinuity*. What often appears as continuity with the past religion is often actually discontinuity, because of the interpretation and meaning given to the phenomenon. The reverse is also the case, where practices found throughout global Pentecostalism are invested with new meanings through the encounter with a local religious and cultural context.\(^10\)

For these reasons, Cho’s theology of the Spirit may be presented as a contextual theology from several perspectives. But here we must be very careful. For example, Harvey Cox wrote in his book *Fire from Heaven* that the ministry of Cho “involves a massive importation of shamanistic practice into a Christian ritual.”\(^11\) This view states that Cho’s ministry involves *continuity* with traditional shamanism. This judgment overlooked two important elements in the appeal of Pentecostalism in

---

10) Ibid., 3-4.
Korea: the role of the Holy Spirit to transform people’s lives in their own context, and the ministry of divine healing.\(^{12}\) The theme of continuity has dominated the social sciences, but is also found in theological and religious studies. Walter J. Hollenweger wrote that Pentecostalism is based on its “black roots,” mediated through its African American founders at Azusa Street, Los Angeles. These aspects of African religion cause it to flourish in similar cultures where “orality” is the dominant feature.\(^{13}\) Cox takes this further when he states that the rapid spread of Pentecostalism is because of its “heady and spontaneous spirituality,” which he calls “primal spirituality.”\(^{14}\) He suggests that for any religion to grow it must include two underlying factors: to “be able to include and transform at least certain elements of pre-existing religions which still retain a strong grip on the cultural subconscious,” and “also equip people to live in rapidly changing societies.” He sees these two “key ingredients” in Pentecostalism, which helps “people recover vital elements in their culture that are threatened by modernization.”\(^{15}\) What Cox hints at when referring to “pre-existing religions” with “a strong grip on the cultural subconscious” is the theological equivalent of a stress on continuity. This emphasis is unbalanced and should be avoided.\(^{16}\) According

---

14) Cox, Fire from Heaven, 71.
15) Ibid., 219-22, 224, 228.
16) Anderson, Spirit-Filled World, 4-6.
to Cox’s view, many of the beliefs and practices found in Korean Pentecostalism can be traced back to ancient shamanistic religion. He gleaned this idea from Hollenweger, who titled his chapter on Korea “The Oral Shamanist Culture in Pentecostal Transformation,” but acknowledges that the chapter “is heavily based on (Boo-Woong) Yoo,” referring to his only Korean Ph.D. student’s thesis on “Korean Pentecostalism”, which was aimed at charismatic practices in the Presbyterian Church, which he considered to be a resurgence of shamanism.\(^{17}\) He did not study Korean Pentecostalism itself.\(^{18}\)

In other words, without paying close attention to the historical, religious and cultural context of Korea in the aftermath of the devastating Korean War, with a focus on the role of the Holy Spirit in that context, it will not be possible to fully understand the theology and practices of Youngsan. These constitute what one of my former doctoral researchers, Chong Hee Jeong describes as a “dynamic contextual theology” and a “contextual ministry”.\(^{19}\) Hyeon Sung Bae has written of Cho’s “Full Gospel Theology” as an “indigenized form of Pentecostal theology in Korea”.\(^{20}\) We must consider to what extent Cho’s teaching on the Holy Spirit is a contextual theology that has adapted to and transformed its

---

cultural and religious environment. Clearly, Cho himself has wanted to be seen as someone who was connected closely with Korean culture, as he writes:

Being a Korean and having been saved out of the Buddhist religion, I have been able to appreciate the distinctive position of Christians who come from the Third World. … We evangelical Korean Christians have developed our own traditions. This is very important because it makes it possible for us to be Christian without being less Korean. In the past, missionaries not only brought their religion but also their culture to the countries they evangelized. So it became apparent that the new converts lost much of their natural heritage. I believe that this produced an unnecessary hindrance to the acceptance of the gospel of Jesus Christ.^{21}

The success of Cho’s message should be seen (among other things) as the result of a response to the influence of the worldview of shamanism that permeates and underlies Korean society. Korean Pentecostalism and older Korean religions both acknowledge the world of spirits and respond to this, as Korean scholars have pointed out.^{22} Shamanism provides a praeparatio evangelica, a fertile ground into which the “full gospel” is more easily planted. When Korean Pentecostal pastors are criticised as functioning as “shamans”, it is simply because they are

---

^{22} Sunghoon Myung, “Spiritual Dimension of Church Growth as Applied in Yoido Full Gospel Church” (Ph.D. diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 1990), 235.
responding to the needs arising from a shamanistic world. Korean Pentecostal leaders emphatically deny any mixture of shamanism and like Pentecostals all over the world, see shamanism as something evil to be rejected.  

Similarly, the dominant conservative Protestant Christianity with its strict moral law finds fertile ground in peoples whose cultures are heavily influenced by Confucianism—as is clearly the case with Korean society. Cho refers to the Confucian background of Korea often in a favourable light, and usually points out that Confucianism is not a religion but an ethical system observed by Koreans.

The writings of Cho demonstrate firstly that his contextual theology of the Spirit is born in the particular situation of Korean suffering. Secondly, they illustrate how Cho has advocated a theology of the Holy Spirit that is standard classical Pentecostal theology throughout the world. Cho is uncompromising and polemical with regard to the religious background of Korea. His former experience as a “devout Buddhist” could not help him solve his problems, he considers it foreign to the compassion of Christ, and he had known only what he calls “well-organized and sterile Buddhist philosophies and rituals”, which were “theoretically very profound”, but which he refers to as “heathenism” and “doctrines of devils”. But Cho’s concept of the “fourth dimension” is linked to his knowledge of Eastern religions with their own miraculous powers, as

in Buddhism, yoga and Japanese religions. He refers to the “evil spirit world” in this “fourth dimension” that is “under the power and authority of almighty God”.26) Although these ideas have brought him criticism from evangelical polemicists, Cho is careful to maintain the distinction between the Asian religious world and the Christian revelation. But clearly his experience of this Asian religious spirituality and its element of the miraculous has brought him to the understanding of the “fourth dimension”, where visions and dreams are the language, and “incubation” or “pregnancy” is the process through which believers receive their requests from God. This “incubation” in the “fourth dimension”, he declares, is also the way that miracles happen in other religions.27) This particular teaching can only be understood by reference to the Asian pluralistic religious background in which Korean Pentecostals are immersed.

In other words, the teaching of Youngsan is continuous with the Korean traditions because it accepts this background as real. But at the same time it is discontinuous with it, because it confronts and transforms those traditions through the Holy Spirit. Korean Pentecostal scholars appreciate the importance of the ancient religious system to Pentecostalism, but they are also aware of its dangers. Young-Hoon Lee, now senior pastor of Yoido Full Gospel Church, points out that shamanism has influenced Korean Christianity in four ways. Firstly, it “made it easy for Koreans

to accept the Christian God and the spiritual world”. Secondly, shamanism’s “emphasis on the present and on material blessings” made these a “major concern” of Korean Christianity and resulted in indifference to social concerns and a “self-centered Christianity”. Thirdly, shamanism “drove Korean Christians to focus on blessings,” and fourthly, it influenced an exclusive and conservative Christianity. Korean Buddhism also influenced Christianity to yearn for present, material blessings and to focus on the other world. Lee writes that Cho “tries to watch out for the influence of shamanism in his ministry” and “stresses that healing is biblical”. He states that the “shamanistic nature” of Koreans made the Holy Spirit movement easier to accept. On the other hand, Confucianism had “given Korean Christianity something of a legalist and authoritarian cast” to “seeking healing rather indiscreetly” and that they might “focus only on material blessing in the present life”.  

It must be understood that because Korean Pentecostalism fulfils some of the needs formerly met by shamanistic rituals, this does not mean that Pentecostal pastors who pray for the sick are therefore shamans. Jeong says that shamanism not only gave Koreans a concept of a High God but through its rituals it offered “help and salvation from worldly suffering and pain of han” (a unique Korean expression roughly translated as bitter grief and despair); and it ensured health, fertility and success. He says that Korean Pentecostalism has a “similar ritual function within the same culture of han”. Korea has a “shamanistic environment” that

is a “seedbed” for Cho’s “contextual ministry”. In this unique context, the gospel is interpreted as the healing of han through “this-worldly blessing, material wealth, good health, and other personal and familial well-being which Koreans desperately need.” Jeong suggests that the healing of han is achieved through the rituals of Cho’s preaching, prayer, worship with dancing and gospel songs, speaking in tongues, and the ministry to women in home cell groups.29) Another Pentecostal scholar, Dongsoo Kim, has also written of Korean Pentecostalism as the healing of han. He adds the important observation of Cho’s calling to the ministry in the midst of personal suffering and a terminal illness from which he was miraculously healed, a similar calling to that of shamans qualifying them to be “priests of han”.30) This is another instance of the contextualization of shamanistic culture in Cho’s ministry, but it is by relying on the Holy Spirit, the polar opposite of the shamanistic spirits that possess Korean shamans.

It is more appropriate to consider Cho’s Pentecostalism as a contextual form of Korean Christianity interacting with shamanism. Korean Pentecostals justify their practices of healing and doctrine of blessings by referring to the Bible as their prime source. This tends to confirm Harvey Cox’s contention that “primal spirituality now surfacing in Korea … also underlies the original biblical faith as well,”31) the main rea-

31) Cox, Fire from Heaven, 226.
son for the growth of Pentecostalism in Korea and in other countries of the world. But Cox may not have reflected on the enormous difference between interacting with shamanism (as Korean Pentecostals do) and becoming shamanistic. This is an untenable position for Pentecostals; Cho himself clearly rejects traditional shamanism and says that shamans “serve demons”.  

Cho’s context clearly played an important role in the shaping of his theology of the Holy Spirit. Several Korean scholars have written of the context of the 1950s when Cho was converted from Buddhism to Christianity and the Full Gospel Central Church was founded in the slums of Seoul. This was a time, writes Young-Hoon Lee, when “most people despaired in emptiness and frustration,” and when “Cho’s message of salvation in body and spirit gave enormous comfort and hope to the people who were poor and suffering”. This message of hope in a good God eased the han of people. Cho refers to these years in most of his books; they are a very significant part of his message and the foundation of the theology he developed for a despairing people. He refers to the sufferings created by the Japanese occupation and the Korean War, his own personal poverty and his gradual healing from tuberculosis. This was a time when many were “struggling for existence,” when he identified himself with the hundreds of refugees on the streets and became himself “one of the hopeless.” He mentions the aftermath of the Korean War when people lost families and businesses, had mental breakdowns,

and became “completely possessed by the devil”.\(^{34}\) His ministry began in Daejo-dong, a poverty-stricken area of Seoul, where he himself was poor and where people were not interested in a message about heaven and hell in their daily struggle for survival. As Myung puts it, in this situation “the gospel had to be reinterpreted and renewed theologically” to meet the needs of people, so a “contextualization of the gospel was needed.”\(^{35}\) Cho’s teaching on healing was closely related to the poverty and sickness rampant in Korea at that time. His teaching on blessings and prosperity was his “theological counteraction” to the han created by the ravages of the Korean War.\(^{36}\) For Cho, the message of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit was a present contextual message that gave hope to a suffering and destitute community. Most of his members in these early years were extremely poor.\(^{37}\) His views on poverty are clear and determined by his context:


\(^{35}\) Myung, “Spiritual Dimension of Church Growth as Applied in Yoido Full Gospel Church,” 236.


Poverty is a curse from Satan. God desires that all His people prosper and be healthy as their soul prospers (3 Jn 1:2). Yet much of the world has not really seen poverty as I have seen it. Especially in the Third World, people live their lives in despair, struggling to survive for one more day. I am from the Third World. I know first-hand what it is not to have anything to eat.\(^{38}\)

Elsewhere he writes that it is because of his “oppressed background,” he has been able “to understand the plight of many oppressed people who have no hope for a future.”\(^{39}\) It is important to understand that Cho’s views on poverty and prosperity come out of his own Korean context of poverty, Japanese occupation, and the Korean War; and should not be interpreted within the context of western wealth and materialism as might be done with the “prosperity” theology of some American televangelists.

### III. Practical Theology of the Spirit\(^{40}\)

That Cho is a “classical Pentecostal” influenced by American Pentecostalism is a feature of his theology that cannot be denied. He is, after all, a minister in the Korean Assemblies of God and was Chairman of

---


\(^{40}\) This section is adapted from Anderson, “The Contribution of David Yonggi Cho to a Contextual Theology in Korea.” 99-104.
the World Assemblies of God Fellowship from 1992 to 2000—at that time he was the most influential minister in this denomination globally. He was trained in the denomination’s Bible school in Seoul, where he received his own experience of “baptism of the Spirit”. Even though he may be regarded in many ways as a theological innovator within classical Pentecostalism (one of the reasons why his books have been so popular in the West), yet his theology is unmistakably Pentecostal. This is especially true of his theology of the Spirit, expressed in his 1989 publication, *The Holy Spirit, My Senior Partner*. The influence of his classical Pentecostal background is evident in that Cho stresses the importance of being “filled with the Holy Spirit” and the “initial evidence” of speaking in tongues.\(^{41}\) Cho sees this as an experience subsequent to and distinct from regeneration or conversion, and distinguishes between speaking in tongues as a “sign” and as a “gift”.\(^{42}\) Like all Pentecostals, speaking or praying in tongues is very important to him.\(^{43}\) Cho sometimes uses the phrase “baptised in the Spirit” in his writings, but differs with some classical Pentecostals in that he distinguishes between being “filled with” and having “fellowship with” the Spirit, and between speaking in tongues and being filled with the Spirit.\(^{44}\) Being filled with the Spirit re-

---

41) Cho, *The Holy Spirit, My Senior Partner*, 8-9; *Successful Home Cell Groups*, 131, 149. However, Sunghoon Myung suggests that Cho does not insist on “initial evidence” in “Spiritual Dimension of Church Growth as Applied in Yoido Full Gospel Church,” 64-65.


sults in people having an “overflowing blessing” to share with others.\(^{45}\)

The Holy Spirit is the “Senior Partner” in his ministry, and Cho says that intimacy or communion with the Holy Spirit is “the greatest experience of my life.”\(^{46}\) Although this particular aspect of Youngsan’s teaching on the Spirit may need some qualification,\(^{47}\) Frank Macchia resolves the difficulty by referring to this consciousness of the constant presence of the Holy Spirit as a “theology of divine presence.”\(^{48}\)

Cho’s understanding of evangelism and mission is also typically Pentecostal: motivated by and completely dependent upon the enabling of the Spirit.\(^{49}\) He says that his preaching is based on the goodness of God, the redemption of Christ and biblical “principles of success,” so that meeting the personal needs of people is his priority above “theology, history and politics.”\(^{50}\) His teaching on sickness and emphasis on healing is also typically Pentecostal: physical healing is seen as part of Christ’s redemption; sickness is “from the devil” and a “curse”; and God wants all people healed.\(^{51}\) Like most Pentecostal preachers, Cho makes extensive use of personal experience or “testimony” to illustrate his theology.

---

This is particularly noticeable on the subject of healing, when Cho often refers to his own sicknesses and how he was healed,\(^{52}\) and gives testimonies of people healed during his ministry to them. Cho makes much of the experience of being “born again” and all his books have a strong soteriological and Christocentric tone. His holistic view of salvation is in common with Pentecostals all over the world, and one of the reasons why the Pentecostal message has spread rapidly among people in great need. In all these emphases, Cho is a true Pentecostal.

Christianity, particularly in its Pentecostal emphasis of the transforming power of the Spirit, purports to offer more than traditional religions like Korean shamanism did. Likewise in Africa, thousands of independent Pentecostal churches have changed the face of Christianity because they have proclaimed a holistic gospel that includes deliverance from all types of oppression like sickness, sorcery, evil spirits and poverty. This central message has often met the felt needs of people more fundamentally than that of churches founded by European missionaries, who left a message that is sometimes over-spiritualised and intellectualised. So, if Cho’s theology has been born in the context of a deeply suffering nation reeling from the aftermath of Japanese occupation and a devastating civil war, then this message is good news for the poor and oppressed, and provides incentives for people struggling to make a living. Cho does not deny the role of suffering in the purposes of God.\(^{53}\) The “thorn in the flesh”, he says, enables believers to live with “persistent perplexity”

\(^{52}\) Cho, *Suffering... Why Me?*, 89-93; *Successful Home Cell Groups*, 41-44.
and thereby know the grace of God.\(^{54}\) There is no “cheap grace” in his theology. His own experiences of sickness came often and lasted long, but through these he learned to “trust even more”, and he was “able to live above despair and continue to walk with God until [his] healing came.”\(^ {55}\) He was himself seriously ill for ten years while he preached healing in Christ, and Cho believes that this experience enabled him to be “completely broken” and “helpless” before God.\(^ {56}\) He views on suffering are clear:

Concerning suffering and endurance of many kinds of trials, we must discipline ourselves to maintain tenacious trust and confidence in the love of God when our lives are shaken by the winds and storms of suffering. Then we will overcome and receive victory. ... Though everything may look dismal and suffering become worse, God will ultimately cause all these things to work together for good because His Word says so. We must have absolute trust in Almighty God even in times of suffering, because there is no power greater than the power of Almighty God.\(^ {57}\)

Cho’s ideas here are very different from the statements of the purveyors of a gospel of health and wealth.

\(^{54}\) Cho, Solving Life’s Problems, 97.
\(^{55}\) Cho, Suffering... Why Me?, 96.
\(^{56}\) Cho, Successful Home Cell Groups, 43.
\(^{57}\) Cho, Suffering... Why Me?, 101-2.
IV. Youngsan Pneumatology

Everything relating to the teaching and activities of Yonggi Cho and Pentecostal churches everywhere have their centre in the theology and personality of the Holy Spirit. The fellowship with the Holy Spirit for every believer is an important emphasis of Cho, and perhaps one of the many theological innovations that might make his pneumatology the centre of his theology. The Spirit is central to the beliefs and practices of Pentecostal churches. Their beliefs and practices are justified by referring to the Bible, which is the ultimate source of authority. The Spirit speaks to their church leaders and members through the Bible. This pneumatology is given expression in the realm of the practices and manifestations of the Spirit in these churches rather than in theoretical theologizing. Most Pentecostals live in the majority world, they are relatively poor and lack formal education. They are disinterested in theological preciseness. As Steven Land points out, “Third World Pentecostals are not as preoccupied with the fundamentalist-modernist, personal versus social, conservative versus liberal controversies as are North Americans” but have “a grass-roots ecumenism born of immediate missionary and pastoral concerns.” This is true of most forms of Pentecostalism, which is known for its high emotionalism and vibrant, often pulsating worship services that happen “when the Spirit comes down”.

Pentecostalism’s central emphasis on the experience of the “baptism” of the Holy Spirit

or “fullness” of the Holy Spirit, also sometimes called “receiving” the Spirit, has caused extensive debates. Pentecostals use the Bible to explain this experience of the Holy Spirit shown by supernatural gifts, especially the more exterior and dramatic ones like healing, exorcism, speaking in tongues and prophesying. For them, the charismata (“gifts”) of the Spirit are the proof that the gospel message is true, is meets real needs, and can be actualised in daily life. As Clark Pinnock points out:

We must know God experientially, not just cognitively. … We need a breakthrough in the realm of the Spirit, an awakening to the presence and power of God. … On this point, Pentecostals excel. They face up to the necessity of fuller actualization and do something about it. … They do it by empowered liturgies in which the reality of the Spirit is palpable, and they supply a social setting in which countless believers have been enabled to break through barriers.59)

Early Pentecostals believed in what they called the “full gospel”: Jesus Christ the Saviour, Healer, Baptiser, and Soon Coming King. This not only meant that Christ saves people from sin, but he also breaks through barriers by healing them from sickness and delivering them from the power of Satan. To this Christocentric and soteriological breakthrough was added a pneumatological and missiological dimension: Jesus Christ is the baptiser in the Holy Spirit who empowers ordinary peo-

ple to witness to the ends of the earth.\textsuperscript{60)} There is also an eschatological emphasis: Christ is the soon coming King who is preparing his church for his rule.\textsuperscript{61)} These Pentecostal tenets have been steadfastly proclaimed throughout Cho’s long ministry. Wolfgang Vondey writes that the “full gospel” is “a narrative for articulating meaningful experiences and spirituality” and “gives new expression to the kind of mystical theology at the core of Pentecostal spirituality.”\textsuperscript{62)} This “full gospel” has a reciprocal relationship between the Bible and the Spirit. Not only does the Bible explain the experience of the Spirit but perhaps more importantly, the experience of the Spirit enables people to better understand the Bible.\textsuperscript{63)}

Cho’s theology of the Spirit demonstrates that God’s power through his pervading Spirit embraces all of life and will often convince people that God is indeed more powerful than the surrounding evil spirit world and therefore is worthy of worship, faith and service. The power of the Spirit—whether through an anointed leader or through the whole congregation in worship or prayer—can effectively meet existential needs. The omnipotent God manifests God’s presence through the Spirit working graciously and actively in the church. Theology becomes applicable to life as it is experienced, and the pneumatology practiced in Korean Pentecostal churches becomes contextual and consistent with biblical

\textsuperscript{60) Acts 1:8 and 2:4.}
\textsuperscript{61) Allan H. Anderson, To the Ends of the Earth: Pentecostalism and the Transformation of World Christianity (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 145-49.}
\textsuperscript{62) Wolfgang Vondey, Pentecostal Theology: Living the Full Gospel (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 21.}
Cho’s ministry and that of those that have followed him have gone a long way towards meeting some of the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of Korean people, offering solutions to felt problems arising from a threatening world. They proclaim that the God who saves the “soul” also heals the body, relieves from the scourges of han and rampant poverty, and delivers from evil spirits.64) When Youngsan relates the “essence” of the gospel, this does not mean that he has ceased to also be contextual in his teaching, so it is not a case of one superseding the other. My view is that it is impossible to understand Youngsan’s simple gospel message without regard to his context. True contextual theology cannot lose its Christian identity and still be “contextual”. But I get the point of this critique and it should be a danger we are all aware of.

Throughout the world, people need their insecurities, fears, and oppressions to be overcome through a greater power than the powers that threaten them. And those powers are everywhere, dogging every step and thwarting every attempt to have an abundant, fulfilling life. The human spirit that an individual receives from God and has in common with him gives a person being and life, strength and power, and harmonises an individual with the rest of humanity and with the universe.65) This human spirit needs to be at peace with the surrounding world, and especially with the spirit world. The infilling of the Holy Spirit in the human spirit can provide this perfect peace. This is the message that makes Pen-

64) Anderson, Spirit-Filled World, 222.
Pentecostalism attractive all over the world. My latest book about the tension between continuity (with ancient religious beliefs) and discontinuity in African Pentecostalism is based on participant observation over many years working in southern Africa as a Pentecostal missionary. I think it is important for all Korean theologians to take the religious context of Korea seriously. Religion is an essential part of culture and if Korean Pentecostalism differs from Pentecostalism elsewhere (as indeed it does), then this is because of its responding to the cultural and religious context of Korea. The important finding of Spirit-Filled World is to demonstrate the fact that discontinuity and continuity run together, and I refer you to this for a much more detailed explanation of this important point.

So too in the Holy Spirit ministry of Cho, he accepts the continuity of the spirit world but this is radically altered by the fullness of the Spirit, who comes to displace every other spirit, to bestow power against the evil spirits, and to bear witness to the inner life of Christ who makes a new creation. As Cho puts it, “The Holy Spirit flows into areas of low atmospheric pressure.” The power of the Spirit gives a person dignity, meaningfulness, freedom from oppression and everything that demeans and lessens the vital force that permits life and purpose, wholeness and success. It could be said that as the spirit-filled world is also the world of the Spirit, so the Spirit is working in continuity with the spirit world while confronting any spirit that does not submit to the rule of God in the world. We should not see the world in simple binary terms of “good”

and “evil”. Rather, there is a constant interplay between what is soundly rejected in a complete break with the past, and what is accepted as real experiences of power manipulation. In the spirit world there is a continuity/discontinuity tension.

V. Conclusion

I end with a note of caution. I do not suggest that an overemphasis on success and power is a characteristic of Youngsan’s theology, but his followers and Pentecostals throughout the world need to be careful of the dangers lurking in such an overemphasis. I stated long ago that if ever there was a justifiable criticism of Pentecostals, it is that they have often expounded a theology of success and power at the expense of a theology of the cross. 67) This is particularly true of some of the popular fringes of Pentecostalism which promises unconditional health and wealth through faith in God. However, forms of Pentecostalism that emerged in the second half of the twentieth century like Yoido Full Gospel Church show that there are still unresolved questions to be answered. Yonggi Cho, in answering traditional Korean questions relating to the role of “success” and “prosperity” in God’s economy, shows that God’s gifts of healing and material provision and the holistic dimension of “salvation” are particularly meaningful in a context of poverty and war. The

67) Anderson, Moya, 72-3.
“here-and-now” challenges being addressed still challenge the church as a whole. But there are seldom instant solutions to life’s challenges and certainly not on a “name it and claim it” basis. Christian faith cannot be measured in terms of success. People are not only convinced by the successes in living out Christian faith, but also by perseverance under its trials. A one-sided triumphalist, power theology is a dangerous theology. The Spirit is not only a Spirit of power, but also a “holy” Spirit, a gentle dove, a Spirit of humility, patience and meekness, of love, joy and peace. The Spirit is the tender Comforter, the Partner who comes alongside to help and strengthen people through life’s trials and challenges. This ministry of the Spirit needs to be emphasised in a world plagued with spiritual insecurity, famine, poverty, economic and political oppression and disease. Overemphasizing the power of the Spirit in terms of outward success often leads to bitter disappointment and disillusionment when that power is not evidently and immediately manifested. A Christian theology of the Spirit must not only focus on power when there is a lack of it—it must also be able to sustain people through life’s tragedies and failures, especially when there is no visible or instant success.  

Bibliography


영산의 가르침에서 성령: 
연속성 또는 변화?

알란 H. 앤더슨

본고는 조용기 목사의 목회에서 상황 신학과 실천의 구체적인 측면, 즉 성령의 역할을 고찰하기 위해 이전의 연구들을 토대로 하고 있다. 이 성령론은 한국 사회에 대한 그의 상황과 실제적인 관심에서부터 분리될 수 없다. 본고는 오순절주의가 전세계에 걸쳐 영적인 만족을 찾지 못한 사람들의 경험에서 발견되는 공허함을 성령에 대한 강조를 통해 어떻게 채웠는가 하는 논쟁으로 시작된다. 그리고 영산의 성령 신학이 어떻게 상황적으로 고찰되고 그의 사회적 문화적 상황과 연관성을 갖고 있는지 개관한다. 마지막으로 본고는 영산의 성령 신학이 어떻게 그의 세계 최대 교회의 목사로서의 사역에 관련되어 있는지에 관해 논하고 있다.

Keywords
Contextual Theology, Holy Spirit, Pneumatology, Pentecostalism, Korea

상황화 신학, 성령, 성령론, 오순절주의, 한국

Date Submitted: July 13, 2018
Date Evaluated: August 5, 2018
Date Confirmed: August 17, 2018