Globethics Repository



Historiographic Approaches to Asian Pentecostalism

This page was generated automatically upon download from the Globethics Repository. More information on Globethics see https://www.globethics.net. Data and content policy of Globethics Repository see https://repository.globethics.net/pages/policy.

Item Type	Article
Authors	Kaye Cole, Deborah
Publisher	Asia Pacific Theological Seminary
Rights	With permission of the license/copyright holder
Download date	2026-11-02 10:59:14
Link to Item	http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12424/236765

[*AJPS* 9:1 (2006), pp. 59-82]

HISTORIOGRAPHIC APPROACHES TO ASIAN PENTECOSTALISM

Deborah Kaye Cole

1. Introduction

As a growing number of Asian Pentecostals are writing their own histories, there is a need for research that seeks to describe historiographic approaches to documenting and writing histories that are applicable to the Asian Pentecostal context that can serve as a helpful resource for this important task of historical research and writing. To date, there has been very little evaluative study conducted regarding the methodology of writing Asian Pentecostal history, and information on Asian Pentecostal historiography is almost nonexistent.

The following study investigates the historiographic approaches that are relevant to the writing of Asian Pentecostal history. This study provides an overview of the analytic approaches to understanding the history and origins of the Pentecostal movement used by Augustus Cerillo and examines the applicability of these historiographic approaches for writing Asian Pentecostal history.

Andrew Walls says that we seem to be standing "at the threshold of a new age of Christianity, one in which its main base will be in the Southern continents and where its dominant expression will be filtered through the culture of those continents."[1] The Third World, the Two-Thirds World and the newer term, the South, are commonly used as interchangeable terms.[2] Allan Anderson notes that, "The 'southward swing' is more evident in Pentecostalism than in other forms of

---

[1] Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996), p. 22.

[2] Dale T. Irvin, *Christian Histories, Christian Traditioning: Rendering Accounts* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1998), pp. 27, 73.

Christianity."[3] He estimates that due to remarkable church growth in the last century in Asia, Africa and Latin America, 75 percent of Pentecostals today live in the Third World and that at least 80 percent of the members of the Assemblies of God live in the Third World, with only 8 percent living in North America.[4]

In light of these powerful statistics, it is perhaps disheartening to note the reality that Allan Anderson observes concerning the writing of Pentecostal history as documentation of this remarkable church growth worldwide. "The writing of the global history of Pentecostalism, at least in the English language, has mostly reflected a bias interpreting the history from western, and predominantly North American, perspectives."[5] As a result, Anderson draws attention to a grave issue that now faces Pentecostal historiography today, which is that "... the vital role of thousands of indigenous workers in the early Pentecostal movement particularly in Asia and Africa, was ignored, overlooked or minimized."[6] He adds,

> The historians and chroniclers of the past have sent thousands of Pentecostal labourers to their unnamed graves. The historical processes leading to the fundamental changes in global Pentecostal demographics must be charted accurately. Hopefully, however, it is not too late to correct past distortions. In much of the writing of Pentecostal history until the present day, the 'objects' of western missionary efforts, now the great majority of Pentecostals in the world, remain marginalized.[7]

It is not too late to hear the voices of Asian Pentecostals and to correct past distortions in the history of Pentecostalism in hopes of addressing the grave issue of omission in Pentecostal historiography today that has been noted above by Allan Anderson. Historians, particularly from the West, must recognize "that Christianity now simply *is* world history" and that there is "an emerging cadre of Christians from

---

[3] Allan Anderson, "Revising Pentecostal History in Global Perspective," in *Asian and Pentecostal: The Charismatic Face of Christianity in Asia*, eds. Allan Anderson and Edmond Tang (Oxford: Regnum Books; Baguio City, Philippines: APTS Press, 2005), pp. 147-173 (151).

[4] Anderson, "Revising Pentecostal History," p. 151.

[5] Anderson, "Revising Pentecostal History," p. 147.

[6] Anderson, "Revising Pentecostal History," p. 150.

[7] Anderson, "Revising Pentecostal History," p. 152.

outside Europe and North America" who are writing world church history.[8]

There is a great need across Asia for the continued emergence of primary and secondary source materials and historical works written from an Asian perspective to document the growth of the Pentecostal movement in various Asian countries and contexts. In his 1983 article, "Suggested Areas for Further Research in Pentecostal Studies," Russell Spittler drew attention to the fact that "More regional histories of Pentecostalism are necessary, particularly of third world areas."[9]

William W. Menzies poses a challenging question to all twenty-first century Pentecostals, "Will Pentecostals be able to hand on to the next generation a solid rationale for their belief and practice?"[10] He provides an encouraging affirmative answer to his own question, particularly directed towards Asian theologians, as he says,

> In the midst of dynamic growth, now seems to be an auspicious time for young Asian theologians to establish an agenda of important issues, and to stake out areas for reflection, discussion, and writing. You can be instruments of God to keep this great revival on a constructive course![11]

As the Pentecostal church in Asia continues to grow and as Asian theology continues to develop as part of this solid rationale for belief and practice that will be handed to the next generation of Asian Pentecostals, a parallel call should go forth for solid historical accounts of the development of the Pentecostal movement and Pentecostal denominations in Asia that can serve as the setting for Asian theology much like a gemstone is set in a ring. We must each recognize our own

---

[8] Mark A. Noll, "The Challenges of Contemporary Church History, the Dilemmas of Modern History, and Missiology to the Rescue," *Missiology* 24 (January 1996), pp. 47-64 (51).

[9] Russell P. Spittler, "Suggested Areas for Further Research in Pentecostal Studies," *Pneuma* 5 (Fall 1983), pp. 39-57 (50).

[10] William W. Menzies and Robert P. Menzies, *Spirit and Power: Foundations of Pentecostal Experience* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), p. 9.

[11] William W. Menzies, "Frontiers in Theology: Issues at the Close of the First Pentecostal Century" (paper presented at the 18th Pentecostal World Conference, Theological Symposium for Asian Church Leaders, "Asian Issues on Pentecostalism," Yoido Full Gospel Church, Seoul, Korea (September 21, 1998), p. 30.

historicity, "the fact that we are ourselves a part of history, not only a product of past history but also a potential agent for history in the future."[12] We are linked to the past and to the future in the present. Now is the time to correct omissions and distortions in Pentecostal historiography.

2. Historiographic Approaches to Pentecostalism

From looking at the existing body of Pentecostal historiography, four general theories of causation or origin of North American Pentecostalism can be extracted. Augustus Cerillo labels these interpretive methods the providential approach, the historical roots approach, the multicultural approach and the functional approach.[13] Each approach "answers a slightly different set of questions and analytic concerns; each provides a slightly different angle of vision from which to view Pentecostalism's beginnings. Each has its strengths and weaknesses."[14] Cerillo notes that historians usually use more than one approach or a combination of approaches in their writing.[15] The following is a descriptive overview of each of these four approaches, including a brief synopsis of the strengths and weaknesses of each approach.

2.1 Providential Approach

The providential approach seeks to find God's divine, sovereign role in history with a particular focus on the work of the Holy Spirit in people and events in Pentecostal history. The early Pentecostals who wrote history using this approach "simply viewed Pentecostalism as a spontaneous, providentially generated, end-time religious revival, a movement fundamentally discontinuous with 1900 years of Christian

---

[12] Beverley Southgate, "Intellectual History/History of Ideas," in *Writing History: Theory and Practice*, eds. Stefan Berger, Heiko Feldner, and Kevin Passmore (London: Hodder Arnold, 2003), pp. 243-260 (248).

[13] Augustus Cerillo, "Interpretive Approaches to the History of American Pentecostal Origins," *Pneuma* 19 (Spring 1997), pp. 29-52 (30). See pages 31-49 of Cerillo's article for an in-depth look at each of these approaches with relevant literature cited for each.

[14] Cerillo, "Interpretive Approaches," p. 50.

[15] Cerillo, "Interpretive Approaches," p. 30.

history."[16] More contemporary uses of the providential approach focus on God's divine role in history working in and through humans as well as society and culture.[17] In studying the providential approach, William Kay has come up with two important contentions regarding Pentecostal history: first, Pentecostal history assumes that God is at work; and second, Pentecostal history cannot be written without referring to God.[18]

While most, if not all, Pentecostals would have no trouble accepting Kay's contentions as legitimate, it should be noted that because a providential approach must be accepted by faith, "it cannot be verified by research and interpretive methods commonly accepted within the historical profession."[19] The value of this approach in persuading those outside the Christian faith is often limited, then. But, as Christians and as Pentecostals, we cannot abandon our core values and convictions in order to be accepted or validated by others. As Kay notes, "If we treat such [miraculous] events as non-providential and do our best to find explanations for them which neither invoke God nor require anything beyond a naturalistic world view, then we run the risk of reinterpreting pentecostal history beyond the recognition of those who participated in it." [20] The divine work and move of the Holy Spirit is crucial to Pentecostalism and consequently will be reflected in the history of Pentecostalism.

The providential approach does tend to be the most prominently employed approach by the first generation of Pentecostals reflecting on and writing their own history. It can sometimes neglect historical and/or sociological factors that have had an impact on events and can tend to see the activities of men and women as insignificant, which can be a

---

[16] Cerillo, "Interpretive Approaches," p. 32.

[17] Augustus Cerillo, Jr. and Grant Wacker, "Bibliography and Historiography of Pentecostalism in the United States," in *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, eds. Stanley M. Burgess et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), pp. 382-405 (399).

[18] William K. Kay, "Three Generations On: The Methodology of Pentecostal History" (a paper presented at the Society for Pentecostal Studies 20th Annual Meeting, Christ for the Nations Institute, Dallas, Texas, November 8-10, 1990), p. 2.

[19] Augustus Cerillo, "The Beginnings of American Pentecostalism: A Historiographical Overview," in *Pentecostal Currents in American Protestantism*, eds. Edith L. Blumhofer, Russell P. Spittler and Grant Wacker (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999), pp. 229-259 (237).

[20] Kay, "Three Generations On," p. 1.

shortcoming of this approach if used alone.[21] While accepting William Kay's contentions that Pentecostal history cannot be written without presupposing God is at work and that God must be referred to when writing Pentecostal history, which are strengths of the providential approach, given the shortcoming that can sometimes appear in works using only the providential approach, perhaps it would be helpful to use other historiographic approaches that highlight the activities of men and women in the process of historical events as well. The providential approach used in combination with other approaches will allow us to see history in terms of God's sovereign activity as well as God's interaction and involvement in the affairs of men and women.

2.2 Historical Roots Approach

The historical roots approach, also called the genetic approach, seeks a link and continuity between Pentecostalism and the past usually along theological and social streams. In the study of North American Pentecostalism, most historians use this approach, which "tends to stress the continuity of 20th-century Pentecostalism with 19th-century religious and social developments: the Pentecostal revival is seen as part of a continuous flow of revivalistic religion that spanned both sides of the turn of the century."[22] The early use of this approach tended to stress either the Wesleyan holiness roots or the non-Wesleyan or Reformed roots as influences on Pentecostalism. A strength of this approach is that it allows the continued search for links to the past to keep going as new historical information and insights become available. Shortcomings of this approach if used alone include the tendency to neglect the contributions of each unique environment and setting where Pentecostalism grew and may also neglect the significance of God's activity and moves of the Holy Spirit in history,[23] which are likely to be emphasized by the providential approach.

2.3 Multicultural Approach

The multicultural approach focuses on the role and contributions of ethnic, racial and non-white minorities in the development of

---

[21] Paul Lewis, personal correspondence with author, August 2003.

[22] Cerillo, "The Beginnings of American Pentecostalism," p. 237.

[23] Lewis, personal correspondence with author, August 2003.

Pentecostalism. Many revisionist theories, particularly those highlighting the role and experiences of African-American Pentecostals, have arisen that have challenged much of the predominately white Pentecostal history.

David D. Daniels reports on the results of a dialogue held in 1993 between African American and Hispanic Pentecostal scholars to discuss the experiences of Black and Hispanic Pentecostals for the purpose of participating in joint scholarly projects to reflect on multiculturalism and Pentecostalism. Such reflection, Daniels suggests, would advance the multicultural interpretation of Pentecostalism in the United States and would expand the analysis of Pentecostalism from "overemphasis on the white wing of the movement to an analysis which captures the variety and vitality of Pentecostalism in the twentieth century." [24] Daniels goes on to add that, "A multicultural emphasis in the historiography could encourage the use of a range of primary and secondary sources, crossing racial and ethnic lines to study U.S. Pentecostalism rather than generalize about U.S. Pentecostalism primarily from white Pentecostal life."[25]

Although there is a lack of agreement among historians regarding the outcomes of this approach, it does provide new ways to think about Pentecostal history from many different points of view and helps "clarify the social, theological, and political diversity that exists within the various white, black, and ethnic pentecostal groups."[26] One shortcoming of this approach is that it can tend to make the variable of race and race relations the focus of the history,[27] which can overshadow the Pentecostal historical events themselves and could tend to be divisive rather informative.

2.4 Functional or Social-Analysis Approach

The functional approach, sometimes called the social-analysis approach, looks at the historical setting in terms of its social, economic and psychological dimensions and how all of these factors affected the Pentecostal movement and those who joined it. Social history offers

---

[24] David D. Daniels, "Dialogue between Black and Hispanic Pentecostal Scholars: A Report and Some Personal Reflections," *Pneuma* 17 (Fall 1995), pp. 219-228 (224).

[25] Daniels, "Dialogue," p. 225.

[26] Cerillo, "The Beginnings of American Pentecostalism," p. 401.

[27] Lewis, personal correspondence with author, August 2003.

historians a broader view of the past because it seeks to analyze cause and effect between economics, society and politics.[28] Though social history as a historiographic approach has a long history itself, it became more common after World War II as

> Social historians studied human collectivities and movements in the past, as well as social structure and change. They analysed demographic, economic and social processes, and the ways they interacted. World-views, mentalities and 'cultures', standard of living and everyday life, the family, associations and other social groupings became objects of inquiry.[29]

"Social history initiated the study of classes—especially the working class—as an emancipatory project."[30] Those who study Pentecostal history through the lens of social history will usually take one of two views and either focus on Pentecostalism's appeal as an escape for the psychologically unhealthy or socially dysfunctional members of society, which tends to offer a rather negative view of Pentecostalism, or focus on the power of Pentecostalism to liberate and empower its followers who were usually marginalized in society, which tends to offer a more positive view of Pentecostalism.[31] Thus, the emancipatory effect of Pentecostalism may be seen in different classes of people in society.

Augustus Cerillo explains that,

> By seeking to connect Pentecostalism to its cultural setting, and Pentecostal adherents to their place in the nation's social and economic structure, the functional view rigorously attempts to understand Pentecostal thought and practice in order to learn why and how it appealed to those who joined the movement.[32]

In addition, this approach focuses on the movement itself in terms of its core values and beliefs as well as organizational and institutional

---

[28] Thomas Welskopp, "Social History," in *Writing History: Theory and Practice*, eds. Stefan Berger, Heiko Feldner, and Kevin Passmore (London: Hodder Arnold, 2003), pp. 203-222 (209).

[29] Welskopp, "Social History," p. 205.

[30] Welskopp, "Social History," p. 205.

[31] Cerillo, "Interpretive Approaches," pp. 46-47.

[32] Cerillo, "Interpretive Approaches," p. 46.

structures and programs.[33] This approach, along with the multicultural approach, shares "a more positive and optimistic evaluation of Pentecostalism's power to liberate and empower the disinherited—farmers, workers, and minorities." [34] One shortcoming of this approach if used alone is that it tends to blend into issues related to Pentecostal theology and related questions such as "What is a Pentecostal?"[35] This question, then, would need a theological explanation in addition to contextual and historical understanding for its answer.

As shown in the brief descriptions of these approaches, each has its own unique contributions to Pentecostal historiography. However, each has its own unique shortcomings when used alone and can miss important factors that are relevant and valid in the other approaches for interpreting the origins and historical beginnings of the Pentecostal movement. Together or in combination, these approaches provide a more comprehensive synthesis of the historical story of Pentecostalism.[36]

3. Historiographic Approaches to Asian Pentecostalism

Can the various approaches to Pentecostal history described above be useful for the study and writing of Asian Pentecostal history? The tentative answer is yes, but the approaches will not likely be viewed through the same lenses as North American Pentecostalism. Cecil M. Robeck, a former editor of *Pneuma*, writes, "In North America, at least, there appears to be a tendency to read all other Pentecostals in the same way we read ourselves…as essentially mono-cultural with little if any legitimate divergence in Pentecostal thinking world-wide."[37] In applying the approaches to Pentecostal history to the study of Asian Pentecostal history, issues may surface that are significant for the Asian context that may not be as applicable for other contexts. There may also be approaches to Asian Pentecostal history that are not applicable in other contexts. One such likely approach is a reconstructionist or revisionist

---

[33] Cerillo and Wacker, "Bibliography and Historiography," p. 405.

[34] Cerillo, "Interpretive Approaches," p. 47.

[35] Lewis, personal correspondence with author, August 2003.

[36] Cerillo, "Interpretive Approaches," p. 52.

[37] Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., "Taking Stock of Pentecostalism: The Personal Reflections of a Retiring Editor," *Pneuma* 15 (Spring 1993), pp. 35-60 (45).

approach, which will be added to the discussion along with the other approaches.

3.1 Providential Approach

As the providential approach is applied in the interpretation of Asian Pentecostalism, historians can look at how early Asian Pentecostal Christians defined Pentecostalism. What role did the miraculous and the supernatural play in the development of Asian Pentecostal churches? The providential approach provides the foundation for the discussion of important supernatural experiences of Pentecostalism such as speaking in tongues, healings and deliverances, prophecies, visions and other miracles.[38] The following are examples of works that highlight the work of the Holy Spirit in the Philippines, Indonesia and South Korea.

Julie Ma focuses on the importance of the work of the Holy Spirit and power encounters among the Kankana-ey people of Northern Luzon, Philippines for planting churches and for the development of the Assemblies of God in the area in her book, *When the Spirit Meets the Spirits*: *Pentecostal Ministry among the Kankana-ey Tribe in the Philippines*.[39] Conrado Lumahan notes the role of the Holy Spirit and the supernatural in the planting of Assemblies of God churches in the Ilocos Region of Northern Luzon, Philippines. Healings, baptism in the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues were all part of the Pentecostal experience of early Assemblies of God churches that were planted.[40]

Gani Wiyono discusses the power of God over demonic power in the ministry of an Assemblies of God tribal chief in Buru, Indonesia, which led to many people accepting Jesus Christ as Savior.

> Therefore the Pentecostal message and practices that boldly declared the victory of God over the power of darkness became attractive to

[38] Everett A. Wilson, "They Crossed the Red Sea, Didn't They? Critical History and Pentecostal Beginnings," in *The Globalization of Pentecostalism: A Religion Made to Travel*, eds. Murray W. Dempster, Byron D. Klaus, and Douglas Petersen (Carlisle, UK: Regnum Books, 1999), pp. 85-115 (90).

[39] Julie Ma, *When the Spirit Meets the Spirits: Pentecostal Ministry Among the Kankana-ey Tribe in the Philippines* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2000), pp. 77-82.

[40] Conrado Lumahan, "Facts and Figures: A History of the Origin and the Developments of the Assemblies of God Churches in Southern Ilocos Region" (Th.M. thesis, Asia Pacific Theological Seminary, Baguio City, Philippines, March 2003), pp. 88-93.

> many Indonesians, both believers (non-Pentecostal Christians) and unbelievers (Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, or tribal religionists.[41]

Jashil Choi wrote a book, *Korean Miracles*, which contains her teaching on fasting and prayer. Numerous testimonies from Korean Christians of healings, deliverances, power encounters and experiences with the Holy Spirit are recorded as the results of fasting and prayer. Though the book is not dated, it appears, from references to the "Hippy movement in America and Europe" in the preface and from the tables listing the church growth and general statistics of Yoido Full Gospel Church from 1978, to have been written in the late-1970s, with many of the testimonies dated in the early 1970s. In the preface, Choi writes, "By faith you can see the great power of the Holy Spirit working through you. This amazing spiritual power also has spread all over the globe, awakening a spiritual desire in the hearts of men."[42] This is now a wonderful primary historical document that shows the tremendous work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of Korean Christians.

3.2 Historical Roots Approach

The historical roots approach is likely applicable to the study and writing of Asian Pentecostal history, however the roots may not always be identical with those of North American Pentecostalism. Pentecostalism in many Asian countries has been traditionally linked with North American Pentecostalism and its historical roots in the 19th and 20th century revival movements, often seen as a by-product of missionary endeavors of North American Pentecostals. But, as Allan Anderson notes, "One of the greatest disservices we do the worldwide Pentecostal movement is to assume that this is a 'made in the USA' product."[43] We must look at other roots of causation within Asian cultural contexts that prepared the way for Pentecostalism. Are there

---

[41] Gani Wiyono, "Pentecostals in Indonesia," in *Asian and Pentecostal*, pp. 307-328 (311).

[42] Jashil Choi, *Korean Miracles* (Seoul, Korea: Young San Publications, n.d.; La Canada, CA: Mountain Press, n.d.), preface.

[43] Allan Anderson, "Signs and Blunders: Pentecostal Mission Issues at 'Home and Abroad' in the Twentieth Century," *Journal of Asian Mission* 2 (September 2000), pp. 193-210 (203).

legitimate continuities with the past and even ancient Asian Christianity that can be traced apart from North American roots?[44]

Harvey Cox has written his observation of Pentecostal worship practices in a comparative manner with that of other faiths:

> On a global basis, Pentecostals incorporate into their worship patterns the insights and practices of other faiths – shamanic trance, healing, ancestor veneration – more than any other Christian movement I know of, albeit, frequently without realizing it. Pentecostalism, I have come to believe, is "catholic" and universal in a way most Pentecostals do not recognize and many might even deny.[45]

Making a similar comparison, Walter Hollenweger and David Martin, along with Cox, propose that Pentecostalism is at its root, shamanism in Korea.[46] The legitimacy of this view is questioned by Korean Pentecostals themselves, such as Wonsuk Ma.[47] Allan Anderson and Hwa Yung also have questions regarding this view of Korean Pentecostalism.[48] Allan Anderson states, "Whether this is conscious syncretism or the influence of the 'aura' of shamanism and the joint acknowledgement of the world of spirits is debatable."[49] He adds, "If

---

[44] Irvin, *Christian Histories*, p. 27.

[45] Harvey G. Cox, Jr., "Some Personal Reflections on Pentecostalism," *Pneuma* 15 (Spring 1993), pp. 29-34 (31).

[46] See Walter J. Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments Worldwide* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), pp. 99-105; and David Martin, *Pentecostalism: The World Their Parish* (London: Blackwell, 2002), pp. 160-162; and Harvey Cox, *Fire From Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-first Century* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1995), pp. 213-41.

[47] See Wonsuk Ma, "Asian (Classical) Pentecostal Theology in Context," in *Asian and Pentecostal*, pp. 59-91 (71-72).

[48] See Allan Anderson, "The Contextual Pentecostal Theology of David Yonggi Cho," in *David Yonggi Cho: A Close Look at His Theology and Ministry*, eds. Wonsuk Ma, William W. Menzies, and Hyeon-sung Bae (Baguio City, Philippines: APTS Press, 2004), pp. 139-148; and Hwa Yung, "The Missiological Challenge of David Yonggi Cho's Theology," *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 7 (January 2004), pp. 57-77 (75-76).

[49] Allan Anderson, "The Pentecostal Gospel and Third World Cultures" (a paper read at the 28th Annual Meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies, Evangel University, Springfield, Missouri, March 16, 1999; database on-line, available at

Pentecostal pastors sometimes appear to be functioning as 'shamans,' it is simply because they are responding to the needs arising from a shamanistic world."[50] Anderson rightly points out the importance of reflecting on the fact that there is an "enormous difference between interacting with shamanism (as Korean Pentecostals do) and becoming shamanistic."[51]

The understanding of the spirit world and being attuned to this dimension is a characteristic of a large percentage of Asians. Did this spirituality and spiritual understanding pave the way for the Pentecostal movement in Asia in a similar way that the holiness movements of the late nineteenth century paved the way for North American Pentecostalism at the turn of the twentieth century? If so, how? William W. Menzies feels that in Western apologetics there is the need to open people up to the possibilities of spiritual realities beyond the physical, natural and secular. This is not necessary in Asia, as he observes,

> In much of Asia, there is a surprising cross-current of belief that somehow meshes concern for the immediate and the practical with the notion that there is, indeed, a spiritual realm that overshadows the concrete world. Apparently most Asians already are prepared to accept the fact of spiritual reality. This has made it relatively easy for Pentecostals to reach animistic cultures. By demonstrating that the God of the Bible, the risen Lord, has offered to intervene in the problems of life, not only for the eternal issues, but also for the immediate practical needs of health and harvest, Pentecostals have been able to get inside the felt-needs of tribal peoples.[52]

Commenting on the reality of the spirit world in Korea, Africa and Latin America, Allan Anderson observes,

> It may be appropriate to consider Korean Pentecostalism as a culturally indigenous form of Korean Christianity interacting with shamanism, just as African Pentecostalism is in constant interaction with the African spirit world, and as Latin American Pentecostalism encounters

---

http://www.artsweb.bham.ac.uk/aanderson/Publications/Pentecostal_gospel_.htm , September 6, 2005), p. 5.

[50] Anderson, "The Contextual Pentecostal Theology of David Yonggi Cho," pp. 144-45.

[51] Anderson, "The Contextual Pentecostal Theology of David Yonggi Cho," p. 148.

[52] Menzies, "Frontiers in Theology," p. 25.

> folk Catholicism and Brazilian spiritism. Those who censure Korean Pentecostals for their alleged "shamanism" often fail to see that the parallels with ancient religions and cultures in their practices are also continuous with the Biblical revelation of the gospel. Furthermore, Pentecostals usually define their practices by reference to the Bible and not to traditional religions. They see their activities as creative adaptations to the local cultural context.[53]

What other historical roots of Asian Pentecostalism may be found in Asian historiography? From Korean historiography, we see different interpretative approaches emerging regarding the roots of Korean Pentecostalism. Yeol-Soo Eim notes that Pentecostal missionaries from abroad did not enter Korea until 1928 and that "Pentecostal distinctivenesses such as healing, gifts of the Spirit, and supernatural miracles were manifested even before the arrival of Pentecostal missionary [*sic*]."[54] Eim then offers a look at three roots of Korean Pentecostalism: "the revival meetings in the beginning of this [twentieth] century, the prayer mountain movement in the 1950's, and the coming of the Pentecostal denominations from abroad after 1950."[55] Eim's first Korean root notes the well-documented revivals and outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Korea during the early years of the first decade of the 20th century from 1903-1907. This revival movement is also the subject of a detailed study done by Myung-Soo Park, who similarly traces the roots of this Korean movement to the late-nineteenth century worldwide revival movements, like the "Wesleyan Holiness movement and [the] Keswick convention in America and England."[56]

Taking a different interpretative approach, Chong Hee Jeong, in an effort to define Pentecostalism in a new way towards greater self-

---

[53] Anderson, "The Pentecostal Gospel and Third World Cultures," p. 6.

[54] Yeol-Soo Eim, "The Roots of Korean Pentecostalism" (a paper presented at the 18th Pentecostal World Conference, Theological Symposium for Asian Church Leaders, "Asian Issues on Pentecostalism," Yoido Full Gospel Church, Seoul, Korea, September 21, 1998), p. 31.

[55] Eim, "The Roots of Korean Pentecostalism," p. 32.

[56] Myung-Soo Park, "'The Korea Pentecost': A Study on the Great Revival of 1903-1907 in the Relationship with Contemporary Worldwide Revival Movement" (a paper presented at the 18th Pentecostal World Conference, Theological Symposium for Asian Church Leaders, "Asian Issues on Pentecostalism," Yoido Full Gospel Church, Seoul, Korea, September 21, 1998), p. 100.

understanding as part of worldwide Pentecostalism,[57] has written an article, "The Korean Charismatic Movement as Indigenous Pentecostalism," where his focus is to reinterpret the Korean Charismatic Movement as indigenous Pentecostalism rather than exploring roots to worldwide western movements. Jeong, after his own reading and research, feels that "Classical Pentecostalism and the western revival movements had a limited impact on Korean Pentecostalism."[58] He argues that, "Because of a different process of Korean church history (quite unlike American Pentecostalism), Korean Charismatic movements do not follow Classical Pentecostalism chronologically."[59] He adds that, "The Korean field was already being prepared through the [Korean] Charismatic Movement (1903-1907) before the first Classical Pentecostal missionary arrived in 1928."[60] Jeong observes two broad historical divisions in Korean Pentecostalism, the Charismatic Movements (1910s-1940s) and the Pentecostal denominations (1950s-1980s) and expresses the belief that the coming of the Holy Spirit to Korea and Korean culture and history have provided roots for the Korean Charismatic Movement and the church in Korea to grow, not Western missionary endeavors.[61]

The interpretations of the roots of Korean Pentecostalism offered by Eim, Park and Jeong highlight the diversity that exists among Korean historians regarding their own roots. These three examples are also positive testaments to the developed nature of Korean Pentecostal historiography, which can be a useful model for other nations.

3.3 Multicultural Approach

The multicultural approach to the study of Asian Pentecostalism allows for the focus of the role and contributions of ethnic minorities in the development of Pentecostalism. Allan Anderson notes that expressions of African American spirituality such as the participation of the entire congregation in worship, hand clapping, oral liturgy and healing were "fundamental to early Pentecostalism and remain in the movement to this day. The African roots of Pentecostalism help explain

---

[57] Chong Hee Jeong, "The Korean Charismatic Movement as Indigenous Pentecostalism," in *Asian and Pentecostal*, pp. 551-571 (554).

[58] Jeong, "The Korean Charismatic Movement," p. 552.

[59] Jeong, "The Korean Charismatic Movement," p. 552.

[60] Jeong, "The Korean Charismatic Movement," p. 552.

[61] Jeong, "The Korean Charismatic Movement," pp. 552, 562.

its significance in the Third World today." [62] What impact did Pentecostalism have among the ethnic and tribal minorities of Asian countries? What diversity exists among the various Pentecostal groups in Asia? What accounts for this diversity? The multicultural approach can help shed light on such questions.

Cin Do Kham provides an account of the Pentecostal revival among the Chin (hill tribe) people of Myanmar with a particular focus on the northern Chin state. He notes the important role that the traditional religion, animism, plays in Chin life and that it is "closely intertwined with everything—from planting of the crops to births, marriages, deaths and festivals."[63] The existence of spirits and demonic beings was central to their religious beliefs and practices, and animal sacrifices were common due to these beliefs. In the early 1970's an evangelistic team of national Christians held crusades that resulted in great revival, salvations, speaking in tongues, healings and miracles among the Chin tribe. Revival has continued since then, and today 90 percent of the Chin tribe are Christians. [64] Kham, a Chin himself, highlights some of the lasting impacts of the revival among the Chin people. They have found freedom from the fear of evil spirits and have replaced their animistic beliefs and practices and secular songs with churches and worship services. Chin young people are preparing themselves for full-time ministry, and Chin Christians give generously to missions, supporting more than three hundred missionaries all over Myanmar.[65]

Saw Tint San Oo has also noted the spread of the gospel in the tribes of Myanmar that began with a Chinese evangelist who crossed from Southwest China in the early 1930s to minister to the Lisu people in the Kachin State of Northern Myanmar.[66] Ministry among the villages of the

---

[62] Allan Anderson, "The Origins, Growth and Significance of the Pentecostal Movements in the Third World" (a paper given at a postgraduate seminar, University of Leeds, November 1997; database on-line, available at http://artsweb.bham.ac.uk/aanderson/Publications/origins.htm, September 6, 2005), p. 3.

[63] Cin Do Kham, "The Untold Story: The Impact of Revival Among the Chin People in Myanmar (Burma)," *Journal of Asian Mission* 1 (September 1999), pp. 205-222 (206-207).

[64] Kham, "The Untold Story," p. 221.

[65] Kham, "The Untold Story," p. 221.

[66] Tint San Oo Saw, "The Indispensable Mission: The History of the Assemblies of God Theological Education in Myanmar" (Th.M. thesis, Asia Pacific Theological Seminary, Baguio City, Philippines, May 2003), pp. 19-20.

Lisu took place throughout the 1930s and 1940s; then Lisu evangelists ministered the gospel to the animistic Rawang people.[67] In the late-1940s, Lisu and Rawang evangelists ministered to the Law Vo people.[68]

The reports of Kham and Saw show how the impact of the gospel and the Pentecostal message have transformed tribal people in Myanmar. It is significant to note that these Christians then reached out to other people and other parts of Myanmar with the message of freedom and power.

3.4 Functional or Social-Analysis Approach

In applying the functional approach to Asian Pentecostal history by looking at the socioeconomic and cultural aspects of Pentecostalism, one might ask, what kinds of communities did Pentecostalism create in particular Asian contexts? What was the social makeup of early Asian Pentecostals? Who was most receptive to the Pentecostal message and why? What was church life in the body of Pentecostal believers like? Did the church have genuine indigenously Asian Pentecostal core values and beliefs, as well as culturally appropriate organizational structures and programs? Or, were they imported from somewhere else? In understanding the complex nature of the Asian context, insights from Rodrigo Tano may be helpful as he notes, "Asia is a complex mosaic of diverse cultures and situations."[69] He goes on to highlight several factors that contribute to this complexity:

> Among these are: 1) the resurgence of indigenous religions; 2) the struggle for a fuller life, which often contends with various forms of oppression; 3) the challenge posed by oppressive ideologies and secular worldview; 4) the impact of scientific and technological development, which influences all three factors above; 5) the tension between traditional values and social change brought about by the process of secularization and modernization; and 6) authoritarian regimes and the limitation of liberties.[70]

---

[67] Saw, "The Indispensable Mission," pp. 21, 23-24.

[68] Saw, "The Indispensable Mission," p. 26.

[69] Rodrigo D. Tano, "Toward an Evangelical Asian Theology," in *The Bible and Theology in Asian Contexts: An Evangelical Perspective on Asian Theology*, eds. Bong Rin Ro and Ruth Eshenaur (Taichung, Taiwan: Asia Theological Association, 1984), pp. 93-117 (101).

[70] Tano, "Toward and Evangelical Asian Theology," p. 101.

Wonsuk Ma makes similar observations, while adding to those of Tano.

> The traditional Asian context includes orality…, relational orientation, emotive/affective thought patterns, community-oriented society, religious pluralism and others. The contemporary Asian context is more complex. It includes, but definitely is not limited to, the coming of the post-colonial era, the rapid socio-economic changes, pluralistic religious context, the rise of religious fundamentalism, the rapid cultural change, changes in family and social structures, the fall of communism, the rise of nationalism, the recent economic crisis, the globalization of communication with the explosion of information via Internet, racial conflicts, and others.[71]

These factors, as well as others, that exist in the Asian context will likely be important to consider and investigate when considering history from the functional or social-analysis approach.

Joseph Suico, a Filipino theologian, notes the social impact of Pentecostalism in the Philippines that has been the focus of a growing body of sociological research in the Philippines. Suico observes that, "Although the movement is gaining more acceptance among the middle and upper class people, its social impact is still much felt among the marginalized masses in the Philippines."[72] He goes on to add,

> The Pentecostal movement in the Philippines has established structures that empower the poor and the marginalized to have a greater voice and participation in the system. An ordinary Filipino whose opinion is not normally heard, upon conversion acquires a sense of worth, new meaning for life, new disciplines for work and new models for family life. Since the Pentecostals put emphasis on active participation of lay people in the ministry, a convert has opportunity to develop his or her skills for articulate communication and group organization.[73]

---

[71] Wonsuk Ma, "Hollenweger's *Pentecostalism*: An Asian Reflection" (a paper presented at the 18th Pentecostal World Conference, Theological Symposium for Asian Church Leaders, "Asian Issues on Pentecostalism," Yoido Full Gospel Church, Seoul, Korea, September 21, 1998), p. 178.

[72] Joseph Suico, "Pentecostalism: Towards a Movement of Social Transformation in the Philippines," *Journal of Asian Mission* 1 (March 1999), pp. 7-19 (15).

[73] Suico, "Pentecostalism," p. 16.

Suico also notes that Pentecostalism has also had a strong impact on Philippine society through the rebuilding of families that have experienced disruption either socially or economically. In addition, Pentecostalism offers Filipinas [Filipino women] the opportunity to use their spiritual gifts to serve in the ministries of the church and to even be ordained in many Pentecostal denominations.[74]

Conrado Lumahan notes four socio-cultural factors that have contributed to church growth among the Assemblies of God in the Ilocos Region of Northern Luzon, Philippines. The nature of a "family oriented society" is such that new churches have been started as a result of follow-up ministry to relatives of church or clan members.[75] "Small groups interrelationship" or the distinct identity of social units with common culture and language has contributed to the planting of churches.[76] "Social changes" themselves have helped create a positive attitude toward change as people want changes from poverty and corruption they experience in their lives; thus, they are open to new churches being planted, which is another form of change.[77] The "power-oriented" nature of Filipinos who are already familiar with the spirit world allows them to be open to healings and deliverances from demonic power and other power encounters, which they find appealing in the Pentecostal message of churches that are planted.[78]

3.5 Reconstructionist or Revisionist Approach

While it is valuable and useful to build upon existing Pentecostal historiography, Asian Pentecostals should not be limited in their view of the past. Simon Chan states it well saying, "…Pentecostals must not simply be content with telling their own hundred year old story. They must develop a catholic perspective, see their own story as part of the on-going story of the one holy, catholic and apostolic Church."[79] As part of the recounting of their own stories, Asian Pentecostals may likely need to correct omissions and perhaps even distortions that exist in the current

---

[74] Suico, "Pentecostalism," pp. 15-16.

[75] Lumahan, "Facts and Figures," p. 79.

[76] Lumahan, "Facts and Figures," pp. 79-80.

[77] Lumahan, "Facts and Figures," p. 80.

[78] Lumahan, "Facts and Figures," p. 80.

[79] Simon Chan, "Whither Pentecostalism?" In *Asian and Pentecostal*, pp. 575-586 (585).

historical record of Asian Pentecostal history. An accounting of people and events which have been minimized or overlooked in the historical record to date will need to be given. A reconstructionist or revisionist approach to Asian Pentecostal history may be helpful to accomplish this task.

Douglas Brown feels that we need to apply "the principle of criticism" to historical research. "This means no effort to interpret history is beyond critical review and revision."[80] Criticism helps clarify the interpretation of historical evidence.[81] Colin Brown points out the value of interpretation from different vantage points:

> No single account can show exhaustively the course of history as it happened, for no single account can look at everything from all points of view. The most that the historian can do is to look at his or her subject in relation to certain questions. The historian then has to leave it to others (or come back to the subject) to bring out other aspects of the subject. By putting different accounts together, we may be able to obtain a better understanding of events, personalities, and issues than we could if we just looked at them from one vantage point.[82]

A reconstruction seeks to study existing facts in a new way and allows data to be rearranged, which allows for a different view of a situation. This different view or revision, then, will likely become the "new norm," while the older version will likely fade behind the newer one.[83] "It is important to remember that reconstruction does not remove what we know but aids in better assessment."[84]

According to Colin Brown, writing history using a revisionist or reconstructionist approach is like constructing models using sources from the past as well as the writer's own understanding of the events and his or her skill. The new model that is constructed will not be identical to the

---

[80] Douglas E. Brown, *When Past and Present Meet: A Companion to the Study of Christian Thought* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987), p. 34.

[81] Brown, *When Past and Present Meet*, p. 35.

[82] Colin Brown, *History and Faith: A Personal Exploration* (Grand Rapids, MI: Academie Books, 1987), p. 55.

[83] Thomas V. Taylor, "Church History Revisited," in *Interpretation and History: Essays in Honour of Allan A. MacRae*, eds. R. Laird Harris, Swee-Hwa Quek and J. Robert Vannoy (Singapore: Christian Life Publishers, 1986), pp. 253-271 (258).

[84] Taylor, "Church History Revisited," p. 259.

original because it will have its own shape and design but will give an indirect picture of the original.[85] He adds that,

> It is not that the latest critical reconstruction necessarily supersedes all earlier models or that the primary accounts can ever be dispensed with. But neither can we avoid making our reconstructions, whether they be technical and critical or unreflective. What critical reconstruction does is to attempt to correct unreflective understanding and to see earlier accounts in new perspective and depth.[86]

The writer of the revision seeks "to show what is wrong with the misleading models and to help build more accurate ones and to interpret them correctly."[87]

S. Immanuel David describes this as a three-step approach to writing history: first is critiquing the existing historical writings in terms of facts and developments; second is recovery of sources that have been ignored or that relate to the people involved; and third is reconstructing or including the information from these sources to construct something new through the process.[88] While there are many positive aspects to a reconstructionist or revisionist approach, it should be noted that one shortcoming of this approach is that many people will not accept the reconstruction or revision as established fact but will always tend to view it as hypothetical.[89]

A major contribution of revisionist or reconstructionist history in writing Asian Pentecostal history would be to tell the stories of the Asian participants in the worldwide growth and expansion of Pentecostalism, not simply as objects of mission history in a passive voice, but as active participants with the Holy Spirit, and in some cases with Western missionaries, with powerful voices, ministries and experiences of their own. Cecil Robeck notes that, "Increasingly Pentecostals around the world are beginning to rise up and move to positions of leadership and

---

[85] Brown, *History and Faith*, p. 59.

[86] Brown, *History and Faith*, p. 59.

[87] Brown, *History and Faith*, p. 77.

[88] S. Immanuel David, "Church History: History as Lived by Christian People," *Asia Journal of Theology* 2 (April 1988), pp. 106-108 (107).

[89] Taylor, "Church History Revisited," p. 258.

influence that compete with the long tradition of North American Pentecostal dominance."[90] As Allan Anderson observes,

> Most of Pentecostalism's rapid expansion in the twentieth century was not mainly the result of the labours of missionaries from North America and western Europe to Africa, Asia and Latin America. It was rather the result of the spontaneous indigenization of the Pentecostal message by thousands of preachers who traversed these continents with a new message of the power of the Spirit, healing the sick, and casting out demons. This may be one of the most important reconstructions necessary in Pentecostal historiography.[91]

Anderson goes on to offer a succinct depiction of what he feels the end result of revisionist or reconstructionist Pentecostal history should be:

> The revising of the history of Pentecostalism in the twenty-first century must be undertaken, not by emphasizing the missionary 'heroes' of the powerful and wealthy nations of the world, but by giving a voice to the people living in the world's most marginalized parts.[92]

Masakazu Suzuki notes omissions and exclusions of twelve missionaries from the pre-WWII history of the Japan Assemblies of God in his article, "A New Look at the Pre-War History of the Japan Assemblies of God."[93] He lists the names of those who were omitted and offers four possible reasons for their deletion from the history of the Japan Assemblies of God.[94] He suggests that, "Many of the ambiguities and deletions are still untouched areas and remain topics calling for further study."[95] Thus, the revisionist approach could be helpful in further studies of Pentecostalism in Japan. Suzuki suggests that

---

[90] Robeck, "Taking Stock of Pentecostalism," p. 59.

[91] Anderson, "Revising Pentecostal History," p. 158.

[92] Anderson, "Revising Pentecostal History," p. 166.

[93] Masakazu Suzuki, "A New Look at the Pre-War History of the Japan Assemblies of God," *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 4 (July 2001), pp. 239-267 (242).

[94] Suzuki, "A New Look," pp. 257-58.

[95] Suzuki, "A New Look," p. 266.

> One way of correcting this problem might be first to trace the history of the different missions and churches started by each of the missionaries and their native workers and then examine how these ministries related and inter-related. If such a task were indeed possible, and if it were successfully carried out, we would then retrieve the complete, clear historical picture.[96]

Paul Tsuchido Shew also notes the omissions and misconceptions in the current historical record of Pentecostalism in Japan and states that, "The history of the Pentecostal movement in Japan as it is known today is scarcely more than myth and rumor."[97] Through using primary documents, Shew gives an outline of the ministries of the earliest Pentecostal missionaries in an attempt to correct omissions in the secondary documents and "revise the general understanding of the history of Pentecostals in Japan."[98] This is also a primary focus of Shew's Ph.D. dissertation, "History of the Early Pentecostal Movement in Japan: The Roots and Development of The Pre-War Pentecostal Movement in Japan (1907-1945)."[99] Suzuki and Shew both show the relevance and importance of the revisionist or reconstructionist approach to Asian Pentecostal history.

4. Conclusion

As has been previously stated, any one of these historiographic approaches to Asian Pentecostalism if used alone misses important issues that are addressed by the other approaches. "All the approaches to origins are important in comprehending the complexities of the phenomenon, especially in its non-western context."[100] A holistic approach combining

---

[96] Suzuki, "A New Look," p. 266.

[97] Paul Tsuchido Shew, "A Forgotten History: Correcting the Historical Record of the Roots of Pentecostalism in Japan," *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 5 (January 2002), pp. 23-49 (27).

[98] Shew, "A Forgotten History," p. 47.

[99] Paul Tsuchido Shew, "History of the Early Pentecostal Movement in Japan: The Roots and Development of the Pre-War Pentecostal Movement in Japan (1907-1945)" (Ph.D. diss., Fuller Theological Seminary School of Theology, 2003), p. 15.

[100] Paul A. Pomerville, *The Third Force in Missions: A Pentecostal Contribution to Contemporary Mission Theory* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1985), p. 43.

the "divine-vertical dimension" as well as the "human-horizontal analysis" gives a more holistic understanding.[101] A variety and combination of these historiographic approaches to Asian Pentecostalism will provide fuller understanding of the broader historical picture of Pentecostalism in Asia.

There is unlimited room for additional histories to tell the stories of Asian Pentecostals. The diverse historiographic approaches possible to Asian Pentecostal history answer different questions and offer unique insights that can help lift historical facts off the page to create a more holistic and three-dimensional view of history, contribute to a developing Asian Pentecostal historiography, and help offer a more complete view of Pentecostalism worldwide. "Thousands of precisely defined case studies from a variety of points of view and methods, based on careful historical, sociological, and anthropological research are needed."[102] This research on historiographic approaches to Asian Pentecostalism has shown that there is room for a multiplicity of opinions and snapshots from different angles that can help create a more panoramic view of Asian Pentecostal history as each individual contribution adds its own unique contribution to the whole.

---

[101] Pomerville, *The Third Force in Missions*, p. 45.

[102] David. D. Bundy, "Bibliography and Historiography of Pentecostalism Outside North America," in *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, eds. Stanley M. Burgess et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), pp. 405-417 (417).