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THE FUTURE OF ASIAN PENTECOSTAL THEOLOGY: AN ASIAN AMERICAN ASSESSMENT*

Amos Yong

This essay discusses the what, whether, why, how, and whither of Asian Pentecostal theology. Hence the essay moves across five moments: description, problem identification, justification, methodological sketch, and constructive proposal. The author argues for the importance of Asian Pentecostal perspectives for the future of Pentecostal theology in particular and for Christian theology in general.

Five sets of questions frame the following discussion: the what, whether, why, how, and whither of Asian Pentecostal theology. I will take them up in order.

1. Whose Asian, which Pentecostalism? The *what* of Asian Pentecostal theology

Any answer to the query, 'What is Asian Pentecostal theology?' requires both a survey, however brief, of existing formulations and an attempt to unpack the qualifiers 'Asian' and 'Pentecostal' in the question. If we begin with the latter, the problem is that Asia itself is not a monolithic

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region. The recent three-volumed *Asian Christian Theologies* documents that the varieties of Christian inculturation or contextualization in Asia has produced a diversity of theologies forged in dialogue with the many historical, social, cultural, political, philosophical, and religious movements and traditions of Asia.[1] So there are Aotearean theologies developed in terms of Maori, Samoan, and Pacific Islander categories of thought; Indian theologies responding to and interacting with the long history of religious pluralism of the Indian subcontinent; Burmese theologies influenced by the pervasiveness of folk Buddhism; Indonesian theologies shaped (almost literally) by its island topography and geography, somehow nourishing a certain mystical religiousness and consciousness; Filipino theologies informed by the quest for political independence, and by animistic and Muslim undercurrents; Thai theologies articulated as apologetic efforts against the Theravada Buddhist tradition; Vietnamese theologies absorbing and yet reacting to the Confucian-Buddhist synthesis and the recent history of Communism; Chinese theologies that have been more creation-centered, perhaps under the influence of the Confucian-Daoist worldview; Hong Kong theologies shaped under the long history of British colonization; Japanese theologies emergent from a long history of Confucian-Buddhist-Shinto convergence, and from the traumas inflicted on the national consciousness by the end of the second World War; and so on. Going down this road, there is no such thing as 'Asian theology'; rather there are only a wide range of Asian theologies, each localized in specific places and perhaps even times, none of which can lay the claim to represent the breadth of Asia in any meaningful sense.

No doubt in part for this reason, there has been the re-assertion that we must nevertheless find meaningful ways to speak about 'Asian theology'. What then are the general features of Asian life? Some have proposed that Asia is characterized by poverty, cultural diversity, and irreducible religious pluralism. The Asian Bishops have therefore suggested that Asian theology must be informed by a liberative praxis focused on the widespread poverty afflicting the masses of Asia, by a wide range of cultural experiences and sensibilities, and by a commitment to the interreligious dialogue.[2] Asian theologians of note operating at least in part within this

[1] John C. England, et al. (eds.), Asian Christian Theologies: A Research Guide to Authors, Movements, Sources, 3 vols. (Delhi: ISPCK and Clarentian Publishers, and Maryknoll: Orbis, 2002-2004).

[2] On the Asian bishops, see Thomas C. Fox, Pentecost in Asia: A New Way of Being Church (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2002), ch. 12; Peter C. Phan, In Our Own Tongues: Perspectives from Asia on Mission and Inculturation (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2003), pp. 213-14; and James H. Kroeger and Peter C. Phan, The Future of the Asian Churches: The Asian Synod and Ecclesia in Asia (Quezon City, Philippines:

overarching framework include individuals like Kosuke Koyama (Thailand and Japan), Aloysius Pieris (Sri Lanka), M. M. Thomas (India), Choan-Seng Song (Taiwan), Peter Phan (Vietnam), and Chung Hyun Kyung, Jung Young Lee and Anselm Min (Korea), among many others.

From the Pentecostal point of view, however, the trajectories opened up by these Asian theologians are less promising than apparent at first brush. Singaporean Pentecostal theologian Simon Chan, for example, has argued that these Asian theologians have focused too much on history and historical processes, resulting in an over-emphasis on immanence to the neglect of transcendence in theology.[3] Precisely because Asian religiosity and poverty have framed the discourse of Asian theologians, leading to the domination of theological themes like the cosmic Christ, God's suffering, and the God of the poor, Asian theology has not been able to engage what he calls the 'irreducible transcendent reality in the Christian faith'.[4] Further, these Asian Christian theologians have too uncritically accepted a modernism which demands secularization in terms of worldview, and demythologization in terms of biblical interpretation. Such moves sit very uncomfortably, Chan suggests, with Asian forms of thinking. The Daoist worldview, for example, locates human beings within a wider cosmological context even while it does not separate human embodiment from that wider environment.

Chan suggests a response along two lines. First, he proposes that a viable Asian Christian theology must include both social reform and evangelistic proclamation, both political action and supernaturalistic charismatic empowerment.[5] Second, he also suggests that the kind of 'body thinking' prevalent among cultures long informed by religious Daoism has a deep affinity with the Christian understanding of truth most clearly embodied in the life of Jesus and in the biblical narratives. Whereas 'liberal'

Clarentian Publications, 2002). For an example of a liberation theology emergent out of a multicultural and interreligious dialogue, see Michael Amaladoss, Life in Freedom: Liberation Theologies from Asia (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1997).

[3] Chan, 'The Problem of Transcendence and Immanence in Asian Contextual Theology', Trinity Theological Journal 8 (1999), pp. 5-18, and 'Problem and Possibility of an Asian Theological Hermeneutic', Trinity Theological Journal 9 (2000), pp. 47-59.

[4] Chan, 'The Problem of Transcendence and Immanence in Asian Contextual Theology', p. 8.

[5] I myself am ambivalent about Chan's use of 'supernaturalism' as it in turn perpetuates the baggage of Enlightenment dualism. My own proposal is for a triadic-trinitarian construct that goes beyond the natural-supernatural dichotomy; see Yong, The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh: Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), §7.3.1.

Asian Christian theologies may provide astute social analyses of the pervasive poverty which characterizes the Asian situation, they fail to offer religious and spiritual answers that concretely engage the masses of Asia.[6] On the other hand, unexpectedly, a theological hermeneutic based on the good news of the incarnation remains plausible in modern Asia since it opens up the possibility of meeting the spiritual needs of people in terms with which they may resonate from the perspective of Asian religious traditions.[7] In this case, a deeply evangelical reading of scripture in Asia would not necessarily be either exclusive of Asian sensibilities or opposed to making connections with Asian religious perspectives.

In these essays, however, Chan seems to be writing more as an evangelical theologian addressing evangelical theological audiences than as a Pentecostal to his fellow Pentecostals.[8] Have other Pentecostal scholars and theologians begun to ask the question about Asian Pentecostal theology, and if so, what matters have been put on the table for discussion? In the inaugural issue of the *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies*, the lead article by journal co-editor was Wonsuk Ma's 'Toward an Asian Pentecostal Theology'.[9] While trained in the Hebrew Bible, Ma has nevertheless been at the forefront of thinking about the Pentecostal theological enterprise. Central to Ma's proposal was to argue for the importance of the Asian Pentecostal theological project given the assumption that the task of Asian Pentecostal theology is to serve as a bridge between divine revelation (in this case, understood in terms of Pentecostal truths and distinctives) and

[6] Thus it has been said, 'Although the Korean liberation theology known as Minjung theology has espoused the concerns of the poor and oppressed, it is to the Pentecostal churches that the poor and oppressed (the minjung) flock for relief'; see Allan Anderson, 'The Contribution of Cho Yonggi to a Contextual Theology in Korea', JPT 12:1 (2003), pp. 85-105, quotation from p. 103.

[7] So evangelical theology would be inclusive of both contextual perspectives and religious and pragmatic readings of the Bible, rather than having to opt for either one or the other (as Moonjang Lee seems to suggest); see Lee, 'Asian Biblical Interpretation', in Kevin J. Vanhoozer (ed.), Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible (London: SPCK, and Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), pp. 68-71.

[8] Remember that Chan teaches in an evangelical context and has engaged evangelical theology, especially in his Spiritual Theology: A Systematic Study of the Christian Life (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998). On the other hand, of course, Chan is equally at home writing to Pentecostal theological colleagues, as seen in his Pentecostal Theology and the Christian Spiritual Tradition (JPTSup 21; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000).

[9] Wonsuk Ma, 'Toward an Asian Pentecostal Theology', Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies 1:1 (1998), pp. 15-41.

the human situation (in this case, understood in terms of the Asian context in general and the spiritist and animist layer of Asian religiosity in particular).

Two responses to Ma's essay have subsequently been published in the same venue. In the next volume, Reuben Gabriel pointedly notes that spiritism alone does not exhaust the Asian context, but he does not proceed to further elaborate on what these other features of the Asian context might be.[10] Gabriel's response is followed by Mathew Clark's.[11] From his South African perspective, Clark suggests common experiences and challenges between the Asian Pentecostal and the African Pentecostal contexts, including a holistic worldview, the issue of ancestor veneration, the pervasiveness of indigenous religious traditions and the accompanying threat of syncretism, and the need to formulate local ethical stances and postures. On the other side, there are also differences, particularly in terms of modernization and development trajectories, and the available missional, ministry, and educational resources (these are more scarce in the African situation). Clark concludes with a call for Asian and African Pentecostal partnership toward the construction of 'a truly global Pentecostal theology'.[12]

Nevertheless, even with these initial proposals, Asian Pentecostal theologians cannot avoid grappling with both qualifiers. Practically speaking, insofar as Pentecostalism in Asia has exploded in places like South Korea, for example, it is to be expected that Asian Pentecostal theology will be most developed among Korean Pentecostals.[13] At the same time, insofar as Pentecostalism is also growing throughout the rest of the Asian continent, there is gradually emerging a wide range of Asian Pentecostal theological voices, including those informed by the experiences of Korean women (like Julie Ma), Indian (and Dalit) Pentecostals (like Paulson Pulikottil), the Filipino Roman Catholic charismatic movement (like Lode Wostyn), and the rural Chinese churches (like Deng Zhaoming and Edmond

[10] Reuben Louis Gabriel, 'A Response to Wonsuk Ma's "Toward an Asian Pentecostal Theology,"' Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies 2:1 (1999), pp. 77-85.

[11] Mathew Clark, 'Asian Pentecostal Theology', Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies 4:2 (2001), pp. 181-99.

[12] Clark, 'Asian Pentecostal Theology', pp. 198-99.

[13] Ma is a Korean Pentecostal theological educator. Other Pentecostal theological works are appearing among Korean Pentecostals, including Ig-Jin Kim, History and Theology of Korean Pentecostalism: Sunbogeum (Pure Gospel) Pentecostalism (Zoetermeer, The Netherlands: Boekencentrum, 2003), and Sung-Hoon Myung and Young-gi Hong (eds.), Charis and Charisma: David Yonggi Cho and the Growth of Yoido Full Gospel Church (Milton Keynes, UK, and Waynesboro, Ga.: Regnum Books International, 2003).

Tang), among many others.[14] And once we begin to look across the Asian continent, the question of the meaning of 'Pentecostal' will press inexorably upon us. The demographers and statisticians of the *New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* have constructed three categories: classical Pentecostals are those churches and movements connected to the Azusa Street revival; charismatics are those in churches and movements connected to the renewal movement in the mainline, Roman Catholic, and Eastern Orthodox churches in the 1960s-1970s; indigenous charismatics and pentecostals, however, comprise the largest group of pentecostal- and charismatic-type of Christians worldwide in terms of their practices of tongues-speaking and embrace of other charismatic manifestations.[15] Many Indian, Chinese, and Japanese charismatic-type churches fall into this third category. But the question is whether or not these indigenous Indian, Japanese, and Chinese churches would really fit theologically as 'Pentecostal'?[16]

Now if we proceeded to understand Pentecostalism inclusively and broadly, then we would need to provide some sort of account for this wide range of Pentecostal-type phenomena. Among the Bible Mission churches in Andhra Pradesh, India, for example, indigenous and Hindu cultures combine in charismatic Christian contexts to produce not only Bhakti-style liturgies but also a guru-mentality that elevates the anointed man-of-God as a charismatic leader. Charismatic gurus like Mungamûri Dçvadâs (ca. 1885-1960) claimed to receive revelations from the Holy Spirit through dreams and visions, even as these messages were confirmed through the gift of healings.[17] In the Spirit of Jesus Church and the Holy Ecclesia of Jesus church in Japan, on the other hand, we have ritual chants invoking the presence and activity of God that is phenomenologically analogous to the chanting of the Nembutsu and sutra recitation in Japanese Buddhism.

[14] See, e.g., Allan Anderson and Edmond Tang (eds.), Asian and Pentecostal: The Charismatic Face of Christianity in Asia (London: Regnum International, and Baguio City, Philippines: Asia Pacific Theological Seminary Press, 2005), and the contributions to the Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies (1998-).

[15] See D. B. Barrett and T. M. Johnson, 'Global Statistics', in Stanley M. Burgess and Eduard M. Van Der Maas (eds.), The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), p. 284.

[16] Luke Wesley, The Church in China: Persecuted, Pentecostal and Powerful (Baguio City, Philippines: AJPS Books, 2004), illuminates the difficulties attending this question vis-à-vis the churches in rural China.

[17] See P. Solomon Raj, A Christian Folk-religion in India: A Study of the Small Church Movement in Andhra Pradesh, with a Special Reference to the Bible Mission of Devadas (Frankfurt and New York: P. Lang, 1984).

Further, in these and other charismatic churches in Japan, traditional burial practices honoring the ancestors are Christianized and legitimated both at the biblical and the theological level, especially with regard to the idea that salvation extends as well to the spirit world.[18] Last (for our purposes) but not least is the Prayer Mountain movement in Korea which builds on indigenous Korean religious beliefs and practices related to sacred mountain sites. When set within the wider matrix of Korean religious history, charismatic leaders have been likened to shamanic healers even as charismatic spirituality has been compared with popular expressions of Korean Buddhism and Confucianism.[19]

To be sure, any Asian Pentecostal theology can choose to either ignore these phenomena, or to articulate an apologetic as to why these should not be included in its theological construction. In fact, some would argue that the kind of phenomenological classification deployed by the *New International Dictionary* does not provide a sufficiently common theological platform so that we can or should include these movements in any attempt to develop an Asian Pentecostal theology. From this more evangelically oriented perspective, Asian Pentecostal theology should be more closely disciplined by classical Pentecostal theology, albeit lifting up the importance of the Holy Spirit, the gifts of the Spirit, supernaturalism, and worship spontaneity, all of which are more relevant in the Asian context.[20]

2. Between the local and the global: The *whether* of Asian Pentecostal theology

I want to pursue this more evangelically informed criticism further in this section because I believe it impinges on part of the debate among Pentecostal theologians about how to understand the Pentecostal theological enterprise in particular as well as the task of Christian theology in general. If the previous section raised the question of *what* Asian

[18] See Mark Mullins, Christianity Made in Japan: A Study of Indigenous Movements (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1998), and Makito Nagasawa, 'Makuya Pentecostalism: A Survey', Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies 3:2 (2000), pp. 203-18.

[19] As suggested by Boo-Woong Yoo, Korean Pentecostalism: Its History and Theology (Frankfurt and New York: P. Lang, 1988), and Harvey G. Cox, Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1995), ch. 11.

[20] As articulated, for example, by Hwa Yung, 'Endued with Power: The Pentecostal-Charismatic Renewal and the Asian Church in the 21st Century', in Simon Chan (ed.), Truth to Proclaim: The Gospel in Church and Society (Singapore: Trinity Theological College, 2002), pp. 57-76.

Pentecostal theology might be given its many local variations, here the counter-question is taken up: *whether* or not the qualifier of 'Asian' in and of itself undermines the coherence of a Pentecostal theology. As this has been part and parcel of the question evangelical theologians have wrestled with, I will unpack this problematic in dialogue with evangelical theology.

To begin, evangelical theology is about the *evangelion*, the good news. Soteriologically, the heart of the gospel as evangelically conceived has historically revolved around the substitutionary atonement of the cross of Christ for the sins of humankind.[21] This conviction empowers the evangelical proclamation of the forgiveness of sin – as St. Paul puts it, 'since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God' (Rom. 3:23)[22] – and the possibility of salvation to all persons. Hence the politics of identity has never been a central feature of evangelical theology. After all, if the assumptions are that none are righteous, not one, and that the gospel is hence equally for to all persons regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexual orientation, etc., then evangelical theology itself is universally viable and applicable, without any need for qualifiers such as Asian or American.

Similarly, of course, Pentecostal theology follows evangelical theology on this issue. Many Pentecostals assume the substitutionary theory of the atonement, the universality of sin, and the conviction that the salvation of the world rests on the person and work of Jesus: 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me' (Jn. 14:6), and 'There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved' (Acts 4:12). In this scheme of things, it matters little that people are red or yellow, black or

[21] The World Evangelical Alliance's Statement of Faith includes the following affirmations: 'We believe... Our Lord Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh, His virgin birth, His sinless human life, His divine miracles, His vicarious and atoning death, His bodily resurrection, His ascension, His mediatorial work, and His Personal return in power and glory...The Salvation of lost and sinful man through the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ by faith apart from works, and regeneration by the Holy Spirit..'. (see http://www.worldevangelical.org/wea/statement.htm; emphases original). While this penal substitutionary view of the atonement will remain dominant within evangelical theology for the foreseeable future, there are signs both that other theories of the atonement are gaining a hearing and that the penal view is itself being creatively reappropriated – e.g., Mark D. Baker and Joel B. Green, Recovering the Scandal of the Cross: The Atonement in New Testament and Contemporary Contexts (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000); J. Denny Weaver, The Nonviolent Atonement (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001); and, Hans Boersma, Violence, Hospitality and the Cross: Recovering the Atonement Tradition (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004).

[22] All biblical quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

white, since anyone who believes in Jesus, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexual orientation, etc., will have everlasting life (Jn. 3:16b).

On the flip side, this universalizing logic of evangelical and Pentecostal theology contains within itself an individualizing trajectory. The atoning death of Christ opens up to the possibility of each individual entering into a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ. And since God is no respecter of persons, neither does the gospel privilege the categories of race, ethnicity, gender, class, and sexual orientation. This assumes, of course, that we as individuals are sinners, and that sin is also no respecter of persons. Paradoxically, then, while this universalizing-individualizing logic of evangelical and Pentecostal theology converge to undermine all other identity qualifiers except those of saint and sinner: all people are either sinners in need of the gospel or saints whose sins have been covered precisely through their reception of the gospel. In this evangelical and Pentecostal scheme, qualifying the good news in terms limited to Asia (or any other category) confuses the nature of the gospel at best and needlessly limits its scope at worst.

Finally, the methodological insistence on Scripture as the norming norm also illuminates the superfluity of Asian or other qualifiers to evangelical and Pentecostal theology. At least as historically conceived, evangelical theology has long featured a robust doctrine of Scripture as the word of God which judges rather than submits itself to other epistemic authorities, whether that be modern rationalism, liberal experientialism, unquestioning 'traditionalism', or an infallible magisterium.[23] The result has been a transformation, especially in the last century, of the Reformational *sola scriptura* into a distinctively articulated doctrine of scriptural inerrancy which continues to serve as the theological, epistemological, and hermeneutical foundation for much of conservative evangelical theology.[24] In this methodological framework, evangelical theology is essentially and inherently *biblical*, thus dispensing with the need for other qualifiers.

[23] None of these 'isms' are unambiguous, of course, even as each is intertwined with the others at some level. Putting things this way, however, captures some sense of evangelical self-perception vis-à-vis the wider ecumenical discussion of authority in theological method.

[24] Reflecting developments from the publication of The Fundamentals to the 'Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy' (1978), many conservative North American evangelicals -- e.g., from Norman L. Geisler, Inerrancy (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980) to James R. White, Scripture Alone (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2004) – have seen and continue to see both sola scriptura and the doctrine of inerrancy as central for evangelical theology. Yet the World Evangelical Fellowship's statement of faith is silent about both matters, preferring the more accepted (even ecumenical) language of, 'the Holy Scriptures as originally given by God, divinely inspired, infallible, entirely trustworthy' (http://www.worldevangelical.org/wea/statement.htm). For more progressive evangelical views of scripture, see William J. Abraham, The Divine Inspiration of Holy Scripture (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), and, more recently, Telford Work, Living and Active: Scripture in the Economy of Salvation (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002).

Similarly, Pentecostal theology's biblicism in many ways emerged out of the fundamentalist hermeneutic of the early twentieth-century. The difference was that while the fundamentalists insisted that the charismatic manifestations were limited to the apostolic period, Pentecostals were convinced that the gifts of the Holy Spirit had continued throughout the history of the Church (albeit sporadically at times), and had been especially infused in these days to empower the Church to take the gospel to the ends of the world. Yet both fundamentalists and their distant Pentecostal cousins believed in a biblically centered Christian theological enterprise. To even entertain the possibility of an *Asian* theology, for example, is to invite the whole range of confusions attached to the subjective experiences of interpreters defined first and foremost by other factors rather than by the biblical revelation.

From a pragmatic point of view, it is clear that the Pentecostal commitment to the Great Commission flows out of the biblical injunction to 'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you' (Matt. 28:19-20a). In this framework, what is important is that 'all nations' are converted from sin and discipled according to the way of Jesus Christ. Insofar as the Christian theological enterprise emerges from out of the practices of the church, Pentecostal theology also emerges out of this commitment to 'Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation' (Mk. 16:15). Adding 'Asian' or any other categorical qualifier to Pentecostal is incidental and irrelevant at best and distracting and confusing at worst since local features are subsumed under the universal needs of all human beings. For Pentecostals, then, there may be both puzzlement and resistance to the very exercise of discussing the task of an Asian Pentecostal theology.

3. The local is the global and vice-versa: The *why* of Asian Pentecostal theology

If the foregoing is correct, then there are at least two major conceptual roadblocks to the construction of an Asian Pentecostal theology. On the one side, the very illusion of a meaningful notion of 'Asian' is exploded by the fact that there is not one but rather there are many forms of Asian

identities (the *what* question); on the other side, the many forms of Asian identities are not theologically significant when considered against the backdrop that all Asians are nevertheless sinners in need of the gospel (the *whether* question). Unless viable responses are forthcoming to these question, the task of Asian Pentecostal theology threatens to either dissipate into many different Asian Pentecostal theologies or to evaporate altogether as it is subsumed under the rubrics or either Pentecostal theology *simpliciter* or Christian theology in general.

Why then proceed with the articulation of an Asian Pentecostal theology? I suggest that one answer to this question helps us to begin responding also to the *what* and the *whether* questions that are still on the table. In brief, the response derives from the conviction that on the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was poured out 'upon all flesh' (Acts 2:17). More particularly, the manifestation of the Spirit's outpouring on all flesh was that there were 'devout Jews from evernation under heaven living in Jerusalem...[and] each one heard them speaking in the native language of each' (Acts 2:5-6). Allow me to unpack three implications of this text in response to the question, *why* Asian Pentecostal theology.

First, I have elsewhere argued that Acts 2 is central to the universal vision of the church and the kingdom of God which extended far beyond the Jewish self-understanding of a religion centered in Jerusalem.[25] The universality of the gospel is not only announced at the beginning of Luke (2:31-32) and of Acts (1:8), but is also prefigured in the fact that the many tongues understood on the Day of Pentecost are derived from the ancient Jewish table of nations and therefore represent all the peoples of the world.[26] But at the phenomenological level, it is not just the translatability of the gospel which is miraculous, but the fact that strange tongues can indeed be vehicles of the gospel and can declare the wonders of God (Acts 2:11). And given the interconnections between language and culture, the Pentecost narrative both celebrates the divine affirmation of many tongues, and announces the divine embrace of the many cultures of the world. This does not mean that entire cultural traditions are to be uncritically accepted

[25] See Yong, '"As the Spirit Gives Utterance...": Pentecost, Intra-Christian Ecumenism, and the Wider Oekumene', International Review of Mission 92:366 (2003), pp. 299-314, and Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh, ch.4.

[26] On this point, see James M. Scott, 'Acts 2:9-11 – As an Anticipation of the Mission to the Nations', in Jostein Ådna and Hans Kvalbein (eds.), The Mission of the Early Church to Jews and Gentiles (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 127; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), pp. 87-123, and Dean Philip Bechard, Paul Outside the Walls: A Study of Luke's Socio-Geographical Universalism in Acts 14:8-20 (Analecta Biblica 143; Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2000), chs. 3-4.

or that every aspect of any particular culture is divinely sanctioned. Rather, languages and cultures need to be discerned, and their demonic elements need to be confronted and purified so that if there is any truth, goodness, or beauty in them, such may be redeemed. Hence the outpouring of the Spirit on all flesh preserves, validates, and even in this sense redeems the many tongues, languages, and cultures of the world, including those of the regions, nations, and peoples of Asia. The question of *why* Asian Pentecostal theology thus receives the answer: because the Pentecost narrative in Acts 2 invites Asian Pentecostals in particular, and Asians in general, to declare and testify in their own tongues and languages about the wondrous works of God.

If Acts 2 provides exegetical legitimation for Asian Pentecostal theology, then at a second level the 'reenactment' of Acts 2 at the Azusa Street revival in Los Angeles, 1906-1908, serves to remind Pentecostals in Asia and elsewhere that the outpouring of the Spirit on all flesh was not just a one-time occurrence in the first century, but a promise for all subsequent generations, 'for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him' (Acts 2:39b), even to the present time and beyond. Even if Azusa Street is not understood as the fountainhead of modern Pentecostalism, it nevertheless represents at least one local expression of the modern Pentecostal revival.[27] And in the Azusa Street context, there is widespread consensus that the manifestations of the Spirit were the same as those recorded in the Acts narrative: whereas sons and daughters were said to prophesy in the first century, men and women were co-laborers in the 'harvest field' of Azusa Street and the Pentecostal revival in the twentieth century; whereas dreams and visions were characteristic of the first century Christian experience, so also would dreams and visions would be prominent features of the modern Pentecostal movement; whereas slave and free were empowered to prophesy by the Holy Spirit in the early church, so also were whites and blacks brought together at Azusa Street, miraculously in an era of Jim Crow laws.[28] Most importantly for our purposes, just as the Day of Pentecost described in Acts includes the languages of those from many tribes, peoples, and nations, so also did modern Pentecostalism almost instantaneously become a global movement involving individuals and

[27] Scholars like Allan Anderson, An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), ch. 9, argue for that Pentecostalism has multiple 'points of origin' during the first decade of the twentieth century.

[28] The most recent and exhaustive history of Azusa Street is Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., The Azusa Street Mission and Revival (Nashville: Nelson, 2006), ch. 4.

people groups from every continent.[29] So to the question of *why* Asian Pentecostal theology a further answer stipulates: because the gift of the Holy Spirit according to the pattern of Acts 2 has been experience by Asian Pentecostal Christians and they are, in turn, not just invited but required to give account of this in their own tongues and languages.

Within this exegetical and historical frame of reference, I suggest a further theological and philosophical rationale for the *why* of Asian Pentecostal theology. Whereas critics of an Asian Pentecostal theological enterprise have insisted that either the 'Asian' disappears in the many local or regional instantiations (the global is the local) or the 'Pentecostal' is subsumed under the more generally evangelical or Christian category (the local is the global), I propose that Asian Pentecostalism is both local and global, albeit in important mutual respects. On the one hand, the category of 'Asian' is constituted by various regional constructs, but that it nevertheless constitutes a coherent category when understood in global context, alongside non-Asian voices and perspectives. Similarly, 'Pentecostalism' constitutes a coherent category when understood in broader Christian context, alongside non-Pentecostal voices and perspectives, even if Christian faith is itself constituted by various traditions, including Pentecostalism. In other words, following the logic of Acts 2 and Azusa Street, the one outpouring of the Holy Spirit is manifest in the many tongues; similarly, the project of Pentecostal theology is itself expressed in the many languages of the world, including those emanating from the regions of Asia. Put philosophically, following Whitehead, if the many are constituted by the one and are increased by the one,[30] then Pentecostal theology is itself constituted, at least in part, by Asian Pentecostal theology and increased by it, even as Asian Pentecostal theology is itself constituted, at least in part, by Indian, Chinese, Japanese, etc., Pentecostal theologies and increased by them.

4. Interpreting many tongues: The *how* of Asian Pentecostal theology

Assuming the *why* question has been satisfactorily answered, at least

[29] On this point, see Karla Poewe (ed.), Charismatic Christianity as a Global Culture (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1994); Walter Hollenweger, Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments Worldwide (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1997); and Allan H. Anderson and Walter J. Hollenweger (eds.), Pentecostals after a Century: Global Perspectives on a Movement in Transition (JPTSup 15; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999).

[30] Alfred North Whitehead, Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology (New York: Harper & Row/Harper Torchbooks, 1960), p. 32.

tentatively, the question of *how* to do Asian Pentecostal theology now presses itself upon us. This is essentially a question about theological method. More specifically, it is a question about how to go about doing Pentecostal theology in the Asian context.

Elsewhere, I have argued the hypothesis that theological method involves a dialectical trilogue – a three-way conversation – between interpretation of the biblical text, interpretation of what the Holy Spirit is doing in the world, and interpretation of the various contexts in which theology is being undertaken.[31] For the purposes of doing *Asian* Pentecostal theology, the focus necessarily needs to be on what we discern the Holy Spirit is doing in and through the churches in its many situations throughout the Asian continent. (Even for Pentecostal theology in general, there needs to be contextual analysis and situatedness. There is no such thing as non-local theology. As I have argued above, the local is the global and vice-versa. The key is whether or not the locality of any theological enterprise is admitted up front, rather than a pretense being put forward, perhaps out of ignorance or carelessness, that those are universal claims *simpliciter*.) I now want to suggest the further hypothesis that the task of Asian Pentecostal theology is to reflect on the experiences of Asian Pentecostal Christians as they attempt to discern what the Holy Spirit is doing in and through the church in their various contexts in light of the received biblical and theological traditions. Along these lines, allow me to sketch three trajectories of inquiry for Asian Pentecostal theology.

First, Asian Pentecostal theology emerges out of the experiences of Asian Pentecostal Christians, and therefore pays close attention to what is happening "on the ground." At this level, Asian Pentecostal theology attempts to make sense of all that is happening in their churches: lives are being transformed; bodies are being healed; the gifts of the Holy Spirit are being manifest; and people are reconciled to one another and, most importantly, to God. Historically, Pentecostal theology in general has focused on this level of Pentecostal experience.

At a second level, however, Asian Pentecostal theology needs to address the social and political realities within which Asian Pentecostal Christians live and move. I wonder, for example, about bringing Pentecostal experiences, perspectives, and theological resources to bear on the following issues and questions (listed in no particular order):

[31] See Amos Yong, Spirit-Word-Community: Theological Hermeneutics in Trinitarian Perspective (Aldershot, UK, and Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, and Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 2002). Of course, this is itself a contextual hypothesis, formulated in dialogue with the discussions on methodology and hermeneutics in the wider theological academy.

- What about a Pentecostal theology of *shalom* in the context of relations between North and South Korea, especially in light of the North's alleged nuclear capacities?
- What about a holistic Pentecostal soteriology in response to the Bandar Aceh tsunami, or even for perennially flooding Bangladesh?
- What about Pentecostal theologies of race, justice, and liberation among the Dalit Pentecostal churches of India, or among other communities impoverished by corrupt governments or globalizing market forces?
- What about a Pentecostal theology of exile in the Himalayan context of Tibet, the political context of Taiwan, or among the refugee communities displaced by the wars in Southeast Asia?
- What about a Pentecostal theology of the land for indigenous Malays, Hmong (of Laos), Chin (of Myanmar), or Sherpa (of Tibet and Nepal)?
- What about a Pentecostal theology of technology for upwardly mobile Chinese, Japanese, South Koreans, and Singaporeans who are now working in the hi-tech industry, or a Pentecostal theology of medical technology which is increasingly accessible to Asian Pentecostals?
- What about a Pentecostal theology of dialogue and hospitality in Roman Catholic Philippines, in Muslim dominated regions like Pakistan and Indonesia, where there are Buddhist and Hindu insurgent (fundamentalist) groups like Sri Lanka and India, and in pluralistic countries like Malaysia?
- What about Pentecostal theologies of suffering (*dukkha*), compassion, or of meditation, all dominant themes in the various Buddhist traditions of Asia?
- What about a Pentecostal theology of the ancestors in light of the filial piety central to the Confucian tradition?
- Last but not least, what about Pentecostal cosmologies that can engage, critique, and provide alternatives for the animist and other worldviews suggested by the religious traditions of Asia?

May I further venture a third trajectory of Asian Pentecostal theological reflection, one that is not circumscribed geographically by the Asian continent? In a globalizing world, 'Asia' is a fluid category, identified not only by geography but also by phenotype (biology), culture, language, and relationships.[32] In this global context, Asian Pentecostal theology is

[32] Thus R. S. Sugirtharajah talks about 'shifting identities' as a marker of 'Asianness' and even 'orientalism'; see Sugirtharajah, Asian Biblical Hermeneutics and Postcolonialism: Contesting the Interpretations (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1998), ch. 5.

an enterprise that all Asians may have a stake in, even those who do not reside on Asian soil. My own experience as a one-point-five generation Chinese American (born in Asia but raised in and naturalized as a citizen of the USA) is a case is point.[33] My firsthand experience of Asia is increasingly further removed as the years go by, but I nevertheless also have a growing commitment to doing theology as an Asian American Pentecostal theologian.[34] From this limited Asian American perspective, then, the following theological tasks further suggest themselves:

- What about a Pentecostal theology of migration and immigration, one that addresses also the refugee experience?
- What about a Pentecostal theology of multiculturalism which can grapple with the complexities of the experiences of the different – first, one point five, and second – generations?
- What about a Pentecostal theology of contextualization that is sensitive to the similarities and differences of inculturation east and west, in Asia and in America?
- What about a Pentecostal theology of politics and nation-building that addresses minority-group experiences in engaging the issues related to democracy, citizenship, and political responsibility?
- What about a Pentecostal theology of globalization that is sensitive to the economic, political, and ideological trends that shape the processes that intertwine east and west, Asia and America, along with the rest of the world?

This list of theological research projects is by no means meant to be exhaustive. Further, they are also not meant to essentialize either Asia or Asian America; in fact, I see that both lists are equally applicable within and outside of the Asian continent. The tasks proposed in either list could be engaged by Asian-based and non-Asian based Asian Pentecostal theologians, even as the results developed from projects engaging either list could also be relevant both within and outside the specifically Asian and even Asian Pentecostal contexts. More important, however, is the

[33] One-point-five and second generation Asian American theologians are not an anomalous group; see Peter C. Phan and Jung Young Lee (eds.), Journeys at the Margin: Toward an Autobiographical Theology in Asian-American Perspective (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1999), and Fumitaka Matsuoka and Eleazar S. Fernandez (eds.), Realizing the America of Our Hearts: Theological Voices of Asian Americans (St. Louis: Chalice, 2003).

[34] See Yong, 'Asian American Religion: A Review Essay', Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions 9:3 (2006), pp. 92-107.

question that many are sure to ask: are not many of these research projects far beyond what Asian Pentecostal theologians have traditionally undertaken, and rather unrelated to more usual, even urgent, tasks of Asian Pentecostal theology? Perhaps Simon Chan might counter that this research program for Asian Pentecostal theology differs little, if at all, from those undertaken by more mainline Protestant and Roman Catholic theological traditions.

I wish to suggest three brief responses to this critical question. First, theology is not only a descriptive enterprise for Christian beliefs, but is also a prescriptive exercise for the sake of Christian practices. It has long been known that Pentecostal Christians are pragmatists in terms of testing their beliefs by the fruits that are produced.[35] Since I am hard pressed to think that Pentecostal Christians worldwide and in Asia and elsewhere do *not* confront these experiential realities, I think that Pentecostal theologians need to reflect on these realities in order to provide a theological grammar that can shape and orient Pentecostal Christians in ways that better enable them to engage the complexities of an increasing globalized twenty-first century. In short, if these are the kinds of realities confronting Pentecostal Christians, then Pentecostal theologians neglect their vocation if they do not address these issues.

Second, I am convinced that it is part of the vocation of Pentecostal theology worldwide to mediate conversations and to do so by interpreting the many languages and discourses of various traditions, peoples, disciplines, and research projects to each other. In this sense Pentecostal theologians should not be only conduits of the spiritual gift of the interpretation of tongues, but should also embody that mediating posture amidst the many conversations theologians are engaged in. In other words, I am inviting Pentecostal theologians in general and Asian Pentecostal theologians in particular to step out of our comfort zones so as to be active participants at the global theological roundtable. The key to this involvement, however, is that Pentecostal theologians engage in that discussion from out of the strength of their own identities as Pentecostals, rather than only on the terms set out by the existing conversation. In order for dialogue to be genuinely reciprocal, all parties have to contribute to both to establishing the terms of the conversation and to its ongoing evaluation.

Finally, I am convinced that Pentecostal engagement in these projects will benefit not just Pentecostal Christians but also the wider Christian church and the wider theological discussion. In fact, I see no reason why

[35] On Pentecostal pragmatism, see Grant Wacker, Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001).

the benefits of a holistic soteriology or of a theology of technology or of a theology of politics will be limited to only Christians. Rather, these kinds of theological undertakings will shape Christian practices that in turn benefit those outside the church as well. In that sense, the Asian Pentecostal theological vocation casts an increasingly wide beneficial net: from Asian Pentecostals to Asian Christians to Asians in general, and then extended beyond the Asian world.

5. Performing Pentecostal hospitality: The *whither* of Asian Pentecostal theology

So where do we go from here? I suggest that one way forward is the articulation of an Asian Pentecostal theology of hospitality.[36] The advantages of such a framework include the following. To begin, inasmuch as Pentecostal theology is never merely abstract or speculative but always already grounded in the church's experiences of the Spirit, so also is an Asian Pentecostal theology of hospitality both a descriptive task and a performative activity. A theology of hospitality cannot be merely *about* hospitality, but has to emerge from out of the practices of hospitality and the interactions between guests and hosts. It is precisely such a Pentecostal theology of hospitality which is capable of sustaining the work of Pentecostal theology both in Asia and in the Asian diaspora. With the advent of globalization, Asian Pentecostalism is now not only an Asian phenomenon, but a worldwide set of fluid and dynamic practices and relationships. An Asian Pentecostal theology of hospitality serves in this global context to orient, shape, and empower Pentecostal theological engagement across the plurality of geographic, political, social, class, ethnic, race, and religious boundaries which characterize not only the experiences of Asian Pentecostals worldwide but also the emerging face of the postmodern theological conversation.

More important, if dialogue, relationality, and mutuality are important virtues to be cultivated for doing theology in a postmodern, postcolonial, and post-Christendom world, then a theology of hospitality is precisely what is needed to provide a *biblical and theological* rationale for such a posture rather than allow it to be driven merely by political correct concerns.[37] By this, I mean that a theology of hospitality is first and

[36] The following sketch anticipates the more robust argument in Yong, The Welcoming Spirit: Pentecost & Christian Practices in a World of Many Faiths, the Annual Lectureship of Asia Pacific Theological Seminary, Baguio City, Philippines (forthcoming, January 2007).

[37] I have sketched the biblical elements of such a theology of hospitality in my

foremost theologically rooted. To be sure, there are social, political, and ideological pressures exerted on Christian theological practices today calling for dialogue rather than proclamation. My claim, however, is to understand the dialogical imperative as driven by theological and, more precisely, pneumatological considerations.[38] I suggest, following Pentecostal theologian Jean-Jacques Suurmond, that the outpouring of the Spirit on all flesh opens up and invites us to new dialogical opportunities previously not possible.[39] The gift of the Spirit enables both the miracle of hearing and understanding strange tongues, as well as the miracle of interpreting and communicating in other languages. In other words, the presence and activity of the Spirit enables the kind of encounter between strangers – mediated through table fellowship, guest-host interactions, and mutuality-reciprocity relations – that fosters listening, understanding, conversation, dialogue, proclamation, and, finally, conversion. These elements were, of course, central to the evangelistic activities of the early church as recorded in the book of Acts. A theology of hospitality grounds the Pentecostal witness present in hosting certain theological conversations on the one hand, and also empowers the Pentecostal listening that is required when being guests at other theological venues on the other.

Finally, I wish to speak candidly about why Asian Pentecostal theologians should take the lead in developing and articulating such a theology of hospitality appropriate to the tasks of Christian theology in the twenty-first century. Increasingly, Asia and its various constituencies are becoming major players on the world stage. The face of the church has now also been shifting from the west to the southern and eastern hemispheres of the globe.[40] What about the theological task itself? Are not Asian voices more essential than ever to the health and vitality of the theological conversation? If so, perhaps this is the time for Asian Pentecostal theologians to take their place at the discussion table, and this involves both hosting moments of the conversation as well as being guests at appropriate junctures. I think Asian Pentecostal theologians can now speak not only for and to Asian Pentecostals, but also for and to other

'The Spirit of Hospitality: Pentecostal Perspectives toward a Performative Theology of Interreligious Encounter', Missiology, forthcoming.

[38] See David Lochhead, The Dialogical Imperative: A Christian Reflection on Interfaith Encounter (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1988).

[39] Jean-Jacques Suurmond, Word and Spirit at Play: A Charismatic Theology (John Bowden, trans.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), pp. 198-203.

[40] E.g., Philip Jenkins, The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

Pentecostals and even the world church. In short, as Asian Pentecostal theology continues to mature, its contributions will be relevant beyond Asia and beyond Pentecostalism, indeed to the church ecumenical, and even to theological conversations at the boundaries where the church meets the many faces of the world.