

Influence of Pentecostal Spirituality to Asian Christianity

by Julie Ma

Introduction

Pentecostals have traditionally maintained their unique belief that empowerment of the Holy Spirit is for evangelism and mission. However, in recent decades, they have broadened the concept (as well as the scope of mission) to embrace social concerns.¹ Many Pentecostal missionaries now engage in a broad spectrum of social work, such as HIV/AIDS intervention and care, relief for the hungry and destitute, involvement in media, education, and others. The focus of such ‘progressive Pentecostals’ may have contributed, in part, to the rise of Pentecostal consciousness of and engagement in social issues. These trends are particularly noted among Pentecostals in the Global South.² Nevertheless, despite this encouraging development, they still maintain as a priority the proclamation of the Gospel, with the experience of signs and wonders to augment evangelistic efforts.

Historical records show that, in the global South, healing was a part of religious practices and expectations, both in Christianity and in other religions, even before arrival of the Pentecostal faith. The Pentecostals’ focused emphasis on manifestations of the supernatural power of God has rightly aligned with this general religious expectation. As a result, while Pentecostalism flourished among such a mindset, it has also influenced fellow Christians in expectation, theology, and mission practices. As it steadily expanded its mission theology and practice to include social issues, Pentecostalism has been considered an important missions player, for example, in the south and Southeast Asia region.

In this study, I will explore the Pentecostal impact on non-Pentecostal churches in this region through the demonstration of divine

¹Miller and Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007), 17 and Wonsuk Ma, “‘When the Poor Are Fired Up’: The Role of Pneumatology in Pentecostal Charismatic Mission,” *Transformation* 24 (Jan. 2007), 29.

²James Forbes, “Shall We Call This Dream Progressive Pentecostalism?” in *Spirit: A Journal of Issues Incident to Black Pentecostalism* 1 (1977), 103.

power, social ministry, and others. As the discussion progresses, I also want to probe as to whether there is an increasing openness to each other.

Expansion of Global Pentecostalism

Development of the present-day Pentecostal movement is an unprecedented experience. At the turn of the previous century, the movement began with a ‘fringe crowd’ congregating every day in a deteriorating storeroom in downtown Los Angeles, California, most of them having been marked as “religious fanatics, but who were urged to spread throughout the world and to impact other church institutions.”³ Although statistics vary,⁴ there is general agreement that the movement has grown to where it now claim about half a billion followers worldwide. Besides the numerical growth, it has embraced diverse systems and traditions, including Charismatics well incorporated into many present churches.⁵ It further describes,

The significance of Pentecostal expansion was evident as the world church celebrated the centenary of the Edinburgh Missionary Conference. In its original 1910 conference, Pentecostals were in their infancy. The disappearance of the Azusa Street Mission in 1909, perhaps the most visible expression of Pentecostal Christianity, after a three-year controversial existence, may have been a relief to some Christian leaders who felt embarrassed by this “tongue-babbling cultish group.”⁶ So, the Edinburgh conference did not need to worry about them. They were already struggling with issues surrounding the Catholic Church. However, Pentecostals did not ‘die out.’ In fact, the dramatic expansion of Christianity owes much to the exponential growth of Pentecostal churches and their variants. By the time the world church came to celebrate the centenary of the Edinburgh conference in June 2010, the radical shift of the landscape of global Christianity was crystal clear. A hundred years ago, about 82% of all Christians lived in the global North, or the ‘West,’ including

³Wonsuk Ma, “‘When the Poor are Fired Up’: The Role of Pneumatology in Pentecostal Charismatic Mission,” *Transformation* 24 (Jan. 2007), 30

⁴Todd M. Johnson and Kenneth R. Ross (eds.), *Atlas of Global Christianity 1910-2010* (Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), Henceforth *AGC*.

⁵*Ibid.*, 103.

⁶Cecil M Robeck, Jr, *The Azusa Street Mission and Revival: The Birth of the Global Pentecostal Movement* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2006), 134.

Oceania. But today, over 60% of Christians live in the global South, the three major southern continents.⁷

The anticipation is that expansion of Christianity in the South will continue well into the foreseeable future. Concurrently, Pentecostal worship and spirituality will also continue to grow.

What, then, is the future significance of global Christianity? To gauge that, let us look at the various continents. For Africa, the exponential growth witnessed in the last century is expected to continue. Indeed, the annual growth rate of Christianity in Africa the first two decades of this present century is a mind-boggling 2.89%,⁸ compared to 1.27% for global Christianity over the same period!⁹ For Latin America, Christian growth is more often the result of transfers among church traditions. For Asia, Christianity stands at almost 9% of that continent's vast population of 3.5 billion, which is more than half the world's population. And within Asia, Chinese Christianity is estimated to be close to 10% of that nation's population¹⁰ (although obtaining any reasonably accurate count is a formidable challenge). All told, the growth of Asian Christianity remains strong (rate of 1.89%), surpassing significantly that of world Christianity (rate of 1.20%).¹¹

So where is Pentecostalism situated to contribute to the continuing growth of Christianity? And equally importantly, what gifts would it bring to the shaping of Christian spirituality in Asia?

Influence of Pentecostalism in Asia

A century ago, most of Asia battled with diverse colonial forces. Although varying in the relationships between the colonizers and the colonized, loss of national identities and dignity was a common experience. Under harsh colonial rules, massacres, sex slaving for the colonial army, and attempts to eradicate national languages were commonly practiced against the people. As the birthplace of all the world's major religions plus the widespread powerful influence of

⁷Wonsuk Ma, "The Theological Motivations for Pentecostal Mission," in Younghoon Lee and Wonsuk Ma (eds.) *Pentecostal Mission and Global Christianity: An Edinburgh Centenary Series, Book 20* (Oxford, UK: Regnum Books International, 2018), 25.

⁸Zurlo, Gina A., Todd M. Johnson, and Peter F. Crossing, "Christianity 2019: What's Missing? A Call for Further Research," *International Bulletin of Mission Research* 43:1 (Jan. 2019), 97.

⁹Ibid., 95.

¹⁰Edward Tang, "Christianity in East Asia" in *Atlas of Global Christianity 1910-2010*, ed. Todd M Johnson and Kenneth R Ross (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 138-39.

¹¹Zurlo, Johnson, and Crossing, "Christianity 2019," 94.

various forms of animism, religion has played a vital role in meeting a variety of the people's needs. Even after the "advent of modern education and economic development along with political independence from the middle of the twentieth century, religious faiths, both native and foreign to Asia, persist in all the East and Southeast Asian countries."

It is within this social context that Pentecostal faith quickly spread among the socially marginalized. Pentecostal's lively worship, anticipation of God's immediate interference, theology of empowerment by the Spirit, and outward signs (e.g., speaking in tongues, healing) have stimulated the swiftest rising in Asia. Emphasis on an experiential dimension of religious life and the affecting aspect of human life has brought a powerful emotional and social release and introduced "religious experience."¹²

Pentecostal and Charismatic beliefs and practices meet a specific plea from the needy and desperate, whose voices are often not heard. The message of a God who can supernaturally intervene in daily concerns is indeed good news. "The promise of good health and blessing, in spite of controversies, re-establishes the materiality of Christian salvation both to individuals, and families, and communities." As a consequence, in numerous East and Southeast Asian countries, a steady "social mobility has been observed among Pentecostal and Charismatic believers."¹³

Transformative Impact of The Pentecostal Faith

South Korea's Yoido Full Gospel Church

The Yoido Full-Gospel Church in Seoul, South Korea, is the largest single congregation in the world, David Yonggi Cho being its founder and now senior pastor emeritus. Upon completing his theological education in 1958, Cho and his future mother-in-law, Jasil Choi, began their ministry among the urban poor in war-torn Seoul. Despite initial harassment for their message of miracles and deliverance out of life's struggle,¹⁴ "the five-member tent church began to grow rapidly to 600 members by 1961. Church growth accelerated after moving to Yoido, and a newly built church on 23 September 1973. Its membership reached

¹²Wonsuk Ma, "Asian (Classical) Pentecostal Theology in Context," in Allan Anderson and Edmond Tang (eds.) *Asian and Pentecostal: The Charismatic Face of Christianity in Asia*, (Oxford, UK: Regnum Book International, 2005), 64-65.

¹³*Ibid.*, 64.

¹⁴K. Min, *Church History of Korea* (Seoul, Korea: Christian Literature Society of Korea, 1982), 470.

100,000 in 1797; 200,000 in November 1980; 500,000 in 1985; 700,000 in 1992, and 755,000 in 2007.”¹⁵

Cho’s Pentecostal messages of hope and healing had reached far beyond his congregation to the devastated post-war population, including to non-believers. The appearance of those messages couldn’t have found a better audience than the whole of society, which was in despairing, deficient, and marginalized. They needed a word of consolation as well as the basic provisions for daily survival. In any society, when people face political and social crisis, they want to hear a voice of peace and comfort; and when they experience injustice, they seek fairness and equal rights to be brought into the situation. Also, such an unstable social situation causes people to pay attention to a message of hope. Not only was Cho’s preaching fiery, it also held the claims of God’s miraculous healing. Thus, his Pentecostal messages began to transform the hearts and attitude of Seoul’s slum inhabitants. His perspective of salvation was and still is inclusive spiritually, emotionally, and physically.¹⁶ His ministry has powerfully demonstrated the role of the Gospel as a significant means of radical social change.

Another factor of Cho’s influence was his stress on prayer, frequently with fasting.¹⁷ Besides the usual prayer meetings (including daily dawn ones), he instituted weekly Friday all-night meetings and soon established a large ‘prayer mountain’ on the outskirts of Seoul. Cho believed that, through prayer, God’s people and churches in Korea would experience his closeness, overcome desperation, and bring hope to all who approach him.

Still another influencing factor is Yoida Church’s cell-group system, which effectively utilized “large numbers of women lay leaders.”¹⁸ This was a drastic and counter-cultural choice in a male dominant and privileged society. The system has brought liberation and empowerment to women as ministerial leaders. “Cell units conceived as sub-churches grew rapidly practicing worship, prayer, and fellowship.”¹⁹ The cell units are particularly useful for evangelism, as people find it easy to participate in a home group. In this mega-church, the cell-unit structure minimizes lostness of the individual in a sea of people. The home environment and

¹⁵Church Growth International, *Church Growth Manual 7* (Seoul, Korea: Church Growth International, 1995), 145.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Young-hoon Lee, *The Holy Spirit Movement in Korea: Its Historical and Theological Development* (Oxford, UK: Regnum International, 2009), 96. See also Young-gi Hong, “The Backgrounds and Characteristics of the Charismatic Mega-Churches in Korea,” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 3:1 (Jan. 2000), 99.

¹⁸Young-hoon Lee, *The Holy Spirit Movement in Korea: Its Historical and Theological Development* (Oxford, UK: Regnum International, 2009), 96.

¹⁹Ibid.

small size of each unit prove conducive to providing pastoral care. Success of the cell-group system has encouraged almost all the Korean churches, regardless of their denominational affiliation, to implement the system by preparing lay women leaders through training.

The Impact of Prayer Mountain

As previously mentioned, prayer has always been one of Yoida Church's the most influencing elements. Cho's partner in the pastoral ministry, Jashil Choi,²⁰ enormously influenced the congregation through prayer and by what she spent hours each day in the 1970s praying for—establishment of a prayer mountain. Although recognizing the formidable financial challenge, Choi never abandoned her vision; in fact, over time it grew stronger. Every night, she would go to where that prayer mountain would some day be (at that time, a cemetery north of Seoul) and pray that the ministry of a prayer mountain would be used to bring people into personal encounters with God and to begin a prayer movement.²¹

In response to her determination, the Osan-ri Pray Mountain (now called the Jashil Choi International Fasting Prayer Mountain) was established in 1973; and people from all walks of life and denominational churches began flocking to it. Known for its emphasis on fasting and for stories of healings and miracles, Prayer Mountain attract Christians first from neighboring countries, such as Japan and Taiwan, and then international visitors, all of whom wanted to learn an innovative “spiritual dimension through prayer with fasting.”²² As the years go by, testimonies of God's miraculous work (especially in healing) have multiplied, attracting more people to experience God's reality. Even non-believers have experienced healing and the transformation of life:²³

Fasting displays how earnest the people of God are, especially in time of need. Arthur Wallis notes that fasting makes prayer ascend up as on eagle's wings. It is meant to usher the supplicant into the spectators' room of the Lord and to extend to him the golden scenery. It may be anticipated to drive back the oppressing powers of darkness and loosen their grip on the prayer objective. . . .²⁴

²⁰Jashil Choi passed away in 1989 during a mission trip to America.

²¹Jashil Choi, *I Was Mrs. Hallelujah*, (Seoul, Korea: Seoul Books, 1978), 432.

²²*Ibid.*

²³*Ibid.*, 433.

²⁴Arthur Wallis, *God's Chosen Fast* (Fort Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade, 1968), 50.

Jashil Choi's vision for Prayer Mountain has set a new model for Korean Pentecostal spirituality by heightening the long religious traditions of Korea—prayer and fasting. With its popularity, Prayer Mountain has been the setting for many ecumenical encounters, drawing people from a wide variety of church traditions but ever united by pressing human needs and expectation of God's transformative work. Further, Choi's Prayer Mountain has motivated a rise of similar prayer mountains or houses in Korea and elsewhere. Through continuous preaching of the immediate work of the Holy Spirit, it has consistently propagated pneumatology on a grassroots and experiential level. "Ultimately . . . it was the Holy Spirit who accomplished the vision, as, during the early period of the prayer mountain, Choi fasted as frequently as three days a week."²⁵

The Revivals in Malaysia

From 1935 through 1940, famous Chinese evangelist John Sung toured throughout the countries in southeast Asian conducting huge Charismatic healing and evangelistic meetings. Considering that, in Muslim-majority Malaysia (and later Singapore), most Christians were either Chinese or Indian, Sung's influence was acutely felt within the Chinese communities. Beginning about the same time as Sung but lasting into the 1960s, Hong Kong actress Kong Duen Yee (popularly known as Mui Yee) played an important part through her Pentecostal revival meetings. Also, in 1936 and 1937, American Pentecostal missionaries conducted large tent evangelistic meetings in Kuala Lumpur. All these unrelated but concentrated efforts by Pentecostal preachers resulted in the experience of Spirit baptism especially among young people, many of whom would make lifetime commitments for full-time ministry.

Starting in 1960, the Bible Institute of Malaysia became influential in development of the Pentecostal movement, with many BIM graduates from 1960 to 1980 becoming evangelists and church planters.²⁶ As a result, the movement, often marked by healing manifestations, even touched many non-Pentecostal churches. In 1973 in East Malaysia, the Barrio Revival began among Christian youth in Borneo and quickly spread throughout the entire island via these Spirit-filled young people functioning as zealous evangelists. This revival movement eventually impacted the whole nation, including West Malaysia. Today, Sidang Inji

²⁵Julie Ma and Wonsuk Ma, *Mission in the Spirit: Toward a Pentecostal/Charismatic Missiology* (Oxford, UK: Regnum Book International, 2010), 254-255.

²⁶Khai, "The Assemblies of God and Pentecostalism in Myanmar," 269.

Borneo Church, the largest denomination in Malaysia, continues to exhibit its Charismatic faith with a strong mission commitment.²⁷

The Pentecostal Holistic Mission in India

Pandita Ramabai (1858-1922) was known as an Indian Christian “reformer, Bible translator and social activist, particularly involved in the revival movement in her mission.”²⁸ Her Mukti Mission and the revival played key roles in the rise of Pentecostalism in India. Because of her high profile in civic engagement, her influence spread far and wide. Also, a revival movement among children and women at her mission was reported both by “the emerging Pentecostal press in India, and especially in Britain and North America.”²⁹

After earning academic degrees in England and the United States, she returned to India in 1889 and soon established a ministry for widows near Bombay (now Mumbai), which a year later moved to Pune. In 1895, she began a mission on a farm she purchased in nearby Kedgaon. By this time, she changed her ministry from “religiously neutral” to an explicitly “evangelical Christian organization”³⁰—a move that resulted in her Hindu parents no longer supporting her work. She called this mission “Mukti,” which means ‘salvation,’ its main goal being to provide housing for underprivileged girls and young women. Many of them were suffering from childhood marriages and widowhood, while others were rescued from hunger. “There were 48 young women and girls in 1896; but throughout that year, 300 girls were liberated from starvation in Madhya Pradesh. By 1900, nearly 2,000 people were cared for.”³¹

Ramabai’s social work, which was based on a deep spiritual foundation, challenged other churches to likewise advocate for the underprivileged and engage in social ministry. By 1905, her Pentecostal community’s holistic ministry efforts became known internationally,

²⁷Tan Jin Huat, *Planting an Indigenous Church: The Case of the Borneo Evangelical Mission* (Oxford, UK: Regnum Books International, 2011), 235-236.

²⁸Allan Anderson, *Spreading Fires: The Missionary Nature of Early Pentecostalism* (London, UK: SCM, 2007), 77.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Jessie H. Mair, “Bungalows in Heaven: The Story of Pandita Ramabai” (Kedgaon, India: Pandita Ramabai Mukti Mission, 2003), 87-88.

even before the revival took place.³² Ramabai's solid mission vision progressed to the point where by 1907,³³

. . . the Mission had expanded to include a rescue mission, a hospital, and oil-press, a blacksmith forge, a printing press, a complete school that provided college entrance training, a school for the blind, and training departments in teaching, nursing, weaving, tailoring, bread and butter making, tinning, laundering, masonry, carpentry and farming.³⁴

Jesus Is Lord Church in the Philippines

Jesus Is Lord Church grew out of a small Bible study group at the Polytechnic University of the Philippines in Manila in 1978, which was led by Eddie Villanueva, a professor of economics and finance. Following his radical conversion experience from Communism, Villanueva seized every opportunity to share the Gospel with students. Each year, his group grew exponentially to where, within a decade, Jesus Is Lord Church claimed five million members, with satellite fellowships all over the Philippines and beyond. Becoming the largest Charismatic church in the nation, with its primary focus on a holistic mission,³⁵ the growth of the JILC and the expansion of its influence were staggering. Joseph Suico explains,

Soon the church expanded to an international multi-ministry network, establishing churches in various cities of Asia, Australia, Europe, Africa, the Middle East, Canada, America,

³²Rajas K. Dongre and Josephine F. Patterson, "Pandita Ramabai: A Life of Faith and Prayer" (Chennai, India: Christian Literature Society, 1963), 13-18.

³³See Anderson, *Spreading Fires*, 77; and S.M. Adhav, "Pandita Ramabai" (Chennai, India: Christian Literature Society, 1979), 114-15. "Ramabai became nationalistic because of the repression of "British rulers" and their arrogance towards Indian social structures . . . She was a dedicated ecumenist before the word was coined in the twentieth century, deploring the divisions within Christianity and pleading for a united Indian church." See also R.E. Hedlund, *Quest for Identity: India's Churches of Indigenous Origins—the 'Little Tradition' in Indian Christianity* (Chennai and Delhi, India: Mylapore Institute for Indigenous Studies and Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2000), 160: "Gauri interprets Ramabai's conversion as a quest for intellectual and spiritual freedom . . . Ramabai set about 'refashioning Christianity to her own requirements,' says Gauri. If so, it is not surprising that in Ramabai one finds an incipient Indian Christian nationalism expressed in a critique of missionary paternalism and rejection of colonial control."

³⁴Mukti Prayer-Bell (Kedgaon, India: Pandita Ramabai Mukti Mission, 1907), 21-22.

³⁵Joseph Suico, "Pentecostalism in the Philippines," in Allan Anderson and Edmond Tang (eds.) *Asian and Pentecostal: The Charismatic Face of Christianity in Asia* (Oxford, UK: Regnum Book International, 2005), 353.

etc. The church maintains 106 Sunday worship sites in Metro Manila, 25 in Bulacan Province, and 275 in the rest of the country. Also, there are 72 international sites in 27 countries, totaling 478 worship sites with two million worshippers altogether. The church also runs a television station (ZOE TV-II) that broadcasts church services. Once [sic] the Jesus Is Lord was the only Pentecostal-Charismatic group in the nation that operated a school system from nursery, kindergarten, whole primary and high school to university.³⁶

Jesus Is Lord Church is especially well known for its attention to social issues. As observed above, it utilizes its educational network to prepare future leaders and its broadcasting systems to spread the message of hope, peace, and love. Among its outreaches to local communities, Jesus Is Lord is providing low-cost education to urban and rural families and opening Bible studies in many civic and governmental organizations. Its engagement with social sectors through holistic ministries has challenged both Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal churches to likewise help address social issues as part of their mission agendas.

The Healing Revival in Myanmar

In Myanmar, healing crusades were favorably used during the early stages of the Pentecostal movement and brought marvelous results. In such meetings, many would come from a variety of denominational churches in the given locality and be exposed to the Pentecostal belief in Spirit baptism and healing. For example, the evangelistic meetings of Harvey McAlister in the 1950s and Mabel Willetts in 1961 were characterized by extraordinary manifestations of God's power, the result being that many were baptized in the Holy Spirit, and the experience of healings was common. These meetings often started with the Spirit descending upon the gathering and would spread into a "veritable deluge."³⁷ Their preaching marked the beginning of the widespread of Pentecostal beliefs and experiences.

In the early 1970s, Hau Lian Kham, a Baptist-turned Pentecostal among the Chin tribe, and Myo Chit, a long-time leader of the Burmese Pentecostal movement, made a noticeable "contribution in the renewal and revival movement" across both Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal Churches:

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Glenn Stafford, 'Convention Time in Burma,' *Pentecostal Evangel* (July 23, 1961), 11.

Kham Hau Lian's evangelistic ministry during 1987-89 was profound, with unique experiences of crying and laughing and being slain in the Spirit. At another evangelistic meeting in Suangzang during May 1988, the village priest, who was sick to the point of death, experienced God's healing touch and instantaneously converted during these evangelistic meetings. Yet, at another evangelistic meeting in Tedim town during July and August 1988, around five to seven thousand attended the service. Again, the move of the Spirit was so strong that many people came to the Lord, received healing, were 'slain in the Spirit', and were speaking in tongues. These evangelistic meetings were celebrated with singing and dancing 'in the Spirit'. Many children became Christians during these meetings, and more than thirty of them went out for evangelism to nearby villages.³⁸

By year 2000, the Assemblies of God of Myanmar had a membership of 84,158, not only growing in number and influence but also in mission consciousness, which, in turn, fueled further growth.³⁹

Influence of Pentecostal Spirituality and Social Engagement on Asian Churches

The immediacy of Pentecostal spirituality, often through manifestations of God's supernatural power, has long been the hallmark of the Pentecostal belief. In revival meetings, whether taking place in a local church or in a park, healing through proclamation and prayer has been a regular feature. In Asia, because most religions include belief in healing, Christians show more openness to this Pentecostal message. It was the western construct of theology, introduced by western missionaries, that tended to hinder the appropriation of such practices in a church's worship and life. In Asia, however, inter-church evangelistic meetings create an environment where messages of healing are openly preached and warmly received; and prayer mountains serve a similar purpose as participants from diverse ecclesial traditions come together with a common and intense expectation of God's intervention.

³⁸Chin Khua Khai, "The Assemblies of God and Pentecostalism in Myanmar," in Allan Anderson and Edmond Tang (eds.) *Asian and Pentecostal: The Charismatic Face of Christianity in Asia*, 269.

³⁹Julie Ma & Allan Anderson, "Pentecostal (Renewalists) 1910-2010," *Atlas of Global Christianity*, edited by Todd M Johnson and Kenneth R Ross. (Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 100-101.

Equally significant is the community-forming aspect of the Pentecostal faith. The Christianity that was introduced in Korea was a western and individualistic form of faith. Thus, the conservative and evangelical tendency among Korean Christians accentuated the individual dimension of faith. Such ran against the socio-cultural fabrics of Korean society, where communal interests precede personal concerns. It was Cho's Yoido Full Gospel Church's home cell-group system and its Prayer Mountain that have brought back the communal dimension of Christian faith. Both have provided common space where people facing similar challenges, regardless of their church traditions, are coming together to share with and pray for one another.

Also, Pentecostal worship features several important elements that foster community-building. One is unison prayer, in which all worshippers are invited to raise their voices in a 'prayer concert,' and many pray in tongues as the Spirit motivates. Although popularized by Yoido Church, this was routinely practiced at the turn of the last century by True Jesus Church in China. Unison prayer, often in tongues, enhances the identity and community-forming process:

Once they pray [together in ritual], they hear their own voice as well as that of others. They thus confirm the copresence of all the participants which includes God, themselves and their fellow members. Amplification of the prayer sound indicates that the church community is strong in faith and well-orchestrated in action.⁴⁰

As discussed previously, Cho's messages of hope for people in devastating situations were well received, as were his awakening words to both Pentecostal and other denominational churches. Also, his cell-group system influenced others to adopt it in their own churches. Additionally, Prayer Mountain astonishingly impacted many non-Pentecostals to come there to pray and fast with Cho's people for healing and other prayer needs. Communal and unison prayer has become common in many churches in Korea and elsewhere.

The other feature of Pentecostal worship that has enhanced the community-forming process is the sharing of testimonies, which takes various means and avenues. For example, in mountain churches in the northern Philippines, members spend considerable time sharing with each other their spiritual experiences. One's experience is soon

⁴⁰Yen-zen Tsai, "Glossolalia and Church Identity: The Role of Sound in the Making of a Chinese Pentecostal-Charismatic Church," in Fengang Yang, Joy K.C. Tong, and Allan H. Anderson (eds.) *Global Chinese Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity* (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 2017), 151-52.

‘communally owned’ through an interpretive and discernment process. At Yoido Full Gospel Church, its highly successful monthly magazine regularly publishes testimonies of God’s intervention, healing, and miracles. Pentecostal ethos and spirituality have positively facilitated the process of community formation.

Expectation of God’s intervention and Cho’s message of hopes have had a transformative effect at both the individual and communal level. As Pentecostal preaching seeks immediate relevancy, real-life struggles are often the basis of sermons. Yoido Church’s weekly overnight prayer meetings at Prayer Mountain were instituted so that all could bring their pressing needs to the Lord in concerted prayer. Such meetings attracted Christians from other churches to experience God’s immediate answer. Soon, all-night prayer was adopted by almost all the churches in Korea. The cell group meetings also regularly collect members’ immediate prayer needs and take time to pray for each of them. Through this process, Pentecostal believers form a more positive attitude towards life, even if they generally come from the lower social strata.

Pentecostalism has also returned the consciousness of the spirit world to Christianity. Most forms of Christian faith introduced to Asia by western missionaries had removed the elements of the spirit world and its impact on our lives. Although to a lesser degree, Asian Evangelical churches seldom spoke about evil spirits, demons, and the like. It was Pentecostalism which re-introduced the reality of the spirit world, along with the person and work of the Holy Spirit. While most religions in Asia and Africa do acknowledge the existence and activity of the spirits (both benevolent and malevolent), traditional forms of Christianity found itself helpless when cases of demon possession were presented to the churches. It is the Pentecostals who actively engaged the spirit world through power encounters. As part of healing prayer, often demons are rebuked for causing physical and emotional disturbances. This has challenged Asian Christianity to rethink the reality of spirit beings and recover it into Christian theology and life.

In many places, Pentecostals have introduced a two-pronged approach—spiritual engagement, such as power encounter, and holistic ministry, as seen in Jesus Is Lord Church in the Philippines and Ramabai’s social intervention in India. The research undertaken by Miller and Yamamori convincingly demonstrates Pentecostal commitment to human suffering.⁴¹ The influence of such a balanced approach has thus encouraged non-Pentecostal churches in Asia to take issues of life seriously.

⁴¹Donald E. Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement*.

Concluding Remarks

I have discussed Pentecostals' empirical experiences of God's power and their unique ministries in diverse occasions in numerous Asian countries. Further, I have shown their influence on non-Pentecostal churches concerning supernatural healing, the cell-group system, prayer mountains, holistic ministry, etc. Also, as mentioned briefly, in the early stages of our movement, the traditional denominational church was hesitant to recognize and accept Pentecostals as a decent Christian group. However, in current times, more and more denominational fellowships are open to and even embrace the Pentecostal Church. Because there seems to be a mutual understanding of different beliefs and practices, this has brought them closer as partners in God's ministry.

My study has explored the locus of modern Pentecostalism and the Asian Church in the context of today's global Christianity. Then, through several examples, this study has identified the key characteristics of Pentecostal faith and spirituality in Asia. Pentecostal's belief in God's immediate intervention and their experience of his power inform their attitude, life, and ministry in diverse social contexts of Asia. The same orientation has given birth to several unique expressions of Christian life, such as the cell-group system, prayer mountains, holistic ministry, and so on.

When the Pentecostal faith was first introduced to Asia, mainstream churches refused to consider and accept Pentecostal churches as a decent Christian group. But as they grew in number and stature, the influence of their faith and life began to increase upon the non-Pentecostal churches, first in worship and prayer and then in the work of the Holy Spirit. More denominational churches are now open and even embrace Pentecostal faith and ethos. This also demonstrates the maturity and confidence of the Pentecostal Church in its identity and relationship with other ecclesial bodies. Consequently, there seems to be a growing mutual understanding among different belief traditions. As Asian societies face more challenges, partnership in ministry among the churches will be needed more than ever. For this reason, such an increase in inter-church relationship is encouraging. Pentecostals, as well as Christianity as a whole in Asia, have come a long way. I anticipate there will be more opportunities to dialogue as well as work together as one body in Christ.

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