

Threads of Pentecostal Thought in Asia

Threads of Pentecostal Thought in Asia is the best way that I can describe the contents of this edition. To begin with, these threads contribute to the smaller tapestries of Pentecostalism in the nations represented here: India, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Thailand, which, in turn, contribute to the larger tapestry of Pentecostalism in Asia represented in Wonsuk Ma's opening article. While these threads in themselves are small, they make their contribution to the growing number of threads of Asian Pentecostal thought that have been slowly multiplying over the last 25-30 years. The result of the threads in this edition represents Pentecostalism, normally written from a classical Pentecostal perspective, as deeply connected to the rich Asian cultures in which it is planted, reflecting a gradual transformation of the gospel that, in many cases, was transplanted into Asia by Western missionaries over the last two hundred years, is now being transplanted deeper into Asian soil while maintaining, at least most of the time, the integrity of the gospel message.

Wonsuk Ma, a world class scholar on Global Christianity who began his long career here at Asia Pacific Theological Seminary (APTS), leads off this edition with a lecture presented during the 31st Annual William W. Menzies Lectureship held on our campus from January 30-February 3, 2023.

Here, Ma draws heavily on the work of Todd Johnson and Gina Zurlo and uses the three classical divisions of Pentecostalism as three families: classical Pentecostals, Charismatics, and neo-Charismatics or Independent Pentecostals, with the last group being the largest and most difficult to identify. He uses this framework to map the realities of the broader Pentecostal movement in Asia today and describe the role of the classical Pentecostal churches and academia now and in the future. Personally, as a missionary to Asia for the last thirty years and as a member of the faculty of one of the dominant Pentecostal seminaries in this part of the world, I am keen to glean all that I can from this work in order to do my part well both as a member of the faculty and as editor of this Journal.

The world is on the move and Pentecostalism is part of it. Esa Autero's article deals with migration in India, drawing on the rich background on this subject in the New Testament, including the baby Jesus and his parents hurried flight to Egypt because of Herod's jealousy, likely making him the most famous migrant in history.

Migration can be voluntary through immigration or involuntary in the case of refugees or internally displaced persons (IDPS), which are both happening in India today. Like the story of Herod and Jesus, some migration in India involves political oppression, especially of the poor, which also fits the story of Christ. In India, where oppression can be both political and religious, many Pentecostals can be found among the oppressed.

My own article, which follows Autero's, was originally published in the *Asia Journal of Theology* and is reprinted here with permission. I join a small number of scholars of Pentecostalism in the Philippines in tracing the connection between Pentecostalism and the Filipinos' traditional religious worldviews, now filtered through folk Catholicism, in an effort to explain that part of the reason for the stunning growth the broader PC movement in that land, estimated at 34 percent of the entire population in 2020, comes from a shared well of supernatural power.¹ While we can be thankful to God that Pentecostalism addresses the Filipinos' deep need for connection with supernatural power, thereby experiencing God's immanence, I also point out some rising concerns about the developing folk Pentecostalism and call for further research and reflection on the matter.

The next article, "Cultural Contextualization in Javanese Christian Missions," is written by Febriani, a local worker who is quite familiar with the context. In this paper, she looks at how the gospel may be understood within the Javanese folk Muslim culture with the view that "by working with cultural leaders and respecting local traditions, missionaries can overcome potential resistance and misunderstanding, fostering connections and acceptance," without watering down the gospel or in any way removing the offense of the cross. To accomplish this, she calls for utilizing "Javanese traditions, languages, and arts" to make the Christian faith more understandable, including using these in Christian worship, being careful that the intent of these things is not confused with Islam or the local traditional religion.

¹Todd Johnson and Gina Zurlo, *World Christian Encyclopedia*, 3rd ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), 640.

Amy Baldwin, a missionary to Thailand with Assemblies of God World Missions (USA) follows with an excellent article on biblically responding to Buddhist funerary rites. Her primary purpose is to outline the issues involved and discuss in which aspects Thai Christians might be involved and in which parts in which they should not, all with the intent of giving Thai believers the opportunities to grieve for the dead with their families and friends. This, then, allows them to express the love of Christ to the deceased without compromising the gospel. While native Thai speakers and veteran missionaries with a high proficiency level in the Thai language will find that some resources from the Thai Thinkers Group probes these issues more deeply and that Baldwin does not include them, her work will be a great help to missionaries just beginning their journey in Thailand and perhaps some Thai pastors who have not been to Bible school or perhaps have no access to the other resources.

Continuing in Thailand, we are pleased to offer an article in the Thai language by Wolfgang Sue, an Australian Assemblies of God missionary among the unreached Isan people of northeastern Thailand, that takes on the always challenging issue of ancestor worship among folk Buddhists. This is seminal research about the Isan in which he outlines the people's fear of evil spirits and angry ancestors. Here, Sue searches for a better way of contextualization than the earlier missionaries practice of separating the Isan believers from their people. The original version of this article, published in English, was included in the August, 2022, edition of the *AJPS*. Here, we offer the article in Thai as part of our ongoing quest to serve the Asian churches. We would appreciate all who have connections to Thai pastors, who usually do not speak English, to download this and share it with their Thai friends without any restrictions as to its distribution, helping us fulfill our dream of serving as many Asians as possible.

Let me conclude with a word of appreciation to you, our readers. For the last few years we have been pursuing what might called a blue water strategy of distributing the Journal by doing some things that may be unprecedented among academic journals. We have posted all fifty-five editions (including this one) of the *AJPS* on Academia.edu, ReferencGate.com, and AMRIconnect.net, as well as our own website, www.aptpress.org, along with parts of our Journal on other sites, as part of our goal of making the Journal as widely available as possible at no cost to our readers. The result has been astounding. Along with thousands of hits a year on our own website, we have had, as of this time, 36,324 hits on Academia.edu from readers in at least eighty-one countries and

another 19,730 hits on ReferenceGate.com. I am beyond amazed at what God has done and there are no words to express my profound gratitude to God and you for the way the *AJPS* continues to be received throughout Asia and other parts of the world. To God alone be all the glory.

Respectfully,
Dave Johnson, D.Miss.
Managing Editor