

Foreword by
ALLAN H. ANDERSON

A THEOLOGY
of
Hope
CONTEXTUAL
PERSPECTIVES in
KOREAN
PENTECOSTALISM

Sang Yun Lee

Book 4 of the APTS Press Monograph Series

Praise For

A Korean Theology of Hope: A Conversation with David Yonggi Cho
and Jürgen Moltmann in the Context of Korean Pentecostalism

Sang Yun Lee provides with this monograph the definitive *theological* apologetic for the "blessing theology" of contemporary Korean Pentecostalism, both by contextualizing its main tenets within the historical, political, and economic history of the Korean peninsula of the mid-to late-20th century and by engaging with the main themes of the predominant theologian of hope—Jürgen Moltmann—of the present time. Along the way, what emerges also is a set of important constructive proposals to ensure that the Korean blessing—and hope— theology will be pertinent not only for the 21st century East Asian context but also for any theological vision aspiring for global relevance in the third millennium.

Amos Yong, Professor of Theology & Mission, Fuller Theological Seminary

Sang Yun Lee's sustained account of the Threefold Blessing taught by Pastor David Yonggi Cho, Korean Pentecostalism's iconic leader, offers a unique insight into the man, the movement, and especially the context which gave birth to the phenomenon.

This is a compelling case study of how social and cultural forces shape religious movements, and the challenges facing them when the context changes. Cho's teaching on prosperity illustrates that a doctrine is never a generic one-view-fits-all but must be evaluated within its context.

David A. Reed, Professor Emeritus, Wycliffe College

Sang Yun Lee sets forth an authoritative theological account of the Threefold Blessing in Korean Pentecostalism. Developed by Pastor

David Yonggi Cho, its iconic leader, this volume offers a unique insight into the man, the movement, and the context which gave it birth. This is a compelling case study of the social and cultural forces which shape religious movements and the challenges facing them when the context changes. Cho's Threefold Blessing—especially the theme of prosperity—illustrates that a doctrine is never a generic one-view-fits-all but must constantly be interpreted and evaluated within its own history and context.

Wonsuk Ma, Distinguished Professor of Global Christianity, Oral Roberts University

Lee introduces and reinterprets a theology of hope for the Korean context in vivid conversation with Jürgen Moltmann, David Yonggi Cho, Pentecostalism, and the proclamation of the Threefold Blessing. Engaging the reader in the historical, soteriological, pneumatological, eco-theological, and socio-theological perspectives of a revitalized Korean theology, this book calls for a broad renewal of the role of the church as a catalyst for social transformation that changes the way we see salvation, prosperity, and healing.

Wolfgang Vondey, University of Birmingham, author of *Pentecostal Theology: Living the Full Gospel*

This book by Sang Yun Lee deserves serious and widespread attention as a significant achievement in theology and modern church history, especially as it relates to Korean Pentecostalism. On one level, this is a provocative theology of hope that takes up the challenge of Rev. Yonggi Cho's message of salvation, healing, and prosperity. On another level, this is a breathtakingly thorough treatment of the Korean context for doing theology. Anyone interested in either Pentecostal or Korean theology cannot afford to ignore this important work. I learned much from it.

Frank D. Macchia, Professor of Christian Theology, Vanguard University of Southern California, Associate Director, Centre for Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies, Bangor University, Wales (UK)

Publisher's Preface

We are pleased to offer this fourth volume in our APTS Press Monograph Series. This is the publication of the author's doctoral dissertation done under the mentorship of Dr. Allan H. Anderson at the University of Birmingham in the United Kingdom. The purpose of this series is to give our readers broader access to good scholarship that would otherwise be unavailable outside of the academic community. This is part of our ongoing commitment to discipleship through publishing.

The other three titles in this series, *Theology in Context: A Case Study in the Philippines*, by Dave Johnson, *Leave a Legacy: Increasing Missionary Longevity*, by Russ Turney and *Understanding the Iglesia ni Cristo*, by Anne Harper, are all available at www.aptspress.org. If you have any questions, you can reach us through our website. We would be happy to hear from you.

We hope you enjoy this book.

THE PUBLISHER

Contents

<i>Preface</i>	<i>ix</i>
<i>Foreword by Allan H. Anderson</i>	<i>xi</i>
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>xv</i>
<i>Tables</i>	<i>xvii</i>
<i>Abbreviations</i>	<i>xix</i>
<i>Glossary</i>	<i>xxi</i>
PART 1	1
INTRODUCING THE THREEFOLD BLESSING IN THE KOREAN CONTEXT	
Chapter 1 The Historical Korean Context	3
Chapter 2 Previous Studies of Korean Pentecostalism and the Threefold Blessing	7
PART 2	13
THE HISTORY OF KOREAN PENTECOSTALISM	
Chapter 3 The Arrival of Christianity as the <i>Silhak</i> Legacy in the Chosŏn Dynasty	15
Chapter 4 Christianity Becomes Rooted in Korea	21
Chapter 5 The Influence of Early Protestant Missionaries and Bible Translations	25
Chapter 6 Korean Revivals and the Birth of Korean Pentecostalism	33
Chapter 7 Korean Pentecostal Revivals and the Development of Korean Pentecostalism	43
Chapter 8 Early Pentecostals and the Quickening of Pentecostal Hope	53
Chapter 9 The Establishment of Korean Pentecostalism	59

PART 3	69
THE CONTEXTUALIZATION OF PENTECOSTALISM IN KOREA	
Chapter 10 <i>Hananim</i> , the Name of God for Korean Christians	71
Chapter 11 <i>Minjung</i> and <i>Han</i> : The People of God in Suffering	79
Chapter 12 The Influence of Korean Shamanism on the Contextualized Hope of the Threefold Blessing	95
Chapter 13 Korean Pentecostalism and the State	103
 PART 4	 109
THE THREEFOLD BLESSING AND HOPE IN THE KOREAN CONTEXT	
Chapter 14 Yonggi Cho and the Threefold Blessing	111
Chapter 15 The Threefold Blessing in the Korean Context	123
Chapter 16 The Hope of the Threefold Blessing	135
Chapter 17 The Threefold Blessing and Moltmann's Theology of Hope	141
Chapter 18 Theologies of Hope and the Kingdom of God	149
 PART 5	 155
THE SPIRITUAL BLESSING OF THREEFOLD BLESSING	
Chapter 19 Spirit Baptism and Infilling in the Threefold Blessing	157
Chapter 20 Prosperity and Hope in the Threefold Blessing	173
Chapter 21 Healing and Hope in the Threefold Blessing	177
Chapter 22 Kerygma in the Threefold Blessing	181
 PART 6	 187
THE THREEFOLD BLESSING IN PRESENT AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES	
Chapter 23 Changing Contexts: Current Korean Pentecostalism	189

Chapter 24	Renewing the Threefold Blessing in the Current Context	197
Chapter 25	Recontextualization of the Threefold Blessing	203
Chapter 26	Observations and Recommendations for Contextualizing the Threefold Blessing Into the Current Korean Context	219
Bibliography		223
Appendix A. Interview with Dr. Jürgen Moltmann		247
Appendix B. Interview with Dr. Young Hoon Lee		253
Appendix C. Interview with Dr. Amos Yong		261
Appendix D. Interview with Dr. Vinson Synan		267

Preface

This book examines the Threefold Blessing: salvation, financial prosperity, and healing as a contextual hope in the Korean Pentecostal context. Ironically, hope always begins in hopeless situations. It will not function as hope unless it is renewed in a context related to a current lack and deficiency.

The Threefold Blessing was the most urgent and eager hope for desperate Koreans in the post-Korean War context because it contradicted socio-economic and political situations. It successfully contextualized into the Korean context, became deeply lodged into Korean Pentecostals' lives, and influenced the growth of strong Korean Pentecostal churches.

As Korea's contexts change, the Threefold Blessing must be reinterpreted and theologically recontextualized. The original Threefold Blessing emphasized the spiritual, physical, and prosperous life of individuals. The new Threefold Blessing must expand its theological perspectives to include social and ecological matters. This book examines the Threefold Blessing as a Pentecostal hope in the Korean context and suggests ways for its recontextualization for present and future Korean Pentecostals

Foreword

It was my privilege to supervise Sang Yun Lee's PhD research at the University of Birmingham a few years ago. The strength of this study is that it comes from an insider of the now famous Yoido Full Gospel Church in Seoul, South Korea, where the author serves on the ministerial staff and knows the teaching of the church inside out. David Yonggi Cho (1936-) led this congregation for fifty years (1958-2008). South Korea has gone through several crises and transformations during this time. Sang Yun Lee takes the context of this large congregation seriously. He advocates a "theology of hope," essentially different from the Moltmann version on which the idea is developed. Lee shows how Cho's message, particularly in its promise of a "saved" healthy, happy and prosperous life (the "Threefold Blessing"), was the antidote to the events that had ravaged the Korean peninsula in the 1950s. Of course, Korea has had a terribly fraught history during the twentieth century, after centuries of being the "hermit kingdom" standing between the great powers vying for influence: China, Russia, and Japan. The first half of the twentieth century saw the Russo-Japanese War, after which Korea was annexed by Japan and was oppressed until Japan's defeat by the United States in 1945. Then came the Korean War in 1950, also aggravated by the ideological conflict between the superpowers the Soviet Union and the United States. Although it ended three years later with a divided Korea that exists to this day, this was only a truce and the two Koreas are still technically at war. At least three million died in the conflict, which left many Korean people destitute and in deep despair, known to the Korean people as *han*. It was into this context that a young Yonggi Cho began preaching hope to his people.

This was the beginning of the most remarkable growth of a congregation ever recorded in recent Christian history. Cho and his

future mother-in-law, Jashil Choi (1915-89), in the aftermath of the devastating war began a small tent church in a slum area of Seoul in 1958 with five members. By 1962 this congregation had grown to eight hundred and by 1964 had a sanctuary seating two thousand people, the second venue for this congregation. In 1969 the church bought property in Yoido before it became prime real estate, and he dedicated a new 10,000 seat auditorium there in 1973. This Full Gospel Central Church (as then known) was now receiving international attention. By 1982 the Korean Full Gospel (Assemblies of God) churches were the third largest Protestant group with over half a million members, half of whom were in Cho's church, which became Yoido Full Gospel Church (YFGC) in 1984. Cho became chairman of the World Pentecostal Assemblies of God in 1992, and the church planted churches all over Korea and internationally. By 1993 the YFGC reported 700,000 members under 700 pastors and was the largest Christian congregation in the world. By the year 2000 the Assemblies of God, with over a million affiliates, was by far the largest Pentecostal denomination in Korea. When they joined the Korean National Council of Churches in 1999, it was the first time any national Assemblies of God church had entered an ecumenical council of churches.

The context of Korea has affected the appeal of the message of Yonggi Cho. Although his writings are devotional and inspirational rather than theological, those writings that deal with Cho's own context illustrate how his implicit theology may be regarded as "contextual" and a theology of hope. This is what this book is all about. It is true that Cho's publications are mainly about his understanding of the Bible and his own experiences as a pastor, but he also refers to the context in which these experiences and understandings were developed. His books abound with biblical illustrations and teaching, but he develops his theology in a particular context of suffering and pain. For Pentecostals in different parts of the world, the "freedom in the Spirit" allows them to formulate, often unconsciously, a theology that brings hope to people in different life situations, and Cho's theology is a leading example of this. Pentecostalism has taken on a distinctive form in Korea, quite different from that found in the West. Observers who have tried to emphasise the "American" nature of Pentecostalism throughout the world or the "Americanization" of Christianity in Korea and elsewhere often miss this

important fact. Creative innovations and the selective transformation of foreign symbols are constantly occurring and, naturally, a synthesising process takes place as a new form of Christianity like Pentecostalism interacts with older Korean religions like shamanism and Buddhism. For example, the well-known prayer mountain movement in Korea is a culturally relevant form of Christian practice that reflects the ancient spirituality of the Korean people. Similarly, Korean people suffering from their accumulated grief or *han* seek healing and “blessings” from traditional shamans to alleviate their deep pain, such as in the years following the Korean War or more recently, during the International Monetary Fund crisis in the late 1990s. The fact that a prominent part of Cho’s message is to proclaim that God brings “blessings” and healings is a contextual message for Korean people that is readily accepted. This is a theology of hope for people who need it. Those who censure Korean Pentecostals for their alleged “shamanism” often fail to see that the parallels with ancient religions in these practices are also continuous with the biblical record. Furthermore, these Pentecostals define their practices by reference to the Bible rather than to shamanism, but see their activities as creative adaptations to the local context. So we are dealing with both a continuous and a discontinuous relationship with the past.

At the same time, Asian Pentecostal scholars might also need a greater appreciation for both the diversity and richness of their cultural and religious past. Demonizing this past does not explain the present attraction of Pentecostalism for peoples deeply influenced by their ancient religions and cultures. But one conclusion that is incontrovertible is that Korean Pentecostals have found both culturally and biblically acceptable alternatives to, and adaptations from, the practices of their ancient religions and are seeking to provide answers to the needs of their own context. I live in the western world and my understanding of religious phenomena outside my context will always be partial. There are unanswered questions about Cho’s theology that are better debated by Koreans themselves. But Pentecostal theology in countries like Korea should not be a reflection of a theology born in the totally different context of the western world, even though cultural radiation from the USA has influenced South Korea for over a generation. A theology of hope made in Germany, the USA or any other place, whether Pentecostal or otherwise, is a form of cultural colonialism. I believe that Asian

Pentecostals must develop a theology that speaks with a different perspective of the voice of the poor, a theology of hope for a suffering people, a genuinely contextual theology. The good news, Cho declares, is that God meets all the needs of believers, including their spiritual salvation, physical healing, and other blessings for material needs. East Asia, like Africa and Latin America, also has the phenomenon of mass urbanization, and the Pentecostal churches have provided places of spiritual security and personal communities for people unsettled by rapid social change. As Korean churches becomes more relevant to their cultural and social context, they become more able to serve the wider society.

I do not plan to repeat what the author has outlined so well in this book. Sang Yun Lee also brings out the very important need for the changes to the message of hope to include changing social and environmental concerns. He speaks of flexibility and change, how a theology of hope must keep up with contemporary needs and contexts. It is always offering hope in the midst of contrary indications and circumstances that suggest there is no hope. I commend this study to you warmly. Read on

Allan H. Anderson
University of Birmingham, England

Acknowledgments

"The Lord God has given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him who is weary. He awakens me morning by morning, He awakens my ear to hear as the learned."
Isaiah 50:4 (NKJV)

I read this prayer every early morning and at night while I wrote this book, which is based on my PhD studies. Thanks and glory to God who heard my prayers and strengthened me. This study would not have been achieved without the consistent support and guidance of my supervisor, Professor Allan Anderson. My special thanks goes to him. I am grateful to all teaching faculty members of the Theology department at the University of Birmingham, especially to Dr. Andrew Davies, who helped me during the first year of my study. I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Wonsuk Ma, Dr. Julie Ma, and Dr. Sangin Han for their continuous encouragement and words of wisdom during my stay in England. I appreciate all the research participants including Sean Huh, who voluntarily offered their time to be in this study. Thanks to Dr. Moltmann, Dr. Synan, Dr. Yong, and Dr. Young Hoon Lee for their interviews. I am also indebted to the following people and churches for their financial assistance. Because of them, I was able to continue my study: The Yoido Full Gospel Church, Dongbu Full Gospel Church, Rev. Soonyeol Seo, Rev. Wookeun Kang, Rev. Jaeman Park, Deacon Kwangho Choo, and Deacon Youngsam Park.

Lastly, I cannot thank enough my wonderful wife Sarah Nayung for her patience through many journeys and adventures with me, even in the midst of her own studies. My love also goes to my sweet children: Teresa, Chara, and Christopher. Their sacrifices will not be forgotten.

Tables

Table 1	62
<i>The Statistics of Pentecostal Churches and Membership in Korea during 1934-1941</i>	
Table 2	88
<i>The Rate of Korean Churches' Growth (1969-1982)</i>	
Table 3	90
<i>The Participants of '80 WEC-Here's Life</i>	
Table 4	107
<i>Growth of GNP Per Capita and Pentecostalism</i>	
Table 5	118
<i>Comparison Between the Four/Fivefold Gospel by Classical Pentecostals, the Four-Fold Gospel by A.B. Simpson and the Five-Fold Gospel by Cho</i>	

Abbreviations

AG Assemblies of God

APTS Asia Pacific Theological Seminary

AJPS *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies*

KAG Korean Assemblies of God

CTCCA Commission on Theological Concerns of
the Christian Conference of Asia

IMF International Monetary Fund

ITI International Theological Institute

JPT *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*

PCCNA Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches of
North America

PFNA Pentecostal Fellowship of North America

YTI Yeongsan Theological Institute

YFGC Yoido Full Gospel Church

Glossary

Abouji: Father

Amateras: The Japanese heavenly goddess

Cheong-Bi-Sa-Sang: The idea of honorable poverty

Che-Sa: The Confucian ancestral worship

Chonju: The lord of heaven

Chosŏn WhangJo Silrok: The Annals of The *Chosŏn*
Dynasty

Chukbok: Blessing.

Gidowon: Prayer Mountain

Gut: Shamanic ritual

Haet Byet Jeong Chaek: The Sunshine Policy

Hak-Gyo: School

Hangŭl: Korean Language

Han: Accumulated feeling of unresolved resentment

Hanmoon: Chinese composition

Hananim: One Supreme Being

Haneunim: Heavenly One and Supreme

Han-puri: The resolution of *Han*

Jang Lo: Presbyterian

Jaju: Self-support

Je-Joong-Won: House of Universal Helpfulness

Jesu: Jesus

- Jesu Sŏngkyo Lukabokum Jyunsŏ*: The Book of Luke of Jesus Christ
- Joeushin Hananim*: Good God
- Joong-In*: The middle-lower class
- Kookga Jochan Gidohei*: The National Prayer Breakfast
- Kwang-Hye-Won*: Widespread Relief House
- Mi Gam li*: American Methodist
- Minjung*: A group of ordinary people
- Oh-jung-bok-eum*: The Fivefold Gospel Pentecostal:
Korean Pentecostal unless otherwise specified
- Sam-jung-chuk-bok*: The Threefold Blessing
- Silhak*: Practical Thought
- Tao*: The great ultimate in Confucianism
The Chosŏn Dynasty: the last dynasty of Korea before Japanese occupation (1392-1897 A.D.)
- The *Daehan Jeguk*: The Korean Empire (October 1897 - August 1910 A.D.)
- Tianzhu shiyi*: The True Teaching of the Lord of Heaven
- Yangban*: The upper class Koreans

Part ONE

INTRODUCING THE THREEFOLD BLESSING IN THE KOREAN CONTEXT

The Korean context has birthed and shaped a unique form of Pentecostalism that stands in agreement with and in contrast to other global Pentecostal movements. Korean culture, politics, religion, and economic factors continue to influence the current Korean Pentecostal movement. In particular, the Threefold Blessing of Yonggi Cho—a Pentecostal promise of salvation, healing, and prosperity (blessing) which emerged in the middle of the twentieth century—needs to be re-examined, recontextualized, and reapplied to be relevant to Korean Pentecostals in their contemporary context.

CHAPTER 1

THE HISTORICAL KOREAN CONTEXT

By the time Christianity arrived, Korea had isolated itself from the Western world. Confucianism provided the foundation of the cultural, socio-political, and religious lives of Koreans. It was the most crucial persecutor of and became the most significant contributor to the beginning of Korean Christianity.

Confucians practice ancestor worship. Koreans combined that Confucian filial piety with Korean shamanic beliefs: fortune and misfortune were dependent on how they served their ancestors. Ancestor worship was not considered optional. Many believers were persecuted and martyred by the government due to their rejection of ancestor worship.

Nevertheless, Confucianism contributed significantly to the advent of Korean Christianity. Korean neo-Confucian (*Silhak*) scholars introduced Christianity to the country in the eighteenth century before the arrival of Western missionaries. These scholars also translated the Bible into the Korean language. Some *Silhak* scholars wanted to transform the nation through “practical studies and thought”¹ and, consequently, became interested in Western civilization as well as Christianity. With the government’s implementation of a closed-door policy, their hopes of reform could not become a reality.

Through the Treaty of Kanghwa in February 1879, (also known as the Korea-Japan Treaty of Amity, an unequal treaty imposed by force), Korea opened her ports to trade with other countries. After the treaty was signed, Korea became subject to Japan and the whole nation plunged into chaos.

With the fall of the Chosŏn Dynasty and Japanese rule, the influences of Buddhism and Confucianism declined. During the Kabo-

¹*Silhak* is a compound word: *Sil* means “practical” or “actual” and *hak* can be translated as “learning” or “studies” in English. From the late seventeenth and early nineteenth centuries, *Silhak* developed with the metaphysical nature of neo-Confucianism and became a social reform movement with practical approach to statecraft in Korea. It denied following Confucian teachings without criticism. See “Practical Learning School, Korean *Silhak*,” in *Britannica Encyclopaedia of World Religions*, (London: Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc., 2006).

Ulmi Reform movement (1894-1895), Confucian society carried out one of the biggest changes in its five-hundred-year history in Korea. In December 1895, a reform cabinet led by Hong Jip Kim promulgated new laws to modernize the country. These included the “Short Hair Act,” the use of the solar calendar instead of the lunar calendar, the abolition of slavery, the prohibition of child marriage, and the permission of widow remarriage.²

According to Confucian teaching, 身體髮膚受之父母不敢毀傷孝之始也 [*Shinchebalboo Soojiboomo Bulgamheisang Hyojisiya* - the body is from the parents, so causing no damage to it is the beginning of filial piety], Koreans traditionally did not cut their hair their entire lives, adopting the topknot. Because of the “Short Hair Act,” they had to cut off the topknot, which symbolized Confucian society as well as male authority in Korea’s patriarchal society. This new decree caused many small-scale revolts by Confucian scholars³ because the topknot had been a sign of their integrity for hundreds of years.⁴

The use of the solar calendar was also a significant social transition and a symptom of the decline of Confucianism. Farming, ancestor worship, marriage systems, and the registration of birthdays and anniversaries had been based on the lunar calendar.

In 1905, Korea became a protectorate of Japan and five years later, its sovereignty was turned over to Japan. In 1910, it became a Japanese colony by force.⁵ By the early 1930s, the Japanese enforced the practice of Shinto worship in Korea.

For thirty-five years (1910-1945), Koreans suffered socio-political repression and religious persecution. Their properties and family members were taken by the Japanese government for the wars that Japan carried out in Asia and the Pacific. Most Koreans were deeply frustrated by these tragic and shameful events. In their desperation, they found little

²Keith Pratt and Richard Rutt, *Korea: A Historical and Cultural Dictionary* (Richmond Surrey: Curzon Press, 1999), 194-95.

³James Hoare and Susan Pares, *Korea: An Introduction* (London and New York: Kegan Paul International Ltd., 1991), 47.

⁴Pratt and Rutt, *Korea: A Historical and Cultural Dictionary*, 479.

⁵Hoare and Pares, *Korea: An Introduction*, 50-53.

consolation or hope for the future in their socio-political or indigenous religious systems.

Korea was liberated from Japan in 1945. Five years later, the Korean War broke out and devastated the country. During the three-year war (1950-1953), innumerable people were killed or went missing. Millions of families were divided and their properties destroyed.⁶ Most Koreans suffered severe poverty and disease in the aftermath of the war. To survive, many were reduced to eating the bark of trees.

In this post-Korean War context, Yonggi Cho introduced the theology of the Threefold Blessing during the early days of the Yoido Full Gospel Church (YFGC, around 1958-1959). The eschatological hope of the Kingdom metamorphosed into an emphasis on the Kingdom of God in the “here and now.” For Koreans affected by the war, the Threefold Blessing summarized the hope they placed in God: salvation for their souls, prosperity to overcome absolute poverty, and divine healing for their diseases.

Scholars inside and outside of the global Pentecostal and Charismatic movements have studied the Threefold Blessing in terms of the Korean shamanistic influences on Korean Pentecostalism or as one of the factors behind the explosive church growth of Korean Pentecostalism, but not as the Pentecostal hope in Korean contexts.

⁶*A History of the Korean People* (Seoul: Hollym International Corp., 1988), 377-378. The Korean War was the biggest national tragedy. During the war, most of the industrial facilities and foundations were destroyed. Although many people survived the war, they were still victims. Their houses were destroyed, and most of them lost family members.