

DAVID YONGGI CHO'S THEOLOGY OF  
THE FULLNESS OF THE SPIRIT:  
A PENTECOSTAL PERSPECTIVE<sup>1</sup>

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1. Introduction

I have watched with fascination the remarkable development of the Korean churches in the last thirty years. The Korean War devastated the country. The industrial, transportation, and communications infrastructure was virtually destroyed. Homes and businesses were shattered. Families were torn apart; many died. Few countries suffered in the twentieth century as did Korea. Virtually all had suffered severely. After the war, there was a great spiritual vacuum in the aftermath of this colossal tragedy. Disillusionment and hopelessness prevailed. I remember my first visits to Korea in the early 1970s, less than twenty years after the Truce. Few public buildings were heated in the bitter cold winter; the cities were dingy and dusty. The marks of poverty were everywhere. It was a time of gloom and sorrow for the nation.

And, yet, I shall never forget my first night in Korea. I was hosted by kind missionaries on the campus of the Bible school in Seoul. It was very cold; my room was unheated. Well before daylight, I heard the sounds of feet crunching in the snow, just outside my window. Faithful Korean Christians were gathering in the school chapel for an early-morning prayer meeting—a practice which I learned was common by that time throughout Korea among earnest Christians. The commitment and dedication of Korean believers is one of the great stories of the modern church.

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<sup>1</sup> An earlier version of this study was presented in the Second Youngsan International Theological Symposium, May 2003, Hansei University, Goonpo, Korea.

What remarkable changes have occurred in the last generation! Korea has emerged from the ashes as one of the powerful economies of the modern world. The industrial and economic developments have been staggering. Shining cities with efficient transportation and communication are in remarkable contrast to the situation that prevailed just a few short years before. And, even more phenomenal than the physical re-birth of the nation has been the remarkable growth and influence of the Christian church. From a very small minority in the society at the end of the Korean War, Korean Christianity has reached virtually every segment of the population, growing at such a rate that it now comprises, I understand, more than one-quarter of the entire population.

One individual, perhaps more than any other, has been at the center of this noteworthy revival—Yonggi Cho. Cho's personal experience of the Spirit, which he attributes as the source of the empowering, led him to bring together the world's largest church, Yoido Full Gospel Church (YFGC). In addition to his own pastoral leadership, Cho has been a major influence in the shaping of the teaching and life of many of the churches of Korea, certainly within the Pentecostal tradition, but also throughout much of Evangelical Christianity in the country.<sup>2</sup> Several of the mega-churches in the Assemblies of God in Korea are pastored by those mentored by Cho. As the Chairman of the World Assemblies of God Fellowship, Cho has clearly been recognized by Pentecostal colleagues around the world as a major leader having great influence and significance. Therefore, to obtain better insight into the values that mark the Pentecostal churches of Korea, one must include the teachings of Yonggi Cho.

There are some terms that Cho employs and emphasizes that he champions which are not always clearly understood within Pentecostal churches. It is my contention that it is important to see Cho's theology within the context of Korean social history to avoid misunderstanding his teaching. And, as one reads his sermons and other writings, one must bear in mind that all of God's truth cannot be articulated readily in a single setting. Because of the unique history of Korea, and the special circumstances surrounding the beginnings of Cho's ministry, it appears that God raised up Cho at a strategic time in Korean history to highlight several key themes that the people desperately needed to hear—themes

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<sup>2</sup> Changsoo Kang, "An Analytical Study On the Life of Woon-Mong Na, Indigenous Korean Pentecostal" (Th.M. thesis, Asia Pacific Theological Seminary, 2003), p. 34.

of hope, of deliverance, of power, of high expectations. Such themes are certainly not all that God has revealed, but it does seem that God chose to use him to herald a positive message for very discouraged people who needed to hear about the possibilities, the hope that flows from the gospel of Jesus Christ. He must be seen as a man called by God for a special time with a special message. It is with this sense of the importance of context that we now address the teaching of Yonggi Cho on the Holy Spirit.

## 2. Baptism in the Holy Spirit and Fullness of the Spirit

Let's begin with Cho's own testimony:

I prayed for an experience with the Holy Spirit whom I had studied and learned about. I asked the Holy Spirit to come and fill me with His power, His ministry and His message for a sick and hurting world....So daily I prayed for the filling of the Holy Spirit.... And then it happened. One evening while I was asking the Lord for the filling of the Holy Spirit, I felt His presence draw near. It was a wonderful experience. I was worshipping and praising Jesus aloud, telling Him audibly again and again how wonderful it was to know Him and how much I loved Him.... As I worshipped, I felt a warm glow touch my face, then my tongue, then my body, and without realizing it I began to speak new words that came to my mind and my tongue at the same time.... My heart was overflowing with praise and worship to Jesus in a new language.... That was my initial experience when I was baptized with the Holy Spirit.<sup>3</sup>

Several things emerge from this brief personal testimony in Cho's own words. First, he recognized that the experience of baptism in the Spirit is separable from new birth. He was already a committed Christian believer. As a student in the Bible school in Seoul, he earnestly desired to serve the Lord effectively. He had been taught to expect a subsequent experience, an "infilling" of the Holy Spirit. Cho acknowledges with appreciation the teaching he received at the Assemblies of God Bible college he attended in Seoul, a school that was the forerunner of today's Hansei University.<sup>4</sup> He was mentored by sympathetic American

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<sup>3</sup> *The Holy Spirit, My Senior Partner* (Altamonte Springs, FL: Creation House, 1989), pp. 8, 9.

<sup>4</sup> Kang, "An Analytical Study," p. 2.

Assemblies of God missionaries in his early years. Consequently, it should not be surprising that his theology of the Holy Spirit resonates closely with standard Assemblies of God doctrine.

Second, this subsequent experience he recognized, indeed, as a “filling” with the Holy Spirit. We will return to this terminology shortly, since it is central to the later teaching of Cho.

Third, it is crucial to recognize that this experience of the Spirit, baptism in the Spirit, was understood by Cho to be an empowerment for service. This distinguishes Pentecostal teaching from historical Wesleyan or Holiness teaching. The Wesleyan understanding emphasized the role of the Holy Spirit in the sanctifying of believers. The latter quarter of the nineteenth century was punctuated with a strong emphasis throughout Evangelical Christianity of the term, “baptism in the Holy Spirit.” Before the birth of the modern Pentecostal movement, Fundamentalists and Holiness exponents freely used this term. The Fundamentalists employed the term to describe an experience of the Spirit subsequent to new birth, understood to be an endowment of power for witness and service, howbeit without tongues.<sup>5</sup> Holiness advocates following the Wesleyan tradition, however, used this popular term in a different manner. By the end of the nineteenth century, many Holiness teachers employed the term “baptism in the Spirit” to speak of an experience commonly called sanctification.<sup>6</sup> Cho understood this experience clearly to be an empowering for service, clearly identifying with classical Pentecostal teaching—which followed the Fundamentalist teaching on the empowerment of the Spirit for service—rather than the Holiness teaching.

Fourth, Cho recognized that this particular episode was his personal Pentecost, the event in which he was baptized in the Spirit, because it was accompanied by speaking in other tongues. We will return to the matter of tongues-as-evidence later.

At this point, let us compare Cho’s understanding of baptism in the Spirit with commonly-accepted teaching among classical Pentecostals. In the recently-issued *New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, Professor J. Rodman Williams, widely-respected Charismatic Presbyterian leader, outlines several aspects of Pentecostal/Charismatic understanding of baptism in the Spirit by which the reader can readily compare Cho’s teaching with that of standard

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<sup>5</sup> A. J. Gordon, *The Ministry of the Holy Spirit* (Philadelphia, PA: Judson Press, 1894; reprinted in 1949), p. 69.

<sup>6</sup> Robert P. and William W. Menzies, *Spirit and Power: Foundations of Pentecostal Experience* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), pp. 18, 19.

Pentecostals world-wide. First, the term “baptism” is listed as essentially the same as the term “filling,” disclosing not only *totality*, but also *abundance*.<sup>7</sup> The term “filling” became the favored term among Korean Pentecostals, including Cho. It should be noted that it is virtually synonymous with “baptism.”

J. Rodman Williams makes it clear that Pentecostals distinguish the experience of baptism in the Spirit from salvation: “It is a pentecostal distinctive, therefore, to affirm that salvation precedes baptism in the Spirit or, to put it a bit differently, that one may truly believe in Christ and not yet have received the gift of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>8</sup> This is precisely what Cho taught.

Williams readily acknowledges that the purpose of baptism in the Spirit is primarily “power for witness,” not a sign of superior holiness.<sup>9</sup> This is clearly the teaching of Cho. It is true that some classical Pentecostals follow a “three-stage” soteriology, identifying the initiation into the Christian life as salvation, followed by a crisis experience of sanctification, sometimes called a “second blessing,” and finally followed by an experience of being filled with the Spirit. This is the common understanding of that group of Pentecostals who are direct descendants of the Holiness tradition, those who are commonly referred to as “Holiness Pentecostals.” Most Pentecostals, however, are classified as “Keswickian” Pentecostals, who understand baptism in the Spirit to be an empowering for service, not a badge of holiness. For them, sanctification begins at new birth and continues throughout one’s life in a progressive fashion, even after the event of baptism in the Spirit. The Assemblies of God identifies with the Keswickian understanding. Cho’s teaching is in perfect harmony with Assemblies of God teaching on this point.

Pentecostals generally acknowledge speaking in other tongues to be the normative initial sign of Spirit baptism. Williams states, “Whether evidence or sign, the point made is that the distinctive event of Spirit baptism is primarily exhibited through speaking in tongues.”<sup>10</sup> The American Assemblies of God employs the term “initial physical

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<sup>7</sup> J. R. Williams, “Baptism in the Holy Spirit,” in *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, eds. Stanley M. Burgess and others (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), pp. 355, 356.

<sup>8</sup> Williams, “Baptism in the Holy Spirit,” p. 357.

<sup>9</sup> Williams, “Baptism in the Holy Spirit,” pp. 358-60.

<sup>10</sup> Williams, “Baptism in the Holy Spirit,” p. 358.

evidence” to indicate that the standard biblical sign to be expected as the accompaniment to Spirit baptism is speaking in other tongues.<sup>11</sup> This understanding is articulated in a standard textbook used widely throughout the Assemblies of God, as well.<sup>12</sup> It should be noted that although most Pentecostals adhere to this teaching, not all do. Also, most Charismatics do not emphasize the necessity of speaking in tongues as evidence of Spirit baptism, although many expect that tongues will normally follow.

Although Cho does not seem to emphasize in his writings what Pentecostals call the “initial physical evidence,” it does appear that this is his own testimony and that this is, in fact, what he personally believes. He does state that tongue speaking is “an external, objective sign of the fullness of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>13</sup>

Cho seems to prefer the term “fullness of the Spirit” over the term “baptism in the Spirit.” There may be an implied nuance of some significance here. The term “baptism” points to a specific event, the initial experience of being filled with the Spirit. However, the term “fullness” points beyond that initial moment to the pattern of life that follows. It seems to speak of the “Spirit-filled life.” Chang-soo Kang points out that Cho in later years has chosen to use the term “fullness of the Spirit,” a term he feels points more clearly to the pattern of life that follows the initial reception of the Spirit than does the term “baptism in the Spirit.”<sup>14</sup> Kang sees this term as the preference among Korean Pentecostals.<sup>15</sup>

In virtually all respects, then, Cho’s teaching regarding baptism in the Spirit appears to resonate readily with classical Pentecostal theology, such as is found in the Assemblies of God. His favoring of the term “fullness of the Spirit” does not seem to contradict classical Pentecostal teaching whatsoever.

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<sup>11</sup> “Minutes of the 49<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Council of the Assemblies of God, Convened in Kansas City, Missouri, August 7-10, 2001, with Revised Constitution and Bylaws,” p. 92.

<sup>12</sup> William W. Menzies and Stanley M. Horton, *Bible Doctrines, A Pentecostal Perspective* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1993), pp. 135-38.

<sup>13</sup> *The Holy Spirit*, p. 114.

<sup>14</sup> Kang, “An Analytical Study,” p. 2.

<sup>15</sup> Kang, “An Analytical Study,” p. 2.

### 3. Prayer and Faith

Cho's strong belief in the empowering of the individual for witness and service is anchored strongly in his understanding of the importance of prayer. He writes, "Before the missionary era of the church began, the Holy Spirit revealed to the leaders gathered in Antioch that they should send Barnabas and Saul. Yet, the Holy Spirit only spoke after they had been in fasting and prayer."<sup>16</sup> A strong commitment to prayer has marked Cho's ministry from the beginnings in Daejo-dong, an impoverished district just outside Seoul in 1958. He pitched a tent and lived there through the cold Korean winter, "spending my nights in prayer."<sup>17</sup> Soon, others began to join him in prayer, until more than fifty were interceding for God's mighty intervention in their community. Cho learned the value of intercession early in his ministry and has sought to carry this emphasis through in a variety of ways. In this respect, Cho exemplifies what is common practice throughout the churches of Korea—a strong emphasis on prayer, both private and corporate. Only through faithful prayer can one expect the Holy Spirit to operate effectively. This, Cho believes, is the key to revival.

It may be difficult to trace with precision the source of current practices in Korean churches, but common to nearly all is the remarkable schedule of prayer meetings that mark the calendars of the churches, certainly including the Yoido Full Gospel Church. In fact, Cho's church is likely the fountain of influence for much of the prayer meeting schedule in many of the churches. The daily regimen begins with a 5:00 a.m. prayer meeting in the church, to which many laymen and lay women faithfully come. The pastoral staff is expected to be present. On Friday evenings, it is a common practice for the Pentecostal churches (and others, I am told), to feature an "all night" prayer meeting. These begin about 9 or 10 p.m., and run until 2 a.m., or thereabouts. As a visitor to one of these Friday night prayer sessions in one of the daughter churches founded by Cho, I was impressed with the number of men who attended. The pattern seemed to follow a cycle of a time for preaching, a time for congregational singing, and an equal segment devoted to concert, vocal, intense prayer. The meeting was characterized by solemnity and total earnestness. Surely these are the habitations of God the Holy Spirit! Visitors to Korea, looking in upon the disciplined pattern of prayer life, come away with a strong sense that this is the secret of the great growth

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<sup>16</sup> *Prayer: Key to Revival* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1984), p. 10.

<sup>17</sup> *Prayer: Key to Revival*, p. 14.

of the Korean churches. And, certainly this is what Cho has taught for many years!

Cho has provided a personal glimpse into his own prayer life. He describes the way he prays, how he prays, and how this impacts the course of his day. It is through this connection with God that the flow of the Holy Spirit rests upon his life.<sup>18</sup> He reports, "How do we get to know the Holy Spirit? We only become aware of His nature as we enter into a life of prayer."<sup>19</sup> He spends time fellowshiping with the Holy Spirit, being renewed spiritually, mentally and physically. "Out of the one hour that I spend in prayer every morning, much of that time is spent in fellowship with the Holy Spirit."<sup>20</sup> Cho says, "The measure of our faith is in direct proportion to our communion with the Holy Spirit."<sup>21</sup>

There is an intimate connection between prayer and faith. In his book, *The Leap of Faith*, Cho illustrates how God works. In 1969, God told him to build a church that would seat 10,000 people. In the providence of God, space for one church had been allotted on Yoido Island, at the edge of Seoul (now it is not too far from the center of the metropolis). From the beginning of construction, many things seemed to go wrong, including the devaluation of the currency and skyrocketing inflation. Many people lost their jobs and the church income suffered. About this time, Cho had felt led to initiate his prayer mountain. Deeply discouraged, Cho joined the group at the prayer mountain. The people of his church had been interceding for Cho. He sensed, all at once, a change in the atmosphere. One poor woman offered all she had—a rice bowl and a pair of chopsticks. Cho, weeping, said he did not want to take these items from the woman, since she had so little. She insisted. One man in the rear of the room heard the conversation. He spoke up and said, "I will buy the bowl and the chopsticks for \$1,000." Others joined in the spirit of sacrificial giving. Cho and his wife sold their home and put the proceeds into the building fund. Miraculously, the church was saved from disaster and the new building was completed. Prayer was the key that produced faith, and faith prevailed!<sup>22</sup>

It is appropriate to acknowledge the legacy of the great revival in Pyongyang in 1906. The Presbyterians had established the practice of

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<sup>18</sup> *Prayer: Key to Revival*, pp. 15-17.

<sup>19</sup> *Prayer: Key to Revival*, p. 43.

<sup>20</sup> *Prayer: Key to Revival*, p. 45.

<sup>21</sup> *The Holy Spirit*, p. 18.

<sup>22</sup> *The Leap of Faith* (South Plainfield, NJ: Bridge Publishing, 1984), pp. 56-59.



gathering each morning for prayer. Revival broke out. Christians confessed their sins. "As a result, Koreans were converted in all parts of the country as the spirit of prayer prevailed."<sup>23</sup> Cho would readily acknowledge that the pattern of prayer which has characterized the Korean churches really began in the great revival of 1906. He has been a faithful steward of that legacy.

#### 4. The Five-fold Message of the Gospel

In a popular document prepared in honor of thirty years of Cho's ministry, titled *Ordeal and Glory through the Thirty-Year History of Yoido Full Gospel Church*,<sup>24</sup> an outline is provided that captures the special emphases in Cho's preaching and teaching. What Cho calls the "five-fold message" is a listing of the "four cardinal doctrines" of the Assemblies of God, plus a fifth one he has added: "blessing." The four cardinal doctrines, borrowed from American Evangelical Christianity, are: salvation, the baptism in the Holy Spirit (what Cho calls the "fullness of the Spirit"), divine healing and the second coming of Christ.

3 John 2, a scripture passage that is central to understanding Cho's ministry, is emblazoned on the wall in the reception area of the great Yoido Full Gospel Church. This verse is the Apostle John's expression of desire that those to whom he wrote would "prosper and be in health." It is critically important to keep in mind, as one evaluates the teaching of Cho, the situation into which he came. The Korean nation had suffered terribly. The Christians had suffered. Many were very discouraged and had lost all hope. It was into the dark night of post-war Korea that God raised up Yonggi Cho to elevate the horizons of his people. His message was the announcement of hope, of the victory there is in Christ, of the available empowering of the Holy Spirit. He saw the practical blessings of salvation embracing not only the spiritual dimension of mankind, but also the physical and the material dimensions, as well. It was this emphasis that caused Cho to be criticized, not only by non-Pentecostal Evangelicals, but by many Pentecostals, as well.

In the United States, excesses in the "salvation-healing" crusades of some evangelists led to a reaction to those who proclaimed what was called the "prosperity gospel." And, certainly a case can be made for the

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<sup>23</sup> *Prayer: Key to Revival*, pp. 13, 14.

<sup>24</sup> YFGC, *Ordeal and Glory through the 30-Year History of Yoido Full Gospel Church* (Seoul: YFGC, 1988).

need for a balanced presentation of truth so that God's desire for the prosperity of believers is not construed to mean that faith will guarantee paradise here and now with no suffering to be encountered by those with sufficient faith. However, an equally strong case can be made for the need to raise the horizons of deeply-discouraged people to dare to believe for God's divine intervention into dark circumstances. It is in this context that Cho's teaching on "the five-fold message of the gospel" must be understood.

The influence of Oral Roberts is clearly evident in the teaching of Cho. One theme of Roberts with which Cho resonates is "God is a good God." In an animistic Buddhist culture, in which works-righteousness is mixed with fear of the supernatural, Cho preached that God is a God of love, a God of grace, and that he intends for good to happen to those who will trust him. Jesus came to bring life and that more abundantly!<sup>25</sup>

Based on 3 John 2, Cho sees three dimensions of God's intended blessing for his people. The first is "as your soul prospers." His primary focus is on the salvation of the individual, new birth. However, Cho moves beyond entrance into the family of God to the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

The fullness of the Spirit includes: 1) speaking in other tongues under the control of the Spirit as a sign that we have received the fullness of the Spirit; 2) an overflowing blessing which touches the lives of others as we live for Him.<sup>26</sup>

Cho moves beyond the initial reception of the Spirit, emphasizing that believers should seek to be filled daily. Instructive in this teaching is that the purpose of the fullness of the Spirit is to bless others. Spirit-filled believers are empowered to bring deliverance to others, to enrich and to bless.

Cho refused to limit the blessing of God to the spiritual realm. He boldly challenged Korean believers to expect God to bless their lives materially. He stated,

The prosperity God wants to see in our lives applies to the whole picture of living: child-rearing, our jobs, businesses, human relationships, the necessities of life, the stability of life, joy and so on. Consequently, if we are made whole in our spirits, souls and bodies, the

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<sup>25</sup> *Salvation, Health and Prosperity* (Altamonte Springs, FL: Creation House, 1984), pp. 11-18.

<sup>26</sup> *Salvation, Health and Prosperity*, p. 49.

natural outcome is that we should prosper in every area of our lives. Jesus shed His precious blood and made out a deed—a certificate of title—calling for our prosperity in all things. The remaining work for us now is to exercise the rights and privileges that have already been given to us in order to obtain those provisions.<sup>27</sup>

Again, we must bear in mind that this message was delivered to people who needed to hear that God, indeed, loved them and wanted his children to raise their vision to greater expectations. Critics could charge that this was a one-sided message, since no qualifications seem to be stated to allow for the difficulties and disappointments that come into every life. However, at the time this was delivered, Cho wanted to bring a strong message of hope to Christians who had been systematically taught to bear suffering and to expect suffering in this world.

In the last generation, an extreme form of positive thinking abounded in the West, commonly labeled the “positive confession” movement. Advocates of this teaching promulgated the overly-simplistic belief that merely articulating a desire would put God into the position of having to supply whatever wish the individual expressed. It was taught, for example, that if one wanted a fine, large automobile, he or she should cut out a picture of the object and put it in a conspicuous place where the person could remind God of the need for him to fulfill the desire by granting this wish. This promoted a view of God as little more than a “cosmic bellhop.” It promoted materialism and self-centered living. Against such extreme teaching, it was felt necessary in the American Assemblies of God to produce a position paper on this matter, titled “The Believer and Positive Confession.” The document states,

God’s Word does teach great truths such as healing, provision for need, faith, and the authority of believers. The Bible does teach that a disciplined mind is an important factor in victorious living. But these truths must always be considered in the framework of the total teaching of Scripture.<sup>28</sup>

Cho did not allow his teaching to descend to that level of abuse. One must remember that his mission was to pull discouraged people out of the depths of despondency.

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<sup>27</sup> *Salvation, Health and Prosperity*, p. 55.

<sup>28</sup> “The Believer and Positive Confession,” in *Where We Stand* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1997), p. 144.

Cho supplies this insight into his self-understanding about poverty and what God wanted him to do about it:

I once thought that poverty had great moral value. In Korea ministers used to preach that poverty was a blessing, that the poor were those who reaped the most from life's experiences. However, these same ministers were also continually asking their congregations to give more and more money to the church. Teaching the value of poverty, they also preached the merit of increased contributions. This contradiction bothered me. When I became a minister myself I volunteered to pastor in a slum area of the city of Seoul. People in that community lived lives of poverty, mostly eating only one meal a day. Children were sick from malnutrition, and many were starving to death. It was then that I read the Bible anew, searching for a solution. I wanted to know God's will about poverty.<sup>29</sup>

It is clear that Cho was addressing a very definite crisis need in the Korean situation. Certainly he emphasized strongly one dimension of the Christian faith—the possibilities for a better life. He should not be faulted for not tempering his message with all the qualifications that can be cited in a balanced message, since in the crisis of that time, he understood what emphasis was most desperately needed.

In Cho's understanding of 3 John 2, he also saw implications for the Christian and physical health. Categorically he states, "God desires that we may live in good health."<sup>30</sup> He taught that healing is not only in the atonement, but that the Holy Spirit has been given to the church by Jesus Christ to bring healing to the nations.

The Holy Spirit, the other Comforter who dwells among us and continues Jesus' work, enables us to understand and receive forgiveness because of Jesus' work on Calvary. As an evidence that we have been forgiven, He heals us. Through the Holy Spirit we have the grace of salvation with healing as its sign.<sup>31</sup>

Cho points out that there is a basic principle regarding healing: where there is strong faith, there will be more healing. He does not

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<sup>29</sup> *Solving Life's Problems* (Plainfield, NJ: Logos International, 1980), p. 27.

<sup>30</sup> *Salvation, Health, and Prosperity*, p. 115.

<sup>31</sup> *Salvation, Health, and Prosperity*, p. 141.

guarantee that all will be healed, but that the Christian who desires healing has the responsibility to cultivate a life of prayer and belief.<sup>32</sup>

The American Assemblies of God has from its beginnings held a strong conviction that divine healing is an essential component of the gospel message.

As we observe the ministry of both Jesus and the apostles, it is evident that divine healing was not something peripheral. It was an important witness to Jesus, as the revelation of the Father, as the promised Messiah, and as the Savior from sin (see John 10:37, 38).<sup>33</sup>

The position paper does acknowledge that, in spite of the strong affirmation about the privilege of all believers to enjoy the blessing of divine healing, there remain mysteries.

In humility we recognize that we do not understand all that pertains to divine healing. We still see through a glass darkly. We do not understand why some are healed and others are not any more than we understand why God permitted James to be martyred and Peter delivered. Scripture makes it clear, however, that our part is to preach the Word and expect the signs to follow.<sup>34</sup>

The American Assemblies of God position paper on divine healing resonates closely with the teaching of Cho, except for the reservation made in the concluding paragraph that acknowledges the mystery pertaining to the fact that not all for whom prayer is offered are, in fact, healed. I do not think that Cho would teach anything contrary to this, although this qualification does not appear to be explicitly stated.

## 5. Conclusion

Pastor Yonggi Cho is a preacher with a strong message. He rose from poverty and obscurity to a position of enormous influence around the world. His preaching over the years has been directed to people whom he felt needed to hear a positive message of hope for a brighter future. The great response of the Korean people to his preaching discloses in a dramatic fashion that his message, indeed, was heard. He has been a key leader during the years in Korean history in which a devastated nation rose from the ashes to become a major power, not only

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<sup>32</sup> *Salvation, Health, and Prosperity*, pp. 144-56.

<sup>33</sup> "Divine Healing: An Integral Part of the Gospel," p. 45.

<sup>34</sup> "Divine Healing: An Integral Part of the Gospel," p. 54.

in the world of international economics, but in the role of Christian statesmanship and missions. In my paper I have sought to demonstrate that Pastor Cho's preaching is best seen in the light of the social situation in which he ministered. He indeed had an important message of spiritual and social transformation at a critical time in Korean national history.