

**Discerning the Spirit(s) in the Western Church:
Learning From an East Asian Theological Openness to the
Spirit World**

Justin Lau
Cranmer Hall, St John's College

September 2022

M.A. in Theology and Ministry

Word Count: 14,997 words

This dissertation is the product of my own work,
and the work of others has been properly acknowledged throughout.

Abstract

This dissertation seeks to draw insights from East Asian theologies to benefit the missional witness of the contemporary western church in a post-Enlightenment, postmodern society. Much has already been made about the decline of western Christianity on one hand, and the emergence of significant East Asian theologies on the other. However, very little thus far has explored how these East Asian theologies can bear positively upon a western context; in other words, how the western church can learn from East Asian theologies. There is also a notable lack of scholarship regarding the spirit world despite it being a major characteristic of the pentecostal-charismatic movement and Majority World cultures. I dialogue with key East Asian theologians including Amos Yong, Simon Chan, Kirsteen Kim, and Wonsuk Ma to show how East Asian theologies can enrich and enliven a declining religion in the West. I propose that substantial engagement with the spirit world in conversation with the western cultural context will allow the western church to be pastorally and missionally applicable.

I first provide a survey and critical analysis of our modern western context and posit that although the West is more secular, it is no less spiritual in its desire for what Charles Taylor terms the transcendent. Therefore, a western church that embraces a split-level Christianity and neglects the spirit world runs the risk of being inadequately equipped to deal with wider society's spiritual needs. I then provide a survey and critical analysis of grassroots East Asian theologies which take into account what Paul G. Hiebert calls the middle level, and which have developed sophisticated and nuanced understandings of discerning spirits in their pluralistic, multireligious contexts. Finally, out of my deep pastoral and missional concerns, I directly apply East Asian theological concepts to concrete pastoral situations in the western church that I have experienced and/or witnessed as problematic. Greater awareness of the spirit world is key to better pastoral and missional practice via effective interreligious/interspiritual dialogue with an increasingly pluralistic society that seeks a spiritual hope and reality. I propose that being open and able to discern the spirits – the demonic, the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit in unexpected places – is crucial for the future of the contemporary western church.

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	4
Part I: Modern Western Society in Context: A Survey and Critical Analysis.....	7
The Impact of the Enlightenment on Modern Western Society	7
The Impact of Postmodern Pluralism on Modern Western Society	8
The Post-Enlightenment, Postmodern State of the Modern Western Church	11
Part II: East Asian Theologies in Context: A Survey and Critical Analysis	16
What Is East Asia and What Are East Asian Theologies?	16
East Asian Responses to (Western) Christianity	18
(East) Asian Theologies: Then and Now.....	20
Grassroots versus Elite Theologies.....	24
Part III: Discerning the Spirit(s): Pastoral Situations in the Western Church	27
Pastoral Situation 1: Encountering the Demonic.....	28
Pastoral Situation 2: Encountering the Holy Spirit.....	31
Pastoral Situation 3: Encountering the Holy Spirit in Unexpected Places	33
Discerning the Spirit(s) in Western Grassroots Experiences.....	34
Pastoral Care and the Spirit World	37
Conclusion	39
Bibliography	42

Introduction

In this dissertation I will explore how the present western church can learn from an East Asian theological openness to the spirit world. Esther E. Acolatse (2018: 2–3) identifies the extreme tendencies of both contexts – the supernaturalism of the Majority World, the rationalism of the West – with the latter often undervaluing, disbelieving, and/or dismissing the spirit world. Thus, a significant gap between theory and praxis exists in the West, not necessarily because there is a dearth of spiritual experiences, but because established theological theories have struggled to respond adequately to ongoing praxis. However, in East Asian contexts there exists a prevalence of both ongoing experiences *and* ongoing theologising of the spirit world. In this project I seek to draw insights from East Asian theologies in order to better equip the western church for dealing with matters relating to the spirit world.

This issue emerged out of my own experiences as an East Asian in the West, as well as both a church congregant and worker over the past decade. As a Singaporean Chinese who grew up in Japan, my cultural backgrounds took for granted the existence of the spirit world, and I have had my fair share of spiritual experiences (e.g. Spirit-baptism, visions and dreams, healings and miracles, demonisation and deliverance). But in recent years, various instances confirmed my suspicions that many western Christians struggle to deal with, let alone talk about, the spirit world. I have encountered deliberate avoidance or dismissal, and in some cases have been made to feel questioned about the validity of my experiences. While I strongly value discernment in pastoral engagement, what I found troubling was that these cases involved Christians in churches – even church workers – who were uncomfortable and/or unable to talk openly about spiritual realities; they struggled to illuminate concrete pastoral situations even if they might have had a theological understanding. My research question stems from precisely this deep pastoral need.

In my first chapter, I provide a survey and critical analysis of our modern western context. Much has already been made of the western worldview being ‘partly rooted in the Enlightenment with its narrow empiricism and skeptical rationalism’ (Hwa 2011: 43). This worldview has also seeped into western Christianity, leading to a more pervasive marginalisation and/or rejection of the supernatural. Harvey Kwiyani (2020: 60) claims starkly that the ‘focus on the Spirit and the spirit world

[...] is antithetical to the beliefs of many British and European Christians'; the Spirit is but a mere doctrine – an object of intellectual assent rather than doctrine informing life – for many western Christians. Acolatse (2018: 6) concurs by describing this 'ordinary notion of the Spirit' as one 'that bothers no one and whom no one really need bother with if they do not want to.' Moreover, western Christianity has been on the decline, and secularism on the rise. However, in our postmodern and pluralistic age, many are searching for meaning by turning to spiritualities (e.g. the occult, witchcraft, New Age) (Heelas 2006a: 47); although the West is more secular, it is arguably no less spiritual. If the western church continues to neglect the spirit world whilst those in wider society increase their engagement, it might find itself inadequately equipped to deal with spiritual needs.

Meanwhile, Christianity is growing in the Majority World, primarily in pentecostal/charismatic forms which exist amid the prevalence of indigenous cultures and religions. As a result, many non-western Christians embody an innate awareness, understanding, and experience of the spirit world, and therefore also of the Holy Spirit. In my second chapter, I provide a survey and critical analysis of East Asian theologies which have been developed in order to engage with their pluralistic, multireligious contexts – a theologising of spiritual praxis – and which take into account the 'middle level' (Hiebert 1982: 43). Gene L. Green (2016: 5) explains: 'Within Asian theologies, the Holy Spirit is not separated from the material world as is common in Western theology but is the primary essence of reality.' This worldview is thoroughly aligned with what Acolatse (2018: 11; 2) expounds as 'biblical realism': 'the world picture that the Bible paints for us about the reality' of principalities and powers, '[a] world teeming with otherworldly spirit beings, angels and demons that can traverse the physical world'.¹

Academic theology has long been dominated by western theologians, but the increase of Majority World theologians over the last few decades has also included significant East Asian theologians. Many engage in critiques of western theologies and develop theologies within their own contexts (either from and within East Asia, or from and within the West), but they are often aimed at an East Asian audience (either East Asians in Asia or East Asians in the West) to help them integrate their ethnic and

¹ Wonsuk Ma (2019: 136) similarly argues that Asia's worldview is 'closer to the Hebrew and Jewish worldviews than [it is] to the Western worldview'.

cultural identities with their faith. Very little thus far has been done to show how these East Asian theologies can positively bear on the western church; in other words, how can the western church learn from East Asian theologies? Majority World theologians such as Acolatse have begun this work, but it is still in its early stages.² In addition, scholars have noted the lack of scholarship regarding the spirit world. Kirsteen Kim (2007: 153) observes that '[n]one of the major studies of the Pentecostal-charismatic movement considers awareness of the spirit-world to be a major characteristic'. Wonsuk Ma (2011: 132–33) agrees, arguing that whilst western Christianity has often ignored the 'deep cognition of the spirit world in Asia', Majority World Christians 'first voiced the need for thorough theological work on the spirit world.' Kim and Ma – along with Amos Yong and Simon Chan – are key theologians who have examined the spirit world in East Asian contexts, and they will also serve as key interlocutors for this project as I explore its implications on the West.

I hope to show how East Asian theologies can enrich and enliven a declining religion by teaching the western church to seriously engage the spirit world. For example, a 'many-spirits' (versus 'one-spirit') pneumatology as expounded by Kim (2007: 143) seems well suited to our increasingly pluralistic age; and reflecting on criteria for 'discerning the Spirit(s)' (Yong 2003: 157) – emerging from a theology of religions – will be essential. Although many of these issues have missional implications, my concerns are primarily pastoral. Therefore, I will focus my third and final chapter on directly applying East Asian theological concepts to concrete pastoral situations relating to the spirit world that I have experienced and/or witnessed over the years in the West – as a 'participating observer' rather than an 'outside commentator' (Yong 2000: 245) – to help us begin to reflect on how the western church might learn from its East Asian siblings. It is a ripe and exciting time for the 'self-theologizing' Majority World 'to make its own contribution to the universal or Catholic discussion' (Green 2016: 4). Just as what Acolatse (2018: 11–12) has begun to do for Africa, I seek to do for (East) Asia, to bridge the hermeneutical gap between the Christian West and Majority World and 'chart a way forward so that the [two] may engage each other in mutually respectful and beneficial ways for the church and the world'.

² Mark Nam (2020) recently completed his MA dissertation on what the Church of England can learn from East Asian theology in terms of contextualising the gospel.

Part I: Modern Western Society in Context: A Survey and Critical Analysis

Before we can address East Asian theologies, we must first examine the western context in which we find ourselves situated. In this chapter, I will give a broad overview of our modern western society informed and impacted by the Enlightenment and postmodern pluralism, with particular reference to what Charles Taylor terms the transcendent. I will also examine how these characteristics have seeped into and impacted the western church, and begin to critically analyse aspects of our modern western society. This will be done in anticipation of the rest of the paper where I will later explore the implications on right and appropriate pastoral practice in the western church.

The Impact of the Enlightenment on Modern Western Society

One prominent thread greatly impacting modern society and the western worldview has been that of the Enlightenment occurring in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. According to James C. Livingston (2006: 5), Immanuel Kant summed up the motto of the Enlightenment with two phrases: ‘*Sapere aude!*’ (‘Dare to know’) and ‘Have courage to use your own reason!’ This combination of autonomy and reason ‘brought together the humanistic spirit of the Renaissance and the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century’ and empowered humanity to comprehend all of life and the world (Livingston 2006: 5). Emphases on science and the individual led to a perspective shift on religion, mainly by eliminating a higher transcendent purpose in creation, relegating religion to the realm of subjective values, and ruling out miracles and anything inexplicable (Bosch 2011: 270–73). Hwa Yung (2014: 2) quotes Charles H. Kraft who summarises the post-Enlightenment worldview as naturalistic, materialistic, humanistic, rationalistic, and individualistic.

These developments are somewhat astounding since belief in what Paul G. Hiebert (1981: 39–41) calls the middle level – where supernatural forces and beings impinge upon this world – persisted into the seventeenth century even in the West: ‘[i]n medieval Europe these included trolls, pixies, gnomes, brownies and fairies’ and ‘supernatural forces such as mana, planetary influences, evil eyes, and the powers of

magic, sorcery and witchcraft.’ Charles Taylor (2007: 25–26) likewise observes that atheism was unthinkable in the late medieval world, its social imaginary characterised by three features: the natural world was a cosmos that pointed to divine purpose and action; earthly society was grounded in a higher reality; and people lived in an enchanted world charged with the presences of spirits, demons, and moral forces.

However, due to modern sciences, what subsequently occurred was a disenchanting of the world, ‘[evacuating] it of spirits and various ghosts in the machine. Diseases are not demonic, mental illness is no longer possession, the body is no longer ensouled’ (Smith 2014: 28). In other words, there was an eradication of the middle level. (Hiebert also uses the term ‘excluded middle’ – that is, missing and neglected – to describe our post-Enlightenment state.) Although belief in the transcendent did persist throughout the Enlightenment, it had been relegated: the religious categories of ‘Creator’ and ‘Creation’ were replaced with the scientific categories of ‘Supernatural’ and ‘Natural’, and thereby restricted God’s activities solely to the supernatural (high, not middle) realm (Hiebert 1999: 2). Moreover, an inevitable consequence of an Enlightenment worldview was the emergence of a non-theistic secularism. Peter L. Berger (1999: 2) describes the secularisation theory with a simple sentence: ‘Modernization necessarily leads to a decline of religion, both in society and in the minds of individuals.’ This is equivalent to what Taylor terms ‘secular₂’ which James K. A. Smith summarises as ‘a nonsectarian, neutral, and areligious space or standpoint’ (Smith 2014: 21).³

The Impact of Postmodern Pluralism on Modern Western Society

However, in our present age, it is too simplistic to say we only live in a ‘secular₂’ society, or that the secularisation theory has been correct and religion has been obliterated. It is true that religion, particularly manifested in social institutions like the church, has been and is still on the decline, but reports have also been exaggerated. Even Berger (1999: 2), who used to be a proponent of the secularisation theory, admitted his assumption was false; the world today was as ‘furiously religious as it ever was’ and even more so in some places – this he called the *desecularisation* of the

³ ‘Secular₁’ is understood as the temporal in public spaces, concerned with an ‘emptying of religion from autonomous social spheres’ (Taylor 2007: 2) – what Smith (2014: 20) describes as ‘the “secular” of the purported sacred/secular divide.’

world. Note that the secularisation theory does not just refer to social institutions, but to what Berger (1970: 17) terms the ‘secularisation of consciousness’ or the individual mind; therefore, what may be seen in larger society does not necessarily or accurately reflect what is occurring with(in) individuals. Berger (1999: 3) explains: ‘Certain religious institutions have lost power and influence in many societies, but both old and new religious beliefs and practices have nevertheless continued in the lives of individuals’. What he describes here is rooted in a disillusionment – we could even ironically say ‘disenchantment’ – with the scientific Enlightenment worldview. David J. Bosch (2011: 361) calls this the postmodern paradigm, describing how two world wars in the twentieth century exposed the Enlightenment as ‘naïve realism’, demonstrating that its rationalism ‘led to disastrous reductionism’ and was ‘found to be an inadequate cornerstone on which to build one’s life.’

What is a natural consequence of this postmodern paradigm shift? Due to a scepticism of metanarrative – whether provided by religion or science – we now live in a world of pluralism where individuals are free to choose for themselves their own mininarratives and their own facts/values, allowed to make ‘personal decision[s] about ultimate questions’ (Newbigin 1986: 11). This rise of postmodernity led to what Taylor (2007: 3) terms ‘secular₃’, where ‘[b]elief in God is no longer axiomatic’ in contrast to a pre-modern worldview where ‘it was virtually impossible not to believe in God’; instead, there now exists multiple alternatives with faith being ‘one human possibility among others’. Returning to Berger’s desecularisation theory, we observe not just an increase but a thriving of various religions and spiritualities around the world – and even, to an extent, in the West. Despite a widespread loss of faith in religious institutions, many are turning to spiritualities (or the ‘supernatural’) to look for meaning and purpose, and referring to themselves as ‘spiritual but not religious’ (SBNR). Paul Heelas (2006a: 47) has explored the growth of New Age spiritualities (or ‘mind-body-spirit spirituality’) which ‘do not conform to the old institutional patterns’ (Kim 2007: 143), pointing to 900,000 active Britons who engage with spiritual practices on a weekly basis.

There has seemingly been an explosion of a re-exploration of the sacred, the transcendent, here on earth. (Notice the echoes with Hiebert’s middle level.) Many are arguably looking for what Berger (1970: 70) terms ‘signals of transcendence’: ‘phenomena that are to be found within the domain of our “natural” reality but that

appear to point beyond that reality'.⁴ He cites studies in England where nearly fifty per cent of respondents had consulted a fortune teller, one in six believed in ghosts, and one in fifteen claimed to have seen one (Berger 1970: 40). Hwa (2011: 44) further points out 'the large sections on witchcraft and the occult in many western bookshops as proof of this.'⁵ Regardless of the exact explanation for why people have this religious or spiritual instinct, it is clear that the secularisation theory has not been infallible, and that people in our postmodern world are looking for something to grasp on to, looking to 'resacralise' (Kenneson 2015: 11) or 'reenchant' the world.

To help us further understand this peculiar blend of Enlightenment rationalism and postmodern longings of transcendence, I would like to introduce Taylor's notion of the 'immanent frame' within which we all exist (2007: 542): this frame 'constitutes a "natural" order, to be contrasted to a "supernatural" one, an "immanent" world, over against a possible "transcendent" one.' Those who believe in the supernatural-transcendent are also situated within this natural-immanent frame, where one is able to choose from a plethora of beliefs. Two basic orientations are evident within the immanent frame: either seeing 'the transcendent as a threat, a dangerous temptation, a distraction, or an obstacle to our greatest good', or 'as answering [...] our deepest craving, need, fulfillment of the good' (Taylor 2007: 548). In other words, the question is not whether we inhabit the immanent frame (we do), but *how* we inhabit it (and perhaps also how to get others to inhabit it *with* a belief in the transcendence) (Smith 2014: 93).

Taylor further uses the terminology of 'open' and 'closed', 'spin' and 'take': one is 'open' if one believes in the transcendent, and one is 'closed' if one believes in the immanent; one has a 'spin' if one believes theirs is the default and natural way of life, whereas one has a 'take' if one views it as one of multiple beliefs you can choose. According to Taylor (2007: 549), a 'take' within the immanent frame can be 'an unchallenged framework' and thus 'something we have trouble often thinking ourselves outside of, even as an imaginative exercise'. Therefore, many who find

⁴ However, Berger's signals of transcendence – play, hope, damnation, humour – do not involve the supernatural because he claims they have 'the quality of the esoteric' and are not necessarily accessible to everyone (1970: 93). But I am interested in precisely these supernatural experiences, and I will be utilising Berger's helpful term in this redefined manner for the rest of the paper.

⁵ I have also personally noticed amongst my non-Christian friends an embracing of astrology and horoscopes, made evident by the pervasive use of shooting star emojis.

themselves susceptible to a post-Enlightenment worldview do not even realise they exist within the immanent frame, that their (closed) position of viewing science as the norm is still a belief – a ‘take’, not a ‘spin’ – that can be chosen; that there is an alternative (open) option to believe in the transcendent. Taylor is concerned – as am I – with helping those who find themselves traversing the middle of the poles on the spectrum. These are people who respect science and fear religious fanaticism *and* who cannot help but believe in something ‘out there’ – what Taylor (2007: 548) terms a ‘spiritualist’ position – and perhaps are close to realising that (by becoming aware of the immanent frame) they can convert from a ‘closed’ to an ‘open’ take via being perceptive to signals of transcendence.

The Post-Enlightenment, Postmodern State of the Modern Western Church

I have done a quick survey of our current western context particularly in secular society.⁶ What about the specific context of the modern western church? To what extent has an Enlightenment rationalism and postmodern pluralism seeped into the church? One of the biggest effects of Christians embracing the modern scientific worldview was to also accept a dualistic split of the transcendent from the natural. They ascribed supremacy to the former which they considered the spiritual, eternal reality, over and above the latter which was tangible and transitory (and which was left to the scientists) – in other words, faith became entirely otherworldly (Bosch 2011: 279). Hiebert (1999: 2) likewise claims that of the two Platonic realms of the material and the spiritual, theologians were primarily concerned with the latter. The pervasive acceptance of Platonic dualism resulted in ‘the secularization of science and the mystification of religion’ – a two-tiered view of reality (Hiebert 1981: 43). As a result, ‘angels and demons alike are condemned to the realms of superstition’ in modern Protestant theology, ‘and what remains is “God and man”’ (Kim 2007: 151).⁷

Nowhere was this more apparent than in Rudolph Bultmann’s programme of demythologisation, which many have criticised. Berger (1970: 25) describes it as ‘a

⁶ I use ‘secular’ here as a catch-all for Taylor’s ‘secular₂’ and ‘secular₃’ definitions; and also as a contrast to the church.

⁷ One must also remember the impact of the Reformation in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries which ushered in a religion of reason with the goal ‘to define, systematize, and conserve the purity of doctrine rediscovered by Luther and Calvin’ (Livingston 2006: 14).

restatement of the biblical message in language free from the supernaturalist notions of ancient man'. Indeed, Bultmann is quoted as saying that 'one cannot use electric light and radio, call upon modern medicine in case of illness, and at the same time believe in the world of spirits and miracles of the New Testament' (Newbigin 1986: 11–13). There is something inherently problematic about this endeavour to eliminate the middle level, especially when that middle level clearly exists within the biblical worldview. Esther E. Acolatse (2018: 52–66) dedicates a chapter in her groundbreaking book on African theology to reclaim myth after Bultmann, emphasising that a demythologised Christianity runs contrary to biblical realism. Paul Hiebert, R. Daniel Shaw, and Tite Tiénou (1999/2000: 175) also agree that a two-tiered dualism is unfounded in biblical thought, providing the counterexample of 'bara' ('what is created'), the Hebrew word for this world, as encompassing angels, humans, animals, plants, and matter.

This western notion could be considered a 'split-level Christianity', a term coined by Jaime Bulatao which refers to 'the co-existence within the same person of two or more thought-and-behavior systems which are inconsistent with each other' (Chan 2014: 31–32). Simon Chan notes that this term is most frequently used to criticise grassroots Christianity influenced by folk religions especially in the Majority World which are often accused of syncretism. But he rightly critiques the hypocrisy of western theologies for demeaning folk Christianity for the sake of maintaining traditions, claiming 'the Christianity of the Enlightenment [...] created *its own kind of split-level Christianity*' by '[compartmentalizing] the world into the "spiritual" and "physical," the unseen and seen, religion and science, subjective values and objective facts [...] reducing the spiritual realm into an aspect of one of the social sciences' (Chan 2014: 34; italics mine). Hiebert, Shaw, and Tiénou (1999/2000: 173) caution against a split-level Christianity in the West involving New Age and pagan spiritualities; but the split-level Christianity that Chan and I emphasise has to do more with a dualistic two-tiered Christianity.

Now I propose that the variety of perspectives within the western church can be grouped into three main categories: one, those who do not believe in the transcendent whatsoever, taking scientific rationalism and naturalism to its extreme (closed take); two, those who do believe in the transcendent, but struggle to take into account or deal with the middle level where 'the spirit and the physical worlds intersect actively' (Hwa 2014: 59) (open take); three, those who accept and embrace it

all – high, middle, and low levels – primarily found in pentecostal/charismatic churches (open take/spin). For purposes of our argument, we will have to neglect the latter group; my concern has to do more with the first two groups, and my focus mostly on the second.⁸ The aim of my argument is not so much to persuade those in this first group (i.e. intellectually opposed) as to activate those in the second group (i.e. intellectually engaged).

Even if one believes (theoretically) in the spirit world, one might find it difficult to believe (practically) in its intersection with the earthly world. As such, a lack of experience within the western church inevitably results in a gap between theory and praxis: limited praxis leads to limited theory, and limited theory also leads to limited praxis. I posit that the western church finds itself in a catch-22 where a lack of experience of the spirit world is due to a lack of belief in the spirit world, but a lack of belief is also due to a lack of experience. Acolatse (2018: 77) provokingly asks: ‘Could it be that in the West the presence of the demonic is muted not because demons have ceased to exist or never were, but for the precise reason that no one fights against nothing? Perhaps, as long as lukewarm faith exists, perhaps the demons need not be troubled nor trouble themselves.’

Working on Taylor’s assumed basis that the church also finds itself situated within the all-encompassing immanent frame, a lack of belief in and/or engagement with the middle level will be reflected in the church’s pastoral behaviour where there might be less of an inclination ‘to attest the powers of demons and spirits in their lives’ (Acolatse 2018: 46). This is not to say all pastoral practice must immediately and instinctively lead to the spirit world – in the next chapter we will explore the need for caution against overspiritualising – but it is a clear missing weapon in the church’s arsenal of pastoral care if everything is only ever ascribed to physical or mental causalities. Acolatse (2018: 125) observes that the gospel mandate to preach and teach and heal can easily transform into ‘[offering] a panacea through medical science’, or the call to cast out demons into ‘a self-reflexive exercise aimed at avoidance of psychological projection’.⁹ But the goal of re-mythologising (in the wake of Bultmann’s demythologising) is not to return to a pre-modern worldview. Kim (2007:

⁸ The first group’s understanding of the divine can risk relegating God to a moral stand-in.

⁹ Taylor (2007: 540) puts it concisely: ‘Where earlier people spoke of possession by evil spirits, we think of mental illness.’

152) is clear: ‘To go back to the Middle Ages in Europe by attempting to reinstate a hierarchy of angels, spirits and demons would not be desirable. Modernity delivered people from the fear of capricious activity and the need for fetishes and mantras that such a worldview can generate.’ The goal instead is to allow religion and spirituality an adequate place in our lives to help deal with ‘the human problem’: ‘[dealing] with the apparently inexplicable, the daily struggle, and the powerful—often unseen—forces [we] encounter’ (Kim 2007: 152).

There is, however, a more serious danger that can result due to a lack of engagement with the spirit world, and that is losing ‘a sense of the involvement of the Holy Spirit in the everyday world that “demons and spirits” inhabit’ (Kim 2007: 152). The question that arises is this: To what extent does the church in the West truly grasp the person, role, and power of the Holy Spirit if there is a lack of engagement – knowledge and experience – with the wider context of the spirit world? My friend shared with me the story of a western Christian in their church cell group who explicitly said that they did not believe in angels or demons since spirits were not real; it made me wonder if this person even believed in the Holy Spirit, or had relegated the Holy Spirit to mere rational doctrine (Kwiyani 2020: 60). It is worth quoting Kim (2007: 153) (and James Dunn) in full as she voices similar concerns:

some have argued that it was the “spirit-world” that “formed the matrix of the idea of the Holy Spirit,” and the absence of awareness of this context in the modern West makes interpretation of New Testament pneumatology particularly difficult (: 2). James Dunn [...] comments that “the New Testament world of demons and spirit,” which Bultmann rejected, “is also the biblical world of the Holy Spirit.” He fears that “in abandoning the dimension of the demonic we may find that we have abandoned also the dimension of the Spirit,” since this is the milieu from which theology of the Holy Spirit arose (1998: 67–68).

The western church should not seek to reclaim an understanding of the spirit world simply to engage with popular spiritualities and/or demons, but also – primarily – to seek the Holy Spirit’s work in our lives on earth; a focus not just on the negative, but (more so) on the positive signals of transcendence.

Amos Yong (2016: 23) rightly observes the need for accurate situational discernment: ‘the “principalities and powers” are never unambiguously good or bad so that healings, miracles, signs and wonders, glossolalia, or manifestations of other

so-called spiritual gifts have to be discerned on a case-by-case basis.’ What we are dealing with has no formula or textbook; it requires the western church to embrace an attitude of openness and embark on a journey of awareness and discernment of the spirit world reflected in the Bible. Acolatse (2018: 77) issues a powerful challenge:

While the purpose of the Christian life is not to irritate demons and incur their wrath through spiritual attacks, a quasi Christianity that is washed out and bears little resemblance to what is epitomized in the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles and demonstrated in the account of Jesus in the Gospels is also bankrupt in holiness and power. It is probably that the lack of knowledge and experience of the presence of the demonic in modern times—through to our current times—has made it easy to turn Christianity into a primarily cerebral, morality-infusing code for civilizing humanity, rather than the life-transforming, Satan-crushing, God-glorifying powerful religion or lifestyle that was intended.

Let us recognise the turning point that we find ourselves in. Postmodernism’s challenge to modernity and its assumptions creates the potential for increased engagement with the transcendent, neither ascribing to ‘modernity’s disdain’ nor ‘the premodern overvalorization of myth’ (Acolatse 2018: 94). But the dangers are still present, particularly ‘the postmodern penchant for interpretative plurality that often lacks clarity and concreteness, especially in pastoral practice’ (Acolatse 2018: 94). What we want to avoid are precisely these extremes: we want neither to reject the transcendent wholesale, nor return to an uncritical pre-modern worldview (which is arguably impossible after centuries of the Enlightenment’s influence), nor acquiesce to a relativist postmodern pluralism. What we need is ‘clarity and concreteness’ in appropriate pastoral practice within our churches, even – and especially – when we deal with the supernatural, the middle level, the spirit world. By doing so, we can continue to embrace the transcendent within the immanent frame, and perhaps help those who seek to do so as well. Taylor (2007: 768) envisions two alternative futures: one that flows out of the secularisation theory where religion shrinks further and further, and one that continues to respond to a transcendent reality. It appears that the latter is much more prominent than we might realise, albeit a fierce battle between the two, and this is precisely the precarious and volatile landscape which we in the western church find ourselves in.

Part II: East Asian Theologies in Context: A Survey and Critical Analysis

If we recall Esther E. Acolatse's spectrum of 'modernity's disdain' on one end and 'the premodern overvalorization of myth' on the other (2018: 94), we might be tempted to ascribe the former to the western context and the latter to East Asian contexts. This is too simplistic, however, as East Asian contexts in their diversity demonstrate differing degrees of modernisation, some with clear traces of 'modernity's disdain'. Yet it is also true that folk beliefs continue to endure even in the more industrialised countries. For example, people in Japan still visit temples on important occasions to seek the protection or favour of the gods; and there is an openness towards fortune tellers and a fascination with those who have '*reikan*' ('spirit sensitivity'). In this chapter I offer a presentation of the East Asian context(s), the responses of demonisation and syncretism to western Christianity, and a survey of past and present East Asian theologies particularly with reference to Simon Chan's emphasis on grassroots theology. This will provide the necessary backdrop for us to then proceed to the next chapter where we can take these theologies and bear them upon the western church in a meaningful and constructive way.

What Is East Asia and What Are East Asian Theologies?

When it comes to talking about East Asia with its vast swathes of peoples and multifarious cultures in all its diversity, we must first clarify the scope of our discussion. What do we mean by East Asia? What constitutes an East Asian theology? And what is the specific East Asian context out of which I write?

East Asia is usually considered to consist of China, Japan, and Korea (North and South). Even as each country is nationally distinct, they also share the common cultural traditions of Confucianism and Buddhism which have influenced their values, politics, and social organisation (Tang 2014: 81). At the risk of overgeneralisation and oversimplification, I have chosen to expand East Asia to also include Southeast Asia, which includes Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore,

Brunei, Indonesia, Philippines, and East Timor.¹⁰ We can thus draw from theologians who originate from East *and* Southeast Asia, for example, Amos Yong and Hwa Yung who are both Malaysian Chinese (Malaysian nationality, Chinese ethnicity).¹¹

Further clarification must be made when talking about East Asian theologies. Do we simply mean the theologians have to be East Asian themselves? But this is complexified when considering many East Asian theologians have been educated in and/or are well-versed in western theologies; in fact, many are based in the West. Furthermore, East Asian theologians raised in East Asia can be distinguished from East Asian theologians raised in the West (e.g. Asian Americans). Rather than heritage, I propose to broadly define East Asian theologies as any theological work whose content engages substantially with East Asia. For example, I would be loathed to insist that Kirsteen Kim's notable contributions – who despite her last name is white British (married to a Korean) – cannot be considered East Asian theology.

Finally, let me situate myself within this discourse by way of acknowledging my own peculiar context. I am Singaporean Chinese – Singaporean by nationality, Chinese by ethnicity – but I was raised in Japan by first-generation evangelical Protestant missionary parents. I attended an American Christian school, which meant my learned Christianity was western (conservative evangelical). At the age of twenty, a powerful encounter with the Holy Spirit introduced me for the first time to the pentecostal/charismatic tradition (though I had had significant spiritual experiences prior to this). I have resided in the UK for the last decade, working for a white-majority church and studying at Cranmer Hall. My spiritual experiences at the grassroots level, as well as my subsequent theological education in a western institution, means I am shaped by both my primal East Asian experiences and western theologies. Knowing that I occupy a unique position in bridging two major cultural contexts, I seek to continue to increase dialogue between East Asia and the West – a mutual discourse – in order to impact my present western context and strengthen the global church.

¹⁰ These countries have also been influenced by similar cultural and religious strands, primarily through India (Hinduism and Buddhism) and China (Confucianism and Taoism) (Evers 2014: 65).

¹¹ In recent years the acronym ESEA (East and Southeast Asian) has emerged in wider British society to amplify the voice of East Asian ethnic minorities grouping in solidarity (similar to the socio-political term 'Asian American' in the U.S.).

East Asian Responses to (Western) Christianity

Christianity was predominantly introduced to East Asia via western missionaries but has struggled to establish itself amid other major religions.¹² It remains a minority religion except in the Philippines and East Timor, and in South Korea it has enjoyed monumental growth over the last few decades (Phan 2011a: 3; Evers 2014: 72; Tang 2014: 83). East Asia's multireligious landscape is inescapable, with Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism, Confucianism, Islam, Christianity, and primal religions all present (Phan 2021: 9). Although it is impossible to cover the entire history of Christianity's spread in East Asia, I would like to focus on two main responses towards Christianity's importation and integration: demonisation and syncretism.

Pentecostalism has enjoyed explosive growth in the Majority World due to its openness to the spirit world, and thus more palatable to indigenous cultures which also believe in the spirit world.¹³ However, anthropologists such as Joel Robbins (2007: 9; 2004: 127) have observed that converts are forced to experience a 'rupture' in their lives via this radical adoption of a new worldview. This can lead to a demonisation of other spirits and religions in contrast to the Holy Spirit, partly due to the belief in a cosmic battle between God (and his angels) and Satan (and his demons). Thus, any engagement with spirits other than the Holy Spirit is viewed as satanic/demonic and to be avoided at all costs, even if at the expense of rifts with converts' families, cultures, and societies. Simon Chan (1994: 31; 8) gives several helpful examples: an emphasis on 'spiritual warfare' results in exorcism sessions for Christians who have past links with Taoist temples; or in active destruction of practices and objects which serve as entry points for evil spirits (e.g. acupuncture, jade artifacts, Persian rugs, images of Chinese dragons). One major point of contention in East Asian contexts is that of ancestral veneration, exemplified by the Chinese rites controversy in which the Holy See banned Chinese Christians from

¹² Indigenous Christian movements open to the spirit world have also emerged in Asia distinct from western Pentecostalism, many Asian Christians simply '[reading] the bible from within their own culture and worldviews' and '[finding] the supernatural in the bible repeated in their own ministries' (Hwa 2014: 58).

¹³ I will be using 'indigenous', 'folk' (Hiebert, Shaw, and Tiéno 1999), 'primal' (Chan 2010), and 'grassroots' (Chan 2014) interchangeably when referring to cultures/traditions and religions/beliefs.

honouring their ancestors for three centuries (1742–1939) because they believed it to be akin to idolatry.¹⁴

On the other hand, another sort of response is that of syncretism. Georg Evers (2014: 78) notes that several million people in East Asia ‘live a cosmic spirituality’ (i.e. animist/folk beliefs). The introduction of Christianity into these cultures results in a fusing together of elements of Christianity with indigenous beliefs, at times leading to perhaps greater compromise on the part of Christianity due to its inherently monotheistic and therefore more exclusivist nature (compared with pantheistic or animistic religions which tend to be more accommodating).¹⁵ One good case study is South Korea. Allegations of syncretism have been levelled against Korean Christians such as David Yonggi Cho, founder of Yoido Full Gospel Church, whose Christian practices (e.g. exorcism, speaking in tongues, praying for healing) are seen to mirror shamanistic practices (Cox 1995: 219–26).

On the more extreme end, controversy occurred at the World Council of Churches Assembly in Canberra in 1991 when Chung Hyun Kyung, a Korean female theologian, dressed up as a shaman and invoked not just the Holy Spirit but also ‘the spirits of suffering, oppressed individuals, peoples, and created things—ranging from Hagar to Joan of Arc, the victims of Tiananmen Square, and the Amazon rain forest’ which she claimed ‘were spirits filled with *Han*, a Korean word meaning resentment, bitterness, and grief’ (Kim 2004: 350). Furthermore, she intuitively compared the Holy Spirit with Kwan In, goddess of compassion and wisdom in Buddhism, whom she viewed as a feminine image of Christ (Kim 2004: 350) – all of which could be seen as a way of reclaiming her cultural heritage and reconciling it with her faith. Some criticised her of utter heresy and syncretism, whilst others expressed admiration for her courageous attempt to contextualise her Christianity.¹⁶ Regardless of what one thinks of these cases, it raises an unavoidable issue about the integration of Christianity in cultures with deeply rooted indigenous beliefs.

¹⁴ Wei Hua (2016: 81–83) provides the full story.

¹⁵ Miroslav Volf (2011: 32) references Jan Assmann’s claim that ‘monotheism is characterized not so much by belief in one God, but by the claim that the one God is the *true* God.’

¹⁶ Raymond Fung accused Chung of at best ‘spiritual naïveté’ and at worst ‘manipulation and cynicism’ due to her dangerously ‘nonchalant attitude toward the spirit world’; whilst Tso Man King believed Chung had been respectful, calling upon the spirits of the martyred ‘to honour them and to stand in solidarity with them, as well as with the suffering people in the world’ (Kim 2004: 355).

But why are such syncretistic tendencies – intentional (Chung) or not (Cho) – such a common phenomenon?¹⁷ Chan (2010: 2) helpfully points to the close connection between Pentecostal Christianity and primal spirituality, drawing on Harold Turner’s characteristics of a primal worldview: humans can enter into relationship with the spirit world to share in its powers and blessings and receive protection from evil forces, all whilst living in a universe with no sharp dichotomy between the physical and spiritual. Similarly for Pentecostals there is no dichotomy between the natural and supernatural realms, and the Holy Spirit’s work impinges practically in the day to day (Chan 2010: 2). Pentecostalism is thus able ‘to integrate premodern and modern modes’, holding ‘primitivist’ and ‘pragmatic’ impulses in productive tension, and ‘has one foot securely set in heaven and the other squarely planted on earth’ (Chan 2010: 3). Christianity with a pentecostal openness to the spirit world will inevitably wrestle with the issue of syncretism versus contextualisation – the latter as the aim – when it encounters indigenous cultures.¹⁸ The key question Chan (2010: 6; italics original) poses is this: ‘*Where does genuine contextualisation end and questionable syncretism begin?*’ This has been the perennial theological dilemma keeping East Asian theologians, past and present, preoccupied.¹⁹

(East) Asian Theologies: Then and Now

Although many of the first Asian theologians studied in the West, the development of indigenous theologies came about via ‘the gathering pace of effective independence

¹⁷ Cho would find it anathema to associate himself with Kyung’s deliberate syncretistic impulse to reject western categories; he has frequently stated that his practices are decidedly not shamanistic but done in the name of Jesus (Anderson 2017: 37). Cho also emphatically quotes scripture when performing healing rituals to demonstrate the biblical nature of the practice (Lee 2009: 113–14).

¹⁸ David M. Thompson makes an important point about Christianity in East Asia still being young and in development. He questions Harvey Cox’s simplistic conclusion that Korean Pentecostalism is just a guise for traditional shamanism by noting that Anglo-Saxon pagan sites of worship were used for Christian worship in England (7th c.) as a strategy for contextualisation; and encourages us ‘not to confuse what may happen in the first generation with the long-term results’ (Thompson 2008: 18).

¹⁹ This does not address western missionaries who ignorantly dismissed the belief in the middle level as mere superstition and have thus been unable to help East Asian Christians navigate their faith within their cultures.

from western missionary domination' (Thompson 2008: 9).²⁰ Theologians like Stanley Samartha, for example, led the way with his book *One Christ – Many Religions* which suggested a revised Christology within the context of an Asian interreligious reality; whilst Korea quickly developed a highly political minjung theology (Thompson 2008: 9). Common threads of development have since emerged from the Asian context, especially to do with themes of liberation.²¹ Many of these theologies deal with war and suffering (e.g. Kazoh Kitamori's *Theology of the Pain of God*); or the poor (e.g. Indian dalit theology, Korean minjung theology); or the presence of other world faiths (Thompson 2008: 9–14). Michael Amaladoss (2014: 108) provides an indicative list of theologians who were part of the first generation of major Asian theologians who significantly engaged with their cultural and religious traditions:

The Minjung theologians not only read their history of struggle for liberation as part of the history of salvation but also use Shamanic masque dances as liberative practices. [...] Raimon Panikkar explored the unknown Christ of Hinduism starting with the image of *Ishwara*. Swami Abhishiktananda and Bede Griffiths dialogued with the *advaitic* tradition of Hinduism. Seiichi Yagi seeks to integrate Christianity with Buddhist Zen. Aloysius Pieris proposes and practices a double baptism in Buddhism and Christianity. Stanley Samartha proposes a pluralist Christology that allows a positive attitude to other religions and their savior figures.

Many of these first-generation Asian theologians reacted in backlash against an imposing of western theologies, which often led them to more syncretistic tendencies.

Times have progressed since Chan (1994: 30) bemoaned the 'dire lack of intellectuals capable of interacting critically with culture' within the Pentecostal movement. Asian theology has certainly grown more sophisticated. Recent theologians have shied away from a simplistic swerving to either end of the demonisation-syncretism spectrum, instead wholly engaging and wrestling with both/and: both Asian traditions/religions and western theologies; both critical rejection (demonisation) and critical embracing (syncretism). And it is surely no

²⁰ I largely leave out South Asian theologians but will occasionally reference them (e.g. Stanley Samartha, Michael Amaladoss) at relevant points.

²¹ Postcolonial liberation theologies have also emerged in East Asia – see Simon Shui-Man Kwan (2014) – but that is beyond my scope.

coincidence that many Asian theologians who have recently made vital contributions have their roots in or have been influenced by pentecostal/charismatic Christianity – undeniably because it is a form that does not innately or instinctively reject the spirit world as superstition.²² For example, returning to the aforementioned issue of ancestral veneration, we see how despite centuries of controversial demonisation, there has emerged a more nuanced theology of the communion of saints to allow for East Asian Christians to remain christological *and* honour their ancestors (Chan 2014: 188–97). The Japanese indigenous Christian movements (JICMs) conduct rites ‘such as evangelism of and prayer and baptism for the dead’ because of their concern for family solidarity beyond the grave as well as their ‘orthodox Christian belief that salvation for all can come only from a personal encounter with Jesus Christ’ (Chan 2014: 174; 189).

Amos Yong, who has conducted extensive work on theology of religions especially in regards to discerning the spirits, returns time and time again to a crucial pneumatological question: How is the Holy Spirit present and active in other religions? As Chan (2014: 156) says: ‘In Asia the world of spirits is very much a part of everyday life. But how the church is to engage this world depends very much on its doctrine of the Spirit.’ Amaladoss (2014: 112) too acknowledges the importance of pneumatology in Asian theologies: ‘While the Word focuses rather on the intellect, the Spirit touches more the emotions, the energy field, and the body.’ He makes a connection between the Holy Spirit and Asian traditions of *sadhana* that deal with the fields of cosmic and human energies, or the experiences of *pranah* (breath), *Qi* (energy), and *Dao* (the Way) (Amaladoss 2014: 112).²³ Although I do not go as far as Amaladoss in elevating the fruits and inspirations of the Spirit as the main criterion for discernment of truth over and above the historical manifestation of God in Jesus Christ continued in the Church – both must be prioritised – it is crucial to demonstrate how the Spirit’s presence and activity is an important focal point of East Asian theologies. Perhaps one could even say the touchpoint is the Holy Spirit, not the indigenous spirits. Some East Asian theologians might push back for fear of a

²² Henry Rowold (2015: 86) notes: ‘If [Chan’s] grassroots, primal form of Christianity sounds like a form of Pentecostalism, it clearly is, not, however, because of conscious theological decision but because this approach grows from the life experience of folks in the “grassroots.”’

²³ Other theologians such as Koo Dong Yun (2012) have also explored in depth the relation between the Holy Spirit and Qi (or Ch’i).

western-centric agenda, and although I understand the caution, I would suggest that the Spirit (of Jesus) must prove the ultimate reference point.²⁴ We will explore this in further detail in the next chapter.

It is worth noting here that although we will naturally touch upon demonology, an openness to the spirit world does not entail a fixation with demons. In fact, an openness to the spirit world should encourage a greater openness to the Holy Spirit more so than to demons.²⁵ This connects to my pastoral concern where a preoccupation with evil should not be sought; rather the priority is to seek the Lord by his Spirit. Indeed, the danger is that of an excessive supernaturalism, and perhaps (what Acolatse was warning against) a ‘premodern valorization of myth’. Pierre Gilbert (2007) acknowledges ‘the ontological reality of Satan and demons’ but warns against naïvely ascribing to them too much power. A culture which cultivates a belief in and interaction with spirits can help Christians to acknowledge a biblical reality and deal with them as beings that generate chaos; but it can also lead to ‘consciously [embracing] these spirits and/or [espousing] the ideologies of death and chaos upon which they feed’ (Gilbert 2007). There is undoubtedly a legitimate need to avoid an exoticisation of and preoccupation with the demonic. But I posit that the primary challenge in the western context is getting the western church to even acknowledge the spirit world before worrying about giving demons too much power.²⁶

Finally, Chan (2014: 7) unequivocally insists that authentic Asian theology cannot develop in a vacuum but ‘must be developed in light of the larger Christian tradition [...] [which is] not simply a matter of preference but essential to our theological quest.’ In other words, Chan advocates mutual conversation, not one-

²⁴ Edmond Tang (2014: 95–96) would certainly push back: ‘Dialogue between Christianity and other world religions has been going on for decades, but the theoretical models have always originated from a Western and Christian center. All of them, exclusivist or pluralist, assume a Christian starting point and a certain degree of Christian uniqueness and incompatibility with other faiths. More recently this either/or model has been challenged from the existential experience of dual or plural belonging.’ But I would say that the challenge is to have a Christian starting point and a certain degree of Christian uniqueness and *compatibility* with other faiths.

²⁵ But I would also argue that proper openness means that a Christian will struggle to get one without the other.

²⁶ C. S. Lewis (2001: ix) astutely observes the two equal and opposite errors humanity can make about the devils: ‘One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them.’ The West leans towards the former.

sided; western theology must listen to East Asian theology, and East Asian theology must listen to western theology. We see contemporary pentecostal/charismatic theologians like Amos Yong, Simon Chan, Kirsteen Kim, and Wonsuk Ma take seriously their East Asian contexts *and* engage in dialogue with western theologies. And it is only more recently that we begin to see them making a uniquely invaluable East Asian contribution to the global theological discourse. For example, Chan (2014: 174) notes that the JICM theology of the dead has the powerful potential to help inform a fresh interpretation of the communion of saints within the global (and western) church. However, very few of them have substantially engaged with the spirit world in conversation with the western cultural context, which is my original contribution.

Grassroots versus Elite Theologies

Chan (2014: 21–25; 31–34) claims that true Asian theologising should begin on the primal grassroots level rather than with ‘elite’ theologians often found in western-tinged ivory towers.²⁷ As aforementioned, many issues emerge from the day-to-day lives of those wrestling on the ground with war, suffering, poverty, and the presence of other religions. Amid these circumstances, East Asian Christians (like David Yonggi Cho) have been shaped by their powerful grassroots experiences of the Holy Spirit, and therefore one could identify their theologising as grassroots theology.²⁸ For what it is worth, my own experiences have also emerged from the grassroots level prior to any theological knowledge and understanding of the spirit world.

However, we cannot simply stay at the grassroots level. As we have seen, the danger lies in an uncritical rejection of grassroots belief (demonisation) or an uncritical embracing of grassroots belief (syncretism). I credit my theological education in helping me to reconcile my extensive spiritual experiences and cultural heritage with my Christian faith (i.e. education subsequent to experiences). However,

²⁷ Franklin J. Woo (2013: 296) notes that Chan himself, ‘a product of Cambridge University, [...] is no less an elitist intellectual, like the people he critiques in this volume.’ I also acknowledge that I too might be an Asian ‘elitist intellectual’.

²⁸ Unfortunately, Cho’s books are not necessarily viewed with respect by academic theologians. Chan (2014: 24) himself critiques the tendency to neglect the ‘creative theologies of men like Watchman Nee and Wang Ming Dao’ which stem from the grassroots but do not necessarily meet elitist theological criteria.

the western framework of my education has also caused me to feel isolated and misunderstood, at times leading to a questioning of my experiences.²⁹ The challenge then is how to traverse the bridge between primal grassroots experiences (which Chan and I both contend should rightly be the origin of theologising) and a critical, rational theologising especially in regards to the spirit world.

Henry Rowold (2015: 86) remains cautious about Chan and criticises him for ‘at times [soft-peddling] what would seem areas where the line between “grassroots, primal” and generic “folk religion” seems rather thin and porous.’³⁰ Rowold (2015: 86) asks: ‘Does this suggest a built-in weakness in his presentation of grassroots Asian Christianity which may explain some of the caution that much of the global Christian family instinctively senses?’ The western church has often erred on the side of cautious criticism. I wholly acknowledge that there is a legitimate caution for syncretism, but I would also wholly assert that many East Asian theologians are not just willing to but must do the heavy lifting out of necessity due to their multicultural, multireligious contexts. The western church therefore has much to learn, rather than simply cowering in (over)caution and remaining unwilling to engage the multifaceted world of spirits.

I agree with Chan’s practical grassroots emphasis which necessarily takes into account the spirit world because of folk religions. And I do somewhat agree with Chan’s sentiments that Asian theology, at least as prevalent in western academia, seems stuck in the past, unable to move past C. S. Song and Kosuke Koyama (2014: 23–25). And I too long to move on from Harvey Cox’s nineties’ study of primal spirituality, from overused comparisons of Korean Pentecostalism with shamanism, and the sensationalising of Kyung’s 1991 demonstration. However, I admit that these are not so much outdated as they are a predecessor to (spirit world) issues that plague East Asian theologies to this day. Pentecostal/charismatic theologians seeking to provide a robust and holistic theology for their East Asian contexts still wrestle with the same issues, for the grassroots experiences continue to be the same. And perhaps there are no helpful answers because there is no single question; the diverse

²⁹ The contemporary term popularised in public discourse is ‘gaslighting’.

³⁰ But Rowold (2015: 86) is also grateful for Chan awakening him to the fact that perhaps ‘the reason the Holy Spirit has such a secondary place in the life and piety of Western Christianity is because our instinctual understanding of the world is generally devoid of spirits’.

complexity of East Asia and its theologies will forever evade simplistic conclusions, and thus urgently require a greater number of theologians engaging with these essential and timely issues.

Many East Asian Christians have persevered in their faith despite undergoing radical conversions and experiencing significant ruptures in their lives. And Chan (2014: 119) astutely explains that conversion (and rupture) is precisely what allows Christians from purely assimilating into primal religiosity. Therefore, a certain level of trust should ideally be afforded to those whose theology and praxis is declared to be Christian: from Cho who claims his beliefs and practices are Christian and not shamanistic; to the JICMs which declare their ancestral veneration to be christological; to Chinese Christians who wholeheartedly believe with clear conscience that Chinese rites are not idolatrous but in line with the Bible (Hua 2016: 96). Their heart and motivation is to honour Christ and to honour their East Asian heritage – and those in the western church should in turn seek to honour their East Asian siblings' valiant theologising.

Part III: Discerning the Spirit(s): Pastoral Situations in the Western Church

How can the western church, in its steady decline within a post-Enlightenment, postmodern context, learn from the theologising of its East Asian siblings? How can East Asian theologies enrich and enliven the western church? I propose that, as a starting point, there is a vital need for greater awareness of the spirit world within the western church to seriously engage with its cultural and societal context. Just as in East Asia, so too in the West are questions regarding the presence of spirits and personal encounters with the spirit world ‘contextually and theologically important, socially and religiously relevant, and pastorally urgent’ (Kit 2018: 54). Our western context is no longer purely rationalistic and naturalistic, but one in which more and more people – Christian or not – are seeking the transcendent in order to address existential concerns. In our pluralistic society, serious and healthy engagement with the spirit world – and as Christians, with the Holy Spirit – will help the western church not to be ‘shamanistic in orientation’ (which Wonsuk Ma simplistically claims about Asian minds), but to be ‘spirit-aware’ in its discernment to align and/or catch up with society (2011: 59).

Spiritual experiences are extremely subjective and, as Ma (2019: 123) observes, difficult to measure in their intensity.³¹ Therefore, it is improbable to create a list of guidelines as much as we might desire to do so; ‘discernment cannot be reduced to applying criteria and following procedures’ (Kim 2007: 169). However, I want to emphasise that these experiences are happening to people in the West, and thus we must not avoid the task of discerning spirits despite its ambiguity and subjectivity. Kirsteen Kim (2007: 167) says: ‘Discernment requires wide horizons, in view of the breadth of the Spirit’s mission; openness, because of the unpredictability of the Spirit’s movements; and humility, since the Spirit is the Spirit of Almighty God.’ It is precisely this breadth and unpredictability of the Holy Spirit that requires us to apply discernment to concrete situations case by case rather than keeping it in the abstract.

³¹ He gives several examples of potentially measurable phenomena such as supernatural healing verified by medical professionals or ‘radical’ heart transformation via a changed lifestyle (Ma 2019: 123).

As such, I will be structuring this chapter around anecdotes of concrete pastoral situations involving encounters with the spirit world that I have personally experienced and/or witnessed in the western church over the past few years. I will be grouping these pastoral situations into three categories: one, encountering the demonic; two, encountering the Holy Spirit; and three, encountering the Holy Spirit in unexpected places.³² I will apply broad principles of East Asian theologies we have already examined to help us reflect critically on the pastoral situations: What was problematic about the way the situation was handled, and what should have been done to provide better pastoral care? These situations also occurred with Christians who believe in the spirit world, even if more theoretically than practically – in other words, the second group I mentioned in the first chapter who believe in the transcendent but struggle to deal with the middle level. I will conclude with brief reflections on Emmanuel Y. Lartey’s work on pastoral care in intercultural contexts to help us enhance our pastoral imagination.

It is also worth noting that I will simply lay out what happened in these situations as objectively as possible, rather than trying to defend or debunk the ‘truthfulness’ of these experiences. Central to pentecostal/charismatic theology is the act of ‘[telling] God’s overarching story and [narrating] their place within that story through their testimonies of encounter [with Christ’s present ministry]’ (Collins 2020: 120).³³ Therefore, as you read these experiences, let me invite you to give them hearing and presume a level of trust, not because their subjective experiences constitute ultimate truth, but because within these subjective experiences there is a disclosure of the real which allows them to “‘know” their faith and the God to whom their faith is oriented’ (Collins 2020: 120).

Pastoral Situation 1: Encountering the Demonic

I begin with encountering the demonic because I believe there is an urgent need for pastoral care and handling due to the negative nature of its aggressive physical

³² Due to the plethora of literature on demonology and pneumatology, my focus and original contribution will primarily be the third category.

³³ Experience has consistently maintained an important position throughout theological history, e.g. pietism (Lutheranism, 17th c.), John Wesley (Wesleyan Quadrilateral, 18th c.), Schleiermacher (Collins 2020: 119).

manifestation of the spirit world. But let me make it clear that beginning with the demonic does not reflect the order of theological priority. Amos Yong (2000: 249) says that ‘discerning the demonic is a derivative function of discerning the Holy Spirit; at the same time, however, proper discernment of the Holy Spirit is dependent in part on recognizing the other spirits at work.’ In other words, both the Holy Spirit and the demonic emerge from the same framework. Our primary aim is still the Holy Spirit and positive signals of transcendence, but the hope is that engaging the demonic and negative signals of transcendence will help us better understand the former.

- When asked by a church worker about what I needed prayer for, I shared about a recent demonic nightmare that had left me shaken. They proceeded to pray for me in a roundabout manner which completely avoided mentioning the word ‘demonic’.
- When asked in a church staff meeting an icebreaker question about the scariest experience I had had in my life, I shared about a recurring childhood demonic nightmare. After an awkward silence, a church worker brushed it aside by quickly changing the topic.

What I found problematic about both cases was the shared issue between the two separate church workers of an inability to discuss, let alone openly and comfortably acknowledge, the concrete actualities of demonic manifestation. This unfortunately resulted in serious pastoral repercussions. In the first case, the church worker intentionally chose not to use the word ‘demonic’ to describe the unsettling experience I had had, which meant that they did not specifically address my prayer request. Yet one of the things we are taught to do in prayer ministry is to ensure that we clearly repeat the request in our prayers to reassure the requester that they have been properly heard rather than dismissed. As a result, this caused me to question if I had even had the experience in the first place, if I was making it up, or if I was blowing it out of proportion – in other words, feeling gaslighted.³⁴ In the second case, a lack of acknowledgement (again) – though this time more deliberately dismissed –

³⁴ I had to subsequently check in with a Nigerian friend who quickly reassured me that the demonic nightmare had been real.

caused me to think twice about being open and vulnerable with other Christians, let alone those who work for a church.³⁵

How can the western church begin to become more aware and accepting of people's broad and diverse spiritual experiences especially of the demonic? Kim's concept of a 'many-spirits' pneumatology – contrasted with a 'one-spirit' pneumatology – can potentially help us in our pluralistic age. She distinguishes these terms by way of comparing Indian and Korean cosmologies, where the former believes 'in the one universal Spirit, within which the universe has its being', whilst the latter believes 'in a world of many spirits, among which the Holy Spirit is believed to be preeminent' (Kim 2007: 141). Thus, in a 'one-spirit' theology there is only 'the Spirit' without any qualifiers, but in a 'many-spirits' theology a qualifier (either 'Holy' or capitalised 'S') is needed to distinguish the third Person of the Christian Trinity from other spiritual entities (Kim 2007: 142). Although Kim (2007: 141–42) describes the Indian cosmology as 'one-spirit', I would posit that the predominant western two-tiered view of reality which splits the transcendent from the immanent – God and humankind – and excludes the middle level is also essentially 'one-spirit' theology, in which only 'the Holy Spirit is perceived to comprise what can be experienced of the spiritual world'.

However, a 'one-spirit' worldview does not help us engage with the existence of the demonic, which Yong (2000: 236) describes as not 'simply a figment or projection of the human imagination' but as 'the forces of destruction, sin and death which threaten human life'. Instead, a cosmology of 'many-spirits' helps us not to relegate the middle level as comprising of only the Holy Spirit, but as involving many spirits including the demonic.³⁶ Note Yong's helpful summary of the demonic: 'It evidences itself in ways that shock us visually, stun our senses, horrify our imaginations, arouse our moral indignation, and motivate us to action' (Yong 2003: 155). He describes the 'concrete actualities' of the demonic as the horrifying 'experience of divine *absence*' on both 'the individual and personal level and in larger

³⁵ There is the other issue of 'the scariest experience you've ever had' being a pastorally insensitive icebreaker question.

³⁶ It is important to recognise the qualitative difference between Spirit and spirits, but Scripture demonstrates the flexibility of biblical language which often embodies a 'many-spirits' language (e.g. seven spirits in Revelation, spirits in prophetic visions).

contexts' that can involve 'various levels of demonic oppression and perhaps even possession' (Yong 2000: 155; 127; 237).³⁷

In a surprising turn of events, the same church worker in the second case called me later in the week because they saw a demon in their mind's eye and were being spiritually oppressed, asking for prayer and advice on how to cast it out. This confirmed my suspicions that even if one hopes to ignore or dismiss the demonic, a greater reawakening to the spirit world proves that the demonic will not ignore or dismiss the western church. Even Christians experience the demonic, and there must be room in our pastoral understanding, practice, and theology for the demonic else we are unable to provide pastoral care in situations where people need it the most.³⁸ What we must remember, however, is that Christ was still at work in these demonic encounters which conclusively ended with Christ's victory and deliverance from oppression, and that even negative spiritual experiences can be transformed into encouraging testimonies.³⁹

Pastoral Situation 2: Encountering the Holy Spirit

We next move on to encountering the Holy Spirit, which is urgent because the Holy Spirit is the most important touchpoint for Christian engagement with the spirit world.

After a Sunday service, I prayed for healing for the dislocated shoulder of a white Christian man from a lower socioeconomic background. He began sweating profusely and felt intense heat in his shoulder. Soon, he was able to take off his cast and rotate his arm

³⁷ He also attempts to provide phenomenological criteria for the demonic, primarily a 'loss of self-control' (Yong 2000: 238), but I will posit that that is too simplistic for demonic encounters that span the wide spectrum of oppression/possession.

³⁸ This is something that western theologians (e.g. Philip G. Ziegler, Declan Kelly) are also propounding, particularly in terms of a 'three-agent drama' involving God, humanity, and 'anti-God powers of sin, death, and the devil' (Ziegler 2018: 28). Although the three-agent drama does not equate exactly with the three levels (high, middle, low), there are overlaps between anti-God powers and the middle level.

³⁹ Helen Collins (2020: 122) states that 'testimonies cannot be vaguely religious encounters with some otherwise unknown transcendental or numinous "force". Rather, in order to be sources for Christian theology, testimonies must be stories of encounters with Jesus Christ. [...] As soon as we say, "I discern Christ is at work here", our experience has become a testimony.'

fully without any pain. As he was leaving the building, he slowly drooped to the ground and lay there half-conscious, muttering in tongues. We carried him back into the building onto a sofa, and when he came to, he began laughing. By this point, the church workers were visibly impatient and annoyed, trying to usher him out of the building so they could lock up and go home. Another church worker quietly accused the man of seeking attention.

We see in this situation the occurrences of classic pentecostal/charismatic phenomena, including being ‘slain in the spirit’, ecstatic utterances (tongues), and ‘holy laughter’. What I found problematic about this case was that an encounter with the Holy Spirit demonstrated by traditional ecclesial signs was reduced to, at best, an inconvenience, and at worst, disbelief at its authenticity. Perhaps we can characterise the church workers’ attitude as one of cautious scepticism, which in itself reflects the post-Enlightenment mindset that has seeped into the western church – even churches which claim to be charismatic and open to the work of the Holy Spirit. Cheong Weng Kit (2018: 80) does note that people from marginalised backgrounds at times have the tendency to try and attract attention. Although this may be true in certain cases, I find this to be a gross overgeneralisation that can have the danger of disregarding an entire group of people and missing the Holy Spirit’s work. What we see in this situation is unfortunately a dismissal of powerful grassroots experiences by what Chan calls theological elites. As aforementioned, spiritual experiences are subjective and difficult to measure, but Ma (2019: 123) also concedes that it is still possible – for example, supernatural healing verified by medical professionals. This was precisely what happened the next day when the man’s doctor confirmed that his dislocated shoulder had been completely healed.

It is worth remembering in full what Gene L. Green (2016: 5) says about Asian theologies: ‘the Holy Spirit is not separated from the material world as is common in Western theology but is the primary essence of reality. Instead of opposing dichotomies, the Spirit is not outside the world but is “the complementary pair of *yin* and *yang*” that organizes all things.’ Perhaps the best way for the western church to integrate a greater awareness of and openness to the Holy Spirit’s supernatural working on earth may be an Asian openness rather than, say, an African openness. Harvey Kwiyani (2020: 4–5) notes the African theological emphasis on

spiritual warfare and power encounters, categories inevitably helpful in the African diasporic context. But instead of focussing on overt warfare with demons (and let me reiterate the legitimate caution against obsessive preoccupation with the demonic), Asian categories of the Holy Spirit as the primary essence of reality can perhaps bear more fruit in the western church by helping to shift people's perspectives from a purely material one to viewing the material in tandem with the spiritual. One might even arguably conceive of 'spiritual but not religious' people in the West as sharing more similarities with an Asian theological openness (more pluralistic; 'many-spirits') than with an African theological openness (more dualistic).⁴⁰

Pastoral Situation 3: Encountering the Holy Spirit in Unexpected Places

But what if the Holy Spirit's presence and activity is not so clear-cut? Encountering the Holy Spirit in unexpected places is urgent because there is a need to discern the Holy Spirit at work beyond the four walls of the church in an increasingly secular and pluralistic society. This is arguably the most challenging idea for the western church to accept and acknowledge, and also possibly the most important lesson it can learn from East Asian theologies.

During a church's mission week, a university student shared a testimony of how they had shared a word of knowledge with a white homeless man that led to his conversion on the streets.⁴¹ That word of knowledge was the name of the ghost that had been plaguing the man's dreams, causing the man to become fearful and exclaim, 'How did you know that name?' Later that day in a subsequent prayer meeting, a church worker who wanted to relay the testimony avoided mentioning the supernatural element of the word of knowledge (i.e. the ghost's name) whatsoever.

⁴⁰ Kwiyani (2020: 61) observes the mutual disadvantage that results when African (diasporic) churches fail to make good connections with European (e.g. British) churches and therefore miss an opportunity to learn from and strengthen each other's mission. This is what we should aim to circumvent with Christian/church relations between East Asia and the West.

⁴¹ This university student can be categorised in the third group of being fully open to and embracing the spirit world.

Several reasons could be conjectured about why the church worker made a conscious decision to avoid mentioning the word of knowledge: one, the church worker was unsure themselves about what they actually thought or believed about the existence of ghosts; two, the church worker was certain that to raise such an issue in the prayer meeting would lead to awkward discussions with other Christians that they wanted to avoid. What I found problematic, however, is that they reduced a supernatural encounter to an incoherent ‘conversion story’ without the actual reason for the conversion; in other words, they refused to disclose the part of the story that the entire conversion testimony hinged upon. Although it is always possible to celebrate someone coming to faith, the vague retelling deliberately obscured an arguable work of the Holy Spirit.

Due to the matter of the ghost, there is greater ambiguity regarding this pastoral situation than the other situations clearly involving demons or the Holy Spirit. However, regardless of what one might believe about the existence and activity of ghosts (e.g. demonic spirits casting an illusion, spirits of the dead), I propose that there is a need to begin with an acknowledgement of the ‘truth’ and authenticity of the experience for the man. How can adequate and appropriate pastoral care be given to this man if in the future he longs to share about the powerful encounter he had had at his conversion, but is instead met with disbelief, mockery, or rejection? It is a relief to know that the student who had been a catalyst was someone competent in engaging with the spirit world; one wonders if someone else might have instinctively dismissed the notion of ghosts as pure nonsense or superstition and unwittingly created a barrier to (rather than encouraging) conversion. Ultimately, the fruit borne of this encounter was conversion to the Christian faith which strongly implies that the Holy Spirit was indeed at work in this unusual situation. For indeed, as I Corinthians 12. 3 says, it is only by the Spirit that we can confess that ‘Jesus is Lord!’

Discerning the Spirit(s) in Western Grassroots Experiences

Let us now look more in depth at East Asian theologies to give us further insight into the third situation in order to prepare us for similar future encounters. The guiding questions we should begin to ask are: Where is the Holy Spirit in other contexts that are not explicitly Christian, be that religious or cultural? How is the Holy Spirit at

work outside the church?⁴² These are questions emerging directly from East Asia's pluralistic and interreligious contexts; reflecting on criteria for discerning the Spirit(s) emerges directly from a theology of religions.⁴³ Although the missional aspect is most prominent within East Asian contexts in order to 'overcome barriers to dialogue with people of other faiths' (Kim 2007: 156), it is just as pastorally applicable since many Christian converts carry over their belief in the spirit world. Therefore, Yong's question becomes pertinent, both for within and without the western church: 'what safeguards exist against confusing the presence and activity of other spirits with that of the Holy Spirit, and, vice versa, confusing the presence and activity of the Spirit with that of other spirits (committing blasphemy against the Holy Spirit)' (Yong 2000: 64)?

Experiences with ghosts – as in the third situation – might very well be (increasingly) a pervasive form of western grassroots experience, and it is understandable that Christians would want to be wise about such encounters (as was the case with ancestral veneration in East Asia). But just as sophisticated and nuanced theologies have emerged within East Asian contexts due to extensive grassroots engagement, so too can they emerge in the West. Personally, East Asian theologies have crucially exemplified how to embody a greater openness to the Holy Spirit working in unexpected ways on the grassroots level. It has helped me to dismantle a simplistic dichotomy of demonisation on the one hand and syncretism on the other – both of which relate to negative signals of transcendence – when it comes to discerning concrete spiritual manifestations. Instead, the work of East Asian theologians has challenged me to primarily seek positive signals of transcendence, namely how and where and when the Holy Spirit is at work in said situations.

If, as Yong (2000: 291) says (and I agree), 'that discernment needs to be open to the possibility of encountering the Holy Spirit at the most unexpected places', how do we go about this process of discernment? It is here that we emphasise the importance of Christ. Kim (2007: 168) acknowledges that people of different religions (e.g. Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists) have different criteria for discerning the spirits

⁴² Ma (2019: 121) notes the spectrum of responses ranging from an absolute 'no' to 'of course, yes' to the question of whether the Holy Spirit works outside the church.

⁴³ Yong (2000: 39; 64) perceptively distinguishes between a (traditional) theology of *the unevangelised* concerning salvific matters and a (contemporary) theology of *other religions* concerning how the Holy Spirit is present and at work in other faiths.

according to their spiritual contexts, but the Christian discernment of the Spirit (of God, and thus, of Jesus Christ) is always Christ-centred. Although Yong views the christological nature of discernment as ‘divisive in interreligious relations’ (Kim 2012: 160) and argues that a truly pneumatological discernment will also take other religions on its own terms instead of imposing upon it a christological framework, I agree with Kim (2012: 36) who says that ‘the criterion for Christian discernment is clear; the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus Christ.’ She goes on to say:

The Holy Spirit is not present only where there is explicit Christian confession but where there is a likeness of Christ. This likeness may be in character or characteristics, the ‘love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control’ which are the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5.22–3; cf. Rom. 12.9–21). Or it may be in action or activity, where the gifts of the Spirit are being exercised in love for the building up of the body (1 Cor. 12–14) and where people are being liberated, healed, helped, forgiven and reconciled (e.g. Luke 4.18–19; John 20.21–3; Rom. 8.22–6).⁴⁴

The challenge with cases like our third situation is that true and lasting fruit is not immediately discerned, especially when it requires a demonstration of spiritual fruits and gifts – ‘a likeness of Christ’ – only observed over time within a (pastoral) church context. However, we also witnessed the man experience real liberation and healing, as well as give an explicit Christian confession and undergo conversion. If we embody a greater openness to the Holy Spirit being able to work unexpectedly, we can then be better equipped to pastorally and sensitively steward the discipleship and lives of others on this spiritual journey even if they might have had unconventional beginnings.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ For more in-depth exploration of criteria, see: Kim’s four biblical criteria (ecclesial, ethical, charismatic, liberational) (2007: 168); Hiebert, Shaw, and Tiéno’s criteria of glory, lordship, power, scripture, accountable, fruits, maturity, unity (1999: 375); Yong’s criteria of fruits, works, salvation, conversion, holiness (2005: 256); Kit’s proposed hermeneutical matrix of context, character-consistency, community, content (2018: 79–81); Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences’ five criteria of fruits, values, faith, listening, harmony/unity (Cho 2014: 22). See also: Yong’s critique of Hiebert’s criteria (2000: 139–40); Chan’s critique of Kim’s criteria (2014: 26).

⁴⁵ Some individuals within the church will have a greater gift of discerning spirits, but what I am encouraging is greater churchwide openness, acceptance, and understanding so that those with the gift can thrive instead of being shut down.

Pastoral Care and the Spirit World

I propose that greater awareness of the spirit world is key – a missing piece – to better pastoral practice in the western church. It is vital that when we consider pastoral considerations, we also fit ‘awareness of the spirit world’ into that framework to allow us to broaden our imagination and approach. Pastoral care is essential in church settings, helping to direct people ‘toward the healing, sustaining, guiding and reconciling of troubled persons’ (Lartey 2003: 21).⁴⁶ However, Emmanuel Y. Lartey (2003: 15) quotes Black psychologists Khatib and Nobles as saying: ‘White [*sic*] or Europeans are no longer the standard by which the psychology of people is judged’. In other words, there is a need to consider pastoral care within the framework of cultural contexts.

Lartey (2013: 120) encourages us to ‘[find] ways of challenging the psychological reductionism of westernized approaches to pastoral care’ and ‘[centre] spirituality integrally and crucially’ so that ‘[s]pirituality instead of psychology becomes the major cognate discipline for pastoral care.’ He provides the example of Masamba ma Mpolo whose models of pastoral care take fully into account African traditional cosmologies and a ‘liberating spirituality’ (Lartey 2003: 24). Masamba expounds the importance of considering both spiritual and relational causes such as bewitchment, the anger of mistreated and offended spirits, possession by an alien spirit, broken human relations, etc.⁴⁷ ‘Pastoral Counselling,’ Masamba says, ‘should therefore also use spiritual means of letting people deal with their emotional needs’ (Lartey 2003: 25).

However, such spiritual experiences that require pastoral care imbued with an awareness of the spirit world are not simply happening in the West to Africans or Asians or other ethnic minorities. It is worth noting that in the second and third pastoral situations, the people involved in these encounters with the spirit world were white westerners. In fact, both were from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, which

⁴⁶ This definition comes from Clebsch and Jaekle’s *Pastoral Care in Historical Perspective* which for many years was ‘regarded as standard both in North America and in parts of the British pastoral movement’ (Pattison 1988: 11).

⁴⁷ Lartey (2004: 97) also observes that pastoral counselling in the Philippines takes seriously the influential unseen world of spirits and powers, e.g. the issue of *sinapiyan* (possession or oppression) by the demonic; he observes that ‘[i]n Filipino life there is little problem with the interface between the psychological and the spiritual.’

perhaps further suggests a greater propensity for spiritual experiences on the grassroots level. Lartey is correct to emphasise the importance of considering ‘cultural context’, but in the West’s constantly shifting cultural context, the spirit world is no longer irrelevant. We see the middle level clearly reflected in the Bible, and in society, and it is our responsibility to shift our perspective to include biblical realism in our pastoral imagination and approach.⁴⁸ Otherwise we may very well fail in our pastoral care when we ‘do not recognize that spirituality is central to the personality’ of more people than we might realise – be that Asians, or Africans, or even Europeans (Lartey 2013: 119).

Is God by the Holy Spirit present and active? Is Satan by the demonic present and active? If both, which areas involve the Holy Spirit and which areas involve the demonic?⁴⁹ Perhaps these are important questions to begin to ask in our discerning of spirits. We must ensure we are pastorally sensitive in areas of care which we rationally understand or are able to quantify; likewise, we must also ensure we are pastorally sensitive with supernatural encounters with the middle level instead of dismissing them as silly, ludicrous, or foolish superstition. What would happen if we approached and dealt with spirit-world experiences with a genuine pastoral gravity? By being open and seeking to discern the Spirit(s), the western church can embody and enact greater pastoral care and sensitivity to those who find themselves wittingly or unwittingly encountering the spirit world, helping them to navigate ‘troubles [which] arise in the context of ultimate meanings and concerns’ (Lartey 2003: 21).

⁴⁸ Justin S. Ukpong (1989) undertakes an in-depth examination of biblical backing for the presence and activity of spirits.

⁴⁹ This does not account for the array of diverse spiritual entities not included in a simple dichotomy between the Holy Spirit and the demonic.

Conclusion

I have given a survey of modern western society to demonstrate the complex admixture and influence of Enlightenment rationalism and postmodern pluralism pervading the western worldview, and which has also seeped into the western church to differing degrees. I have also provided a survey of East Asian theologies which fully consider and engage with the presence and activity of the spirit world, and which have developed a sophisticated and nuanced theology of discerning spirits – both the Holy Spirit and other spirits. Finally, I attempted to map principles of East Asian theologies on to concrete pastoral situations involving spiritual experiences occurring in the western church with the aim to encourage a proactive awareness of and engagement with the spirit world, as well as to reclaim the ‘excluded middle’. My heart has been not just to critique but to help align the mismatched levels of a two-tiered, split-level western Christianity that does not sufficiently take into account the middle level by both providing conceptual language and establishing a framework.

It is worth mentioning here a criterion for discernment that will hopefully further enable the western church to take seriously the experiential realm of the spirit world especially on the grassroots level which often eludes rationality (e.g. ghosts). Amos Yong (2000: 247) expounds one of Stephen Parker’s primary means of discernment as ‘the deeply-felt sense of rightness about the situation’ – where ‘one’s cognitive, affective and practical senses combine to present an intuitively felt sense of harmony’. In a post-Enlightenment worldview this ambiguous sense might be disparaged, but blind capitulation to rationalistic, naturalistic assumptions as well as ‘an intolerance for ambiguity’ (Yong 2000: 249) could very well undermine proper discernment of spirits. There is certainly a need to discern within community and with Scripture, but in an increasingly pluralistic world where ambiguity is pervasive, objective criteria alone will not suffice; this subjective intuitive sense should be made one of many – but not the sole – criteria. Yong (2000: 250; italics mine) summarises this as ‘[embracing] a holistic epistemology’ where ‘[r]ational and non-rational (*not irrational*) ways of knowing combine to inform [a] charismology of discernment.’

However, despite the best efforts of many theologians to formulate guidelines or criteria for discerning the Spirit(s) (see footnote³⁵), we must acknowledge not just the subjectivity and plausible ambiguity of spiritual experiences, but also – and

primarily – the breadth and unpredictability of the Holy Spirit’s work. Ultimately, it is important to remember that discerning the spirits is a gift of the Holy Spirit rather than a set of rules to follow; discernment ‘is an aspect of Christian spirituality, the result of “living by the Spirit” in relationship with Jesus Christ’ (Kim 2007: 169).

My concerns in this dissertation have mainly been pastoral, but it is worth briefly noting the missional implications. The western church has an urgent need to locate and appeal to those in society already interested in engaging the supernatural (e.g. New Age spiritualities).⁵⁰ Secularism is present in western society, but it is arguably not as pervasive. Grace Davie (2015: 163; 74) notes the shift away from ‘orthodoxy’ and formalised/institutionalised religion, but she also observes how the majority of people (seventy-seven per cent) in Britain believe that ‘there are things in life that we simply cannot explain through science or any other means’ – in other words, ‘some sort of God or supernatural force’. Even those who do not consider themselves religious or spiritual might still engage in diverse spiritual practices and beliefs like ‘healing, the paranormal, fortune telling, fate and destiny, ghosts, spiritual experiences, prayer and meditation, luck and superstition’ (Davie 2015: 162; 74).

As uncertain, unknown, and ambiguous as grassroots spiritual experiences and beliefs might be to the western church, we must resist retreating and insisting on the ‘ultimate incommensurability’ of Christianity and other faiths/spiritualities, the heavy consequences of which include an abandoning of Christian mission and the ceasing of the gospel as universally applicable if points of contact cannot be found (Yong 2004: 192). The western church must engage in interreligious – or more accurately, what I term *interspiritual* – dialogue just as its East Asian siblings have done and are continuing to do. We now live in a pluralistic world where ‘the transcendent or eternal nature of the Spirit of Jesus Christ cannot be predetermined or assumed, but only discerned and experienced in the life of believers’ (Kim 2007: 169). As awareness and experience of the spirit world grows in the West, perhaps conversion testimonies will naturally revolve less around Augustinian ‘struggles with a guilt-laden conscience’ and more around powerful encounters with the Holy Spirit leading to ‘freedom from bondage to fear, evil powers or the caste system’ (Chan 2014: 120–21) – healing and deliverance and an emphasis on *Christus Victor* where although ‘the gods failed, the

⁵⁰ The western landscape is also being formed by immigrants and their religions (e.g. Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism), which will require greater interreligious dialogue.

Christian god came and overcame.’ This is precisely what we saw in the pastoral situation involving the homeless man freed from the bondage to fear of the ghost.

Finally, the phenomenon of ‘reverse missions’ – or ‘blessed reflex’ (Ross 2003: 167) – demonstrates that many with a spirit-world background continue to live, serve, and minister in the West and the western church. Globalisation and migration will only further this trend, increasing engagement between East Asian and western Christians, and therefore also greater opportunities for cross-cultural learning and growth.⁵¹ Let me reiterate: We want neither to reject the transcendent wholesale, nor return to an uncritical pre-modern worldview, nor acquiesce to a relativist postmodern pluralism. What we need is appropriate pastoral and missional practice within our churches when dealing with the spirit world. And by doing so, we can continue to embrace the transcendent within the immanent frame, and perhaps help those who seek it as well. Davie (2015: 163) claims that ‘the British have not become a nation of atheists or materialists. On the contrary, a spiritual current runs as, if not more, powerfully through the nation than it once did.’ Through openness to the spirit world, I pray that the western church will not just survive but thrive in our contemporary society, helping people who are seeking a spiritual hope and reality – people seeking spiritual answers to spiritual questions – to find and know God ‘both noetically and experientially’ (Acolatse 2018: 7).

⁵¹ This is exemplified by the estimated migration of 300,000 Hong Kong residents to the UK over the next five years – see ‘Media factsheet: Hong Kong BN(O) Visa Route’ (2022).

Bibliography:

- Acolatse, Esther E. 2018. *Powers, Principalities, and the Spirit: Biblical Realism in Africa and the West* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans)
- Amaladoss, Michael. 2014. 'Asian Theological Trends', in *The Oxford Handbook of Christianity in Asia*, ed. by Felix Wilfred (New York: Oxford University Press), pp. 104–20
- 2014. 'Pentecostalism and Charismatic Movements in Asia', in *The Oxford Handbook of Christianity in Asia*, ed. by Felix Wilfred (New York: Oxford University Press), pp. 158–70
- 2017. 'Contextualization in Pentecostalism: A Multicultural Perspective', *International Bulletin of Mission Research*, 41: 29–40
- Berger, Peter L. 1970. *A Rumour of Angels: Modern Society and the Rediscovery of the Supernatural* (London: Allen Lane The Penguin Press)
- 1980. *The Heretical Imperative: Contemporary Possibilities of Religious Affirmation* (London: William Collins Sons & Co)
- 1999. 'The Desecularization of the World: A Global Overview', in *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics*, ed. by Peter L. Berger (Washington D.C.: Ethics and Public Policy Center), pp. 1–18
- Bosch, David J. 2011. *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission, Twentieth Anniversary Edition* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books)
- Carter, Steven S. 2000. 'Demon Possession and the Christian', *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies*, 3: 19–31
- Catto, Rebecca. 2008. 'Has mission been reversed? Reflections on recent sociological research with non-Western Christian missionaries in England', in *Migration and Mission: Papers read at the biennial conference of the British and Irish Association for Mission Studies at Westminster College, Cambridge 2nd–5th July 2007*, ed. by Stephen Spencer (Sheffield: Cliff College Publishing), pp. 109–18
- Chan, Simon. 1994. 'Asian Pentecostalism, Social Concern and the Ethics of Conformism', *Transformation*, 11: 29–32
- 2010. 'Folk Christianity and Primal Spirituality: Prospects for Theological Development', in *Christian Movements in Southeast Asia: A Theological*

- Exploration*, ed. by Michael Nai-Chiu Poon (Singapore: Genesis Books and Trinity Theological College), pp. 1–17
- 2014. *Grassroots Asian Theology: Thinking the Faith from the Ground Up* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press)
- Cheong, John. 2009. ‘Reviewed Work(s): *The Holy Spirit in the World: A Global Conversation* by Kirsteen Kim’, *Transformation*, 26: 60
- Cho, Heejung Adele. 2014. ‘The Presence of the Holy Spirit in the Context of Christianity in Asia: From the Perspective of Frederick E. Crowe and the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences (FABC)’ (unpublished doctoral essay, University of Toronto, Regis College)
- Chung, Hyun Kyung. 1991. *Struggle to be the Sun Again: Introducing Asian Women’s Theology* (London: SCM Press)
- Chung, Paul S. 2009. ‘The Future of Irregular Theology in East Asia: Asian Contextual Theology: Past, Present, and Future’, in *Constructing Irregular Theology: Bamboo and Minjung in East Asian Perspective* (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV), pp. 185–210
- Clooney, S. J., Francis X. 2014. ‘In the Light of Asia: Reflections of a Western Christian’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Christianity in Asia*, ed. by Felix Wilfred (New York: Oxford University Press), pp. 593–96
- Collins, Helen. 2020. *Reordering Theological Reflection: Starting with Scripture* (London: SCM Press)
- Cox, Harvey. 1995. *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-first Century* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press)
- Davie, Grace. 2015. *Religion in Britain: A Persistent Paradox*, 2nd edn (Chichester: Blackwell Publishers)
- Evers, Georg. 2014. ““On the Trail of Spices”: Christianity in Southeast Asia: Common Traits of the Encounter of Christianity with Societies, Cultures, and Religions in Southeast Asia’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Christianity in Asia*, ed. by Felix Wilfred (New York: Oxford University Press), pp. 65–79
- Fabella, Virginia, Peter K. H. Lee, and David Kwang-sun Suh. 1992. ‘Introduction’, in *Asian Christian Spirituality: Reclaiming Traditions*, ed. by Virginia Fabella, Peter K. H. Lee, and David Kwang-sun Suh (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books), pp. 1–10

- Gerkin, Charles V. 1997. *An Introduction to Pastoral Care* (Nashville: Abingdon Press)
- Gilbert, Pierre. 2007. 'Further Reflections on Paul Hiebert's "The Flaw of the Excluded Middle"', *Direction*, 36: 206–18
<<http://directionjournal.org/36/2/further-reflections-on-paul-hieberts.html>>
[accessed 31 August 2022]
- Green, Gene L. 2016. 'The Spirit Over the Earth: Pneumatology in the Majority World', in *The Spirit over the Earth: Pneumatology in the Majority World*, ed. by Gene L. Green, Stephen T. Pardue, and K. K. Yeo (Carlisle: Langham Global Library), pp. 1–12
- Heelas, Paul. 1993. 'The New Age in Cultural Context: The Premodern, the Modern and the Postmodern', *Religion*, 23: 103–16
- 2006a. 'Challenging Secularization Theory: The Growth of "New Age" Spiritualities of Life', *The Hedgehog Review*: 46–58
- 2006b. 'The Infirmary Debate: On the Viability of New Age Spiritualities of Life', *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 21: 223–40
- Hiebert, Paul G. 1982. 'The Flaw of the Excluded Middle', *Missiology: An International Review*, 10: 35–47
- 1999. *Missiological Implications of Epistemological Shifts: Affirming Truth in a Modern/Postmodern World* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International)
- Hiebert, Paul G., R. Daniel Shaw, and Tite Tiénou. 1999. *Understanding Folk Religion: A Christian Response to Popular Beliefs and Practices* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books)
- 1999/2000. 'Responding to Split-Level Christianity and Folk Religion', *International Journal of Frontier Missions*, 16: 173–82
- Hopkins, Denise Dombkowski, and Michael S. Koppel. 2010. *Grounded in the Living Word: The Old Testament and Pastoral Care Practices* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company)
- Hua, Wei. 2016. 'Pauline Pneumatology and the Chinese Rites: Spirit and Culture in the Holy See's Missionary Strategy', in *The Spirit over the Earth: Pneumatology in the Majority World*, ed. by Gene L. Green, Stephen T. Pardue, and K. K. Yeo (Carlisle: Langham Global Library), pp. 78–98

- Huss, Boaz. 2014. 'Spirituality: The Emergence of a New Cultural Category and its Challenge to the Religious and the Secular', *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 29: 47–60
- Hwa, Yung. 2008. 'Mission and evangelism: evangelical and pentecostal theologies in Asia', in *Christian Theology in Asia*, ed. by Sebastian C. H. Kim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 250–70
- 2011. 'Pentecostalism and the Asian Church', in *Asian and Pentecostal: The Charismatic Face of Christianity in Asia*, 2nd edn, ed. by Allen Anderson and Edmong Tang (Oxford: Regnum Books International), pp. 30–47
- 2014. *Mangoes or Bananas?: The Quest for an Authentic Asian Christian Theology*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Regnum Books International)
- Kelly, Declan. 2022. *The Defeat of Satan: Karl Barth's Three-Agent Account of Salvation* (London: T&T Clark)
- Kenneson, Philip D. 2015. 'What's in a Name? A Brief Introduction to the "Spiritual But Not Religious"', *Liturgy*, 30: 3–13
- Kim, Kirsteen. 2004. 'Spirit and "Spirits" at the Canberra Assembly of the World Council of Churches, 1991', *Missiology: An International Review*, 32: 349–65
- 2007. *The Holy Spirit in the World: A Global Conversation* (New York: Orbis Books)
- 2008. 'The Holy Spirit in the world: a global conversation', *ANVIL*, 25: 177–93
- 2012. *Joining in with the Spirit: Connecting World Church and Local Mission* (London: SCM Press)
- Kim, Sebastian C. H. 2008. 'Preface and Acknowledgements', in *Christian Theology in Asia*, ed. by Sebastian C. H. Kim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. xi–xiv
- 2014. 'Inter-Asia Mission and Global Missionary Movements from Asia', in *The Oxford Handbook of Christianity in Asia*, ed. by Felix Wilfred (New York: Oxford University Press), pp. 145–57
- Kit, Cheong Weng. 2018. 'The Holy Spirit and Other Spirits in Asia: Discernment of Spirits in Non-Christian Religions', *Jurnal Teologi Amreta*, 1: 53–88
- Koyama, Kosuke. 1999. *Water Buffalo Theology, Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Edition Revised and Expanded* (New York: Orbis Books)
- Kwan, Simon Shui-Man. 2014. *Postcolonial Resistance and Asian Theology* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge)

- Kwiyani, Harvey. 2020. *Multicultural Kingdom: Ethnic Diversity, Mission and the Church* (London: SCM Press)
- Lartey, Emmanuel Y. 2003. *In Living Color: An Intercultural Approach to Pastoral Care and Counseling*, 2nd edn (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers)
- 2004. ‘Globalization, Internationalization, and Indigenization of Pastoral Care and Counseling’, in *Pastoral Care and Counseling: Redefining the Paradigms*, ed. by Nancy J. Ramsay (Nashville: Abingdon Press), pp. 87–108
- 2013. *Postcolonializing God: An African Practical Theology* (London: SCM Press)
- Leach, Jane. 2007. ‘Pastoral Theology as Attention’, *Contact*, 153: 19–32
- Lee, Jung Young. 1971. ‘The Yin-Yang Way of Thinking: A Possible Method for Ecumenical Theology’, *International Review of Mission*, 60: 363–70
- 1996. *The Trinity in Asian Perspective* (Nashville: Abingdon Press)
- Lee, Young-hoon. 2009. *The Holy Spirit Movement in Korea: Its Historical and Theological Development* (Oxford: Regnum Books International)
- Lewis, C. S. 2001. *The Screwtape Letters* (New York: HarperCollins)
- Livingston, James C. 2006. *Modern Christian Thought: The Enlightenment and the Nineteenth Century*, 2nd edn (Minneapolis: Fortress Press)
- Ma, Julie C. 2010. *When the Spirit Meets the Spirits: Pentecostal Ministry Among the Kankana-ey Tribe in the Philippines*, 2nd revised edn (Eugene: Wipf & Stock)
- Ma, Julie C., and Wonsuk Ma. 2010. *Mission in the Spirit: Towards a Pentecostal/Charismatic Missiology* (Oxford: Regnum Books International)
- Ma, Wonsuk. 1997. ‘A “First Waver” Looks at the “Third Wave”’: A Pentecostal Reflection on Charles Kraft’s Power Encounter Terminology’, *PNEUMA: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies*, 19: 189–206
- 2011. ‘Asian (Classical) Pentecostal Theology in Context’, in *Asian and Pentecostal: The Charismatic Face of Christianity in Asia*, 2nd edn, ed. by Allen Anderson and Edmong Tang (Oxford: Regnum), pp. 48–76
- 2019. ‘Lord and Giver of Life: The Holy Spirit among the Spirits in Asia’, in *Asian Christian Theology: Evangelical Perspectives*, ed. by Timoteo D. Gener and Stephen T. Pardue (Carlisle: Langham Global Library), pp. 119–38
- ‘Media factsheet: Hong Kong BN(O) Visa Route’, *Home Office in the media* (2022) <<http://homeofficemedia.blog.gov.uk/2022/02/24/media-factsheet-hong-kong-bnos/>> [accessed 31 August 2022]

- Melchionna, Elizabeth Marie. 2016. 'Reviewed Work(s): *Grassroots Asian Theology: Thinking the Faith from the Ground Up* by Simon Chan', *Anglican and Episcopal History*, 85: 549–51
- Nam, Mark Yan Ying Sum. 2020. 'Prophetic Dialogue, East-Asian Theology and the Changing Voice of Mission: What can the Church of England learn from East-Asian theology in terms of Contextualizing the Gospel?' (unpublished master's dissertation, Trinity College/Bristol Baptist College)
- Newbigin, Lesslie. 1986. *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture* (London: SPCK)
- Ooi, Samuel Hio-Kee. 2006. 'A Study of Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare from a Chinese Perspective', *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies*, 9: 143–61
- Parker, Stephen E. 1996. *Led by the Spirit: Toward a Practical Theology of Pentecostal Discernment and Decision Making* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press)
- Pattison, Stephen. 1988. *A Critique of Pastoral Care* (London: SCM Press)
- Phan, Peter C. 2011a. 'Introduction: Asian Christianity/Christianities', in *Christianities in Asia*, ed. by Peter C. Phan (Chichester, West Sussex: Blackwell Publishing), pp. 1–8
- 2011b. 'Conclusion: Whither Asian Christianities?', in *Christianities in Asia*, ed. by Peter C. Phan (Chichester, West Sussex: Blackwell Publishing), pp. 255–61
- 2014. 'Asian Christian Spirituality', in *The Oxford Handbook of Christianity in Asia*, ed. by Felix Wilfred (New York: Oxford University Press), pp. 510–23
- 2021. 'Contemporary Christianities in Southeast Asia: Challenges and Opportunities', *Indonesian Journal of Theology*, 9: 8–22
- Rah, Soong-Chan. 2009. *The Next Evangelicalism: Freeing the Church from Western Cultural Captivity* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press)
- Rayan, Samuel. 1992. 'The Search for an Asian Spirituality of Liberation', in *Asian Christian Spirituality: Reclaiming Traditions*, ed. by Virginia Fabella, Peter K. H. Lee, and David Kwang-sun Suh (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books), pp. 11–30
- Robbins, Joel. 2004. 'The Globalization of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 33: 117–43
- 2007. 'Continuity Thinking and the Problem of Christian Culture: Belief, Time, and the Anthropology of Christianity', *Current Anthropology*, 48: 5–38
- Robinson, Martin. 1996. *To Win the West* (Crowborough: Monarch)

- Ronan, Marian. 2010. 'Reviewed Work(s): *The Holy Spirit in the World: A Global Conversation* by Kirsteen Kim', *Journal of World Christianity*, 3: 77–85
- Ross, Kenneth R. 2003. "'Blessed Reflex": Mission as God's Spiral of Renewal', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 27: 162–68
- Rowold, Henry. 2015. 'GRASSROOTS ASIAN THEOLOGY: Thinking the Faith from the Ground Up. By Simon Chan', *Concordia Journal*, 41: 85–87
- Samartha, Stanley J. 1990. 'The Holy Spirit and People of Other Faiths', *The Ecumenical Review*, 42: 250–63
- Schweizer, Eduard. 1989. 'On Distinguishing Between Spirits', *The Ecumenical Review*, 41: 406–15
- Singapore Bible College. 2022. *Mosaic: A Podcast of Singapore Bible College*, online podcast, Singapore Bible College <<http://www.sbc.edu.sg/podcast/>> [accessed 31 August 2022]
- Smith, James K. A. 2014. *How (Not) to Be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans)
- Song, C. S. 1979. *Third-Eye Theology: Theology in Formation in Asian Settings* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books)
- Studebaker, Steven M. 2012. *From Pentecost to the Triune God: A Pentecostal Trinitarian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company)
- Tang, Edmond. 2014. 'Identity and Marginality—Christianity in East Asia', in *The Oxford Handbook of Christianity in Asia*, ed. by Felix Wilfred (New York: Oxford University Press), pp. 80–97
- Taylor, Charles. 2007. *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press)
- Thompson, David M. 2008. 'Introduction: mapping Asian Christianity in the context of world Christianity', in *Christian Theology in Asia*, ed. by Sebastian C. H. Kim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 3–21
- Ukpong, Justin S. 1989. 'Pluralism and the Problem of the Discernment of Spirits', *The Ecumenical Review*, 41: 416–25
- Volf, Miroslav. 2011. 'One Spirit, Many Tongues: Globalisation, Christian Faith and Religious Diversity', in *The Holy Spirit in the World Today*, ed. by Jane Williams (London: Alpha International), pp. 29–41

- Vondey, Wolfgang. 2010. *Beyond Pentecostalism: The Crisis of Global Christianity and the Renewal of the Theological Agenda* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company)
- Wiebe, Phillip H. 2004. *God and Other Spirits: Intimations of Transcendence in Christian Experience* (New York: Oxford University Press)
- Woo, Franklin J. 2013. 'Reviewed Work(s): *Grassroots Asian Theology: Thinking the Faith from the Ground Up* by Simon Chan', *China Review International*, 20: 294–96
- Woods, Paul. 2015. 'Reviewed Work(s): *Mangoes or Bananas: The Quest for an Authentic Asian Christian Theology* by Hwa Yung', *Transformation*, 32: 137–38
- Yong, Amos. 2000. *Discerning the Spirit(s): A Pentecostal-Charismatic Contribution to Christian Theology of Religions* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock)
- 2002. 'Going Where the Spirit Goes: Engaging the Spirit(s) in J.C. Ma's Pneumatological Missiology', *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*, 10: 110–28
- 2003. *Beyond the Impasse: Toward a Pneumatological Theology of Religions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic; Carlisle, Cumbria: Paternoster Press)
- 2004. 'The Holy Spirit and the World Religions: On the Christian Discernment of Spirit(s) "After" Buddhism', *Buddhist-Christian Studies*, 24: 191–207
- 2005. *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh: Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic)
- 2011. 'The Demonic in Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity and in the Religious Consciousness of Asia', in *Asian and Pentecostal: The Charismatic Face of Christianity in Asia*, 2nd edn, ed. by Allen Anderson and Edmong Tang (Oxford: Regnum Books International), pp. 77–108
- 2016. 'I Believe in the Holy Spirit: From the Ends of the Earth to the Ends of Time', in *The Spirit over the Earth: Pneumatology in the Majority World*, ed. by Gene L. Green, Stephen T. Pardue, and K. K. Yeo (Carlisle: Langham Global Library), pp. 13–33
- Yong, Amos, Dale T. Irvin, Frank D. Macchia, and Ralph Del Colle. 2003. 'Christ and Spirit: Dogma, Discernment, and Dialogical Theology in a Religiously Plural World', *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*, 12: 15–83
- Yu, Carver T. 1987. *Being and Relation: A Theological Critique of Western Dualism and Individualism* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press)

Yun, Koo Dong. 2012. *The Holy Spirit and Ch'i (Qi): A Chiological Approach to Pneumatology* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications)

Ziegler, Philip G. 2018. *Militant Grace: The Apocalyptic Turn and the Future of Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic)