

A Response to Kenneth Archer's
"Blessed Assurance: A Pentecostal Theology of Grace"

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INTRODUCTION

Thank you, Dr. Archer, for the opportunity to engage with your excellent presentation. Your paper is a passionate call for Pentecostals to look back into our shared Wesleyan heritage, and re-envision a theological framework to strengthen Global Pentecostalism.

Archer explores Pentecostal Spirituality from her historical “Wesleyan holiness” roots and frames salvation as a grace-filled, lifelong journey with God. Next, Archer proposes using the Fivefold Gospel of Jesus (as Saviour, Sanctifier, Baptiser in the Holy Spirit, Healer, and Soon-Coming King) with corresponding understanding of sacramental ordinances (such as water baptism, foot washing, gifts of healing, tongues and tears, and communion) undergirded by a Wesleyan theology of grace, as expressions of the Spirit’s ongoing work.

In addition, Archer defines sacramental ordinances as community acts of commitment ordained by Christ as means of grace with particular symbolic significance for our Pentecostal identity (story) and faith journey (*via salutis*).¹ He states that the early Pentecostal community approached Scripture and rituals through a “supernatural worldview” that sacramental ordinances are not mere symbols but *encounter spaces* where the Holy Spirit actively work among God’s people to heal and deliver, bridging the gap between the biblical text and modern life.²

I would like to offer my response in two sections: First, how Archer’s paper reinforces our understanding of the Theology of Grace for Asian Pentecostals. Second, my reflections on adopting the proposed Archer’s Wesleyan-informed Pentecostal framework in the Asian context.

A Pentecostal Journey to Asia: From Aldersgate via Azusa

¹ Kenneth J. Archer, “Nourishment for Our Journey: The Pentecostal Via Salutis and Sacramental Ordinances,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 13, no. 1 (2004): 80.

² Kenneth J. Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic: Spirit, Scripture, and Community* (CPT Press, 2009), 140–141.

Archer's framework reinforces the need for Asian Pentecostals to rediscover a theology rooted in the understanding of soteriology with sanctification and how the Spirit's work is understood Christologically. Wesley's theology posits that believers could experience a second work of grace, subsequent to conversion, that would perfect them in love.³ This emphasis on personal piety and spiritual experience laid the groundwork for the Pentecostal movement. As Archer reminds us, Pentecostalism historically emerged from the Wesleyan holiness womb, *as persons experienced a distinct moment of God's grace called the Baptism of the Holy Spirit*. Donald Dayton notes that early Pentecostals saw themselves as completing Wesley's vision, taking "new birth" and adding Spirit Baptism for mission.⁴

The Azusa Street Revival, led by William J. Seymour in 1906, marked a pivotal moment in the emergence of Pentecostalism out of the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition.⁵ This revival emphasised the baptism of the Holy Spirit, accompanied by speaking in tongues, as a distinct experience subsequent to conversion.⁶ Following his Wesleyan roots, Seymour maintained an integral connection between sanctification and power by defining Spirit baptism as a gift given "upon the sanctified, cleansed life."⁷ Spirit Baptism does not replace sanctification; it empowers, renews, and releases the sanctified life into outward expression.⁸ This imagery directly reflects Wesley's understanding of sanctification as a total transformation by the love of God. As Seymour wrote, "Divine love, which is charity. Charity is the Spirit of Jesus," asserting that

³ John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley, Vol 1: Sermons I* (Abingdon Press, 1984), 125.

⁴ Donald W. Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Hendrickson, 1987), 21.

⁵ William J. Seymour, "The Doctrines and Discipline of the Azusa Street Apostolic Faith Mission" (Los Angeles: Azusa Street Mission, 1906), 3.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁷ William J. Seymour, "The Way to Holiness," *The Apostolic Faith* 1, no. 1 (September 1906): 4.

⁸ Macchia, "The Kingdom and the Power: Spirit Baptism in Ecumenical Perspective," in *Pentecostal Theology and Ecumenical Theology: Interpretations and Intersections* (Brill, 2019), eds. Peter Hocken, Tony L. Richie, and Christopher A. Stephenson, 233.

Spirit baptism fundamentally fills the believer with this divine love (cf. Rom 5:5).⁹ The Azusa Street's outpouring would lead to the global Pentecostal movement as we know today.

Understanding a Wesleyan-informed Theology of Grace

In this next section, I would like to explore how this Wesleyan-informed Pentecostal spirituality can impact us in Asia today. With Wesleyans, in contrast to Calvinists, grace does not point Christians to salvation primarily in forensic terms, but to a living relationship with the Spirit, who on the basis of Christ's atonement continues the work of transformation in us and our society. I would like to highlight two polarising theological shifts in Asia:

a. Reformed Monergism

Simon Chan highlights that as the first and second generations of Asian Pentecostals attained higher levels of formal education, they began to experience a profound sense of cognitive dissatisfaction with the shallow intellectual theology, and unbridled emotionalism in their churches.¹⁰ This sentiment among urban Asian Christians can be read as a structural reaction against the perceived deficiencies in a Pentecostal, charismatic culture. The Reformed movement gives educated Asian Christians a sense of intellectual stability and theological depth that their local Pentecostal environments frequently lacked.¹¹

From a Wesleyan-Pentecostal perspective, Reformed theology places greater emphasis on God's sovereign action and too little on the believer's cooperation with the Holy Spirit. In Reformed monergism, human agency is functionally overwhelmed by an irresistible grace

⁹ Macchia, "The Kingdom and the Power," 234.

¹⁰ Simon Chan, *Pentecostal Theology and the Christian Spiritual Tradition*, Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplement Series, vol. 21 (T&T Clark, 2000), 45.

¹¹ Chan, *Pentecostal Theology*, 52.

operating exclusively upon the elect. Under a more restrictive Reformed lens with a cessationist bias, the mediated spaces for the Holy Spirit can be more limited with greater emphasis placed on a cerebral, text-centred engagement with Scripture. Archer's retrieval of prevenient grace re-establishes the Pentecostal understanding of grace—how God's love universally “inspires and enables, but does not overpower.” Prevenient grace enables human free will rather than force our response, inviting us to actively partner with the Holy Spirit on a lifelong journey of justification, sanctification, and glorification.

b. Hyper-Grace Movements

Tan-Chow May Ling observes that in affluent, high-stress, and capitalistic Asian cities, believers often crave a spiritual message offering quick relief from corporate pressure, performance anxiety, and cultural guilt.¹² This has fuelled a “hyper-grace” theology that overemphasises forgiveness and legal standing, while ignoring progressive sanctification. By dismissing repentance, confession, and the moral law as obsolete, hyper-grace slides into antinomianism. This contradicts core Pentecostal spirituality, which asserts that grace must in reality transform our daily lives and character into Christlikeness, not just alter our legal status before God.

Archer's Wesleyan theology of grace offers a balanced view on the Christian life: God's grace invites us to cooperate with the Spirit and actively transforms us through the same Spirit, avoiding both Reformed determinism and hyper-grace complacency. By anchoring the Fivefold Gospel and sacramental ordinances in this Christocentric pneumatology, Archer's framework

¹² May Ling, Tan-Chow, *Pentecostal Theology for the Christian Spiritual Tradition in Modernity* (Wipf and Stock, 2011), 54.

preserves a dynamic, relational space for the Spirit to heal, sanctify, empower, and form the church in holiness and love—love for God and others.

Wesleyan-informed Pentecostal Sacramental Framework for Asia

Next, I would like to offer two reflections on how Archer's proposed Wesleyan-informed Pentecostal sacramental framework can strengthen Pentecostal spirituality in Asia.

First, the need for a Christocentric pneumatology. As Singaporean sociologist Daniel Goh observes, urban Asian Pentecostalism easily slides into a consumerist, transactional prosperity theology. This turns the church into a corporate machinery where economic success and wealth are displayed as a moral economy of pure grace.¹³ Such “hyper-grace” strips sacraments of ethical depth.¹⁴ Communion becomes a passive token of individual entitlement rather than a moment of deep self-examination. In contrast, Wolfgang Vondey reminds us that true Pentecostal spirituality centers on the “altar”—a place of radical personal crisis, repentance, and transformation.¹⁵ Such a Christocentric pneumatology keeps its focus on Christ and the active work of the Spirit shaping us into Christlikeness. This prevents us from turning Christianity into a materialistic faith and reducing the sacraments to means of blessing only.

Secondly, the need for sacramental ordinances that demonstrate relational and social restoration. Sacramental ordinances provide an essential liturgical space for communal healing. In many Asian cultures where public emotional restraint is expected, believers carry deep, unvoiced generational trauma and grief—a reality captured by the Korean theological concept of

¹³ Daniel P. S. Goh, “Pentecostalism in Singapore: History, Adaptation and Future,” in *Brill's Series on Christianity in East and Southeast Asia* (Brill, 2019), 19.

¹⁴ Melissa L. Archer and Kenneth J. Archer, “The Sacramental Nature of Pentecostal Ordinances,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 22, no. 2 (2013): 189.

¹⁵ Wolfgang Vondey, *Signs and Wonders: Theology after Pentecost, Roman Catholic and Protestant Perspectives* (T&T Clark, 2024), 55.

han (한 / 恨).¹⁶ While Western theology often focuses on the sinner's need for forgiveness, *han* shifts the focus to the *victim's* need for comfort, vindication, and collective restoration. Here, salvation reveals God not just as a judge who forgives, but as a compassionate companion who validates pain and dismantles structural trauma.¹⁷ Approaching ordinances as a “Spirit baptism into God’s love” that overflows into “tongues and tears” turns the church into a healing sanctuary. It gives victims a public voice to lament and allows the Holy Spirit to heal their deep-seated bitterness inwardly.¹⁸

In addition, Hwa Yung emphasises that Asian societies are structured around strong ethical frameworks, including Confucian filial piety, honour-shame dynamics, and strict social boundaries.¹⁹ In this context, the ordinance of footwashing serves as a restorative tool that dismantles these rigid hierarchies and enforces mutual accountability between leaders and laity.²⁰ Tan-Chow reinterprets footwashing as a radical space of socio-political resistance outwardly—a physical subversion of the authoritarian leadership patterns and socioeconomic hierarchies dominant in Asia.²¹ Furthermore, Steven Land argues that sacramental ordinances fuse the corporate, historical, and eschatological dimensions of faith, allowing the community to experience an affective transformation of the heart (*orthopathy*) through the Holy Spirit.²² These ordinances provide a safe, physical anchor for believers to externalise their pain and experience genuine emotional, relational, and social restoration.

¹⁶ Amos Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh: Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology* (Baker Academic, 2005), 192.

¹⁷ Andrew Sung Park, *The Wounded Heart of God: The Asian Concept of Han and the Christian Doctrine of Sin* (Abingdon Press, 1993), 68.

¹⁸ Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, 110.

¹⁹ Hwa Yung, *Mangoes or Bananas?: The Quest for An Authentic Christian Theology* (OCMS, 1997), 15.

²⁰ Archer and Archer, “The Sacramental Nature of Pentecostal Ordinances,” 201.

²¹ Tan-Chow, *Pentecostal Theology*, 108.

²² Steven J. Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom* (Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 115.

Asian Contextualisation of the Fivefold Gospel

In Asia, Pentecostalism has taken root in diverse cultural contexts, incorporating local expressions and traditions.²³ Archer notes, the fivefold gospel provides a “coherent” and comprehensive understanding of Pentecostal Theology.²⁴ Though some have criticised that the fivefold gospel is too Western-centric and neglects the diverse expressions of Pentecostalism in the Global South, the fivefold gospel remains a useful pastoral framework for Asian Pentecostal churches.²⁵

The most prominent example of an Asian adoption of the fivefold gospel is found in South Korea, introduced by the late Dr. David Yonggi Cho (1936–2021) at Yoido Full Gospel Church (YGFC).²⁶ Following the devastation of the Korean War, the population faced intense poverty, disease, and societal despair. Cho took the traditional, text-centered fivefold gospel exported by Western missionaries and adapted it to meet the felt needs of the broken populace.²⁷ Cho structured his entire homiletical and ministerial philosophy around a localised adaptation of the fivefold gospel which he categorised as:

- The Gospel of Regeneration (Savior)
- The Gospel of the Fullness of the Holy Spirit (Spirit-Baptiser)
- The Gospel of Divine Healing (Healer)
- The Gospel of Blessing (Blessor)

²³ Allan Anderson, “An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity,” (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 123.

²⁴ Kenneth J. Archer, *The Gospel Revisited: Towards A Pentecostal Theology of Worship and Witness* (Pickwick, 2011), 63.

²⁵ Yong, “The Spirit Poured Out”, 25.

²⁶ Sung Hoon Myung, “Spiritual Dimension of Church Growth as Applied in Yoido Full Gospel Church” (D.Miss. diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 1990), 248.

²⁷ David Yonggi Cho, *The Three-Fold Blessing* (Seoul Logos, 1993), 45.

- The Gospel of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ (Soon-Coming King).²⁸

As a contextual adaptation, Dr. Cho reconfigured the traditional Holiness/Wesleyan emphasis on Jesus as Sanctifier into a “Gospel of Blessing,” making the Fivefold Gospel more pastorally relevant to a nation recovering from war. At the same time, he developed a companion hermeneutical tool known as the Threefold Blessing, referencing 3 John 2 (“*I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you*”).

Through Cho’s framework, the fivefold gospel was no longer just an inward, pietistic journey of individual moral self-improvement. Instead, Jesus as *Healer* and *Blessor* meant that Christ’s redemption actively disrupted physical illness, ancestral curses, and material poverty in the present world.²⁹ While Western critics frequently accused Cho of blending the gospel with shamanistic syncretism, Asian theologians note that this contextual adoption allowed Pentecostalism to offer a tangible “gospel of hope” that resonated deeply with the collective existential trauma of post-war Korea.³⁰ To date, YFGC is the world’s largest church in human history³¹ with a recorded attendance of more than 850,000 members in 2023.³²

It is important to note that Cho’s fivefold gospel has not slipped into hyper-grace or the prosperity gospel and has remained Christologically-centred and pneumatologically grounded.³³ One key reason for this is the sacramental ordinances present in the ecclesial life of YFGC. The successful adoption and realisation of the fivefold gospel at YFGC cannot be understood merely

²⁸ David Yonggi Cho, *Great Businessmen of the Bible* (Yoido Full Gospel Church, 2002), 12-15.

²⁹ Myung, “Spiritual Dimension of Church Growth,” 250.

³⁰ Wonsuk Ma, “The Full Gospel and the Apocalypse: An Asian Perspective,” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 15, no. 1 (2012): 22.

³¹ “About Us,” Yoido Full Gospel Church, accessed July 19, 2026, <https://www.yoidoenglishministry.org/announcements-1>.

³² Adam Volle, “Yoido Full Gospel Church,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, last updated February 17, 2026, accessed July 19, 2026, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Pentecostalism>.

³³ Lee Young-Hoon, “The Role of Prayer and its Centrality in Sustaining the Effectiveness of Global Christianity,” in *Voices Loud and Clear*, eds. Kong Hee, Bryon D. Klaus & Douglas Petersen (Regnum Books International, 2024), 90.

as the introduction of a new theological system. Instead, its actualisation was entirely qualified, powered, and sustained by a radical, intensive corporate prayer movement. This is the sacrament of tongues, tears, praying for the sick and laying on of hands as described by Archer.

The present senior pastor of YFGC, Dr Young-Hoon Lee shares about the importance of “tong sung prayer” in their church. The members will call out “Lord, Lord, Lord” three times and pray simultaneously in tongues.³⁴ Till today, the sacramental ordinance of *glossolalia* remains central in YFGC. Archer argues that this sacramental ordinance draws believers into a deeper and more intimate communion with the Trinity, and it overflows into the life of the church, empowering every believer to live out the mission of Christ.³⁵

CONCLUSION

Archer’s fivefold gospel framework offers us a pastoral understanding of our Pentecostal heritage which is shaped by a Christological pneumatology. By pointing us back to a Wesleyan soteriology, we recover the ongoing responsive experience of sanctification in our personal relationship to the Spirit which is not limited to a charismatic, missional empowerment.³⁶ In the life of the church, it is not a human organisation that merely asks for the Spirit’s power; but rather, it is “a continuous event sustained by the breath of God” where He regenerates, sanctifies, baptises, and empowers us with His charismatic gifts.³⁷

As Asian Pentecostals, we must remain open to the immediate contextualisation and disruptive movement of the Spirit.³⁸ To sustain a resilient Asian Pentecostal Church, we need to

³⁴ Lee, “The Role of Prayer,” 87.

³⁵ Archer, “Nourishment for Our Journey,” 19.

³⁶ Daniel E. Albrecht, *Rites in the Spirit: A Ritual Approach to Pentecostal/Charismatic Spirituality* (Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 238–243.

³⁷ Frank D. Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology* (Zondervan, 2006), 209.

³⁸ Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*, 225.

live in the continuous outpouring of the Spirit's divine love and in holiness, through worship, prayer, sacramental ordinances, repentance, spiritual disciplines, and Spirit-empowered mission, enlarging the encounter spaces where the Spirit actively mediates Christ's ongoing work on earth, as Saviour, Sanctifier, Baptiser, Healer, and Soon-Coming King—from the Father, through the Son, in the Spirit.

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