11. Christology and soteriology

11.1. INTRODUCTION

According to Walter J. Hollenweger, pentecostal pneumatology is critically viewed as an actualized Christology. Christology in pentecostalism, therefore, appears as pneumatological Christology. This statement indicates that Christ works here and now through the Holy Spirit. Sunbogeum theology far exceeds classical pentecostalism in this matter. Having received the traditional formulation of Chalcedon in A.D. 451 (one person with two natures), it addresses both the nature of His being, the so-called ontological Christology and His redemptive work in the sphere of Christology, the so-called functional Christology. Regarding penal substitutionary Atonement through Christ to restore the glory of which man was deprived by Adam’s fall, Sunbogeumism holds that God restores His holistic blessing, namely the Triple Blessing, in Christ. Therefore, it also regards Christ’s kingship as a matter of great importance, a defining characteristic. Its soteriology accompanies this Christology and is manifested in the idea of Triple Salvation. In other words, Sunbogeumism argues that Christ saves us from spiritual death, physical sickness, and circumstantial curse.

In this chapter, we will first deal with Christology (11.2) and, thereafter, with soteriology (11.3). Systematic Theology: A Pentecostal Perspective (1994), edited by Stanley M. Horton, will be consulted together with Triple Salvation (1979) and The Truth of Sunbogeum I & II (1979) by Yonggi Cho. Systematic Theology (1941) by L. Berkhof and Der gekreuzigte Gott: Das Kreuz Christi als Grund und Kritik christlicher Theologie (1972/ 2nd ed. 1973) by Jürgen Moltmann, are referred to as critical sources.

11.2. CHRISTOLOGY

The Christology of Sunbogeumism provides the underlying principle of Triple Salvation. In addition to the traditional doctrine of Christology, it has several other features. We will discuss these three features: the contrast in the roles between the first Adam and the Second Adam (11.2.1), the cross of Jesus Christ (11.2.2), and the three offices, especially the kingly office of Jesus Christ (11.2.3).

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2 David R. Nichols, “The Lord Jesus Christ,” in STAPP, p295. It is defined by what He did or does and who He is.
11.2.1. Jesus Christ, the Second Adam

Sunbogeuism compares the position of the first Adam who lost God’s blessing by his disobedience to God to the role of the Second Adam, God’s Son Jesus Christ, who restored man’s relationship with God as well as its consequential blessing through His obedience to God (Rom. 5:12-21). Even though the parallel between Adam (the head of the covenant of works) and Christ (the head of the covenant of grace) is discussed in covenantal theology, which sees them as the representatives of the old and new covenants, covenantal theology approaches it in relation to justification. Accordingly, its concern was focused on the fact that the penalty of the broken covenant was death and the promise of the new one is eternal life. Berkhof hints at the fact that the contents of the covenant of grace is summarized as “I will be a God to thee.” Then all other promises are included in it: various temporal blessings, which often symbolize the spiritual kind; justification, adoption, and eternal life; the Holy Spirit for the application of the work of redemption and the blessings of salvation; and the final glorification life.4

For Sunbogeuism, this comparison will be applied to the redemptive efficacy of Jesus Christ, who restores that which Adam was deprived. Adam’s sin was his ignoring God’s sovereignty (Gen. 3:1-7). It was his disobedience to God. Adam lost his life and was sent out from God’s blessed Garden of Eden. Consequently, Adam and his descendants, who are all doomed to return to dust, exist by toiling the land of thorns and thistles. More than that, they became slaves to Satan because of their sins (1 John 3:8). The Second Adam, God’s Son, however, obeyed God. He sacrificed Himself as the ransom for all the sins of Adam. Consequently, He not only saves souls but also restores the blessed life of Eden.5 This comparison of Adam and Christ in relation to their positions as representatives does not appear in the Christology and soteriology of classical pentecostalism; but it is a feature of Sunbogeuism, which believes in the total depravity of the human and total salvation in Christ.6 Sunbogeuism, in this regard, is closer to classical orthodox Protestant theology (Berkhof)7 than pentecostalism.

Young Hoon Lee contends that conservative Christology in Korea (Sunbogeuism belongs to this) differs entirely from that of Minjung theology, which ignores the redemptive work of Christ.8 Jeong-Geun Pak pointed out the difference between Sunbogeu Christology (the Mediator Christ) from shamanism, which regards shamans as mediators.9

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4 ibid., pp.211-218, 262-301. Quoted from 277. It seems that Berkhof also believes that the general circumstantial blessing of God is included in Christ’s redemption as a new covenant of grace. He does not fully develop this idea as Sunbogeuism does.
6 Gordon Anderson, “Current Issues in Pentecostal and Charismatic Theology.” Unpublished pamphlet. This view of Sunbogeuism is entirely different from the Kingdom Now Movement (1980-...), which teaches that the kingdom is present ... everything is possible and people are little gods...
7 Berkhof, Systematic Theology, 1938, pp.410-411.
11.2.2. Cross and Resurrection

Sunbogeum theology puts the events of the cross as the core of Christology. According to Cho, who emphasizes divine sovereignty, the cross was preplanned by God before creation by the eternal council of the Trinity. Understanding the redemptive grace of God pneumatologically, Cho writes that the blood of Jesus presented before God is for our redemption today and the Holy Spirit brings His blood to us now and sprinkles it on our hearts (conscience) to sanctify us. There is no other way to salvation of humankind whose sin is transmitted from Adam as a whole except through Christ’s Atonement through His suffering and death. Christ took upon Himself original sin and all sins committed, all environmental curses, every kind of disease, and the death of Adam’s descendants. Then He fully restores the spiritual and material sovereignty by destroying the satanic right to rule over sinners. This is the interpretation of the cross of Jesus in Sunbogeumism, which takes the penal substitutionary doctrine literally on the basis of the vicarious Atonement. In this way the foundation for Triple Salvation is laid. However, Sunbogeum’s understanding of His death and resurrection as the Atonement for our salvation has its own uniqueness. It emphasizes the substitutionary side of Christ and nearly ignores the reconciliatory side of Christ’s Atonement. His death and resurrection was substituted for our sins but the morality for the reconciliation between the resurrected Christ and us is overlooked. Consequently, the reconciliation among believers in His agape cannot be well-established. This weakness also stems from the weakness of its Biblical hermeneutics, which loses the sight of the whole Bible.

Moltmann’s Christology can be interpreted as a criticism of this Christology. He points out the tendency that traditional/evangelical Christology, to which Sunbogeum Christology also belongs, emphasizes “the only begotten (monogenes) Son of God” for sinners’ Atonement whereas it neglects “the first-born (protošekos) among many brethren.” As a result, that Christology does not fully move people to be transformed into the image of Christ through the Spirit. According to Moltmann, a “functional-soteriological-substitutional Christology,” including that of Sunbogeumism, can neither encourage believers to be identified with Christ in His sufferings in this world (Col.1:24), nor bring a true koinonia among people in their communities.

Sunbogeumism also seems to lose the balance of the dual aspects of the cross — suffering and glorification (1 Pet.1:11,12). This problem has not been a big issue for pentecostalism in general. On account of this tendency, Sunbogeumism has been sometimes criticized for having too little understanding of the cross. However, as we have already observed, its Triple Salvation was established upon the Atonement of the cross. Sunbogeumism seems to be a theologia gloriae at first sight, but the theological position of Luther’s theologia crucis is not contrary to Sunbogeumism.

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10 Cho, The Truth … II, pp.119, 158, 162,163.
14 Moltmann, In der Geschichte … , pp.64-66; idem, Der gekreuzigte Gott … , pp.245-254.
15 The separation of three-stage pattern and two-stage pattern pentecostalism was an issue at its early stage.
because the latter does not leave from the general framework of Reformation theology. Walter von Loewenich’s formulation sheds insight on the relationship between these two theologies. He states that theology which takes the Holy Spirit seriously does not deal with theologia gloriae, but with theologia crucis. This implies that in theologia gloriae, no real work of the Holy Spirit is taken into account. For Luther himself, if works originate from God (opera Dei) through faith, they belong to theologia crucis. According to these two ideas, we can infer that Sunbogeumism, which is wholly involved in the work of the Holy Spirit and faith, belongs to theologia crucis. However, other aspects seem to point to a difference between both positions. Although both parties share the basic principles of the Reformation, they also differ. These differences are not primarily based upon their theological foundations but on their emphasis. Both Luther and Korean pentecostalism make what happened on the cross of Christ a key concept, but Luther regards the suffering as of more importance while Sunbogeumism emphasizes glorification. Both developed a Christ-centred theology, trying to realize unio cum Christo, but Luther invites Christians to live as if they were co-crucified with Christ, whereas Sunbogeumism calls them to live co-resurrected with Christ, as witnesses of Christ through wonders and miracles in the power of the Spirit. Therefore, Luther’s ‘negative theology’ emphasizes the crucified and hidden God while Sunbogeum’s ‘positive theology’ promotes the resurrected and revealed God. Consequently, they disagree with one another on a spiritual plane even though they share the same theological ground.

17 Martin Luther, “Die Heidelberger Disputation, 1518” in Theologie des Kreuzes, edited by Georg Helbig, Leipzig, 1932, pp. 105-121. For Luther, theologia gloriae was the work of the Law or human efforts of Scholasticism in relation to justification before God.
18 Loewenich, ibid., p.161.
19 ibid., pp.99-216. passim. We may compare theologia crucis and Sunbogeumism as follows: the former takes a future-oriented (eschatological) and hidden-God concept of faith while the latter presents a future-oriented and works-producing concept of faith as well; the former emphasizes inner relation to suffering (life under the cross) while the latter seeks the outer works through the Holy Spirit (life of witness); the former thinks of the crucified Christ while the latter looks more at the glorified Christ who is with us in the Spirit (filling with the Spirit); the former regards the world as the opposite aspect of faith and it seeks the hidden God in it and separates itself from it while the latter tries to conquer it with the Gospel and regards resources as means for accomplishing God’s will; the richness, happiness, and the highest Christian virtue of the former are found in faith in hidden-God Himself and in the peace, humility, suffering, temptation, and lowness of the cross while prosperity, health, joy, and much work for Christ are believed to bring happiness and these will be the virtue of the latter.
traditional religions, it has developed in this context. As such, we understand that both have had different missions in different times.

Considered from the standpoint of *theologia crucis*, Sunbogeunism belongs in the category of *theologia gloriae*. The theology of cross may contribute to Korean pentecostalism through criticism and new guidelines. First of all, it can warn Sunbogeunism of the danger of losing the balance between the cross and the resurrection by emphasizing the concept of glorification. At the same time, the latter has something to contribute to the former. From the viewpoint of Sunbogeunism, the former, which is involved in the fight for justification through Christ’s redemptive death versus the scholastic understanding of human efforts, overlooked sanctification as well as the gifts of the Holy Spirit in God’s church. This means, that *theologia crucis* has the opposite one-sidedness of Sunbogeunism. The former reveals its inclination to an ascetic model whereas the latter shows its disposition of a pentecostal model.

11.2.3. The Offices of Christ

Calvinism developed the doctrine of the three offices of Jesus Christ – prophet, priest, and king. As prophet, He revealed God through proclamation and teaching; now in heaven, He continues prophetic activity through the Holy Spirit in His church. As priest, He offered Himself as the redemptive sacrifice and, now in the heavenly sanctuary, He is doing His intercessory work. These two offices are also understood by Sunbogeunism in the same way. His kingly office, however, is more practically described by Sunbogeunism. This office also differs slightly from the teaching of classical Pentecostalism. Christ-centred Sunbogeunism asserts that Christ should be the King in all aspects of our lives. This difference is the matter of emphasis because classical pentecostalism holds the same view of His kingly office. Sunbogeunism, according to its pneumatic and dynamic Christology, teaches that Jesus as King frees believers from both spiritual captivity and circumstantial suppressions, which are the result of sin. The Gospel and the power of God forgive sins and break satanic oppressions. As a king has the power to rule, so too does Christ have God’s authority to accomplish the Messianic mission. In other words,
His prophetic and priestly offices cannot be carried out without His kingly office. When Jesus cast out Satan or demons by the Spirit of God on earth, the royal rule of God (basileia tou theou) was established (Matt. 12:22-29). Since His exaltation, He continues this work (Heb. 13:8) through the Holy Spirit. Where His Spirit works, there His kingship becomes real in the realm of human life. Triple Salvation is then realized where believers enjoy royal richness and dignity.\(^{27}\)

This Christology, however, which emphasizes the presence of Christ (Christ-God) in the church and in revival movements tends to neglect the historical Jesus (Jesus the man). Korean pentecostals embraced this Christology not only because of the Scriptures but also because of the critical situation in Korea which needed Christ as a miracle-bringing God rather than a Christ of humility.\(^{28}\) In reference to this Christology of Korean pentecostalism, Jae Bum Lee suggested that the theologia crucis or theology of affliction needs to be highlighted so a more balanced theology can be developed.\(^{29}\)

### 11.3. SOTERIOLOGY

Sunbogeum soteriology emphasizes both the vicarious atonement of Christ and His presence in believers through the Holy Spirit. The loss of Adam as the representative of the old covenant can be restored wholly by Christ as the representative of the new covenant. This is central to Sunbogeumism’s soteriology.

We will now turn our attention to two points that are crucial to understanding Sunbogeumism soteriology: the order of salvation (11.3.1) and the application of Jesus’ redemptive grace to the holistic salvation of mankind (11.3.2).

#### 11.3.1. The Order of Salvation

Keeping the view of original corruption, total depravity, and total inability,\(^{30}\) Sunbogeumism teaches that salvation is the absolute grace of God for humanity.\(^{31}\) While Jeong-Geun Pak and Jeong-Ryeol Pak did not deal with the order of salvation under the heading of soteriology in their systematic theology,\(^{32}\) Yonggi Cho dealt with it under the heading of ‘Grace of Salvation’ in his book, *The Truth of Sunbogeum II* (1979). He then discusses soteriology in three sections: the essence of salvation, the three phases of salvation, and the assurance of salvation.

Cho explains the essence of salvation by saying that humans, who are under the yoke of Adam’s sin, need to be saved. The only way to get this grace is God’s salvation. Humans need to respond to Him through repentance and faith. For people, repentance and faith are the conditions for salvation. Even though repentance and faith are the means of God’s grace, humans can resist this grace. Faith especially is needed to help man receive salvation. The whole process of salvation is divided up

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28 See 6.2.7 and 6.2.8.
into the three stages of regeneration, justification, and sanctification. These three phases may be called the ‘order of salvation.’ Regeneration is a practical and conscious event which brings a changed life. Justification is the legal state of righteousness in a man, which the good God declares on the grounds of the imputed righteousness of Christ. Sanctification is a lifelong process. A constant infilling of the Spirit for Christians is included here. Nevertheless, sinless perfectionism is clearly denied. As classical pentecostalism is characterized more by the gifts of the Spirit rather than the fruit of the Spirit, Sunbogeumism is also more interested in the power to witness than in sanctification. Under the heading of ‘Assurance of Salvation,’ Cho deals with predestination (according to foreknowledge), election, assurance, the possibility of falling, and the position of the Law and grace in relation to salvation. Cho assures believers, however, that we are saved by the grace of God, not by the works of the Law.

Cho’s view of predestination is not entirely identical with that of classical Pentecostalism, which follows Arminian doctrine. For Cho, God had known that all humans would fall. This point is understood by Cho as the foreknowledge of God in reference to predestination and salvation. Second, God had predestined some to be saved among the potentially fallen humans, according to His own love and will before the foundation of the world. This does not mean that God had predestined some on account of the foreseen faith or good works in Christ (cf. Arminianism), but means that some, who had been predestined among sinners, would therefore believe in Christ and would be saved. These two aspects resemble infralapsarianism. Third, the double predestination of both election and condemnation, as well as the theory of limited Atonement, are denied whereas man’s free will to reject God’s grace is acknowledged. This position can be seen as mediating between Calvinism and Arminianism. In other words, this position is similar to that of the Augustinian view of the balance between predestination and the free will of man. If we arrange the ordo salutis of Sunbogeumism according to the traditional form, we can list it as follows: predestination according to foreknowledge of the general fall, election and calling, repentance, faith, regeneration, justification, sanctification, possibility of

53 Cho, ibid., pp. 319-351.

54 ibid., p.343; idem, Triple Salvation, 1978, pp.186-188. Cho teaches a holy life, so-called Christian perfection, through the grace of the blood of Christ, the holy Spirit, and the word of God. He especially denies perfectionism because it not only denies God’s grace but is also self-centred, and the idea of the Law.

55 Idem, The Truth … I, p.119. The Truth … II, pp.351-361. This idea is not the official doctrine of the Korea Assemblies of God. Cho did not formulate any doctrine about this but his idea is found in his writings.


57 Cho, The Truth … II, pp.351-371; idem, A Commentary on the Epistles to the Romans, pp.270-291; idem, A Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians, pp.18-24; ITI, Faith and Theology of Yoido Sunbogeum Church I, 1993, p.121. Cho’s emphasis on predestination is that humans as a whole are sinners. Therefore, those who are not predestined are not in a position to accuse God on account of His predestination because they are sinners and are under the sentence of death in any case. Cho interprets that God had predestined and elected some before the foundation of the world according to His own will and plan (his commentaries on Rom. 9:11-21 and Eph. 1:4-11); Because Cho also admits the human right to resist God’s grace, his idea of God’s sovereign predestination is logically unsound and different from that of Calvinism.

58 Sam-Hwan Kim, telephone interview to ITI, Seoul (20.6.2002). ITI, ibid., pp.120-122.
fall, glorification, and assurance. Assurance is the climax of the whole *ordo salutis* in Sunbogeum’s understanding of soteriology.  

### 11.3.2. Threefold Redemption through Christ

Sunbogeum’s understanding of Christ’s Atonement is connected to soteriology. As has been already observed in a previous section (11.2), *Sunbogeumism* applies the substitutional death of Christ to our salvation as a whole. Adam’s sin, which is passed down to humankind, caused five problems: man’s spirit is dead and his relationship with God became extinct; man’s body was cast out from the blessing of Eden; man’s body was doomed to die and disease as a means for it; man lost the image of God and became the servant of Satan; and the order of human constituents, spirit, soul, and body, was changed to making the soul the centre, subject to the desire of the body. The blood of Christ redeemed man from all the above-mentioned consequences. This is the Triple Salvation of *Sunbogeumism* (8.3.2).

While classical pentecostalism holds the fundamental truth that divine healing is included in the redemption of Christ (8.2.2), and practises it to some extent, it does not include the redemption of circumstantial curse in its soteriology. *Sunbogeumism*, however, insists that sin, disease, and circumstantial curse are redeemed through Christ. According to *Sunbogeumism*, the grounds for this doctrine is found in the Scriptures. First, Christ provided a ‘threefold redemption’ (spirit, body, and circumstances) for Adam’s threefold corruptions (Gen. 2:16,17; 3:8-21). Secondly, He redeemed mankind from the curse of the Law: “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us … for it is written, ‘cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’ “ (Gal. 3:13); “the chastening for our peace (well-being) fell upon Him” (Is. 53:5c); and “though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich” (2 Cor.8:9). Cho claims that “the Gospel is the practical qualification which saves the human” in totality. In this regard, he pointed out six misconceptions about the Gospel of Jesus Christ: that it saves only the soul; that it is mainly the norm of ethics and morals; that it is the new religious law and doctrine; that it is the object of religious knowledge; that it is the principle of social reform and philosophy; and that it is the tool for shamanistic blessing. Even before the Second Coming of Christ, God’s presence through the Spirit among His people (*Immanuel*) makes them anticipate

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39 Cho emphasizes assurance. He argues that our salvation does not come from our works and, therefore, our faults do not nullify our salvation. Only two sins can lead believers to apostasy. First, if a man recognizes the work of the Holy Spirit and blasphemes against the Spirit, he can be an apostate (Matt. 12:22-37). Second, if a man is saved and acknowledges the grace of God through the Spirit and denies Jesus Christ wilfully, he will lose the grace of salvation (Heb. 6:4-8). These two sins have prerequisites: recognizing God’s grace fully and rejecting God wilfully.

40 A Statement of Fundamental Truths Approved by the General Council of the Assemblies of God (2-7. 10. 1916), states that “Deliverance from sickness is provided for in the atonement, and is the privilege of all believers”; There are no discussions about the atonement of circumstances in the writings of Ernest S. Williams (*Systematic Theology vol. II*, 1953) and Stanley M. Horton (*STAPP*, 1994, edited by Horton).


43 ibid.

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His kingdom. This holistic idea leads Christians to apply Christ’s grace of Atonement to the Triple Salvation so that God’s rule will be established in practice in all realms of their lives. These items are included in the lives of orderly Christians: praying constantly, receiving the baptism in the Spirit and keeping the fullness of the Spirit, loving others and evangelizing, tithing, working hard and being successful in what they are engaged, and fasting and praying. Then they will see the blessing of God in all respects of their lives.

Although this doctrine is strong because of its pragmatic scope, it also has the danger of losing sight of being justified by God’s grace (God’s juridical declaration of justification) because it can encourage the notion that doing good works proves the quality of salvation. The Tonghap Presbyterian Denomination gave warning to such a pneumatological and holistic understanding of soteriology in a different way: it may cause confusion between justification by faith and sanctification because of its coupling of the Fivefold Gospel (salvation) and the Triple Blessing (blessing).

11.4. CONCLUSION

Having been developed in the modern Korean religio-cultural environments, Sunbogeumism has shaped a strong pneumatological Christology and a holistic view of soteriology. We will first evaluate its Christology and then its soteriology.

Sunbogeum Christology goes beyond the teaching of classical pentecostalism by the application of the roles of Adam and Christ as the representatives of both covenants. In line with this understanding, it proclaims that Christ restores the total blessing of God, which Adam was deprived of, through His Atonement. This interpretation laid the foundation for the Triple Salvation. Its understanding of holistic salvation through the cross manifests an inclination towards theologia gloriae. Accordingly, it is not unexpected that Sunbogeum Christology places a major emphasis on the kingly office of Christ – Christ is King in all aspects of human life and He makes men free from all circumstantial suppressions. This is a strong pneumatological Christology.

Sunbogeum Christology’s strength is that it has further developed the traditional covenant theology to the point that it illuminates what Christ restores in humanity from the loss of Adam. In other words, its tendency towards theologia gloriae has the positive aspect of materializing God’s grace in His Spirit, but it has the weakness of emphasizing the substitutionary side of His Atonement and ignoring the reconciliatory aspect of His Atonement (Moltmann). It further has the danger of overlooking the balance of the cross (suffering and glorification) with the pursual of man’s glory. This Christology ends up in the prosperity Gospel of Sunbogeumism.

Sunbogeum soteriology shares the same characteristics as its pneumatological Christology; but its ordo salutis, especially Yonggi Cho’s idea of predestination, falls somewhere between the Calvinistic concept of predestination and

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Arminianism’s idea of free will. It emphasizes God’s sovereignty more than classical pentecostalism, and logically concludes that what Adam lost is restored in Christ in the spiritual, physical, and circumstantial realms. Believers are expected to practically claim the whole salvific grace of God in the here and now. Christ is expected to become King in their daily lives and they can then live after the order of the royal family.

This soteriology’s strength is in the thought that God’s sovereignty is more accentuated in its ordo salutis than classical pentecostalism. At the same time, it has the potential of strongly encouraging believers to expect God’s salvation of their souls and to have faith in God’s grace for their daily physical circumstances. Its weakness, however, is its tendency to emphasize self-righteousness or work-righteousness. Because Sunbogmazeism seeks after the kind of faith which brings about works or results, it can lead to the conclusion that any faith that does not bring works is defective: the confusion of justification and sanctification in its soteriology (Tonghap Presbyterian denomination).