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DOCTORAL DOMAIN: “THEOLOGY”**

**DOCTORAL THESIS**

**Be filled with the Spirit!**

**Amos Yong’s Contribution to the Development  
of Contemporary Pentecostal Theology**

**THESIS ABSTRACT**

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## THESIS ABSTRACT

Starting from the premise that the current stage of development of Pentecostal theological reflection, on a global level, proves theological maturation, and therefore, the ability to engage in a fruitful dialogue with other Christian traditions and even beyond Christian borders, in interreligious dialogue in the public space, this thesis offers a critical evaluation of Amos Yong's work, with the aim of identifying his contributions to the development of contemporary Pentecostal theology and therefore to the maturation of the Pentecostal theological reflection noted here. This approach is both necessary and novel – Amos Yong is a representative, outstanding contemporary Pentecostal theologian, prolific author and innovative thinker. Therefore, an analysis of the theological themes and analytical methods encountered in his work can form the basis of a discussion of the development of global contemporary Pentecostalism. Moreover, the analysis in the context also offers an opportunity for reflecting on indigenous Romanian Pentecostal theology and what Amos Yong can contribute to it.

Pentecostalism is a Christian renewal movement that has seen remarkable growth since its inception. Originating in the early 20th century in the U.S., Pentecostalism has spread throughout the world for 120 years, numbering over 644 million members today. Although Pentecostals do not form a homogeneous group, neither from a theological point of view nor from the point of view of praxis, all Pentecostals share a similar framework of mind: all emphasise spiritual experiences, understood as manifestations of the works of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer, in the church and in the world. This approach to spirituality, based on repeated personal and transformative "encounters" with the divine, shapes Pentecostals' understanding of God and His purposes, of humanity and their destiny, and of creation, and implicitly influences how Pentecostals think about and interact with the world around them, including their theological thinking.

Contemporary Pentecostal theology evolves around three major themes: (1) the theological unity of Pentecostalism; (2) the relationship between Pentecostal theology and ecumenical, inter-denominational and inter-religious traditions; and (3) positioning Pentecostal theology vis-à-vis current issues such as social justice, world peace, and creation care. In Amos Yong's

theology, these themes occupy a central place because these thematic developments are the very object of his theological project – hence the need for this study.

Amos Yong plays an important role in shaping a new Pentecostal theological vision, suited to the contemporary multicultural and multi-religious context and clearly in harmony with the concerns of the contemporary world. Yong's theology transcends typical theological and doctrinal patterns, recommending itself as a truly global theology. His work is impressive, both from a quantitative point of view and from the point of view of the depth and originality of theological reflection. Therefore, Yong's work is a catalyst for Pentecostal theology produced globally. In this light, the present study is justified from the point of view of its thematic content. Moreover, due to the fact that studies on Yong's theology are limited to specific themes, the synthetic approach of the present thesis is fully justified. Therefore, the objective pursued in the thesis is to identify and present Yong's theological insights and evaluate their impact on Pentecostal thought and practice.

Amos Yong is an extremely prolific Pentecostal writer. Starting with the publication of his doctoral thesis in 2000, Yong produced a new monograph almost every year. At the date of the

completion of this work (end of academic year 2022-2023), the number of books published by Yong as an author has reached 26. To these are added more than 30 coordinated volumes and more than 500 articles, book chapters and reviews published. The present study refers to a large part of these writings but is limited to the earlier works that are considered to be more relevant to the research topic addressed.

Methodologically, the study combines the rigorous analysis of Amos Yong's writings with observations on his work offered by other theologians and with the considerations of the author of the present thesis on the impact of Yong's ideas in the world and within the Romanian Pentecostal theological context. The bulk of the assessment consists of an overview of Yong's main theological writings, with the aim of identifying the foundations of his theology, the direction of the development of his theological thought and his working method – an organization of the material otherwise found in the titles of the chapters of the thesis. This overview traces Yong's methodological and theological pilgrimage diachronically throughout his career. At the same time, the evaluation contains both synthesis elements and analytical comments. Elements of synthesis as the discussion is systematized around the central

themes addressed by Yong, and analytical commentary as specific influences and nuances resulting from Yong's dialogue with other scholars and his life experience are considered.

The argument developed is structured in five chapters, preceded by an introduction and followed by conclusions. Keeping with the typical approach, the Introduction is where considerations such as the research topic, its framing and justification, and working methodology are presented.

The purpose of the first chapter is a preliminary one – to identify the influences on Yong's thinking, both from the context in which he was born and raised, as well as from the education he received and the theologians he met during his formation.

In the second chapter the argument of the thesis is launched with an evaluation of the pneumatological perspective specific to Yong, a perspective that "colors" his entire theological discourse. Thus, the chapter presents the theology of religions developed by Yong as a point of departure in his work and then, based on this discussion, provides an overview of Yong's metaphysics, epistemology and hermeneutics. What is specific in this discussion is the deeply pneumatological perspective advanced by Yong, which is summarized at the end

of the discussion in an overall presentation of his theological stance.

In the third chapter, the argument turns to an evaluation of the missiological direction that Yong's theology takes, starting from his concern with the integration of soteriology and pneumatology in such a way that the Christian mission is no longer done from exclusivist premises but dialogically. Therefore, the central concept in Yong's thinking on mission is the "hospitality" that the Christian must offer to members of other religions in an attempt to present the gospel to them. Specific to Yong, this chapter shows that both interfaith and interreligious dialogue are covered by the Gospel's missiological vision. Finally, the mission is transposed into the soteriological presence in the public space, a presence that has an effect on politics, culture, economy, religion, etc.

Chapter four analyzes the dialogic method proposed by Yong, focusing the discussion on the relationship between theology and science developed by him. Thus, it is observed that the dialogue is not only a missiological action, but rather it is the working method used by Yong to bring out the character of the theology that he advances.

Finally, in chapter five we have a synthesis of the discussion in the previous chapters, a synthesis in which eight specific themes or directions in Yong's theology are identified. Also in this chapter we have an excursus on Romanian Pentecostalism, the purpose of which is to briefly point out the opportunities opened by Yong's theology for the development of indigenous Romanian Pentecostal theology.

The conclusion of the thesis summarizes Yong's contribution to the development of contemporary Pentecostal theology and offers some directions for research.

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