

**THE PNEUMATIC EXPERIENCES OF THE  
INDIAN NEOCHARISMATICS**

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## **The Abstract of the Thesis**

This thesis elucidates the Spirit practices of Neocharismatic movements in India. Ever since the appearance of Charismatic movements, the Spirit theology has developed as a distinct kind of popular theology. The Neocharismatic movement in India developed within the last twenty years recapitulates Pentecostal nature spirituality with contextual applications. Pentecostalism has broadened itself accommodating all churches as widely diverse as healing emphasized, prosperity oriented free independent churches.

Therefore, this study aims to analyse the Neocharismatic churches in Kerala, India; its relationship to Indian Pentecostalism and compares the Spirit practices. It is argued that the pneumatology practiced by the Neocharismatics in Kerala, is closely connected to the spirituality experienced by the Indian Pentecostals. Spiritual gifts, healing, spiritual warfare, exorcism, prayer and worship are significant to both movements. While emphasizing about healing, prosperity, and the miracles the movement is unable to cater the pastoral needs of those who could not experience any. The daily Christian experience with struggles and pain shapes the pneumatology of the Neocharismatics. However, the Neocharismatics practice it as emotional engagement with a modern outlook that relates to globalization. The argument engages with Pentecostalism as a global movement, and Neocharismatic Christianity as an advanced version of globalized Pentecostalism. Healing, prosperity and miracles give prime importance in the church. Hence spiritual life is seen as a fulfilment of a way out of the struggles of material life. This thesis suggests the need to construct a pneumatology for the Neocharismatics, which is focused towards the Christian doctrine. The Holy Spirit leads one to the knowledge and the joy in the Lordship of Jesus Christ, which overtakes any negative situations of life and transforms the believer to the image of Jesus Christ.

## **Acknowledgment**

At the very outset, I recognize the presence of God in my life, who called me and separated me for Christian ministry. I love Him, in Him I live; He is the source of all wisdom and understanding. His unceasing care, mercy and provision are indeed incomparable. All glory, honour and praise be to Him alone!

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**To**  
**Anju, Jeffrey and Joeline**

**With love**

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

ACA	Apostolic Church Alliance
AG	Assemblies of God
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
CD	Compact Disc
C E	Christian Era
CG	Church of God
CMS	Church Missionary Society
CSI	Church of South India
DVD	Digital Versatile Disc
ENHF	Eschol National Harvest Festival
IDPCM	International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements
IPC	Indian Pentecostal Church of God
IPCKTS	Indian Pentecostal Church Kottayam Theological Seminary
ISAE	Institute for the Study of American Evangelicals
LMS	London Missionary Society
MA	Master of Arts
MDiv	Master of Divinity
M Th	Master of Theology
OT	Old Testament
NT	New Testament
NFI	New Frontiers International

PRDS	Prathyaksha Raksha Daiva Sabha
RSS	Rashtreeya Swayamsevak Sangh
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SAIACS	South Asia Institute of Advanced Christian Studies
SNDP	Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana
SJPS	Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sngam
St.Thomas	Saint Thomas
SVD	Society of the Divine Word
TPM	The Pentecostal Mission
UK	United Kingdom
USA	The United States of America
VHP	Vishwa Hindu Parishad
WCC	World Council of Churches

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## INTRODUCTION

The beginning of the twentieth century witnessed a powerful emphasis on pneumatology in Pentecostalism, even in the midst of strong opposition by the more conservative denominations, due to Enlightenment rationalism. Nevertheless, Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity is still the fastest growing religious movement in the contemporary world. Within Christianity, Pentecostalism in all its diversity has continued to grow since its origins in the twentieth century.<sup>1</sup> Allan Anderson observes that, ‘During the second half of the twentieth century the most significant changes in the global demography of Christianity have occurred through the growth of Pentecostalism, which has its origins in a series of revival movements at the beginning of the century.’<sup>2</sup> Such a spiritual pursuit is evident in Christianity since its origin. Although there are multiple fields of studies in Christian theology, like never before pneumatology has become a promising theological locus. The pneumatology ranging that of Eastern Orthodoxy to New Age movements includes Pentecostal and Charismatic movements in the world.<sup>3</sup> While Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity remains a global movement, its proliferation into a complex variety of different forms has been of theological interest. The phenomenal growth and expansion of Pentecostal and Charismatic movements rejuvenated scholarship from various angles. Significant studies have been made in terms of social and theological aspects from a Pentecostal view point. Wonsuk Ma is of the opinion that Pentecostal theology is still in its

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<sup>1</sup> Allan Anderson, “Varieties, Taxonomies and Definitions,” in *Studying Global Pentecostalism: Theories+Methods*, ed. Allan Anderson, Michael Bergunder, Andre Droogers and Cornelis van der Laan (California: University of California Press, 2010), 17.

<sup>2</sup> Allan Anderson, *To the Ends of the Earth: Pentecostalism and the Transformation of World Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 1.

<sup>3</sup> Peter C. Hodgson, *Winds of Spirit: A Constructive Christian Theology* (Louisville: Westminster, 1994), 277.

formative stage with variety of questions to be answered.<sup>4</sup> Studies in Pentecostalism are multifaceted with regards to the origin of Charismatic revivals. Pentecostal scholars of the past tended to locate the origin of the Pentecostal movement in North America believing that the movement then spread across the world from this single location.<sup>5</sup> However, contemporary scholarship discusses multiple origins of global Pentecostalism.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, more recently it became evident that the manifestation of the Holy Spirit was evident in India before the North American revival. The ideas of Anthony Norris Grove to bring people to the simple standards of God's Word eventually found worldwide acceptance in evangelical circles.<sup>7</sup> Groves, who travelled to India as a missionary, was an associate of George Müller. He is credited as preparing the ground for one of the earliest indigenous revivals in India that even predates the revival at Mukti Mission in Pune, India.

Pentecostalism in India has spread across the country. A significant growth of the Pentecostals and Charismatics are visible among people from all walks of life. During the early days of Pentecostalism in south India, the growth was predominantly among the poor people including the Dalits and lower castes. In the later stage, Pentecostalism became a threat to the other mainline denominations when people moved from their respective churches and joined Pentecostal congregations.<sup>8</sup> With the arrival of the Roman Catholic Charismatic movement, the classical Pentecostals in India realized that the manifestation of the power of Holy Spirit can be available to non-Pentecostals.

Indeed, Anderson states that, classical Pentecostalism in different parts of Asia and

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<sup>4</sup> Wonsuk Ma, "Toward an Asian Pentecostal Theology," *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 1/1 (January, 1998):15, 15-41.

<sup>5</sup> Simon Chan, "Withered Pentecostalism," in *Asian and Pentecostal: The Charismatic Face of Christianity in Asia*, ed. Allan Anderson and Edmond Tang (Oregon: Regnum, 2011), 467.

<sup>6</sup> Allan Anderson and Hwa Yung challenge the view of single origin of Pentecostalism in their essays in the book *Asian and Pentecostal: The Charismatic Face of Christianity in Asia*.

<sup>7</sup> n.a. "Man Who paved the way for India Revivals," *Commission* (Assemblies of God Great Britain, May 2014), 25.

<sup>8</sup> Shaibu Abraham, "Ordinary Indian Christology" (Ph.D. diss., University of Birmingham, 2011), 6.

Africa has been affected by the revival movements.<sup>9</sup> By the end of twentieth century, Indian Christianity witnessed the rise of free independent churches, or Neocharismatic churches, that were less willing to be identified with either the Classical Pentecostals or the Catholic Charismatics. This development was apart from global phenomena. In the 1990s the Pentecostal and Charismatic renewal as a whole continued to spread rapidly across the traditional churches. The *World Christian Encyclopaedia* Volume Two records that by the end of the twentieth century there were 33,530,000 adherents in these movements in India which included 81% that were followers of Neocharismatic churches.<sup>10</sup> Although accurate population statistics of the Pentecostals and Charismatics is not available, as per the most recent statistics of the *World Christian Encyclopaedia*, there are 135million Pentecostals/Charismatics in Asia alone.<sup>11</sup> Certainly, it is a Herculean task to ascertain an accurate figure of these movements, because the number is rapidly increasing every day. According to Anderson, ‘... Asia has the second largest number of Pentecostals / Charismatics of any continent of the World’.<sup>12</sup>

The independent free churches have grown the fastest among all other Christian groups. When compared to other states of India, a significant growth of this movement is seen in Kerala. This is probably because Kerala has more Christian experience than any other states in India. Another reason could be the spread and establishment of Classical Pentecostalism in Kerala. Indeed, the most significant feature that binds the Pentecostals and Charismatics is their emphasis on the Holy Spirit. The doctrine of the Holy Spirit is a definite form of theology today. Since the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity, present in the world, it is the Spirit who coordinates the inner life of God

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<sup>9</sup> Allan, Anderson, “Introduction: The Charismatic Face of Christianity in Asia,” in *Asian and Pentecostal: The Charismatic Face of Christianity in Asia*, ed. Allan Anderson and Edmond Tang (Oregon: Regnum, 2011), 2.

<sup>10</sup> “India,” in *World Christian Encyclopaedia*, ed. David B. Barrett, George T. Kurian and Todd M. Johnson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001): 365.

<sup>11</sup> “India,” 366.

<sup>12</sup> Anderson, “Introduction: The Charismatic Face of Christianity in Asia,” 2.

whereby the believer experiences God.<sup>13</sup> The free independent churches give priority to the charismatic experience as the initial way of understanding theology, particularly the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit who coordinates the inner life of God and it is through the Spirit that the believer experiences God. The believers value the experience as a perfect means of apprehending the truth.

### **1.1 The Aim of the Research**

The central aim of this research is to examine the Spirit experiences among the independent Charismatic Christians in Kerala, India and to evaluate their beliefs and practices critically. The central argument in this thesis is the integration of Neocharismatic movement with Pentecostals in Kerala that provides new spheres to Indian Pentecostalism. Although the Neocharismatics claim that they do not belong to the Pentecostals in Kerala, it is part of Pentecostalism. The Spirit experiences are studied from an outsider eye view to come up with more accurate suggestions. I suggest that the experience of Spirit manifestations among Pentecostals generated an interest in the Neocharismatics to have a holistic approach in mission.

The Neocharismatic congregations are not more than a decade old, and hence the research will identify the strengths and weaknesses of the movement, whether the movement is prepared to face and sustain the onslaught of forces which are unfavourable. The aim can be attained by interacting with believers from the Neocharismatic community about their personal experience of the Holy Spirit manifestations in the particular context in which they live. Many of the believers in these churches are converts of other religions, particularly Hinduism. It would be interesting to learn how far their personal experience added flavour to their intimate

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<sup>13</sup> Travis Du Priest, "Spirit: Inner Witness and Guardian of the Soul," *Anglican Theological Review* Vol.83/3 (summer, 2001), 391.

relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ and sustained them in the ongoing struggles of daily Christian life.

## **1.2. Explanation of the Terms**

Walter Hollenweger used a diagram to explain the development of Christianity in his book *Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments Worldwide*. He has placed the roots of Pentecostal and Charismatic movements in catholic, black, evangelical, critical and ecumenical origins.<sup>14</sup> The whole Pentecostal and Charismatic movement has been explained in three waves by Christian scholarship. However, this classification of Pentecostalism cannot be applied to Indian settings, because there is evidence of Evangelical revivals that pre-date the arrival of Western Pentecostal missionaries, and which resulted in manifestations of the Holy Spirit. Many of these evangelical revivals resulted in the beginning and the formation of Pentecostal congregations in India. Although different classifications of Pentecostalism are not significant in this research, they are mentioned for the sake of scholarship.

The first wave of Classical Pentecostalism experienced a tremendous growth during the first half of the twentieth century. Since 1960 the Charismatic movement, known as the second wave has flowered in the mainline churches. The third wave<sup>15</sup> includes all churches that are charismatic in nature and exercise various gifts of the Spirit, but have a stronger emphasis on the “gift of healing”. The churches or congregations in the third wave prefer to experience the power of the Holy Spirit in healing the sick, prophetic

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<sup>14</sup> Walter J. Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism: Origin and Developments Worldwide* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), 2.

<sup>15</sup> The term third wave is used to designate a movement which is similar to the Pentecostal movement. The Pentecostal movement was known as the first wave of the Holy Spirit in the twentieth century. The Charismatic movement is the second wave. The third wave movement have chosen not to be identifying with the early two waves.

ministry, casting out demons and any manifestation introduced by the Holy Spirit.<sup>16</sup> A key component which relates the Neocharismatics to the classical Pentecostals is the emphasis on the gift of healing.<sup>17</sup> Both movements promote and practise healing. In North America, the healing evangelists played the role of immediate forerunners of the Charismatic movement.<sup>18</sup> William Branham, Kathryn Kuhlman, Oral Roberts are to name a few. They used media to influence and popularise themselves to the rest of the world. Along with some African countries, a few countries in Asia followed the strategies of these healing ministers. For example, China's "house church" movement has strong roots in Neocharismatic Christianity. With regards to India, there are more free independent churches than classical Pentecostal churches. However, this three wave classification cannot be applied to the Indian context because many Pentecostal groups do not place the same emphasis on tongues as the classical Pentecostalism once did. Pentecostalism in India is sidetracked by the Catholic hierarchy, therefore Pentecostalism is not considered to be a part of mainstream Christianity. In such a situation the Neocharismatics put on a different jacket to attract people to their congregations. The reasons for the development of the Neocharismatics in India will be discussed in the later chapters.

### **1.2.1. Pentecostalism**

Pentecostalism is an umbrella term widely used by scholars of religion which includes many forms of renewal movements like Classical Pentecostals, Charismatic movements, Neo Pentecostals, Neocharismatics and all other independent churches

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<sup>16</sup> C. P. Wagner "Third Wave," in *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, ed. Stanley M. Burgees and Gary B. McGee (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998): 1141.

<sup>17</sup> James Wright, "Profiles of Divine healing: Third Wave theology compared with Classical Pentecostal Theology," *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 5/2 (July, 2002): 271, 271–287.

<sup>18</sup> Karla Poewe, "Introduction: The Nature, Globality, and History of Charismatic Christianity," in *Charismatic Christianity as a Global Culture*, ed. Karla Poewe (South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1994), 2.

across the globe. The diverse nature of Pentecostalism constitutes a considerable variety of worship patterns, cultural attitudes, ecclesiastical structures and methods of evangelism. However, Anderson suggests that the commonality of Pentecostalism can be seen in the use of spiritual gifts.<sup>19</sup>

### **1.2.2. Classical Pentecostals**

Classical Pentecostals are those whose links derive from the early twentieth century revival and missionary movements.<sup>20</sup> They are a part of the global religious movement that occurred in the beginning of the twentieth century. This includes people who first experienced the revival and those who remain in the same experience. These believers attend churches that highlight Classical Pentecostal doctrines such as speaking in tongues as a vital evidence of Spirit baptism, divine healing through the atonement of Christ, pre-millennial eschatology and the atonement of Christ.<sup>21</sup> Anderson states that the formation of Pentecostalism as a separate movement occurred just before and after World War I in North America.<sup>22</sup> Although there were like-minded revivals and missionary movements in different locations in the world, including India, the term ‘Pentecostal’ must have derived from North America. Known at first simply as ‘Pentecostal’ churches, they were called Classical Pentecostals in the 1960s in order to distinguish them from the Charismatics in mainline Protestant and Roman Catholic Churches who were at first called Neo-Pentecostals and Catholic Pentecostals.<sup>23</sup> Although the term ‘Classical Pentecostalism’ is widely used by the native Pentecostal scholars in India, there is an ambiguity in the use of the term. In the context of

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<sup>19</sup> Anderson, “Varieties, Taxonomies and Definitions,” 14.

<sup>20</sup> Anderson, “Varieties, Taxonomies and Definitions,” 17.

<sup>21</sup> Gary B. McGee, “Pentecostalism,” in *A Dictionary of Asian Christianity*, ed. Scott W. Sunquist (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Erdmans Publishing Company, 2001): 646.

<sup>22</sup> Anderson, “Varieties, Taxonomies and Definitions,” 17.

<sup>23</sup> H.V. Synan, “Classical Pentecostalism,” in *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, ed. Stanley M. Burgees and Gary B. McGee (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Erdmans Publishing Company, 1998): 553.

community transformation by the power of revival, this occurred in India before the news about Azusa Street manifestations of the Holy Spirit reached India. This is explained in chapter two. The Classical Pentecostals believe in the subsequent experience of Spirit baptism with the gift of speaking in tongues.<sup>24</sup> While Pentecostalism all over the world is witnessing various forms of revival movements, Anderson's four classifications on Classical Pentecostalism are useful to understand the terms used.<sup>25</sup> However, in the Indian context, the Classical Pentecostals in India can be further categorised as Western founded churches and Indian founded churches. The Church of God Full Gospel and Assemblies of God are under the first category because they were founded by Western missionaries who travelled to India after the Azusa Street revival. The second category refers to churches that were founded by native missionaries. In this research Indian founded churches are referred to as indigenous Pentecostal churches.

### **1.2.3. Charismatics**

Charismatics derive their name from the Greek word Charisma which means 'a gift of grace, a gift about involving grace on the part of God as donor'.<sup>26</sup> Hocken denotes the new movement of the Holy Spirit as Charismatic within the older churches.<sup>27</sup> The term Charismatic includes the Roman Catholic Charismatic movement and the Protestant

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<sup>24</sup> Anderson "Varieties, Taxonomies and Definitions," 17.

<sup>25</sup> In his article "Varieties, Taxonomies and Definitions" Anderson classifies the Classical Pentecostalism to four subtypes. 1) Holiness Pentecostals -: They have roots from the Holiness movement of the nineteenth century and do believe in a second work of grace known as Sanctification. They do follow the baptism in the Holy Spirit as a third experience. E.g. The Church of God in Christ, Church of God, Cleveland, Tennessee and The International Pentecostal Holiness Church. 2). Baptist or Finished Work Pentecostals-: They differ in the approach to sanctification and believe that it is a different experience followed the conversion. E.g. The Foursquare Church, The Pentecostal Church of God, The Assemblies of God. 3). Oneness Pentecostals-: These groups reject the doctrine of the Trinity and promote Unitarianism that includes the deity of Christ. E.g. True Jesus Church in China, The United Pentecostal Church, The Pentecostal Assemblies of the World. 4). Apostolic Pentecostals-: They emphasize the authority of present- day apostles and prophets. E.g. Apostolic Church groups, African independent churches.

<sup>26</sup> W. E. Wine, "Pneuma," *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Words* (Virginia: Mac Donalds Publishing House, 1952), 487.

<sup>27</sup> Peter Hocken, *Streams of Renewal* (Cumbria: Paternoster, 1997), 185.

Charismatics. Scholars like Synan refer to revival groups among the Protestant churches from the 1960s as Neo-Pentecostals. According to him, Neo-Pentecostals are a group who experience the Pentecostal like experience within the historic Protestant churches.<sup>28</sup> But at present all these groups are generally identified as Charismatics. Although there is a similarity between the work of the Holy Spirit among Roman Catholic Charismatics and Protestant Charismatics, many theologians and historians who discuss the revival movements differentiate them from the Roman Catholic Charismatic Movement. The Catholic Charismatics appeared in the late 1960s and began to shatter all the stereotypes and beliefs about the Spirit manifestations that had prevailed in the Pentecostal churches.<sup>29</sup> In India, the Roman Catholic Charismatics fall under the wider category of Charismatics since they hold similar experiences of the Holy Spirit manifestation. Kerala is a place that has millions of adherents to the Roman Catholic Charismatic movement. Secondly, Kerala is one of the largest Catholic Charismatic places in the world. In India, the Charismatics include all categories of revival movements in the historical churches.

#### **1.2.4. Neocharismatics**

The term Neocharismatics is a catch-all category that comprises many independent, indigenous, post-denominational churches and groups that cannot be classified as either Pentecostal or Charismatic.<sup>30</sup> These are Christian congregations with Pentecostal-like experiences, but welcome any kind of manifestation of the Holy Spirit and have no

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<sup>28</sup> Vinson Synan, *The Holiness – Pentecostal Tradition: Charismatic Movements in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1997), 220.

<sup>29</sup> Charles E. Hummel, *Fire in the Fireplace: Charismatic Renewal in the Nineties* (Illinois: Inter Varsity Press, 1997), 21.

<sup>30</sup> P. D. Hocken, "Charismatic Movements," in *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, ed. Stanley M. Burgees and Gary B. McGee (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998): 155.

connection with the traditional Pentecostal denominations.<sup>31</sup> Although they share a common emphasis on the Holy Spirit, spiritual gifts, Pentecostal- like experiences, signs and wonders, and power encounters, they are as diverse as the world culture they represent.<sup>32</sup> They function and express themselves clearly according to the need and the pulse of the context they represent. Therefore, each Neocharismatic church is different and each should be studied separately. They are also called Neo-Pentecostal which includes mega churches and are influenced by classical Pentecostalism and the Charismatic movement.<sup>33</sup> However, in India, the Neo-Pentecostals have a separate identity as they prefer to remain in the historic churches and have no association with the Pentecostals. Anderson states that the Neocharismatics are clearly distinguished from Classical Pentecostals but share an emphasis on the power of the Holy Spirit. He also explains that the emphasis on the gifts of the Spirit and a desire to receive more of God's empowering for the Christian life is the hallmark of this movement.<sup>34</sup> This movement is broad in all senses and inclusive of numerous free independent churches all over the world including India. For the lack of a better term these are called the free independent Charismatics or Neocharismatics. The use of this term is important in Indian context to differentiate them from the Catholic Charismatic movement. It is an umbrella body that includes Word of Faith churches, churches that comes under the third wave, new apostolic churches and a variety of independent churches.<sup>35</sup> There are

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<sup>31</sup> S. M .Burgess, "Neocharismatics," in *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, ed. Stanley M. Burgees and Gary B. McGee (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998): 928.

<sup>32</sup> n.a. "Introduction," in *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, ed. Stanley M. Burgees and Gary B. McGee (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998): xx.

<sup>33</sup> Anderson, "Varieties, Taxonomies and Definitions," 19.

<sup>34</sup> Allan Heaton Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Second Edition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 3.

<sup>35</sup> Anderson, "Varieties, Taxonomies and Definitions,"19.

1) Word of Faith churches emphasis on physical health and material prosperity by faith. E.g. Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth Copeland, E. W. Kenyon and Oral Roberts. 2) Third Wave churches usually switch to Spirit baptism with conversion and teach that spiritual gifts are available to all believers. E.g. Vineyard Fellowships and Calvary Chapel. These churches mostly originated in 1980's. 3) New Apostolic

thousands of churches and movements<sup>36</sup> that are part of this group, but do not fit into the definition of Pentecostal or Charismatic.<sup>37</sup> Wide differences in forms of spirituality and theology become even more apparent when indigenous Neocharismatic groups are examined. Since, this research is focused on the Neocharismatics, the term Neocharismatics and free independent Charismatics will be used synonymously in this research. In addition, the general term Charismatics is used to denote all Charismatic movements with the exception of the Roman Catholic Charismatic movement. In India, many of the Neocharismatic churches do not identify themselves as part of Classical Pentecostalism. Also, there are instances of pre- twentieth century revivals in India, which are discussed in the second chapter of this research. Therefore, the ‘three waves’ will not be taken as an authoritative term while talking about the movement of the Holy Spirit in India.

In the research context, the definition given about the Pentecostals and Neocharismatics are central. There is a clear distinction between the two movements as they do not accept one another easily. The Pentecostals maintain their tradition as God used them powerfully in the early decades of twentieth century and believe that the Neocharismatics are newly budded to the Pentecostalism in India. The Pentecostal superiority against the Neocharismatics is visible in Kerala; while the Neocharismatics claim that they are a generation God is using as the Pentecostals are becoming lethargic in their responsibility.

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Churches-: The claim, that they reintroduced apostolic leadership and ministry and established churches globally. They also ordained apostles. E.g. Coalition of apostles. 4.) Free independent churches-: They vary in their theology from all other Pentecostal and Charismatic groups. Mostly individual leaders establish churches and they teach what they believe. It is difficult to number them or categorize them.

<sup>36</sup> Many of the free independent churches recognize themselves as a movement.

<sup>37</sup> Todd M. Johnson, “Counting Pentecostals Worldwide,” *Pneuma* 36 (2014): 276, 265–288.

### 1.2.5 Globalisation and Glocalisation

The term “globalisation” contains a complex set of meanings in different settings. It is a term used in industry, technology, economy, society, culture and religion. In each of these areas, the term has specific meanings. Roland Robertson is one of the most important theorists of globalisation producing major works on this topic since the 1960s. He defines globalization as the increasing socio-cultural interdependence of the world and our growing awareness of the world as a single place.<sup>38</sup> Pentecostalism is a regionalised global movement, which differs in identity from one part of the globe to the other. Klaus argues that despite these regional differences Pentecostalism has generated a global culture which shares a common form of spirituality.<sup>39</sup> In this study the interconnectedness and the similarity of Pentecostalism around the world is used in relation to globalisation.

“Glocal” is another term associated with globalization. The term “glocalisation” has become a significant key word in social scientific explanations of globalization. It was first used by Robertson (1992) and others elaborated the concept later. The word glocalise derived from the Japanese term *dochakuka* and roughly means global localization.<sup>40</sup> It connotes to the agricultural principle of adapting one’s farming techniques to local condition, but also adapts to Japanese business for global localization.<sup>41</sup> Applying the term for the study of Pentecostalism, each church locally

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<sup>38</sup> Roland Robertson, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture* (London: Sage Publications, 1992), 8–9.

<sup>39</sup> Byron D. Klaus, “Pentecostalism as a Global Culture: An Introductory Overview,” in *The Globalization of Pentecostalism: A Religion Made to Travel*, ed. Murray M. Dempster, Byron D. Klaus and Douglas Petersen (Oxford: Regnum, 1999): 127, 127–150.

<sup>40</sup> Robertson, *Globalization*, 173. This term was particularly developed in reference to the marketing issues, as Japan became more concerned with and successful economy.

<sup>41</sup> Roland Robertson, “Globalization or Glocalization?,” *The Journal of International Communication* 18:2 (2012): 194, 191–208.

functions as they sustain cultural imperatives. However, Pentecostalism as a global movement sustains its global culture and identity in the local setting.

### 1.3. Research Context

The Pentecostal movement in India has considerably developed since its inception at the beginning of the 20th century. The Pentecostal population in south India is considerably high and has established notable priority in the social status of society.<sup>42</sup> David Martin quotes R. Frykenberg who suggested that the single most sweeping movement of conversion in India is Pentecostalism.<sup>43</sup> Kerala, a southern state in India has experienced a strong Christian presence for centuries, since the Indian tradition is that St. Thomas, the disciple of Jesus Christ arrived in C.E.57.<sup>44</sup> The Christian spectrum in Kerala coexisted with the Mar Thoma Syrian and Assyrian branches of Churches until the arrival of Roman Catholicism in 1600. Anderson identifies that Pentecostal – like revivals, with speaking in tongues and other manifestations of Charismata have been evident in South India since 1860.<sup>45</sup> According to Stanley Burgess, an outpouring of the Holy Spirit occurred in Travancore (now Kerala) in 1874-75.<sup>46</sup> However, organised Pentecostalism in Kerala was a result of the latter awakening in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. It began as a countercultural movement in the context of a structured Christianity. Pulikottil observes that, Western Pentecostalism had the opportunity to meet the indigenous Pentecostalism in Kerala.<sup>47</sup> Indeed the contemporary Pentecostal movement in Kerala is a bricolage of Western and indigenous forms of Pentecostalism.

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<sup>42</sup> Abraham, “Ordinary Indian Christology,” 3.

<sup>43</sup> David Martin, *Pentecostalism: The World their Parish* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002) 154.

<sup>44</sup> Stanley M. Burgess, “Pentecostalism in India: An Overview,” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 4/1(2001): 90, 85–98.

<sup>45</sup> Allan Anderson, “Pandita Ramabai, the Mukti Revival and Global Pentecostalism,” *Transformation* 23/1(January, 2006): 37, 37–48.

<sup>46</sup> Burgess, “Pentecostalism in India: An Overview,” 87.

<sup>47</sup> Paulson Pulikottil, “As East and West Met in God’s own Country: Encounter of Western Pentecostalism with Native Pentecostalism in Kerala,” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 5/1 (January, 2002): 5, 5–22.

Although there are now several Pentecostal denominations in Kerala; the Indian Pentecostal Church (IPC) and the Assemblies of God (AG) are the largest Pentecostal denominations in India with 750,000 members each in 2000.<sup>48</sup> Frank Bartleman referred to Wales and India as representing the birth and adolescence of the worldwide Pentecostal movement.<sup>49</sup> Indian Pentecostalism developed from a grassroots local culture is a people movement in this part of the Hindu-dominated sub-continent. In the 1960s, a new phase was introduced into Christianity with the arrival of Roman Catholic Charismatic Movements. From the 1980s with the arrival of the “third wave”, the Neocharismatics became a key movement in the history of the Christian church, particularly as part of Pentecostalism.<sup>50</sup> All these phenomena had an influence on Pentecostalism in Kerala, as in the other parts of the world. At this juncture, it became necessary for the Pentecostal movement to clarify their spiritual and theological positions, particularly with regards to manifestations of the Holy Spirit such as glossolalia. People were allowed to stay within the traditional church settings and still experience the infilling of the Holy Spirit. However, at the beginning of the twentieth century, there were charismatic churches, which were independent in nature.<sup>51</sup> All these groups, instead of staying within Classical Pentecostalism exercised their gifts as a separate entity. Many of the local congregations in India have a large number of people attending the worship. According to Anderson, there are 15 million members in the Neocharismatic groups in India.<sup>52</sup> Considering these figures were reported ten years ago we can, in light of the trajectory of growth within the Neocharismatic churches in India,

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<sup>48</sup> Allan Anderson, “Revivals and the Global Expansion of Pentecostalism after Azusa Street,” in *The Azusa Street Revival and its Legacy*, ed. Hunter Harold D. And Cecil M. Robeck Jr. (Cleveland, TN: Pathway Press, 2006), 188.

<sup>49</sup> Anderson, “Pandita Ramabai,” 37.

<sup>50</sup> Burgess, “Neocharismatics,” 928.

<sup>51</sup> Anderson, *Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 127.

<sup>52</sup> Anderson, *Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 127.

suppose that these numbers have increased. Without reliable evidence, however, we cannot, of course suggest what these numbers are.

According to Simon Chan, Pentecostals must not stop at chronicling their own history, writing commentaries and doing biblical theology, because these are very important for a movement like Pentecostalism.<sup>53</sup> Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal scholars have recognized the importance of the movement, and lay emphasis on biblical scholarship from within. Pentecostalism in India was very slow in articulating their theology. Even after 100 years of Pentecostal experience in India, it never explained its beliefs. It lacks a solid textbook on indigenous Indian Pentecostal theology. Theology for a Pentecostal is more experiential based and oral in form than that of extensive creeds and theological tomes. Michael Bergunder points out that “despite its numerical strength and hundred years of history, Indian Pentecostalism has remained rather invisible in the academic writing of Christianity in India.”<sup>54</sup> Pentecostals in India generally felt that Bible study and preaching was sufficient enough for the survival of the church. Indeed, anti-intellectualistic tendencies are very common in Kerala Pentecostalism. For example, the scripture 2 Corinthians 3:6 (‘...for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life’) has been misinterpreted for generations by the Pentecostals. There was a strong tension between the theology of “word” and “Spirit”. I suggest that this tension is evident in global Pentecostalism too, to some extent. For example, Olson writes that “Endemic to Pentecostalism is a profoundly anti-intellectual ethos. It is manifested in a deep suspicion of scholars and educators and especially biblical scholars and

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<sup>53</sup> Simon Chan, *Pentecostal Theology and the Christian Spiritual Tradition* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000) 12.

<sup>54</sup> Michael Bergunder, *The South Indian Pentecostal Movement in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: William B. Erdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 14.

theologians.”<sup>55</sup> However, Walter Hollenweger, comments that, “With many other observers I am impressed by the vitality of Pentecostalism, its theological, ethical and cultural pluralism. In the last years, the beginning of a rigorous theological reflection and revision of their own theology and historiography has forced me to revisit Pentecostalism and to correct my earlier judgements.”<sup>56</sup>

The global tendency of Charismatic movements to affect the long-established Christian denominations in the world is evident in India as well. Neopentecostal churches and preachers are mushrooming in India. They experience the kind of spiritual experiences that the Pentecostals had long cherished. A major problem in classification of these more recent forms of Christian practice is that the Charismatic groups of all denominations and independent churches are generally viewed as Pentecostals.

Unfortunately, the society is not aware of the categories churches are referred to. The situation in other parts of the world is not different. Henry Lederle observes that Pentecost has been cheapened and many preachers have become guilty of hype and charlatanry.<sup>57</sup> There is a heart cry of church believers against the television fund raising and spiritual gimmicks performed by some preachers. Even though their popular preachers are not trained theologically, they claim authority from God to perform all kinds of ministry at their gatherings. This includes the healing of the sick, laying hands on people, casting out demons and so on. They lack theological training, not because of the scarcity of Bible colleges or theological seminaries in India, but because of the misconception among preachers that theological training is not necessary for Christian ministry. I suggest that part of their popularity is the lack of control from a central

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<sup>55</sup> Roger E. Olson, “Pentecostalism’s dark Side,” *Christian Century* 123/5 (27 March, 2007) 27. <http://web.ebscohost.com.ezproxyd.bham.ac.uk/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=5&sid=c801df79-7ada-4d93-9369-159225d2d293%40sessionmgr4002&hid=4106> (21, January, 2014).

<sup>56</sup> Neil Hudson, “Interview with Walter Hollenweger- Pentecostalism Past, Present and Future,” *The journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association* xxi (2001): 41.

<sup>57</sup> Henry I. Lederle, *Theology with Spirit: The Future of the Pentecostal & Charismatic Movements in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Word and Spirit Press, 2010), x.

authority such as is established in Anglicanism and Roman Catholicism. Miller and Yamamori record that the Neocharismatics are groups that have one or more offshoots, but have not centred on an organizational state of a denomination, and they resist such formulations.<sup>58</sup> They acknowledge that “On the one hand, these charismatic pastors are not “company men” and typically lack seminary training or other formal theological education.”<sup>59</sup> However, Miller and Yamamori also identify that these pastors run large churches, and the religious experience of the lead pastor plays a significant role in the development and function of their churches. Miller and Yamamori identify them as the kind of churches that are at the cutting edge of the Pentecostal movement.

In Kerala, the Neocharismatics embrace the experience of the Holy Spirit, in a way that the worship and practices of the church appeals to the teens and young adults in a cultural sense. In the context of the growth of Neocharismatic churches classical Pentecostalism also needed to explain their own theology of the Holy Spirit. It could be argued that Neo charismatic churches and pastors are willing to accept any kind of theology without proper study or explanation. Most of these theologies are imported from Western preachers or like-minded churches. Eventually, each these churches or groups develop their own understanding of the Holy Spirit. The most recent example is the theology of ‘radical grace’ proposed by Joseph Prince from Singapore.<sup>60</sup> Spiritual experiences among the Neocharismatics are Pentecostal in nature, but the rest of their theology varies from group to group or church to church. I suggest that Pentecostal and Neocharismatic churches in India need to articulate their pneumatology, so that there is less doctrinal ambiguity. Since to date there has not been any study completed in the

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<sup>58</sup> Donald E. Miller and Tetsunamo Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement* (California: University of California Press, 2007), 27.

<sup>59</sup> Miller and Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism*, 27.

<sup>60</sup> Warran Nosaki, “Joseph Prince: Unmerited Favour” in *Christian Research Institute*, <http://www.equip.org/article/joseph-prince-unmerited-favor/> (accessed on 17 March , 2017).

area of Neocharismatic pneumatology, this thesis is an attempt to highlight how Neocharismatics in Kerala articulate their Pneumatology from their Spirit experiences.

#### **1.4. Scope of the Study**

In qualitative research the theological position of the researcher plays a crucial role in the whole research project. I am a third generation Pentecostal, born and raised in Kerala, south India. Since becoming a believer at the age of nineteen, I have been immersed in the Pentecostal church, observing its rituals and norms. From a young age I was involved in theological study, missionary work and then teaching in different seminaries in India. My experience in teaching ministry at IPC Theological Seminary Kerala inspired me to study the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements. Based in Kottayam, Kerala, I closely observed one of the fastest growing Neocharismatic churches in Kerala, the church known as the Heavenly Feast, an increasingly popular place of worship which has the largest church attendance in Kerala at its Sunday worship service.

As an observer and a participant, I felt the need to explain the pneumatology of the Pentecostals and Neocharismatic movements in India. The context of Christian spirituality is constantly changing. The pneumatology of the Neocharismatics differs from that of the Pentecostals in many ways. However, the geographical location of the study focuses on Kerala, because Pentecostalism experienced an exponential growth in Kerala, while free independent churches have also established themselves in the state. Although Pentecostalism can be seen in part as a local movement in Kerala, their pneumatology has yet to be outlined from an academic point of view. Pentecostals follow oral tradition and their pneumatology is derived out of the book of Acts.

The Neocharismatic movement in Kerala entered the Christian religious spectrum as a counterpart to Pentecostalism. Therefore, the Neocharismatic movements tend to adapt

the existing practices of Pentecostalism adding a variety of phenomenal flavour and in line with the traditional Pentecostals; they have not been interested in a systematic pneumatology. Since the research is to discover the existing Spirit practices of the Neocharismatics in Kerala, the study focuses upon the common believers of Neocharismatic churches. Many of them believe in the Holy Spirit as a fact that they experience in everyday life. Since the leadership of all the Neocharismatic churches in Kerala has had membership in Pentecostal churches, I looked at Pentecostalism in Kerala as a background, to contextualise and better understand the pneumatology of Neocharismatics. Although there are a number of Neocharismatic churches in Kerala, the focus of this research is on Heavenly Feast, the largest Neocharismatic church in the state; In addition, two other churches are mentioned in this thesis because they are more than a decade old.

### **1.5. Methodology of the Research**

The main role of theology is to take the divine truth, the revelation of God and apply it to a specific human setting. Theology always challenges the practice of the Church and offers recommendations to transform it. In recent times, practical theology is under constant redefinition.<sup>61</sup> For example, Mark Cartledge advocates three forms of theology: the *formationalist* switch to theology *for* practice, the *liberationalist* uses it as theology *of* practice and for the *empirical* strands it is to be a theology *from* and *with* practice.<sup>62</sup> Hence, the common approach to theology is closely associated to practice.

Since this study focuses on a movement that developed towards the end of the twentieth century, the researcher approached it from an historical-theological point of view. The

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<sup>61</sup> Mark J. Cartledge, "Practical Theology," in *Studying Global Pentecostalism: Theories + Methods*, ed. Allan Anderson, Michael Bergunder, Andre Droogers and Cornelis van der Laan (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010), 268.

<sup>62</sup> Cartledge, "Practical Theology," 269.

primary object of this research is to analyse and elucidate understandings and practical beliefs of Neocharismatic Christians in Kerala with regards to the Holy Spirit. At the same time, the pneumatology of Pentecostalism has been a secondary focus of the thesis, due to its history of a century. The majority of the leaders of the Neocharismatic congregations are foundational Pentecostals in their beliefs. This research employed qualitative data collection methods, includes personal interviews, focus groups, participant observation and informal interaction with the followers of free independent charismatic churches in Kerala. Three leading free independent churches were selected for the purpose of this research. They were selected owing to the fact that, they were all within a reachable area and their leadership are the pioneers of this movement. The focus of this study is the Heavenly Feast church which is the largest of its kind in Kerala.

### **1.6 Objectives of the Study**

Within the overall aim, this research has five objectives.

1. To briefly analyse the historical background of Pentecostal and Neocharismatic movements in Kerala.
2. To briefly assess the Pentecostal beliefs and practices regarding the Holy Spirit because it serves as a platform for the Neocharismatics in their understanding about the Holy Spirit.
3. To assess the overall understanding of the practice of the Holy Spirit in Pentecostal and Charismatic churches in dialogue with believers in the selected Neocharismatic churches as they experience the manifestation of the Holy Spirit in their daily lives.
4. To assess the simple articulation of the common people about the Holy Spirit through field study.
5. To evaluate the examples and identify various characteristics and nuances of Neocharismatic Spirit practices and to recommend modifications to this theology.

### **1.7. The Relationship to the Scholarship**

As already identified Pentecostalism has been growing rapidly in different parts of India. There have been attempts, from both Indians and others, notably Allan Anderson and Michael Bergunder to write about the history of classical Pentecostal history in south India. In terms of local scholarship Saju Mathew, a Bible teacher and devotional writer who writes in Malayalam, wrote a history of Kerala Pentecostalism as part of his popular writing. C. T. Louiskutty, a Pentecostal scholar from Kerala, has also written a book on Pentecostalism in Kerala from a devotional point of view. V.V. Thomas is another Pentecostal historian from Kerala who has studied Dalit Pentecostalism. He is biased towards the Dalit Pentecostals and has only mentioned the history of Pentecostalism in a few pages. Paulson Pulikkottil has been yet another Pentecostal theologian who seems interested in the area and has published a few articles on Pentecostalism. A.C. George is a senior pastor and theologian from Assemblies of God, and has a few articles on the relationship between AG and Malankara Revival. George Oommen from Union Theological College, Bangalore is also a contributor to the Pentecostal historiography. He also published a book on the history of Indian Christianity. Among the non-Indian authors, Anderson has detailed the history of Pentecostalism in India, in his well-known work *Introduction to Pentecostalism*. His other works, such as *The Ends of the Earth*, *Spreading Fires*, also contain references to Indian Pentecostalism. Michael Bergunder is another writer from outside India, who has authored a book called *The South Indian Pentecostal Movement in the Twentieth Century*. In this book he thoroughly outlined major actors and events in relation to the history of the Pentecostal movement in South India. Some of the minute historical facts that are not covered by other authors are outlined in his work.

The theology of the Spirit has been an interesting issue since Pentecostalism became widespread in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Plenty of research has been done on the topic of the Holy Spirit with various emphases, but there is less material about the Charismatic and related movements from the 1960 onwards. However, the Charismatic movements did command the attention of the writers after 1980 with the arrival of more independent churches. Although there are writers who have written appreciatively about these popular movements, a genuine theology of the Holy Spirit utilising a thorough evaluation of Biblical material, has been attempted.

The book *Charismatics and the New Millennium* by Nigel Scotland addresses the historical and theological outlook of the Charismatic renewal. Henry I Lederle's *Theology with the Spirit* is throwing light on the new independent Charismatic churches by analysing them together. The beginning of the twenty first century witnessed authorship of several works on Pentecostal and Charismatic movements, and yet the formation of a Spirit theology is still lacking in many writings. Although attempts have been made to study the free independent churches in Kerala, a thorough research of their pneumatology has yet to be written. There is a lack of printed historical material that can be sources in the study of Indian Pentecostalism. As the early Pentecostals focused on preaching and saving souls, there was no emphasis on writing a history. Indeed, since Neocharismatic congregations are a recent development in India, it may take many decades to come up with solid written materials.

### **1.8. Overview**

This research project is divided into seven chapters. After the Introduction, chapter one deals with a brief history of the Pentecostal movement in Kerala. This chapter will help understand how the Holy Spirit begins to move among the Pentecostals in Kerala. The origin and history of the movement are decisive in forming its fundamental beliefs and

influencing its growth. Chapter two is a brief history of the Neocharismatic movement in India. This chapter is significant to this study because the growth of Neocharismatic churches in a decade is surprising. It discusses briefly the origin and growth of Neocharismatic movement in the context of Charismatic and Pentecostal revivals.

Chapter three is an attempt to explain the pneumatology of the classical Pentecostals, as part of an attempt to study their beliefs and practices of the Holy Spirit. Since Pentecostalism in India survived for more than a century, the discussion in this chapter leads to a discussion of the importance of Pentecostal pneumatology which is a platform for the Neocharismatic origin. The fourth chapter elucidates the spiritual practices of the selected Neocharismatic churches with special focus to Heavenly Feast church. Chapter five endeavours to analyse the beliefs and practices of Neocharismatic pneumatology. This chapter engages in a serious theological reflection based on an analysis of how Spirit manifestations are seen as applicable to the everyday life of Neocharismatics. Since globalization is significant in the life of people today, chapter six explains the link to the global Neocharismatic movements. The global influence of the Spirit theology is addressed in this chapter. Chapter seven contains recommendations and a conclusion. It also highlights the importance of a Neocharismatic pneumatology which may help the movement to consolidate its mission, ecclesiology and theology.

## CHAPTER ONE

### A BRIEF HISTORY OF PENTECOSTAL AND NEOCHARISMATIC MOVEMENTS IN KERALA, INDIA

#### 1.1 Introduction

In the contemporary world, Pentecostalism has made an enormous impact and it represents a large section of the Christian community.<sup>1</sup> Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity, in all its diversity, have expanded into almost every country of the world, and became the fastest growing religious movement of the twentieth century.<sup>2</sup> At the beginning of the twentieth century, most Pentecostals came from marginalized communities. However, charismatic experience has now pervaded beyond Pentecostalism and spread to communities that include all kinds of people throughout the world. The network of Pentecostalism was a global movement from its beginnings, including having an early presence in India,<sup>3</sup> and it was the later dramatic rise of Pentecostalism from a minuscule minority some fifty years ago to a major segment of contemporary Asian Christianity that has aroused theological interest.<sup>4</sup> Among South Asian countries, Indian Pentecostalism is in an important phase in the development of Pentecostalism in Asia. In the story of Indian Pentecostalism, its history in Kerala is of significance, having been part of the religious fabric of society in that part of southern India for more than a hundred years.

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<sup>1</sup> Allan Anderson, "Introduction: World Pentecostalism at Crossroads," in *Pentecostals After a Century: Global Perspectives on a Movement in Transition*, ed. Allan H. Anderson and Walter J. Hollenweger, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 20.

<sup>2</sup> Allan, Anderson, *Spreading Fires: The Missionary Nature of Early Pentecostalism* (London: SCM Press, 2007), 4.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Bergunder, *The South Indian Pentecostal Movement in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Erdmans, 2008), 11.

<sup>4</sup> John Mansford Prior, "The Challenge of the Pentecostals in Asia Part One: Pentecostal Movements in Asia," *Exchange* 36/1(2007): 6, 6–40.

Although the world Pentecostal movement has originated from other evangelical Christian movements, modern leaders of the Pentecostal movement in India are themselves the product of Indian Pentecostalism. Indian Pentecostal leaders developed a passion for their new faith and its experience. With contributions from foreign missionaries, Indian-led churches experienced a dramatic growth with similar revival experiences to the rest of the world.

## **1.2 Christianity in India**

Indian Christianity plays a significant role in the development of Asian Christianity. According to historians, Christianity may have come to the south-western part of India in the first century. The historian A. C. George maintains that St. Thomas the disciple of Jesus Christ came to India in C.E. 52 and planted seven churches before his martyrdom in C.E. 72.<sup>5</sup> These churches are still part of the Christian tradition in India. Indian Christian historian, F. Hrangkhuma, states that there was a bishop who was a representative of 'Persia and great India' at the Nicene Council in C.E. 325.<sup>6</sup> According to A. M. Mundadan, another church historian and Roman Catholic theologian in India, the reports of occasional visitors from Europe and the East suggest that there were scattered Christian communities in India.<sup>7</sup> Although most of the visitors testify to the existence of a church community in Mylapore in South India, little is known about the function of these churches. The records from the Church of Persia provide insight into the relationship of the Indian Church with Persia.<sup>8</sup> The richest of the available documents on Christianity in India is from the Portuguese during the sixteenth and

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<sup>5</sup> A. C. George, "Pentecostal Beginnings in India," *Dharma Deepika* (July-December, 2002), 41, 41–45.

<sup>6</sup> F. Hrangkhuma, "The Church in India," in *Church in Asia Today*, ed. Saphir Athyal (Singapore: Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, 1996), 400.

<sup>7</sup> A. M. Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India Volume 1* (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 1984), 71.

<sup>8</sup> Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India*, 70.

seventeenth centuries.<sup>9</sup>The arrival of the Portuguese in India in the sixteenth century was a significant turn in the history of the Church in India. Through the Portuguese, Indian Christianity developed a strong relationship with Western Christianity.<sup>10</sup>St. Francis Xavier, a Jesuit missionary was instrumental in introducing the Roman Catholic brand of Christianity to Indian society and planted several churches.<sup>11</sup>Until the arrival of Portuguese colonial rulers in Kerala, the Church remained part of the Eastern tradition associated especially with the Church of the East the Syrian Catholikos in Baghdad. However, under Portuguese domination, the Indian Church was forced to terminate its relationship with the Syrian Church of Persia and St. Thomas Christians were brought under the jurisdiction of the Portuguese Patronage.<sup>12</sup> Later, that church divided and one group joined with the Roman Catholic Church, whilst the other joined with the Syrian Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch.<sup>13</sup>

In the nineteenth century, there was a split in the Syrian Orthodox Church, in which Anglican missionaries formed a Protestant section known as the Mar Thoma Church.<sup>14</sup> Michael Bergunder records further division in the Mar Thoma Church that resulted in the formation of the Brethren movement, which in turn paved a way for Pentecostalism in Kerala. The interesting part of the story is that all the above-mentioned churches existed in Kerala, and some of them moved out of their traditional teaching against the Holy Spirit and allowed Spirit activity in their congregations. Although the country has a remarkable history of Christianity, Indian Christianity is statistically insignificant even today. According to the 2001 census, the Christian population is 2.3 percent.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India*, 70.

<sup>10</sup> Wessly Lukose, *Contextual Missiology of the Spirit: Pentecostalism in Rajasthan, India* (Oxford: Regnum, 2013), 24.

<sup>11</sup> A. C. George, "Pentecostal Beginnings in India," 42.

<sup>12</sup> Lukose, *Contextual Missiology of the Spirit*, 25.

<sup>13</sup> Bergunder, *The South Indian Pentecostal Movement*, 15.

<sup>14</sup> Bergunder, *The South Indian Pentecostal Movement in the Twentieth Century*, 15.

<sup>15</sup> <http://blogs.wsj.com/indiarealtime/2015/01/09/where-are-indias-census-figures-on-religion/>

Christianity has remained a minority religion in the country, even two thousand years after its arrival in India. However, the growth of Pentecostalism from the twentieth century onwards presents a remarkable chapter in the history of Indian Christianity.

### **1.3 Pentecostalism in India**

Pentecostalism has now been in India for just over a century. Often Indian Pentecostalism is considered as an advent of modern Pentecostalism from the Azusa street movement. However, Frank Bartleman, a scholar of the Azusa Street revival, maintains that the “present global revival” was born in Wales, developed in India, and then later established in Los Angeles.<sup>16</sup> However, it can be argued that the movement has been influenced by mission from other parts of the world.

Under the aegis of the East India Company, several missionary movements like the London Missionary Society (LMS), the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and the Basel Mission worked in India.<sup>17</sup> The missionary activities of CMS, who worked in central parts of Kerala, resulted in the formation of the Mar Thoma Church, which was later instrumental in many pre-Pentecostal Christian movements in the region.<sup>18</sup>

Paulson Pulikottil takes a step further and does not rule out the possibility of early revivals in Indian Christianity prior to 1860.<sup>19</sup> In writing about the pre- twentieth century revivals, which influenced the emergence of Pentecostalism in India, Anderson remarks that, “These revival movements were in many respects, revolutionary, paving the way for momentous change within the church, society, and nations, and in

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Even though the last census was in 2011, at present this is the latest available information from Government websites. The number of Christians in India today can be expected to be higher than due to increased evangelism. In addition, it should be acknowledged that, even after the conversion experience, many Hindus, including people from Tribal belts, chose to officially remain with the identity of their previous religion for Governmental benefits.

<sup>16</sup> Frank, Bartleman, *Azusa Street: An Eyewitness Account* (Gransville, FL: Bridge-Logos, 1980), 22.

<sup>17</sup> A. C. George, “Pentecostal Beginnings,” 42.

<sup>18</sup> George, “Pentecostal Beginnings,” 43.

<sup>19</sup> Paulson Pulikottil, “Emergence of Indian Pentecostalism,” *Dharma Deepika* (July –December, 2002), 48, 47–58.

particular, creating a heightened awareness of personal dignity and identity'.<sup>20</sup> The revivals brought forth significant change not just to the Christians, but influenced secular society and non-Christian religions too. This is corroborated by Anderson who explains that, 'Pentecostal - like revival movements with speaking in tongues and other manifestations of the Spirit's presence had been known in South India since 1860 in a CMS mission under the ministry of John Christian Aroolappen'.<sup>21</sup> Anderson says that, speaking in tongues occurred in the Mumbai area in Maharashtra state before news of Azusa Street had reached India.<sup>22</sup> It is significant to note that the first missionaries to India from Azusa Street, Albert and Lillian Garr, only reached Kolkata a month after the revival.<sup>23</sup>

Stanley Burgess records that the first of these revivals occurred in Tamil Nadu in 1860-61 and again in Travancore (Kerala) in 1874-75.<sup>24</sup> K. E. Abraham narrates that three powerful revivals occurred in Kerala in 1873, 1895 and 1908 with the sign of glossolalia and other manifestations of the Holy Spirit evident.<sup>25</sup> Many of these revivals had all the Pentecostal- like experiences of speaking in tongues, prophecy, interpretation of the tongues, and other manifestations associated with Pentecostalism. Abraham acknowledges that the people were uneducated in the Bible and were not in a position to recognize that these phenomena were the result of Holy Spirit baptism.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Allan Anderson, *To the Ends of the Earth: Pentecostalism and the Transformation of World Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 18.

<sup>21</sup> Allan, Anderson, "Pandita Ramabai, the Mukti Revival and Global Pentecostalism," *Transformation* 23/1(January, 2006): 37, 37-48. It is also noted that other revivals occurred in India, even before the revival at Mukti Mission. The earliest move of the Holy Spirit happened in North India in 1895. Other revivals are also reported in Dholka (Gujarat) and Sialkot (Punjab). Some of the Mukti Mission members were part of the early revivals in Gujarat. (See Shaibu Abraham, "Ordinary Christology," (Ph.d. diss, University of Birmingham, 2010), 115-117.

<sup>22</sup> Allan Anderson, "The Mukti-Revival (1905-07) and its consequence for Pentecostalism," (a paper presented at the Kerala Pentecostal Leadership Conference in IPC Theological Seminary, Kottayam, February, 2007):5, 1-24.

<sup>23</sup> Anderson, "The Mukti-Revival (1905-07) and its consequence for Pentecostalism," 5.

<sup>24</sup> Burgess, "Pentecostalism in India: An Overview," 87.

<sup>25</sup> K. E. Abraham, *I.P.C. Praaramba Varshangal* (The Early years of I.P.C) (Kumbanad: K. E. Abraham Foundation, 1955), 5.

<sup>26</sup> Abraham, *I.P.C. Praaramba Varshangal* , 6.

A number of foreign scholars, like Allan Anderson, Edwin Orr, Stanley M. Burgees and Michael Bergunder, in addition to Indian Pentecostal theologians like Paulson Pulikottil, Ivan Satyavrata, Wessly Lukose, Shaibu Abraham and Indian Pentecostal historians such as A. C. George and V.V. Thomas have acknowledged that revivals were evident in India before Azusa. Paulson Pulikkottil quotes Edwin Orr when he says that a ‘wonderful work of the Spirit began on the 4<sup>th</sup> of March 1860, and in May the Spirit was poured out openly upon the congregations, some there prophesied and rebuked people and others beat their breasts in contrition, and some fell down, wept bitterly and confessed their sins.’<sup>27</sup> There are records of similar revivals in India at least forty- five years before the Mukti Mission outpouring.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, this was not just a phenomenon in India alone, but in Europe, Africa and other parts of Asia as well.<sup>29</sup> There is also an undocumented history of similar revivals in other parts of India. Thomas quotes Gary B. McGee, who was a well- known historian in Assemblies of God. McGee was of the opinion that the Pentecostal experience of speaking in tongues was manifested in 1906 among the missionaries of the Christian Alliance group in Akola, Maharashtra, India.<sup>30</sup> It can be argued, therefore, that in its earliest expression Indian Pentecostalism is an indigenous mission movement, rather than a form of Pentecostalism influenced by western revivals. Therefore, it can be argued that the Pentecostal -like revivals at the end of the nineteenth century, were indigenous in nature.

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<sup>27</sup> Pulikottil, “Emergence of Indian Pentecostalism,” 48.

<sup>28</sup> Ivan M. Satyavrata, “Contextual Perspectives on Pentecostalism as a Global Culture: A South Asian View,” in *The Globalization of Pentecostalism: A Religion Made to Travel*, ed. Murray W. Dempster, Byron D. Klaus and Douglas Petersen (Oxford: Regnum Books, 1999): 205, 203–221.

<sup>29</sup> Burgess, “Pentecostalism in India: An Overview,” 85.

<sup>30</sup> V. V. Thomas, *Dalit Pentecostalism: Spirituality of the Empowered Poor* (Bangalore: Asia Trading Corporation, 2008), 28.

### 1.3.1 Mukti Mission Revival and Indian Pentecostalism

The Mukti Mission in Pune, India, associated with the leadership of Pandita Ramabai is a significant milestone in the history of Indian Pentecostalism. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Mukti Mission in 1905 lasted for a year and spread beyond Pune to many schools and churches in India.<sup>31</sup> However, many Christian leaders in India did not recognize the Mukti revival as Pentecostal, probably because those who were part of this revival did not organize themselves into a movement nor did they associate themselves with Pentecostalism.<sup>32</sup> However, this revival was widely reported in the Western Evangelical and Pentecostal press, and it caught the attention of mission minded people.<sup>33</sup> The revival at Mukti also triggered revivals for individuals from other churches. For example, Minnie F. Abrams, a 'deaconess' missionary from the Methodist Church joined Ramabai in 1887 and was filled with the Holy Spirit in the Mukti Revival.<sup>34</sup> Willie C. Hoover in Chile received a copy of a detailed report of the Mukti revival from Abrams, which influenced the Pentecostal revival in Chile.<sup>35</sup> Anderson states that the Mukti Mission became a catalyst for the beginning of Pentecostalism in Chile.<sup>36</sup> Interestingly, there is no record of Ramabai herself experiencing the Spirit baptism in the revival in Pune, but she did defend the manifestations of tongues in her periodicals against criticisms. Nevertheless, historically, the Mukti Mission is understood as the birthplace of the Pentecostal movements in India and in 2005 there was a celebration of 100 years of Indian Pentecostalism at Pune to commemorate the event.

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<sup>31</sup> Anderson, "Pandita Ramabai, the Mukti Revival and Global Pentecostalism," 39.

<sup>32</sup> Pulikottil, "Emergence of Indian Pentecostalism," 50.

<sup>33</sup> Anderson, *Spreading Fires*, 79.

<sup>34</sup> Anderson, *Spreading Fires*, 79.

<sup>35</sup> G.B. McGee, "Abrams Minnie F.," in *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* ed., Stanley M. Burgess and Garry McGee (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997), 7.

<sup>36</sup> Allan Heaton Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Second Edition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 38.

Paulson Pulikottil quotes Ramabai on the nature of revival in her own words,

I was led by the Lord to start a special prayer circle at the beginning of 1905. There were about seventy of us who met together each morning and prayed for the true conversion of all the Indian Christians, including ourselves, and for a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Christians of every land. In six months from the time, we began to pray in this manner the Lord graciously sent a glorious Holy Ghost revival among us, and in many schools and churches in this country. The results of this have been most satisfactory.<sup>37</sup>

In 2000 I had visited the Mukti Mission in Pune with the intention to study the Mission and the early revival. During this time I read Ramabai's letters about the revival from the archives, which had been written to several individuals. None of the material explained her personal experience of the baptism in the Holy Spirit through glossolalia. However, she does write about how the women in Mukti Mission experienced Holy Spirit baptism in greater measure. Furthermore, Anderson, in writing about Ramabai, states that 'In about 1894 she had a definite experience described by her niece as "the blessing of the Holy Spirit", when she was filled with joy and peace'. Anderson goes on to quote Ramabai as expressing that, 'I found it a great blessing to realize the personal presence of the Holy Spirit in me and to be guided and taught by Him'<sup>38</sup> Ramabai recognized the revival as a means by which the Holy Spirit was creating a locally-contextual form of Indian Christianity.<sup>39</sup> However, she never identified with the existing Pentecostal movements of those days nor did she use the Mukti revival in to promotethe growth of Pentecostalism in India. Although Ramabai is identified as a significant figure in the Indian revival in the twentieth century, her emphasis towards the continuity of the revival is absent in her writings. Ramabai's underlying nationalism and desire for an Indian church, is evident in her mission. The Mukti's influence on Pentecostalism in India is evident through the work of Albert Norton and Minnie

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<sup>37</sup> Pulikottil, "Emergence of Indian Pentecostalism," 49.

<sup>38</sup> Anderson, *Spreading Fires*, 79.

<sup>39</sup> Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 139.

Abrams, who were missionaries to India and associates of Mukti. The revival at Mukti resulted in the empowerment of Indian women and children fulfilling a mission mandate. Even today Ramabai's legacy is continued with the Mukti mission accommodating, educating and training only girls and women. Anderson states that both the Mukti and Pettah revivals were significant in reference to the involvement of Indian women who were later the propagators of the Pentecostal message in India.<sup>40</sup> It is important to notice that, during this period, Indian women had a low social status and were denied of their right to education. Only men were allowed to go to school. In fact, her focus had been on the empowerment of the downtrodden Hindu women in society, and the revival helped Ramabai to respond to the needs of evangelism and mission in India. Ramabai always thought that the result of revival was to create space for indigenous form of Christianity. Nowadays, people in the Indian Church respect Ramabai as a contributor towards nation building, recognizing her passion for education and the empowerment of women in Indian society.

#### **1.4 The Context of Kerala before Independence**

The State of Kerala was divided into two small kingdoms known as '*Natturajyam*' (small country), namely Travancore and Cochin. Kings ruled each state and they had a specific set of rules in place. Religion played a significant role in setting the culture and practice in each country. Some kings were always in favour of the British East India Company because they did not have the military power to resist the company.

##### **1.4.1 The Religious Background of Kerala**

A study of the religious background of Kerala is needed to understand Pentecostalism in the region. Kerala, which is one of the twenty-nine states in India, is geographically located at the southernmost tip of the country. In the history of Kerala, religion was a powerful force in shaping the culture. The state was created after India gained its

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<sup>40</sup> Anderson, *To the Ends of the Earth*, 33.

independence in 1947. The religion of Kerala from the beginning of the Christian era was predominantly Hindu.<sup>41</sup> Hinduism educated its followers within a strong caste system, which included discrimination due to notions of purity and pollution. The Brahmins placed themselves at the top of the Hindu caste system, as a group thought to be more 'pure' under the ministry of St. Thomas, it was members of the Brahmin community who were the first converts to Christianity in India.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, the Syrian Christians in Kerala claim to be the descendants of those upper caste Hindus converted by St. Thomas.<sup>43</sup> In the later period, even today, the St. Thomas Christians seem to carve out an identity of superiority. The religious context of Kerala has influenced the socio-cultural scenario to an extent that the most prominent factor of social and cultural structure is the religion.

#### **1.4.2 Socio- Cultural Context of Kerala**

Before independence, most of the socio-cultural practices in Kerala were based on the religious domination of the Hindu society. Caste dissension had a destructive impact on the people of Kerala. For example, the caste system pushed the original inhabitants of the land to the bottom of the society as slaves.<sup>44</sup> The caste system was often a subject for the poets, who composed famous poems on this issue. Indeed, it was not unlawful to kill a lower caste if he or she did not quickly move away from the walkway when a high caste person passed by.<sup>45</sup> The socio-cultural dimension of the society often conditioned people's economic status. The lower caste did not acquire any land and therefore, for survival, they had to depend on the powerful high caste landowners.

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<sup>41</sup> T. S. Samuelkutty, *The Place and Contribution of Dalits in Select Pentecostal Churches in Central Kerala from 1922-1972* (Delhi: ISPC, 2000), 6.

<sup>42</sup> Gail, Omvedt, *Dalits and Democratic Revolution: Dr. Ambedkar and the Dalit Movement in Colonial India* (New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 1994), 32.

<sup>43</sup> Thomas, *Dalit Pentecostalism*, 99.

<sup>44</sup> M. Azariah, "Doing Theology in India," in *A Reader in Dalit Theology*, ed. A. P. Nirmal (Madras: GLTC Research Institute, 1991), 42.

<sup>45</sup> Samuelkutty, *The Place and Contribution of Dalits*, 17.

Thomas writes that, on a visit to Kerala in 1892, Swami Vivekananda, who was a Hindu religious reformer, witnessed caste discrimination and termed it as a “Veritable Lunatic Asylum”.<sup>46</sup> This is a famous statement of Vivekananda explaining the severity of the caste system in Kerala. Furthermore, in a speech made in Chennai (formerly Madras) in 1897, Vivekananda said, ‘Nowhere in the world has such wickedness (existed) than what I have seen in Malabar. The poor *paraya* cannot walk through the street where the *savarnas* walks.’<sup>47</sup> But everything will be alright provided a mixed English or Muslim name is accepted by them. All those *Malabaries* are lunatics. All their homes are lunatic asylums.’<sup>48</sup>

The poor people spent their lives serving the needs of the high caste masters. Their health was affected due to the meagre food available. Often, due to food scarcity, the poor people hunted for crabs, tiny fish, snails and red ants.<sup>49</sup> The Christians who were present in the society during this period did not influence the transformation of society; rather they accepted the norms and practices of Hinduism and accommodated their message. The context of Kerala posed a great challenge to Western Pentecostal missionaries. Evangelizing a society with an unfamiliar socio-cultural system was an immense challenge. Nevertheless, American missionary Robert F. Cook stayed almost forty years in Kerala and evangelized the state with the message of Jesus Christ.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Thomas, *Dalit Pentecostalism*, 88.

<sup>47</sup> *Paraya* means a low caste and a *Dalit*. *Savarna* is a term used for High caste in Malayalam, the local language of Kerala.

<sup>48</sup> Thomas, *Dalit Pentecostalism*, 88. *Malabaries* means People who live in Kerala. It is a term used in 18th and 19<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>49</sup> Samuelkutty, *The Place and Contribution of Dalits*, 19.

<sup>50</sup> Bergunder, *The South Indian*, 29.

### **1.4.3 The Christian Community in Kerala**

The Christians in Kerala were known as St. Thomas Christians, which reminded them of their long tradition and affinity with the message of St. Thomas. A. M. Mundadan, a well-known Church historian in Kerala, records that the St. Thomas tradition in Kerala stands sufficiently justified.<sup>51</sup> Mundadan support the view of Christian presence in India, in terms of the historical investigation made in the Western tradition and different aspects of the Indian tradition. Dempsey states that there is ample historical evidence to suggest that the migration of the East Syrian Chaldean Christian community to India was closely involved in Kerala's thriving spice trade by the fourth century B.C.<sup>52</sup> Indeed, C. B. Firth records the migration of the Christian community from Persia to Kerala in 345 B.C. and then later in 823 B. C, which resulted in the assimilation of both communities, and the creation of a wealthy Christian community in Kerala.<sup>53</sup> Today these Christians are known as 'Syrian Christians' due to their history with the East Syrian Church. By the time of the arrival of the Portuguese in the late fifteenth century, these Christians had integrated the cultural practices of the Hindu society. To protect their own status in the society, they practised local customs, including a variety of ritual observances, and maintained caste purity to the extent of enjoying a high social status similar to the prosperous Hindu Nair. Church life also had assimilated Hindu practices. For example, Dempsey states that 'Although these Kerala Christians kept their use of

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<sup>51</sup> A. M. Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India*, Vol.1 (Bangalore: CHAI, 1989), 64. See, *Eastern Churches Journal* 19/1,2,3, (Spring, Summer, Autumn, 2012), 448.

<sup>52</sup> Corinne G. Dempsey, *Kerala Christian Sainthood: Collisions of Culture and Worldview in South India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 5.

<sup>53</sup> C. B. Firth, *An Introduction to Indian Church History* (Madras: CLS, 1961), 28.

east Syrian liturgical language and canon law, they tended to model their churches after South Indian temples, and their priests bore a marked resemblance to Hindu sanyasis'.<sup>54</sup> As it is identified earlier the Syrian Christians considered themselves to be the original Christians and therefore, they kept a high caste identity which is visible even today. The majority of the Christian historical records written by the Syrian Christians emphasize this view. However, there is a record of the conversion of Christians from the Dalit category that is known as "New Christians" and they were also called "Avasa Christians" (Backward Caste Christians).<sup>55</sup> CMS missionaries who planted churches in the middle of the nineteenth century, worked among the Dalits in Kerala, with the first baptism reported in 1854.<sup>56</sup> It is against this historical context that the emergence of Pentecostalism must be understood.

### **1.5 The Context of Pentecostalism in Kerala**

The Pentecostal movement in Kerala is the outcome of a dramatic phenomenon of the move of the Holy Spirit at the beginning of the twentieth century. Like other Pentecostal movements in the world, Pentecostalism in Kerala began at the turn of the twentieth century. However, as mentioned earlier, the early evangelical revivals are also significant with regards to the origin of Pentecostal movement in Kerala, and therefore this chapter offers a detailed discussion of those early revivals. The first generation of believers in Kerala who experienced the power of the Holy Spirit through the initial evidence of speaking in tongues were not interested in documenting their experiences or were busy in sharing their new faith with other people. Therefore, most of the narratives we hear of that time are based on oral traditions, and are gathered and collated by scholars from different fragmented sources. As in other parts of the world, Indian Pentecostal leaders and missionaries have often been those without a formal theological

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<sup>54</sup> Dempsey, *Kerala Christian Sainthood*, 6.

<sup>55</sup> Samuelkutty, *The Place and Contribution of Dalits*, 25.

<sup>56</sup> Samuelkutty, *The Place and Contribution of Dalits*, 26.

background. Indeed, intellectual abilities were seen as a disqualification for Christian ministry, although the situation has now changed and more Pentecostal pastors in Kerala receive formal theological training. Due to the lack of written historical sources spanning the last hundred years since the beginning of this form of Christianity in this region, little research has been done on the history of the Kerala Pentecostal movement.

### **1.5.1 The Social Structure of Kerala Pentecostalism**

The study of Pentecostalism is significant in Kerala because it did not come out of a vacuum rather it came out of a church that has almost two thousand years of Christianity.<sup>57</sup> It is important to look at the social structure of Kerala Pentecostalism because it has parallels in other continents like Africa and Latin America. Paulson Pulikottil observes that Indian Pentecostalism offered a challenge to the western missionaries, as they had to encounter the whole question of the caste system.<sup>58</sup> The Indian caste system has social and political implications. Dalit is a common name for lower groups in the caste system. 'The word Dalit literally means "oppressed" or broken people'.<sup>59</sup> They consist of several groups of people like *pulayas*, *parayas*, *kuravas*, *ezhava* etc. They are known by different names in different states. They were placed socially, economically, culturally and politically at the very bottom of a hierarchical society. Every effort was made to keep them there through enforced poverty and social degradation. Why were they *Dalits*? It was not out of choice. They were *Dalits* because they were born into the caste.<sup>60</sup> Many of the early converts into Pentecostalism were from the *Dalit* community. A number of them were converted to

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<sup>57</sup> A. C. George, "Pentecostal Beginnings in Travancore, South India," *Asia Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 4/2 (2001): 216.

<sup>58</sup> Paulson Pulikottil, "Azusa Missionaries in the Context of the Caste System in India," in *The Azusa Street Revival and its Legacy*, ed. Hunter Harold D. And Cecil M. Robeck Jr. (Cleveland, Tennessee: Pathway Press, 2006), 164.

<sup>59</sup> Pulikottil, "Azusa Missionaries in the Context," 164.

<sup>60</sup> Pulikottil, "Azusa Missionaries in the Context," 164.

Christianity in India by Protestant missionaries, before the arrival of Pentecostal missionaries.

India was a favourite mission destination for the Azusa missionaries. Many of them had extraordinary experiences in their mission work. For example, Alfred G. Garr believed he spoke in the Bengali language when he was baptised in the Holy Spirit and moved to West Bengal and focused his work in Calcutta.<sup>61</sup> The western missionaries faced a genuine dilemma with regards to the issue of caste. The missionaries had to overcome a variety of cultural and social issues. Most writers on Pentecostalism in Kerala have not addressed the struggle of western missionaries. It can be assumed that due to this reason many of the foreign missionaries who came to India could not stay for a long period with few exceptions. Even for an Indian, the caste system is complicated and often a stumbling block to conversion to Christianity.<sup>62</sup> Indeed, these oppressed people were the first respondents to the message of Pentecost, because they were in need of God and His message.

### **1.6 History of Revivals in Kerala**

Pulikottil states that there were no Christian revivals recorded in Kerala before 1850.<sup>63</sup> However, some forms of revivals were recorded in the Roman Catholic Church in Kerala before the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, the Christian church had influenced the society and spread throughout Kerala over a period of eighteen centuries. The Egyptian historian Cosmos visited India in the sixth century and, in his book called *Christian Topography*, he recorded that there were established forms of Christianity and churches.<sup>64</sup> However, the spiritual development of the Kerala churches until the middle of the nineteenth century was fragile when compared to other parts of the world. Even

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<sup>61</sup> Pulikottil, "Azusa Missionaries in the Context," 161.

<sup>62</sup> On many occasions I have faced this problem in my ministry in North India and in Kerala.

<sup>63</sup> Saju, *Kerala Pentecostu Charithram* [The History of Pentecost in Kerala] (Kochi: Sanctuary World Media, 1994), 36.

<sup>64</sup> Saju, *Kerala Pentecostu Charithram*, 36. (Original source not cited)

the arrival of the Portuguese in India did not contribute to the development of the Kerala churches; rather by the time they arrived the churches were spiritually weak.<sup>65</sup> Saju records various reasons for the spiritual weakness among the Christians in Kerala. One reason was political, namely that Indian Christians had lost their fellowship with Christians in Palestine and Syria due to an invasion of Islam. Another reason is that by the seventh century the kings in the smaller kingdoms of Kerala elevated some of the Christians to higher positions.<sup>66</sup> Thereby, the Christians professed to consider them to be higher caste and behaved like non-Christians.

Neither the sixteenth century Reformation in Europe nor the later awakenings in Christianity had any impact on the life of Christians in Kerala. It is likely that the Christians in Kerala were not aware of such a move of the Holy Spirit in the European countries. Indeed, it could be seen that some of the Christian groups in Kerala were almost like Hindus with all the Hindu religious and cultural practices.<sup>67</sup> There are some other significant factors that contributed to the revival in the church community in Kerala.

### **1.6.1 The Role of Bible Translation in the revival**

The translation of the Bible to indigenous languages was an important factor in the history of Christianity in India. The Bible was not available in Malayalam until 1841, but after that, the translated Bible contributed to the revival in Kerala. Indeed, according to Edwin Orr without the inspiration and knowledge from the Bible, a revival is impossible.<sup>68</sup> The church in Kerala was ignorant about the use of the Bible until the nineteenth century, with only the priests, a small minority able to access the Bible in the Syrian language. In this way, the situation was similar to European churches during the

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<sup>65</sup> Saju, *Kerala Pentecostu Charithram*, 31.

<sup>66</sup> Saju, *Kerala Pentecostu Charithram*, 37.

<sup>67</sup> K.K. Kuruvila, *Keralathile Athmeeya Unarvu* [The Revival in Kerala] (Thiruvalla: Malayalam Christian Literature Committee, 1941), 32.

<sup>68</sup> Saju, *Kerala Pentecostu*, 39.

dark ages of Christianity. A Protestant missionary from England, Claudius Buchanan, visited Kerala in 1809. The head of the Syrian Church in Kerala sent a Syriac Bible with him, and he printed one hundred copies in England and sent them back to India.<sup>69</sup> The common believers had no access to this Bible, because it was in the Syriac language. The first Malayalam Bible of the church in Kerala was the translation of the four gospels translated by Mar Divannios and printed by Buchanan. Benjamin Bailey translated the New Testament into Malayalam in 1829.<sup>70</sup> His translation of the Bible influenced the church community in Kerala more than any other translation available. The translation of the Bible was a key factor in the revivals in other places of India. It is reported that while Pandita Ramabai was expounding the eighth chapter of John the girls in her Bible study were led into the confession of sins by the Holy Spirit. At the explanation of the Scripture, they were stricken by a variety of manifestations, such as the sensation of burning, simultaneously praying with a loud cry, and speaking in other tongues.<sup>71</sup> Lukose refers to O.L.Snaitang who recognized the importance of the Bible translation by the Welsh missionaries as crucial in the revival in Northeast India.<sup>72</sup> The translation of the Bible into indigenous languages was a challenge to the early missionaries in India, and yet people like William Carey translated the complete Bible into six Indian languages and parts of it into twenty nine other languages and dialects.<sup>73</sup> The people who were a part of the revival had a positive response to its message as preached by the missionaries.

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<sup>69</sup> Saju, *Kerala Pentecostu*, 38

<sup>70</sup> [n.a], "Benjamin Bailey," [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benjamin\\_Bailey](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benjamin_Bailey), (27 February, 2014) Benjamin Bailey was a missionary from Yorkshire, England. He lived in Kerala for 34 years. He was the progenitor of printing and book publishing in Malayalam, the native language of Kerala. He also established the first printing press (the Kottayam CMS press) and started printing Malayalam in Kerala. He was the first lexicographer, author and translator in the language.

<sup>71</sup> Satyavrata, "Contextual Perspectives on Pentecostalism...", 204.

<sup>72</sup> Lukose, *Contextual Missiology of the Spirit*, 27.

<sup>73</sup> [n.a]. "William Carey," <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/95736/William-Carey>, (18 March, 2014).

### **1.6.2 The Revival and Protestant Missions**

The arrival of the British missionary William Carey and the endeavours of other mission organizations such as CMS, LMS and the Basel Mission in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries produced an atmosphere conducive for the revival.<sup>74</sup> There were revivals in India prior to many other well-known revivals around the world. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the revival in Christian Petta in Tamil Nadu is the oldest in the history of Indian Christian revivals. But this revival is not recognized as Pentecostal nor given any reference in many of the early writings on Pentecostalism in India. However, contemporary scholars like Allan Anderson among others, who have acknowledged the revival in Christian Pettah.

In 1864, a Christian woman named Ammal Vedanayagam arrived in Kerala from Thanchavoor, in the neighbouring state of Tamilnadu, she came with her group, visited churches, preached the gospel and taught Christian songs.<sup>75</sup> It was this group that can be seen to be the first to generate an interest in the Bible among the Syrian Christians.<sup>76</sup> Indeed, Anderson refers to early Pentecostal revivals in Asia which is associated with Arulappan. His meetings Tamilnadu in 1860-61 saw many reported charismatic gifts.<sup>77</sup> The role of Arulappan in Kerala, a man who can be seen as a trailblazer with regards to the Pentecostal revivals in India, will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.

According to Saju, Arulappan read about the revival in Britain and America in 1859, and he prayed to God for such a revival to occur in his country. Meanwhile, God used him to take a leadership role in the revival on 4<sup>th</sup> March 1860, at his home, in Christian Pettah, Tirunelveli, Tamilnadu.<sup>78</sup> His meetings with David Fenn, a CMS missionary in Kerala lasted for many years and there were manifestations of the Holy Spirit. Henry

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<sup>74</sup> Lukose, *Contextual Missiology of the Spirit*, 26.

<sup>75</sup> Saju, *Kerala Pentecostu*, 38.

<sup>76</sup> Saju, *Kerala Pentecostu*, 38.

<sup>77</sup> Allan Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 124.

<sup>78</sup> Saju, *Kerala Pentecostu*, 39.

Becker, another CMS missionary also held meetings in Kottayam, Kerala in January 1875 and almost 589 people were baptised on a single day.<sup>79</sup> The Protestant missionaries and churches were open to the work of the Holy Spirit irrespective of their understanding of pneumatology.

The CMS Mission also played a role in the revival before the beginning of the twentieth century. Justus Joseph, a Brahmin convert, a priest in the Anglican Church and a CMS missionary, led the revival in which the Pentecostal-like manifestations were seen.<sup>80</sup> He also established a church called ‘*Kanneettu Unarvusabha*’ (Kanneettu Revival Church). An important event in the life of Justus Joseph was that his colleague prophesied that Jesus Christ would return in six years from 15 May 1875. Many people believed this prophecy and became members of this church. His prophecy was not fulfilled, and the church went into the ruins.<sup>81</sup> The Anglican Church considered Justus Joseph and his church a form of heresy.

In 1888, Lakshmanarayar a preacher and lay person was instrumental in the revival of the Mar Thoma Church. During this period, two foreign missionaries named Baringold and Kearney also conducted revival meetings. Mathews Mar Athanasius, the Metropolitan of the Syrian Church, was a key figure in the revival among the Syrian Christians. He assembled his parish people and educated them in the need of Bible study and prayer on Sunday afternoon.<sup>82</sup> George records that they emphasized to their people the need for a revival based on *sola scriptura, sola gratia, sola fide, sola christus*. As the leadership of the church failed in their effort to change in 1889 many left the Syrian Church and formed a new church, presently known as the Mar Thoma Church. Later, some of the believers in the Mar Thoma Church advocated a more Bible

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<sup>79</sup> Saju, *Kerala Pentecostu*, 38.

<sup>80</sup> Pulikottil, “Emergence of Indian Pentecostalism,” 48.

<sup>81</sup> Saju, *Kerala Pentecostu*, 38.

<sup>82</sup> Saju, *Kerala Pentecostu*, 38.

centred life and pioneered a new movement called the Brethren Assembly. They believed in baptism by immersion, separation from all worldliness and the priesthood of all believers.<sup>83</sup> Later on, a Basel missionary from the West, V. Nagal joined the Brethren Assembly and became a leading figure.<sup>84</sup>

Many Mar Thoma believers were attracted by the Brethren teachings and later moved to Pentecostalism. The Mar Thoma Church was almost like a close associate of the Syrian Christian churches in Kerala. A missionary who belonged to the Keswick movement named J. G. Gregson travelled from England to Kerala and preached in the Maramon Convention in 1897. This is still one of the largest annual Christian gatherings among the non- Pentecostals in South Asia. While Gregson preached in several meetings in Kerala and associated himself with V. Nagal from the Brethren movement, Gregson was attracted by the Brethren teachings and took immersion baptism; he later became a preacher in the Brethren movement.<sup>85</sup>

In 1905, Punchamannil Mamman Upadesi from the Mar Thoma Church led a revival meeting at Kizhakkam Muthoor near Kaviyoor, Kerala for nineteen days. Hundreds of people experienced the manifestations of the Holy Spirit that included seeing visions, dancing and praising God, and speaking in tongues.<sup>86</sup> Another significant revival in the Mar Thoma church in 1920 was led by Moothampackal Kochukunju Upadesi, a layman in the church. He wrote a number of songs in Malayalam which are sung even today by the wider Christian community in Kerala. Many of these songs were later translated to some Indian languages like Tamil, Kannada and Hindi.

In addition, there is a clear evidence of the Pentecostal manifestations among Protestants in the other parts of the world before the twentieth century. The pre-

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<sup>83</sup> George, "Pentecostal Beginnings...", 223.

<sup>84</sup> Saju, *Kerala Pentecostu*, 41.

<sup>85</sup> Saju, *Kerala Pentecostu*, 42.

<sup>86</sup> Kuruvila, *Keralathile*, 58.

twentieth century revival in India was also similar to these early revivals in other parts of the world. It is astounding to see the development of the work of the Holy Spirit in Kerala prior to the arrival of Pentecostalism. Early Pentecostalism in India was particularly attractive to the poor and Christians seeking more from their faith.<sup>87</sup> Considering these pre-twentieth- century revivals, the Pentecostal-like outpouring in Arulappan’s meetings in Kerala can be seen to be closer and appealing to the nature of Pentecostalism.

### **1.7 The Origin of Pentecostalism in Kerala**

Since Christians in Kerala had experienced several Pentecostal-like outpouring, they responded very positively to the message delivered by the missionaries. People in Kerala were the most literate in all India, and could read both the Malayalam and the English Pentecostal literature.<sup>88</sup> Therefore, the Western missionaries’ involvement in the initial stages of Pentecostalism in Kerala was significant. The claim of American historians that the birth place of global Pentecostalism can be found in Topeka, Kansas has generally been an accepted truism only until 1970s. According to Stanley M. Burgess, for every Pentecostal, this has become “their sacred time” and “sacred space.”<sup>89</sup> However, the ever-growing scholarship on World Pentecostalism has raised arguments against this notion, and suggested that revivals were also prevalent outside the United States of America. As mentioned in the previous section, the Pentecostalism in Kerala does have a pre-twentieth - century experience.

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<sup>87</sup> George, “Pentecostal Beginnings...,” 220.

<sup>88</sup> Burgess, “Pentecostalism in India..,” 90.

<sup>89</sup> Burgess, “Pentecostalism in India...,” 86.

### 1.7.1 The Theory of Many Jerusalems

Pentecostalism in many countries, including India, is often regarded as a result of Azusa Street. However, Pentecostal scholars have pointed out that the Pentecostal phenomenon has a multiplicity of origins in different cultures. Everett Wilson has noted that Pentecostalism is not the result of American revivals; rather it has broken out or has been rediscovered since the beginning of the century.<sup>90</sup> Anderson regards Global Pentecostalism as ‘not the child of Azusa Street’ but as an indigenous movement shaped by the context of a particular country.<sup>91</sup> Pulikottil, a theologian and representative of Indian Pentecostalism in the World Council of Churches (WCC), argued for the indigenous nature of Pentecostalism in India. He explains in his article ‘Emergence of Indian Pentecostalism’ that the native Pentecostalism has overtaken Western Pentecostalism in India in both numbers and impact.<sup>92</sup> Indeed Pulikottil writes that ‘Pentecostal leaders in India like K.E. Abraham did not see their movement as something that had roots in the Azusa Street revivals, but one that is the result of the revivals that were going on in India ever since Christianity came to India’.<sup>93</sup> Along similar lines Lukose argues for a polycentric approach in Pentecostal historiography, rather than a purely Eurocentric approach.<sup>94</sup> Indeed, George, quoting from an unpublished article by Gary McGee says that Pentecostal and Pentecostal like movements preceded the development of 20<sup>th</sup> century Pentecostalism in the North

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<sup>90</sup> Everett A. Wilson, “They Crossed the Red Sea, Didn’t they? Critical History and Pentecostal Beginnings,” in *Globalization of Pentecostalism: A Religion Made to Travel*, edited by Murray W. Dempster, Byron D. Klaus, Douglas Petersen (Oxford: Regnum, 1999), 91-93.

<sup>91</sup> Anderson, *Introduction to Pentecostalism*, Lukose, *Contextual Missiology of the Spirit*, 35--36. Stanley M. Burgess also advocate for Pentecostalism shaped by the cultural values of the particular country of its origin.

<sup>92</sup> Pulikottil, “Emergence of Indian...,” 47.

<sup>93</sup> Pulikottil, “Emergence of Indian...,” 49.

<sup>94</sup> Lukose, *Contextual Missiology*, 35–36. The theory of many Jerusalem was explained by Allan Anderson in his book *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*.

America and Europe by at least 40 years. Apart from the revival under Edward Irving in the U.K. in the early 1830s, the most prominent revivals of the 19<sup>th</sup> century characterized by the charismatic gifts of the Holy Spirit occurred in India. There is evidence to support the non-western beginnings in India. The revivals occurring in India during 1860s definitely took spiritual gifts, signs and wonders seriously. When modern Pentecostalism began there in 1906, it developed independently from the influence of the similar revivals in the West.<sup>95</sup> Pentecostal scholarship in India has only really developed over the last thirty years or so, India is a country with a plethora of languages and cultures. Its twenty nine autonomous states are rooted in local indigenous cultures and society. It was the vision of the early Pentecostal leaders of Kerala like K. E. Abraham to identify their new movement as indigenous in nature. The indigenous nature of Pentecostalism in different parts of the world remained undocumented by western historians until recently.<sup>96</sup> Many of the revivals in India must have taken place in rural villages and the news about these kinds of revivals became part of the oral tradition. A. C. George identifies the problem in writing the history of the Pentecostal movement in India as due to the lack of adequate and reliable resources.<sup>97</sup> Anderson also suggests that Indian Pentecostalism cannot be understood simply as a product of Western missions because ‘the history of Indian Pentecostalism is a complicated one, with many relationships and historical connections between its main protagonists that it cannot be constructed as the history of Western missions’.<sup>98</sup> Since very little is documented due to financial and technological limitations, a lot of vital information is missing, as early Pentecostals have since died. The available line of history tells us that Pentecostalism in India is a strong indigenous movement and

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<sup>95</sup> George, “Pentecostal Beginnings...,” 220.

<sup>96</sup> Burgess, “Pentecostalism in India...,” 86.

<sup>97</sup> George, “Pentecostal Beginnings...,” 41.

<sup>98</sup> Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 127.

indeed, today, all these denominations are headed by native leaders. The emergence of the Pentecostal churches has a complex story as it was under the supremacy of foreign missionaries until 1930.

### **1.7.2 John Christian Arulappan- A Predecessor of Indian Revivals**

As mentioned earlier Arulappan's revival in Christian Pettah, Tamil Nadu between 1860-65, in which many charismatic gifts were experienced, is considered to be the first of its kind in nineteenth century India. Renowned Pentecostal Western scholar Allan Anderson and Indian Pentecostal theologians support this. However, the most extensive history of Pentecostalism in South India by Michael Bergunder gave no reference to the revival of Arulappan. Anderson identifies that very little information is available, except the CMS archives and the unstructured account of the Brethren writer G. H. Lang published in 1939.<sup>99</sup> Although Arulappan is not directly associated with Pentecostalism in Kerala, the revival in his church at Christian Pettah influenced the Mar Thoma Church during the end of the nineteenth century. The revival in his church spread among the Protestant missionary churches in Kerala and Tamil Nadu including the Syrian Orthodox churches of Kerala.<sup>100</sup> His followers had an active role in the revival in Kerala during 1873-75.<sup>101</sup>

### **1.7.3 The Influence of National Revivals**

Mc Gee writes that Indian revivals in the later part of the nineteenth century influenced the modern Pentecostal movement of the twentieth century.<sup>102</sup> All kinds of spirit manifestations occurred in the historic revivals of Azusa Street and Wales revivals were also present in the Indian revivals. Anderson identifies that confessions of sin and an emphasis on holiness which were reported in the Wales revival were the main

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<sup>99</sup> Anderson, *To the Ends of the Earth*, 18.

<sup>100</sup> Pulikottil, "Emergence of Indian..." 48.

<sup>101</sup> Anderson, *To the Ends of the Earth*, 25.

<sup>102</sup> Garry B. McGee "India: Pentecostal and Pentecostal like Movements (1860-1910)" in *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, ed. Stanley M. Burgees and Gary B. McGee (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998): 118.

characteristics of the revival in India.<sup>103</sup> McGee reports on the revival in Tirunelveli in Tamil Nadu, South India as follows,

The Phenomena in the revival included prophecy, glossolalia, glossographia, and interpretation of tongues, as well as intense conviction of sin among nominal Christians, dreams, visions, signs in the heavens, and people falling down and or shaking. Other noted features were the restoration of the offices of the apostle and prophet, evangelism, conversions of unbelievers, prayer for the sick, and concerns for the poor. The appearance of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the ministry of Aroolappan clearly indicated an open-ended expectation of the miraculous, based on expectancy of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as predicted for the end times by the OT prophet Joel. The revival not only attracted Indian Christians, but British soldiers stationed in the region as well.<sup>104</sup>

Interestingly, the revival led many non-believers to the faith and to salvation. Unlike the other revivals in India and abroad, this revival is significant because it did not take place among a group of believers waiting for the promise of the Holy Spirit like in the Book of Acts; rather it was in an insignificant village in Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu.

Anderson records that after his studies in the CMS Seminary, Arulappan followed the radical Evangelicalism of Pentecostalism's forbearers. His theological position is significant to the revival in the nineteenth century. He questioned the idea that only the ordained clergy had the right to minister the sacraments. Arulappan and his colleague Andrew were the leaders of a mission in Pilney Hills, and presided over Holy Communion and baptisms.<sup>105</sup> Anderson observes that the revival was characterized by the confession of sins, an emphasis on holy life, women beginning involvement in ministry, and also missionary activity, including tract distribution and preaching.<sup>106</sup>

Although Arulappan died in 1867, his disciples were significantly involved in later revivals in the CMS and Syrian Orthodox communities in Kerala. Later, these revivals

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<sup>103</sup> Anderson, *To the Ends*, 21.

<sup>104</sup> McGee, "India," 118.

<sup>105</sup> Anderson, *To the Ends*, 20.

<sup>106</sup> Anderson, *To the Ends*, 21.

led in turn to the formation of the Mar Thoma Church, which is discussed later in this chapter.

According to Anderson, the revival led by Arulappan Christian Pettah is not just phenomenological, because the effect of the revival travelled to other parts of India, long after Arulappan's time, and prior to the revival in North America and Europe.<sup>107</sup> Pentecostalism in India is deeply indebted to both these national revivals led by Indian initiation and leadership. The common characteristics of these revivals, like preaching the gospel and evangelism by enthusiastic and Spirit filled believers marked the beginning of Pentecostalism in Kerala.

#### **1.7.4 The Beginning of Pentecostalism – Collaboration with the Western Missionaries**

There is a fascinating history of revivals under the leadership of Western missionaries in the early days of Pentecostalism in Kerala. By the beginning of the twentieth century, several missionaries from the West had already arrived in India. In 1909 George Berg, an American Brethren missionary with a German origin arrived in Kerala and preached in a Brethren convention in Thrikkannamangal, near Kottarakkara.<sup>108</sup> According to Anderson, Berg is considered to be the most successful 'early expatriate' Pentecostal missionary in India.<sup>109</sup> However, the Brethren church did not accept his teachings based on the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, in the following year, missionaries like V. Nagal and David Arthur preached in the conventions in the same place, defending George Berg and his teachings based on baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Pulikottil records that opposition from the Brethren movement meant that Berg subsequently organised his own meetings.<sup>110</sup> During his third visit to Kerala in 1911, Robert Cumine, a Tamil speaking Anglo- Indian missionary from Karnataka, who later

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<sup>107</sup> Anderson, *To the Ends*, 25.

<sup>108</sup> Saju, *Kerala Pentecostu*, 39.

<sup>109</sup> Anderson, *Spreading Fires*, 95.

<sup>110</sup> Pulikottil, "Emergence of Indian...", 50.

became a leader in the Pentecostal movement in Kerala, accompanied Berg. They stayed in Kottarakkara, in Kerala, for most of the time, and met a small prayer group in Thuvayur, near Adoor, which under the leadership of Paruttumpara Ummachan, had close contact with the Brethren Assembly. This congregation invited Berg to Thuvayur and as a result they accepted the Pentecostal faith. This church is now considered to be the first Pentecostal church in Kerala. Furthermore, Berg took some of the young people from Kerala to Bangalore, conducting Bible study sessions and instructing them in the Pentecostal faith. Among them were Umman Mammen and Pandalam Mathai Upadesi, who both later became leaders of the Pentecostal movement in Kerala.<sup>111</sup>

#### **1.7.5 George Berg – The Trailblazer of Kerala Pentecostalism**

The pre-twentieth century revivals in Kerala resulted in creating awareness of the work of the Holy Spirit. However, although, those involved in these revivals did experience Pentecostal manifestations, they did not develop any level of congregational identity. Neither did Pentecostal preaching on southern India by foreign missionaries such as Minnie F Abrams (1859-1912), Alfred Goodrich Garr (1874-1944) and Alice Evelyn Luce (1873-1955) result in the formation of any Pentecostal denominations.<sup>112</sup>

However, in the beginning of the twentieth century, it is Berg, who was more active in Pentecostal ministry in Kerala than any other foreign missionary who became a key person in the history of Pentecostalism in Kerala. Berg received the Baptism in the Holy Spirit at Azusa Street in 1906.<sup>113</sup> It was his experience at this revival which gave him clarity about his future mission work; he heard someone next to him speaking in Hindi and he decided that he should travel to India.<sup>114</sup> Berg's ministry raised several disciples, whose own ministry efforts developed under his training. Indeed, Bergunder

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<sup>111</sup> Bergunder, *The South Indian Pentecostal*, 26.

<sup>112</sup> Pulikottil, "Emergence of Indian...", 50.

<sup>113</sup> Anderson, *Spreading Fires*, 95.

<sup>114</sup> Anderson, *Spreading Fires*, 95.

says that Berg's ministry in Kerala played a vital role in the making of the Pentecostal movement in southern India.<sup>115</sup>

His arrival in Kerala is a significant phase of Indian Pentecostalism. He came to Kerala for the first time in 1909 to preach in the Brethren Convention held in Kottarkkara.<sup>116</sup>

As mentioned in the previous section, revivals did take place in Kerala prior to the arrival of Berg. For example, Abraham records a revival in 1908 among the Christians in Kerala.<sup>117</sup> Since Brethren teachers were leading the majority of the gospel meetings, the Pentecostal faith promoted by Berg had faced opposition. In 1911, after his Pentecostal experience at Azusa Street, he returned to Kerala with Charles Cummins, a follower of Pentecostal faith through Berg. Nevertheless, Berg organized several Bible studies from the Epistle to Hebrews, which gained wide acceptance from people and many turned to Christ. In his meetings many came to the Pentecostal faith at places called Punthala, Kidangannoor, Venmony, Elanthoor, Adoor and Thuvayur.<sup>118</sup> Until the arrival of Robert F. Cook, the Pentecostal gatherings were not in an organized church form, but were held in the homes of believers. Anderson writes about the ministry of Berg in detail, and suggests that moral lapse was behind his reason for leaving India in late 1914 to join his family in the USA.<sup>119</sup> Irrespective of this reason, one has to recognise the significance of Berg as a trailblazer in history of Pentecostalism in Kerala.

#### **1.7.6 Robert Felix Cook – A Veteran of Kerala Pentecostalism**

Robert Felix Cook was born in 1880 in Warsaw, Poland, the son of a Baptist preacher.

His family migrated to California in the early years of his life. After his conversion experience at the age of seven, when he was only fourteen, God called him to be a missionary. He married to Anna Yagarin 1904, and attended a revival meeting at the

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<sup>115</sup> Bergunder, *The South Indian*, 26.

<sup>116</sup> George, "Pentecostal Beginnings..." 225.

<sup>117</sup> Abraham, *Yesu krithuvinte Eliya Dasan*, 12.

<sup>118</sup> Samuelkutty, *The Place and Contribution*, 49.

<sup>119</sup> Anderson, *Spreading Fires*, 97.

Azusa Street in 1908, where he received the Holy Spirit baptism. A prophecy based on Luke 4:18 confirmed his own conviction to become a missionary in South India. He met Berg at a convention in Chicago city in 1912, and Berg's experience in India heightened Cook's vision. In 1913, Cook arrived in Bangalore as an independent Pentecostal missionary.<sup>120</sup> His life experiences in Kerala are recorded in his biography *Half a Century of Divine Leading and 37 Years of Apostolic Achievements in South India*. In January 1914, Cook accompanied Berg on a preaching tour in Kerala.<sup>121</sup> A few months later, Berg left India permanently.<sup>122</sup> Saju records that Cook and Berg parted ways due to a disagreement.<sup>123</sup> Cook avoids comment on his association with Berg in his biography, which offer space for speculation by students of Pentecostal history in Kerala.

In 1921 Cook settled in Kottarakkara, Kerala, to focus on his ministry. He worked with A. K. Varghese his translator, K. C. Oommen, and Chodie. Chodie was a Dalit leader who feared having an operation, but was reportedly healed by the prayer of Cook.<sup>124</sup> The conversion experience of Chodie is not recorded in the available sources of history. Cook himself says that Chodie was bitter towards missionaries.<sup>125</sup> Cook paid several visits to Kerala and conducted gospel meetings between 1914 and 1921. Miraculous healings and conversions including the conversion of several Muslims are recorded during these meetings. The Muslim community in Punalur, Kerala referred to Cook and

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<sup>120</sup> Anderson, *An Introduction*, 125.

<sup>121</sup> Bergunder, *The South Indian*, 27.

<sup>122</sup> There are various opinions about the reasons of Berg leaving India. In his biography, Cook records that he broke his relationship with Berg, because of Berg's unholy life. (Cook, *Half a Century of Divine Leading and 37 Years of Apostolic Achievements in South India*, 21.) Anderson believes that he left due to moral failure in life. (Anderson, *Spreading Fires*, 97) According to Bergunder, Berg left India most probably due to the conflict with Cook. Pentecostal authors in Kerala are of the opinion that Berg had to leave India at beginning of the First World War due to his German Origin.

<sup>123</sup> Saju, *Kerala Pentecostu*, 95.

<sup>124</sup> Robert F. Cook, *A Quarter Century of Divine Leading in India* (Chengannur, India: Church of God Press, 1938), 35.

<sup>125</sup> Robert F. Cook, *Half a Century of Divine Leading and 37 years of Apostolic Achievement in South India* (Cleveland, TN: Church of God Foreign Mission Department, 1955), 99.

his associates as *angels* because of the miracles.<sup>126</sup> The responses of people he encountered motivated Cook to settle down in Kerala and continue his ministry. Cook and his family were instrumental in pioneering churches in Kerala. During the early days of his stay in Kerala, he planted churches and worked with the Assemblies of God. Cook worked with native leaders like K. E. Abraham, Pandalam Mathai and A.K. Varghese. Cook experienced difficult moments in his journey of Pentecostal faith to develop. In the absence of Cook a clash developed on financial matters between Mary Chapman, a missionary of Assemblies of God and K. E. Abraham, who joined the Pentecostal faith in 1923 and led a small congregation in Mulakuzha, near Chengannur.<sup>127</sup> On returning from the U.S., Cook supported the views of the native leaders and argued that the autonomy of his indigenous co-workers along with their congregations should be accepted.<sup>128</sup>

Later Cook also departed company with Abraham due to disagreements on these issues. It is clear in his biography that Cook developed a sense of anti-nationalism, which was popular in India at this time. He called; these “forces of darkness” referring to Ephesians 6:11-12.<sup>129</sup> His association with the Church of God, Cleveland, Tennessee in 1936 is a remarkable step in the development of Pentecostalism in Kerala. To this date his house in Mulakuzha, Kerala, which was built in 1927, still stands. This should be a monument in the history of Pentecostalism in Kerala. His vision, life and ministry significantly helped the growth of Pentecostalism in Kerala. In 2013, the Church of God in Kerala celebrated the centenary year of Cook’s arrival in Kerala.

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<sup>126</sup> George, “Pentecostal Beginnings,” 227.

<sup>127</sup> Bergunder, *The South Indian*, 28. For Details please see Page 27 and 28.

<sup>128</sup> Bergunder, *The South Indian*, 28.

<sup>129</sup> Cook, *A Quarter Century*, 57.

### **1.7.7 The Dalit Face of Kerala Pentecostalism**

The Dalit face of Kerala Pentecostalism has been researched by Thomas, who refutes the claim of superior tradition by the Syrian Christians and the elite within the Church. His research criticises Syrian-Christian authors for not considering the Dalit people as a point of reference.<sup>130</sup> It is true that authors like Saju did not uncover the reasons for the Dalits being suppressed, but instead promoted the Syrian Christian face of Pentecostalism in Kerala. However, this chapter will incorporate a focus on those Dalit leaders who might have influenced Pentecostalism in Kerala but were somewhat side-lined in the literature.

#### **1.7.7.1 Chodie (Vellikara Mathai)**

Chodie is an important name in the history of Pentecostalism in Kerala. Born as Vellikara Mathai, Chodie changed his name to identify with his own people and to work towards their empowerment.<sup>131</sup> Chodie was a Dalit leader who belonged to the Anglican Church, but later he lost interest in the church.<sup>132</sup> He was influential among the poor people in Central Kerala, holding large gatherings every year to drink and to dance through the night.<sup>133</sup> Cook met Chodie through his translator, Varghese and arrangements were made for Cook to preach to the followers of Chodie in Kumbanadu, Kerala. These meetings resulted in the conversion of Dalits and helped the growth of Pentecostal churches in those areas.<sup>134</sup> However, Chodie is neither recognised as a significant figure nor mentioned in some Pentecostal writings, yet it is argued that Cook's mission was greatly assisted by Chodie. Thomas outlines that the Syrian Christians, who became the leaders of Kerala Pentecostalism kept Dalit leaders like

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<sup>130</sup> Thomas, *Dalit Pentecostalism*, 384.

<sup>131</sup> Thomas, *Dalit Pentecostalism*, 174.

<sup>132</sup> Thomas, *Dalit Pentecostalism*, 172.

<sup>133</sup> Cook, *A Quarter Century*, 35.

<sup>134</sup> Thomas, *Dalit Pentecostalism*, 174.

Chodie at a distance and hindered Dalits from becoming leaders.<sup>135</sup> However, although Syrian Christians in Kerala did not accept Dalits into the leadership of the Church, it was in fact the lower castes who were the first respondents to the gospel in Kerala.

#### **1.7.7.2 Poykayil Yohannan**

Poykayil Yohannan was a Dalit activist, poet, social reformer and a Christian preacher in Central Kerala. He was born to Christian parents named Kandan and Lechi of the Paraya community, on 17 February, 1879. In his early days he worked as a slave for a well-known family in Eraviperoor, Kerala. His parents named him Kumaran but after his baptism at the age of five in the MarThoma Church, he was given the name Yohannan.<sup>136</sup> He left the Mar Thoma church because he witnessed Dalits being forced by the Syrian Christians to take away the decomposed body of another Dalit from the Church tomb in which it was buried.<sup>137</sup> During the revitalization in Travancore, Yohannan was attracted to the preaching of the missionaries and he became an itinerant follower and an active preacher in the CMS and later in the Brethren Missions although he later broke his relationship with the Brethren Church later due to caste discrimination.<sup>138</sup> In fact, he suffered discrimination from all three Christian communities, leading him to conclude that Indian Christian communities had entrenched prejudice towards people of a lower caste. Meanwhile, Yohannan felt that his community was in need of a liberating force, and embarked on educating his followers to emancipate themselves from the clutches of caste discrimination. He

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<sup>135</sup> Thomas, *Dalit Pentecostalism*, 174.

<sup>136</sup> [n.a.], "Poikayil Yohannan- Life and Biography," <http://www.spiderkerala.net/resources/11241-Poykayil-Yohannan-Profile-Biography.aspx>, (01 March, 2014).

<sup>137</sup> Vijayan Kangazha, *Sree Kumara* (Trichur, Kerala: Gurudevan, 1978), 8.

<sup>138</sup> K. V. Simon, *Malankarayile Verpadusabhakalude Charithram* (The History of Brethren Churches in Malankara) (Thiruvalla: Sathyam Publications, 1999), 115.

founded a movement known as *Pratyaksha Raksha Daiyva Sabha* (PRDS, The Church of God for Visible Salvation).<sup>139</sup>

Yohannan, who had five thousand followers, met Cook prior to the formation of his movement in 1922. Cook refers to him as an earnest Christian who was used by God to bring many people to Jesus Christ.<sup>140</sup> Thomas says that the CMS missionaries considered Yohannan as a heretic.<sup>141</sup> Thomas writes in detail about the missionary work of Cook and Yohannan, but acknowledges that the rest of the Syrian Christian leaders were not in favour of Yohannan. Yohannan's name was omitted from the recorded history of Pentecostalism in Kerala due to the Syrian Christian prejudice. Thus, Pentecostalism in Kerala lost an eminent Dalit leader who had great influence on their community. Yohannan's organization, PRDS, still operates today and identifies with the Hindu forms of worship. Yohannan was an associate of Aiyankali, another social reformer from the *Pulayar* community in Kerala who sought to improve the access for all children to education. Conversion to Christianity was a prerequisite for attendance in most of the Christian schools run by the missionaries. Although the Government attempted to modernise its approach to education and social welfare to impress the British colonial administration, not all groups received the benefits.<sup>142</sup> Some of the missionaries' action were harmful and helped further class segregation in Indian society.

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<sup>139</sup> The Church attempts to spiritually liberate and empower Dalits with the aim of improving their struggle for rights and dignity and to make a new casteless creed for the people. Yohannan was the contemporary of other great social reformers in Kerala such as Sree Narayana Guru Devan (SNDP) and Mahatma Ayyankali (SJPS). Through his accomplished spiritual preaching he established 102 Churches in Kerala and other parts of India and some of them working with best performance as meritorious Christian revivalism based on Holy Bible. It is claimed to be a model Christian Church and other engagements to annihilate the castism, untouchability and impartial demerits come to the way of Christianity.

<sup>140</sup> Cook, *Half a Century*, 120.

<sup>141</sup> Thomas, *Dalit Pentecostalism*, 180.

<sup>142</sup> K. Ravi Raman, *Development, Democracy and the State: Critiquing the Kerala Model of Development* (London: Routledge, 2010), 18–22. See Subhadra Mitra Channa and Joan P. Mencher, *Life as a Dalit: Views from the Bottom of Caste in India* (New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2013).

### **1.8 Pentecostalism, Dalits and Pre Pentecostal Connections.**

The story of Pentecostalism in Kerala is very interesting because it is relative to pre-Pentecostal movements by all means. This is not given enough attention in Indian Pentecostal writings. As it clearly stated about the relation between Pentecostalism and other protestant movements this section affirms that Indian Pentecostalism existed with the help and support of Protestant missionaries and movements. These facts are not recorded in Pentecostal writings probably because of the fear that it would affect the claim of Pentecostal spiritual heritage.

Indeed, Dalits involvements in the development of Kerala Pentecostalism should not be forgotten. A good number of Dalits had become Christians before the Pentecostal missionaries arrived in India. The Protestant missionaries presented the gospel which addresses the existing hierarchical social system that put the Dalits under the carpet. The Pentecostal missionaries helped the Dalits to overcome the social realities of oppression and exploitation. In early Pentecostalism the Dalits had an important role in evangelization with the foreign missionaries. The influence of the Dalit community is significant even today. It can be argued that Pentecostalism in Kerala could be stronger with the Dalit leaders like Chodie, Yohannan and their followers. I am aware of many Pentecostal local churches in Kerala do not allow a Dalit person to worship with the Syrian Christian community even today.

### **1.9 The Organised Pentecostal Denominations**

In the twentieth century, Pentecostalism in Kerala had to act or continue living with difficulty due to the social and faith structure. Movements originate as a consequence of the partitioning of the affected organizations. The emergence of Pentecostalism in Kerala was part of an ongoing battle to distinguish spirituality from the nominal Christian community. Thus, the native leaders in Kerala intended to develop

Pentecostalism within the local cultural context whilst at the same time defining Pentecostal spirituality in relation to the existing church forms. The history of Pentecostalism in India is the history of mission and church development. It is the story of disharmony between the gospel and the socio-political and spiritual-cultural context of the country. Since India shares an egalitarian view of its unity in diversity, such context is applicable to virtually all regions of the country with minor deviations. For instance, the different Pentecostal denominations developed in Kerala as a result of Spirit-filled people responding to the need for mission and evangelism. It was a spiritual struggle against what was believed to be the ‘sinister’ powers of the particular setting. It was the ministry of Berg that resulted in the establishment of the very first Pentecostal church at Thuvayur, Adoor in 1911. It appears that during the early years, the Pentecostals in Kerala did not have clarity of organisation. Cook, who had an association with Berg, constituted and organised the early Pentecostal movement based on his own personal experience and gifts of the Holy Spirit. During this time, the Dalits became a focus of his mission. In his book, Berg outlines that ‘Our main work here is mostly among the lower castes, those called the untouchables or the neglected’.<sup>143</sup> And indeed, the subsequent response of those ‘neglected’ people could be seen as a key reason for the growth of Pentecostalism among the Dalits in Kerala. A substantial development is seen in Kerala Pentecostalism during 1920 to 1926, which Samuel Kutty calls the ‘second phase’, the first phase relating to the arrival and work of the foreign missionaries.<sup>144</sup> I disagree with Samuel Kutty, and argue that the first stage is the evangelical revival that happened during the latter half of the nineteenth century, which paved way to the second stage of the Pentecostal revival in Kerala with the arrival of the Western missionaries. The ‘Third phase’ is Native Pentecostalism.

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<sup>143</sup> Cook, *Half a Century of Divine Leading*, 28.

<sup>144</sup> Samuel Kutty, *The Place*, 51.

The arrival of the Assemblies of God missionary Mary Chapman can be seen to have led to growth in denominationalism in Kerala. K.J. Mathew, in his thesis, argues that until 1920 Pentecostalism in Kerala was non- denominational and independent.<sup>145</sup> Anderson points out that, during the 1916 visit of Robert Cook and Charles Cumine, the local missionaries such as Paruttumpara Ummachen and Pandalam Mathai already had thriving ministries in Thuvayur and Pandalam respectively.<sup>146</sup> However, Cook settled in Kerala, and was instrumental in establishing independent Pentecostal churches there. The local congregations lacked supervision from experienced people in ministry and hence, the foreign mission department of the Assemblies of God US took over the mission work in Kerala, with Mary Chapman appointed to supervise and lead the ministry. Abraham and his co-workers pioneered indigenous churches among Syrian Christians in Kerala and wanted those churches to be independent from foreign missions.

A brief discussion on the development of major Pentecostal denominations in Kerala is necessary for this study because the Neocharismatic movement cannot be understood without this. The formation of Pentecostalism in Kerala is mostly centred on the following denominations which I have chosen to discuss: Indian Pentecostal Church of God (IPC), The Pentecostal Mission (TPM) Assemblies of God (AG) and Church of God (COG). The other denominations have been omitted due to the understanding that many of their leaders were part of the denominations mentioned above separated from these denominations and started their own, for various reasons.

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<sup>145</sup> K.J. Mathew, "Denominational Pluralism among Pentecostals in Kerala: Causes and Responses 1920 to the Present," (M.Th. Thesis, Union Theological College, Bangalore, India, 1993), 63.

<sup>146</sup> Anderson, *An Introduction*, 140.

### **1.9.1 The Indian Pentecostal Church**

The second and third decade of the twentieth century witnessed the emergence and growth of the Pentecostal movement under the leadership of Indian believers. The revival among the Syrian Christians brought forth new groups professing the evangelical faith. The foremost in this category was the Mar Thoma Church and another called *Viyojitha Prasthanam* (Separatist Movement), which was similar to the Holiness movement. This movement later paved the way for the emergence of the Brethren and Pentecostal churches in Kerala. The Brethren movement derived from *Viyojitha Prasthanam* under the direction of the noted Malayalam Christian poet K. V. Simon.<sup>147</sup> As a consequence of the revival in Kerala several congregations and prayer fellowships were established in Malankara, under the guidance of a number of leaders, notably Ramankutty Paul, K.E. Abraham, K. C. Cherian and P.M. Samuel. Indeed, these four stalwarts can be seen as pioneering native Pentecostalism in Kerala, with each establishing Pentecostal churches.<sup>148</sup>

The Indian Pentecostal Church, now known as the IPC, is the first and the largest indigenous Pentecostal denomination in India. Pastor K. E. Abraham, who co-founded the IPC and served as president until 1974, had converted from the Syrian Orthodox church, where he had previously had ambitions to enter the priesthood. He was baptized on 27 February, 1916 by K. V. Simon.<sup>149</sup> Later on 20 April 1923, Abraham was baptized in the Holy Spirit when he was praying with C. Manasseh in Thiruvananthapuram.<sup>150</sup> Subsequently, he became active in the Pentecostal ministry and planted churches.

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<sup>147</sup> Saju, *Kerala Pentecostu*, 94.

<sup>148</sup> Pulikottil, "Emergence of Indian Pentecostalism," 52.

<sup>149</sup> Abraham, *Yeshukristuvinte Eliya Dasan*, 26.

<sup>150</sup> Abraham, *Yeshukristuvinte Eliya Dasan*, 66. It is important to note that Abraham's born again experience was through the ministry of Chethikkattu Varghese Vadhyar on 1 December, 1912. After his

Aside from Ramankutty Paul, the other leaders of the Pentecostal movement in Kerala, were from the Syrian Christian community. Paul, a Dalit from central Kerala was converted to Christianity by his employer who had converted from Hinduism. After his conversion and baptism in the Holy Spirit in 1923, Ramankutty Paul and Alwin de Alwis founded the Ceylon Pentecostal Mission, which is now known as The Pentecostal Mission (TPM).<sup>151</sup> It was Paul who ordained Abraham and many other leaders in Indian Pentecostalism. However, it is surprising that none of the native leaders were ordained until 1930. Pulikottil observed that the Western Pentecostal missionaries controlled the mission work in India and the native missionaries were mere assistants and guides to the Western missionaries.<sup>152</sup> That may be how the missionaries saw them, but it is unlikely that the native leaders saw themselves like that.

In the 1920s Abraham and his team allied themselves with Robert Cook and Mary Chapman of the Assemblies of God. During this time, Abraham was heading a small congregation in Mulakuzha, near Chengannur. Along with his co-workers, he established churches in all the areas in which Syrian Christianity had a strong following.<sup>153</sup> Abraham joined Cook in 1923, although they later parted company in 1930. Samuel Kutty cites some of the leadership issues between them.<sup>154</sup> Cook joined the Assemblies of God for a while and from 1929, he proceeded with his mission work with the Church of God, Tennessee. Since Cook affiliated his churches to the Assemblies of God, the churches that were headed by Abraham also became part of the AG.

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baptism he worked with the Brethren movement in Kerala and became a pioneer in Pentecostalism after his baptism in the Holy Spirit in 1923.

<sup>151</sup> Anderson, *Spreading Fires*, 103.

<sup>152</sup> Pulikottil, "Emergence of Indian Pentecostalism," 52.

<sup>153</sup> Abraham, *Yeshukristuvinte Eliya Dasan*, 142.

<sup>154</sup> Samuel Kutty, *The Place*, 51–55.

Gradually, Pentecostalism spread through the cardinal region of Kerala and together, the leaders named their collective churches the “South India Pentecostal Church of God” (SIPCG). In April 1925 the churches united to hold the first convention, in Ranni, which is believed to be the first general convention of the IPC. The pioneers of the IPC were not salaried by any mission group, but were volunteer workers who ‘lived by Faith’. In 1935, the IPC was registered under the Society Act of the Government of India, in Eluru, Andhra Pradesh. The IPC now claims to have seven thousand local churches all over the globe.<sup>155</sup> While K. E. Abraham is considered to be the founder of the IPC, it’s founding and development was the product of a team effort rather than the contribution of any single individual. The Holy Spirit coordinated the ministry with individuals from different locations in Kerala. However, the Spirit’s activity is often overlooked as individual protagonists are emphasized in many records.

A major setback in the history of the IPC occurred in 1953, which led to a schism in the Church. The reason for the schism was regarding the appointment of a pastor to a local church in Kumbanadu, Kerala. Two pastors claimed the position, and two separate groups then emerged. Abraham was the leader of one group and Samuel, T.G. Oommen and P.M. Philip jointly led the other. This division created a new organisation named *Suvisheshasangam* [Gospel group].<sup>156</sup> The two groups functioned in parallel and each produced their own conventions, church magazine etc. Some of the church lands were registered in the name of *Suvisheshasangam*. Bergunder records that due to a deficiency of adequate administration, the IPC was not properly prepared to face the schism.<sup>157</sup>

The travels of Abraham, Cherian and Samuel to America and to visit Lewi Pethrus of the Filadelfia Church in Sweden raised funds to implement the mission task of the

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<sup>155</sup> No Author, “History,” The Indian Pentecostal Church of God, [http://ipcsite.org/ipc\\_history.php](http://ipcsite.org/ipc_history.php) (15 May 2014).

<sup>156</sup> Saju, *Kerala Pentecostu Charithram*, 94.

<sup>157</sup> Bergunder, *The South Indian*, 38.

Church. Abraham, through controlling the finances of the church, attempted to secure his authority and status, which led to serious disagreements about the leadership and governance of the church.<sup>158</sup> This led to the demotion of Abraham and the subsequent decentralization of authority to local leaders.

Meanwhile, while the leaders fought over issues of economics and authority, a believer named Kodumthara Ummachen (K. C. Oommen) donated all his belongings to the Church of God and the IPC in Kumbanad.<sup>159</sup> It is ironic that a local church of the IPC, and also the IPC headquarters are now situated on this donated four and half acres of land. The schism led to the birth of another Pentecostal denomination in Kerala called the Sharon Fellowship Church which was founded by P.J. Thomas in 1953. Although the churches reconciled in 1957, further disagreement in 1966 restricted the development of the IPC.<sup>160</sup> It is interesting to note that Abraham did not mention anything about the schism and its related issues in his auto-biography. Following the schism the IPC went into a period of decline and to survive it needed to redefine itself. The Church then experienced considerable growth under the leadership of T. S. Abraham, the son of Abraham. During his leadership, the Church's work spread throughout the world and members of the Kerala diaspora formed churches in the Persian Gulf, Europe and America. The IPC now is an established indigenous Pentecostal denomination with local churches across the globe, with an official constitution, headquarters and Bible Colleges in different locations in Kerala. Although several Bible colleges are owned by individuals, the IPC Theological Seminary in Kottayam, which was established in 2001, is known as the only commonly owned Pentecostal theological institution in India. Although Hebron Bible College at Kumbanad trained thousands of pastors and was the official Bible college of IPC, this

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<sup>158</sup> Bergunder, *The South Indian*, 38.

<sup>159</sup> Saju, *Kerala Pentecostu Charithram*, 190.

<sup>160</sup> Bergunder, *The South Indian*, 38.

college is now limited to training women and a one year diploma to the theological students who have already been trained, in order to officiate them as IPC pastors. IPC holds the largest Pentecostal annual convention in Kumbanad, Kerala, and every year with an average attendance of fifty thousand people. The church is characterised by its self-governing structure, self-propagation, and with its support largely coming from its own ranks. IPC engages itself with evangelistic outreach ministries aimed at unreached Indians.

### **1.9.2 The Pentecostal Mission (TPM)**

Ceylon Pentecostal Mission (CPM) now known as The Pentecostal Mission (TPM) was founded in 1924 by Ramankutty Paul in Ceylon, Sri Lanka. Paul was a CMS church pastor but after being baptised in the Holy Spirit he left the church and became a Pentecostal pastor.<sup>161</sup> He was widely recognized as a dynamic preacher and pioneered churches in Trivandrum, Kollam, Mayyanadu and Puthuppally in Kerala. TPM differs from the other Pentecostal churches on the basis of their doctrinal beliefs. They teach that water baptism should be conducted by a pastor who is filled with the Holy Spirit. If it is experienced otherwise, it is thought, the believer should be re-baptized.<sup>162</sup> They believe that all pastors should be filled with the Holy Spirit with the gift of speaking in tongues as the initial evidence. The Church has a strong emphasis on the celibacy of their pastors and teaches against acquiring wealth and property. They believe that the followers of Christ should not acquire wealth. Ironically, today they have moved far from this precept, and acquire wealth and properties.<sup>163</sup>

These doctrinal positions were established in the church by a pastor called Alwin D. Alwis. He maintained a position that since Abraham of the IPC was baptized by K. V.

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<sup>161</sup> P.G. Abraham, *Caste and Christianity: A Pentecostal Perspective* (Kumbazha, Kerala: Crown Books, 2003), 63.

<sup>162</sup> Saju, *Kerala Pentecosthu*, 174.

<sup>163</sup> Abraham, *Caste and Christianity*, 64.

Simon from the Brethren Fellowship he had to be re-baptized. This is one of the major reasons that Abraham and his colleagues parted company with the Ceylon Pentecostal Church in 1933.<sup>164</sup> Abraham, of the IPC, and Paul were co-workers and pioneered churches in many places in Kerala. From 1934, the doctrine of TPM has been propagated in Kerala and further spread across South India. However, most Pentecostal churches do not consider TPM as an associate because of the doctrinal conflicts. TPM does not entertain or partner with any of the Pentecostal groups, even in ministry related affairs.

### **1.9.3 Assemblies of God (AG)**

In 1914 the Assemblies of God (AG) was officially formed in Hot Springs, Arkansas, USA. Later AG began to send missionaries to spread the gospel to other countries like India. In 1915 Mary Chapman came as the first missionary from the USA to Madras (now known as Chennai) in Tamilnadu, India.<sup>165</sup> There is also a record of Schoonmaker, another missionary from the USA who came to Bombay (now known as Mumbai) in Maharashtra, India at about the same time.<sup>166</sup> However, Mary Chapman's ministry in different parts of southern India helped AG to plant churches in this region. Meanwhile, Cook associated with Chapman and pioneered churches in central Kerala, a region earlier known as Central Travancore. After the First World War, a female missionary named Aal Divingal returned to India to join Chapman.<sup>167</sup> Divingal came to Kerala as a Brethren missionary at the time when Berg was also in the region. Abraham states that although the presence of these missionaries helped Pentecostalism to develop its foundation, the work was insignificant and minimal.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> Saju, *Kerala Pentecosthu*, 175.

<sup>165</sup> Anderson, *An Introduction*, 140.

<sup>166</sup> See Pothan Abraham Thottumkal, "The India Pentecostal Church of God and its contribution to Church Growth" (M.A. Thesis, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1988), 21. Anderson, *Spreading Fires*, 95.

<sup>167</sup> Abraham, *IPC Praramba Varshangal*, 9.

<sup>168</sup> Abraham, *IPC Praramba Varshangal*, 12.

From, 1925 Chapman was settled in Chengannoor, Kerala from where she published the first Pentecostal Magazine, named “*Pentecosthu Kahalam*” (Trumpet of Pentecost).<sup>169</sup> This magazine probably influenced many educated people and contributed to the expansion of Pentecostalism at that time. There were educated people among the early Pentecostals in Kerala and it would, therefore be incorrect to characterize the early Pentecostals as an anti-educationalist. In 1927, Abraham and Cook initiated the publishing of another magazine in both Malayalam and English with the title “*Suvishesha Prabhashakan*” (Gospel Preacher).<sup>170</sup> Until 1929, the AG did not sustain a formal organisational structure in India.

However, that year, a council was formed and the work of the church spread throughout India and Sri Lanka.<sup>171</sup> The church council restricted the scope of the missionaries’ work to within their own geographical boundaries and encouraged them to collaborate with one another. After Indian independence, AG established a number of churches in different states of India such as Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. These churches were brought together under the larger umbrella organisation called “The South India Assemblies of God”.<sup>172</sup>

The ministry of the AG in Kerala was initiated by Chapman but after her death in 1927, Cook and Abraham continued with the mission. As mentioned earlier, in 1929 Cook and Abraham left AG as they felt that the ministry being restricted to the geographical boundaries of missionaries was against the original conviction and call of the organisation.<sup>173</sup> A milestone in the history of the Assemblies of God in Kerala was the founding of the Bethel Bible School in 1927, under the leadership of John Burgess from the USA, the first AG Bible school to be established outside of the United States. Even

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<sup>169</sup> Saju, *Kerala Pentecosthu*, 107.

<sup>170</sup> Abraham, *Yeshukristhuvinte*, 147.

<sup>171</sup> Pulikottil, “The Emergence,” 51.

<sup>172</sup> Pulikottil, “The Emergence,” 51.

<sup>173</sup> Abraham, *Yeshukristhuvinte*, 147.

today, most Assemblies of God pastors in Kerala are trained in this institution. The ministry of AG in Kerala is divided into two regions: Malabar district and Malayalam district. Until 1995, the AG in India had three separate, independent regions: South India Assemblies of God, Assemblies of God North India, and Assemblies of God North East India. Now all these three regions have come under one umbrella organisation, the Assemblies of God in India which claims to have eight thousand churches and two hundred thousand believers. Assemblies of God in Kerala, which is independent of the main AG experienced a steady growth in the 1990s under the leadership of P. D. Johnson, following a schism in the organization in which all the American missionaries left Kerala.<sup>174</sup> Nowadays, the AG in Kerala is led by Indians.

#### **1.9.4 Church of God**

The Church of God in Kerala, was formed only after Cook alienated himself from the Assemblies of God in 1929. Although he worked with the IPC for some time, the relationship came to an end in 1930. Cook explains the reason for parting from the association of IPC: ‘Since two brethren from the Indian Pentecostal Church of God (IPC) were taken to Sweden, we sensed the danger that lay ahead in their return, especially if they were backed by foreign finances’.<sup>175</sup> He explains further that the decision to separate from the IPC was taken under divine guidance and he felt that God then opened a way to carry the work forward. He met J.H. Ingram, a representative from the Church of God headquarters in Cleveland, Tennessee in the United States.<sup>176</sup> The divine direction in this matter is understood by his confession that Cook never knew that there was such a Pentecostal body in the USA prior to this event. Being passionate about the future of his ministry in Kerala, Cook decided to join the Church

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<sup>174</sup> Bergunder, *The South Indian*, 44–47. A detailed explanation about the schism is stated in Bergunder’s *The South Indian Pentecostal Movement in the Twentieth Century*.

<sup>175</sup> Cook, *Divine leadings in South India*, (Cleveland, Tennessee: Church of God Foreign Missions Department, 1955), 211.

<sup>176</sup> Cook, *Divine Leadings*, 211.

of God in USA. At its height, and under Cook's leadership, by the 1940's the Church of God in Kerala had forty three ministers and a few thousand believers, in addition to the Mount Zion Bible Institute in Mulakuzha.<sup>177</sup>

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, most of the native Pentecostal leaders were from the Syrian Christian background and the priority for them was their own people. The difference seen in the ministry of Cook is that he sacrificially ministered among the low caste. His ministry among the poor was a blessing and a relief from the oppression they suffered from the high caste in society. He trained many of them to be faithful disciples of Christ and a few to be leaders. The Church of God in Kerala was, officially founded in 1936. Cook had been the decision maker in the Church until the American headquarters sent C.E. French to India. His mission was to replace Cook because the term for an overseer was a maximum of twelve years. However, Cook had no plan to retire, even at the age of seventy, and hence French faced obstacles during his time in India<sup>178</sup>. He was apparently manhandled at his bungalow at Mulakuzha, and court cases were filed against Cook. This report is not recorded in any of the writings about the Church or in academic work, but is supported by oral traditions amongst believers in Kerala. After this incident, the General Overseer of the Church of God from the USA visited Kerala. During his visit, and after much discussion, Cook decided to leave India in 1950, despite his desire to die and be buried in the country. It could be seen that the treatment of Cook leaves a bad impression of Pentecostalism in Kerala, especially of the Church of God in India.

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<sup>177</sup> C. W. Conn, *Like a Mighty Army* (Tennessee: Church of God Publishing House, 1955), 236.

<sup>178</sup> Bergunder, *The South Indian*, 48.

Today, the Church of God in Kerala is fully under native leadership, but divided into two in Kerala. This division is because Cook helped the lower caste to grow in ministry and trained them to be leaders. However, later the leadership was predominantly formed of Syrian Christians and the lower caste believers did not have the opportunity to become leaders. This opened disagreement and strife in the Church. In 1972, the then Superintendent of the Church of God Asia, Laval R. Carry, divided the Church of God into two. The Syrian Christian group is known as the Church of God Kerala State and the Dalit group is known as the Church of God Division. The two regions have separate activities including during the General Convention. The Church of God State and Division have experienced schism like all other Pentecostal denominations in Kerala, but is still one of the main Pentecostal denominations in Kerala.

The four major denominations referred to in the section above are significant in relation to the growth and development of Pentecostalism in Kerala. There are a number of other denominations, most of which are the result of schism from the churches mentioned above, or have been started by individuals. They are not discussed in this chapter because they are not significant for the purpose of the study. Although there has certainly been a call for indigenous Pentecostalism, the contribution of the foreign missionaries in Kerala in taking the gospel to rural villages and pioneering churches, cannot be written off. Cook and Chapman are particularly important in this regard because they worked in Kerala during a time of demanding social, cultural and religious circumstances. All the leaders in the different churches experienced baptism in the Holy Spirit and other Pentecostal manifestations in the ministry. They faced arduous life experiences and challenges from the society in order to make Pentecostalism stronger in Kerala.

### **1.9.5 The Basic Beliefs of Classical and Indigenous Pentecostal Denominations**

The Classical and indigenous Pentecostals do not believe in papacy or historical – episcopacy but is anti-episcopal in nature. It challenges the hierarchy and function autonomously. Denominations like IPC, AG and Church of God are democratic in electing leaders. It is believed that the Holy Scripture is the revealed Word of God, the all sufficient rule of faith in God. The Holy Bible, consisting of sixty six books, including the Old and New Testament, is the inspired Word of God, a revelation from God to human beings. The fatherhood of God is commonly accepted, with Jesus Christ as His son, who is considered to be the redeemer of sinful humanity. The Holy Spirit, who originated from the Father and the Son together, is the Lord and giver of life, and is worshipped and glorified. A significant place is given in Pentecostalism to the believer's baptism by immersion and speaking in tongues is considered to be the initial evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Leading a holy life which leads to sanctification through separation from worldly passions holds a key place in the believer's life. In the pre-millennial second coming of Christ, those who are asleep in Christ will be first to be resurrected and then the Church, which is the body of Christ, will be caught in mid-air to be with Him. The millennial rule, the transformation of the world, the judgements and an eternal reign of Christ with His people are intrinsic to the Pentecostal faith.<sup>179</sup>

#### **Evaluation**

The Pentecostal movement in Kerala can be seen as identifying with the struggle of the oppressed lower caste people. The cultural, religious and economic circumstances of Kerala have influenced the formation and growth of Pentecostalism. Indigenous

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<sup>179</sup> No Author, "Statement of Faith," [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian\\_Pentecostal\\_Church\\_of\\_God](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_Pentecostal_Church_of_God), (23 January, 2016), see "Church of God Faith," [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church\\_of\\_God\\_\(Anderson,\\_Indiana\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_of_God_(Anderson,_Indiana)), "Our Beliefs," <http://agmdc.org/our-beliefs-2/>. M. Stephen, "Indian Pentecostal Church of God and its Doctrinal Influence in the Present World" *Indian Pentecostal Church of God: Navathi Convention Souvenir*, (Kumbanadu: IPC Hebron, 2016), 66–68.

leadership helped believers to have their own style and pattern of spirituality. Instead of being seen simply as a product of American Pentecostalism, the formation and growth of Pentecostalism in Kerala needs to be understood in terms of the local religious, social and cultural settings. The perception of local people and the local milieu need to be understood. The Pentecostal movement in general can often be seen as a religion that creatively adapts to local contexts and promotes the value of human beings. The translation of the Bible into the local language was a key factor in the revival. People recognized the importance of God's word and its supreme authority in matters of faith, rituals and ethics. The early evangelical revivals contributed to the growth and development of Pentecostalism in Kerala. Drawing spiritual strength from the Bible, the pre-Christian mystical experiences enabled the Pentecostals to flourish and develop their own culture-oriented practices. Despite this, one cannot say that Pentecostalism in Kerala is exclusively indigenous because some Pentecostal groups are part of global movements, with some controlled from headquarters in the United States (although local administration is done by Indians).

Indigenous Pentecostalism in Kerala needs further development in terms of its social responsibility towards society. Missionaries from other churches and mission organizations influenced by the indigenous revivals brought the Pentecostal faith to the people. The early revivals created a spiritual desire in the people as they accepted the new faith. The growth of the Pentecostal churches in Kerala resulted in the mission of the church. Many missionaries travelled to the northern states of India and became key figures in the growth and development of Pentecostalism in that region. It is the revival with its emphasis on mission which inspired them to travel and became cross-cultural missionaries. The Holy Spirit intervention in Pentecostal movements in India marks its growth and development in the past one hundred years. After one hundred years of

Pentecostal existence in Kerala, the Neocharismatic groups which are the most recent development in Pentecostalism started to establish many churches. Although the Neocharismatic movement is still young, in the following section, selected churches in Kerala are examined in an effort to understand the way that the movement functions.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE NEOCHARISMATIC MOVEMENTS IN INDIA

#### 2.1 Introduction

The Indian Pentecostalism has widened in its thinking and approach to accommodate new spirit filled churches in the recent history. Until 1980s only the classical and indigenous Pentecostal movements were known as Pentecostalism in India, but with the arrival of new Pentecostal like churches the scenario has been changed. The free independent churches empowered people by leading them to free style worship of God. For example, people began to open up in churches experiencing the joy in the Holy Spirit. They became more expressive in praising God. Gradually more such congregations began to exist in India. At present such free independent congregations are seen all over India and they are recognised as part of Indian Pentecostalism. This chapter provides a basic history of the Neocharismatic movement in India with a brief narration of two selected churches based on their geographical location. The third church is Heavenly Feast which is used for the case study in chapter four.

#### 2.2 Charismatic Movements in the Twentieth Century

The global Pentecostal movement in general has experienced profound changes in its beliefs and practices over the past hundred years. Observers affirm that the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements form one of the most striking new elements in global Christianity in the twentieth century.<sup>1</sup> This includes all types of churches with a Pentecostal character, including Neocharismatics. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Europe and North America were the two continents which had the highest

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Hocken, *The Challenges of the Pentecostal, Charismatic and Messianic Jewish Movements: The Tensions of the Spirit* (Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2009), 1.

percentage of Pentecostal believers. However, by the end of the twentieth century, this scenario changed and Asia, Africa and Latin America now record the highest number of independent charismatic Christians in the world.<sup>2</sup> In the last forty years, global Christianity has been experiencing a proliferation of new denominations and networks.<sup>3</sup> Primarily this growth took place within Protestant Christianity, including Pentecostalism. Independent churches are now a category of Christianity being observed and studied by scholars worldwide. In India, rapid growth of classical Pentecostalism was recorded until the 1980s. In the last 30 years classical Pentecostal church growth is stagnant. Towards the end of the twentieth century and the early years of the new millennium, the independent Charismatic churches experienced growth and established local churches across the country. A majority of these churches have larger numbers of attendees than the Pentecostal churches have. As the research is centralized on Kerala and because of rapid growth of Neocharismatic churches in this state of India, this chapter includes the historical background of the three selected case study churches.

The Charismatic movement characterised the basic Pentecostal experience but also demonstrated beliefs and experiences that were beyond recognised boundaries of the Pentecostal movement.<sup>4</sup> For many centuries, Charismatic manifestations have been evident in the history of the Christian church. Charismatic spirituality has been important to all Christian generations in the past. Whilst specific Spirit manifestations were evident in some eras; they became an almost hidden aspect during some other periods.<sup>5</sup> Cartledge briefly records some key figures in the history of the Christian

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<sup>2</sup>Todd M. Johnson, "Counting Pentecostals Worldwide", *Pneuma* 36 (2014), 279, 265-288.

<sup>3</sup>Johnson, "Counting Pentecostals Worldwide," 265.

<sup>4</sup> Hocken, *The Challenges of the Pentecostal*, 29.

<sup>5</sup> Mark Cartledge, *Encountering the Spirit: The Charismatic Tradition* (London: Darton Longman+Todd, 2006), 33.

church that experienced Charismatic manifestations and used their gifts.<sup>6</sup> The significant fact about the use of the Charismatic gifts down through the century is that it illuminated the spiritual source. The Spirit manifestations cemented the relationship between believers and Christ through prayer, sacraments and fellowship.<sup>7</sup> However, speaking in tongues and healing was not the centre of attraction as in many present day churches. A person did not see healings merely as an accomplishment, rather as a means of recognizing and accepting the Lordship of Jesus Christ.<sup>8</sup> Modern day scholarship considers the charismatic movement as an extension of Pentecostalism into the historic churches. Charismatic renewals revive the practices and beliefs of many historic churches in Europe, America and Asia. These churches recognized the need of expanding themselves to incorporate the faith and lived experience of believers. Thus, they changed the pattern and style of their worship, prayer and preaching.

According to Hocken, the geographical origins of independent groups welcoming the Pentecostal Spirit baptism are in Britain and the USA.<sup>9</sup> Historians refer to David du Plessis (1905-87), who was the secretary of World Pentecostal Fellowship, as a promoter of the Charismatic movement. He was the secretary of the World Pentecostal Fellowship. He linked the early years of Pentecostalism of the twentieth century and the 1960s charismatic experiences in the historic denominational churches.<sup>10</sup> The Charismatic Movement created an opportunity for the Pentecostal like experience to become part of the historic denominational churches in England and America. One of the significant influences was the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International,

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<sup>6</sup> Cartledge, *Encountering the Spirit*, 33.

<sup>7</sup> See chapter two of *Encountering the Spirit* by Mark Cartledge.

<sup>8</sup> P. D. Hocken, "Healing in the Christian Church," in *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, ed. Stanley M. Burgees and Gary B. McGee (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998): 703, 699-710.

<sup>9</sup> Hocken, *The Challenges*, 31.

<sup>10</sup> Scotland, *Charismatics and the New Millennium*, 15. R. P. Spittler, "Du Plessis, David Johannes," in *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, ed. Stanley M. Burgees and Gary B. McGee (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998): 592.

which was founded in southern California in 1951 in by Demos Shakarian. This was an organization that spread the Pentecostal message in the context of the charismatic renewal.

### **2.3 Relationship to the Pentecostal Movement**

The Pentecostal movement in the twentieth century had an enormous impact on the history of Christianity. Its growth in the non-Western world is an important phase to all the traditional forms of Christianity. However, there is a complexity in the Pentecostal-Charismatic form of Christianity. The question about the relationship between Pentecostalism and Charismatic Christianity is debated among scholars of Christianity worldwide. At the beginning of Pentecostal revival in the twentieth century, it was more than the mere denominational spirit present in Pentecostalism today.<sup>11</sup> It marked a genuine move of the Holy Spirit with a focus on preaching the gospel and missionary work. Thus, this primary motivation enabled Pentecostalism to expand into the global arena.<sup>12</sup>

Considering the relationship of Neocharismatics to Pentecostalism, both are primarily understood to incorporate Spirit manifestations. There had been antecedent manifestations of Holy Spirit in the evangelical gatherings prior to the emergence of Pentecostalism in the twentieth century. Hocken considers the Charismatic revival to be a continuation of renewed Spirit manifestations exhibited in the Pentecostal movement.<sup>13</sup> In the early days of Pentecostalism, before the founding of new denominations, the movement consisted of people emboldened by the Spirit and His manifestations.<sup>14</sup> This is also reflected in Indian Pentecostalism. It never originated as a denomination, but rather the revival led individuals to a salvation experience and then

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<sup>11</sup> Hocken, *The Challenges*, 76.

<sup>12</sup> Anderson, *To the Ends of the Earth*, 2. Anderson also records that Pentecostalism emerged as a 'missionary movement of unprecedented vigour' (*Spreading Fires*, 290)

<sup>13</sup> Hocken, *Challenges*, 54.

<sup>14</sup> Hocken, *Challenges*, 76.

later some of these believers became instrumental in spreading the message.<sup>15</sup> Although theological convictions developed at a later stage, a feeling of unity in the Spirit marked the growth of Pentecostalism all over the world.

A key aspect in the relationship between both movements is their emphasis on the Holy Spirit manifestations. Anderson recognizes the common ground between the theology and praxis of Pentecostals and New Independent churches is that both are “Pentecostal” in character. However, both movements can be seen to have different practices. While the Pentecostal movement has traditionally focused on impoverished and marginalised communities, the Charismatics can be seen to have paid greater attention to people of greater wealth and social status, like the Full Gospel Businessmen’s Fellowship of the USA, for example.<sup>16</sup> Further discussion on the relationship between Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity is explained later in chapter Five.

#### **2.4 The Origin of Charismatic Movements in India**

The Charismatic movement in India began with the Roman Catholic Charismatic renewals in Mumbai in the 1970s. Burgess writes about Minoos, a young Parsi civil engineer who, while at Fordham University in the United States, converted to Catholicism and then subsequently brought Charismatic renewal to India.<sup>17</sup> Although the movement began in Mumbai, where numerous charismatic congregations were founded, the revival soon attracted many people across the country.

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<sup>15</sup> See Saju, *Kerala Pentecosthu Chariithram*, V. P. Philip, *Anayatha Agnijwala* 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition [Unquenched flame], (Tiruvalla, India: Media Mission, 2011).

<sup>16</sup> Larry Eskridge, “Pentecostalism and Charismatic Movements,” Institute for the Study of American Evangelicals, <http://wheaton.edu/ISAE/Defining-Evangelicalism/Pentecostalism>, (accessed 08 April 2015).

<sup>17</sup> S.M. Burgess, “The Second and Third Waves of Renewal (1960-Present),” *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, ed. Stanley M. Burgees and Gary B. McGee (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998): 124.

Mathew Naickomparambil from Kerala is a priest of the Syro-Malabar Rite, and a leading Charismatic healing evangelist from Kerala who is of the Vincentian order.<sup>18</sup> The Vincentian priests established the Potta-Divine Retreat ministry in 1977 to coordinate popular mission retreats. It became a centre to cater for the needs of the sick and poor in Kerala. Nowadays, people come to the centre for counselling and for spiritual meditation. Healing is emphasised and many sick people are offered prayers. Some fifteen thousand people from different religions come to the centre each week.<sup>19</sup> The retreat centre, which is owned by the Roman Catholic Church, is now the largest of its kind in the world.<sup>20</sup> The rise of Catholic Charismatic renewal was clearly significant to encouraging the charismatic urge in other churches in India. From 1992, Naickomparambil was an itinerant preacher who was healing people across India particularly in Kerala. The Charismatic movement has put in every effort to continue the Spirit led manifestations by faith and practice through their efficient administration and ministry teams.<sup>21</sup> While the Catholic Charismatic revivals faced criticism from Pentecostals, people within the Pentecostal churches began to re-examine their responsibility and thirst for a spiritual awakening.<sup>22</sup> Whilst the spiritual gifts had previously been the monopoly of the Pentecostals, the Charismatic revivals (which were thought to be a repetition of the early Pentecostal revivals) meant that Catholic Charismatics were also exercising many manifestations of the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>18</sup> John Mansford Prior SVD, "The Challenge of the Pentecostals in Asia Part One: Pentecostals in Asia," *Exchange* 36 (2007), 35.

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach the good news to the poor," (Lk 4:18) this was taken by St. Vincent as a special motto for his own ministry and that of the society of priests that he founded. The Vincentian Congregation, patterned on the society of priests founded by St. Vincent de Paul, was started in India in 1904.

<sup>19</sup> Prior SVD, "The Challenge..." 36.

<sup>20</sup> No Author, "How the Divine Potta ministry began," [http://: www.drcm.org/about-us/overview](http://www.drcm.org/about-us/overview) (08April 2015).

<sup>21</sup> Leela D'Souza, "The Pentecostal Charismatic Movement: A Socio-Historical Analyzis" *Indian Church History Review* (June, 2008):46, 28 – 49.

<sup>22</sup> C.T. Louiskutty, *Pentecost: Oru Punarveekshanam* [Rethinking Pentecost], (Punalur: India, Hope Ministry, 2010), 184.

However, the classical Pentecostal churches in India did not respond to the renewal in the Catholic Churches, and many within Roman Catholic Churches did not see any need for them to leave the more established Churches. Nevertheless, some Charismatic Catholics who had little solidarity with the Roman Catholic teachings left the Church, although they were not willing to join a Pentecostal congregation.<sup>23</sup> This led to the formation of new churches with Pentecostal characteristics. The free independent churches (Neocharismatic) across India are a result of such response.<sup>24</sup>

#### **2.4.1 The Neo Charismatic Movements**

The Neocharismatic renewal groups are the largest movement in Indian revival history.<sup>25</sup> As mentioned in Chapter One, these are independent churches with different theological emphases. The independent churches in India are local expressions of a global spiritual culture. Since there is a large number of Neocharismatic churches in India that have yet to be properly studied, it is impossible to trace the exact origins of this movement. Stanley M. Burgess considers all evangelical churches in India as Neocharismatics, a movement he suggests incorporates classical Pentecostal and free independent churches as well as all indigenous movements, including the Mar Thoma Church.<sup>26</sup> However, the Mar Thoma Church is an evangelical church founded towards the end of the nineteenth century, which has strong doctrinal differences with Pentecostalism. It is unimaginable to categorise the Mar Thoma Church as a part of Neocharismatic Christianity for several reasons, predominantly because of its doctrinal distinctions and differing periods of establishment. Neocharismatics are a category globally defined to be part of the 'Third Wave'. As stated earlier, in Chapter One,

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<sup>23</sup> Louiskutty, *Pentecost*, 184.

<sup>24</sup> Interview M.V. Thomas, a Senior Pastor of IPC, 14 January, 2015. Louiskutty, *Pentecost*, 184.

<sup>25</sup> S.M. Burgess, "The Neocharismatics," in *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, ed. Stanley M. Burgess and Gary B. McGee (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998): 125.

<sup>26</sup> Burgess, "The Neocharismatics," 125.

although the term ‘Third Wave’ is not applicable to the Indian revival movements, yet the Neocharismatic movement is significant in terms of its origin in India. All the Neocharismatic churches in Kerala, were pioneered after 1980 whereas the Mar Thoma Church is of Syrian Christian origin from 1898, which is a Christian group present in Kerala. In his study of Pentecostal charismatic movements, Anderson differentiates classical Pentecostals and Neocharismatic as separate movements with theological differences.<sup>27</sup> Modern scholarship does not recognize these two groups as one while the evangelical churches of early origin are not included in the study.

The Indian revivals of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries took an indigenous course. The revivals resulted in the separation of Pentecostals from the traditional form of Christianity. Neocharismatics have followed this trend, maintaining indigenous origins and leadership. The Neocharismatic churches in Kerala are now experiencing increased growth in comparison to their Pentecostal counterparts. It is only after 1980 that the free independent churches began to exist in Kerala.<sup>28</sup> In the beginning of the twenty first century, then, Pentecostalism in Kerala has witnessed new trends in spirituality.<sup>29</sup>

The last ten years have been remarkable for the Neocharismatics in comparison with the Pentecostal and Catholic Charismatic movements. Many of the Neocharismatic leaders are people who had previously held secular jobs, including in the business sector. They are neither theologically trained nor do they emphasize the need for theological training. The trend of pioneering and planting new independent churches has been

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<sup>27</sup> Anderson, *To The Ends of the Earth*, 5–6.

<sup>28</sup> George Varghese, “An Evaluation of the Growth of Neocharismatic Churches in Kerala,” (M.Div.Thesis, Bethel Bible College, Punalur, 2013), 19.

<sup>29</sup> K. J. Mathew, “Malayalee Pentecosthinte Oru Noottandu Vilayairuthapedumbol,” [An Evaluation of Malayalee Pentecost over a Century] in *Hallelujah Pentecostal Year Book 2014* (Thiruvalla: Hallelujah Publishers, 2014), 42.

adopted from the western preachers.<sup>30</sup> Between 1998 and 2006, mega-crusades were held in different locations in central Kerala with preachers such as Reinhard Bonnke (Christ For all Nations), Morris Cerullo and David Yongi Cho. These crusades attracted thousands of people from all religions, with many people attracted by their offer of healing. Indeed, one of the major characteristics of these Neocharismatic churches is their emphasis on healing, with many people attending their meetings with great expectations that they may be cured of physical ailments and illness. These crusades can be seen to set a trend in Kerala for people to proclaim themselves as pastors and plant their own churches, with many of these free independent churches emphasising healing and miracles.

#### **2.4.2 The Reasons for Neocharismatic Growth**

There are substantial reasons for the dissatisfaction of people that led to the rise of Neocharismatic movements in Kerala. Since Pentecostalism is globally recognized as a Spirit guided movement, the expectation of living is high. Anderson records that the Pentecostal revival produced a new form of Christianity in the world in the twentieth century.<sup>31</sup> The leadership who could not follow the vision of the early leaders may be ultimately responsible for the fragmentation of the body of Christ. In writing about Pentecostal leadership, Anderson argues that, the health and wealth gospel, in particular, has spawned a rapidly growing global Pentecostal culture that has questionable practices tantamount to exploitation in the name of “God’s blessing,” which are linked to an equally questionable theology. He further points out that, many

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<sup>30</sup> Mathew, “Malayalee Pentecosthinte...,” 42.

<sup>31</sup> Allan Anderson, “Revival and the Global Expansion of Pentecostalism After Azusa Street,” in *The Azusa Street Revival and its Legacy*, ed. Hunter Harold D and Cecil M. Robeck Jr. (Cleveland, TN: Pathway Press, 2006), 191.

present day Pentecostal leaders are accountable to nobody and are law unto themselves.<sup>32</sup>

Spiritual leadership is crucial for Pentecostals and related movements because they are all spiritual movements that follow the Bible as the basis of their faith and belief system. For Pentecostals, apart from the Bible and its teachings, no other sources constitute authority. However, as the Pentecostal leadership in Kerala did not satisfy the spiritual hunger of the people and as it failed to recognize that need, new trends and movements arose in the Church. The growth of Neocharismatic churches in Kerala is a classic example. All of the leaders of these churches were previously members of Pentecostal churches. It has been observed that the Pentecostal leadership in Kerala is often motivated by material prosperity, positions in the church and hence less attention is given to the ministry.<sup>33</sup> It was a common requirement in the Pentecostal churches in Kerala that every pastor should be engaged in full-time ministry not based on the issue of survival, but on the idea that God calls one to do His work. For example, Bergunder identifies that Abraham of the IPC had a “faith life” like George Müller and other faith luminaries of early times.<sup>34</sup> The “faith life” was a norm for anyone who joined in ministry. Many of the senior leaders and the pioneering pastors followed this principle and lived up to the expectation of their call from God. Today, it can be seen that this has changed, with people demanding money, power and position to join the ministry in Pentecostal churches. Consequently, believers in the local churches are dissatisfied and they look for better options to worship God irrespective of denominational barriers. It is interesting to note that either most of the leaders of the new generation of churches were previously members of the Classical Pentecostal movement, or were born to Pentecostal parents. Another reason for the dissatisfaction is the institutionalised

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<sup>32</sup> Anderson, ‘Revival and the Global Expansion..,’ 190.

<sup>33</sup> Interview, Kurian Thomas, A senior believer in Church of God, Kochi, 16 January, 2015.

<sup>34</sup> Bergunder, *The South Indian*, 195.

structure of Pentecostalism. More than a spiritual body the church has become a place for morally incorrect activities.<sup>35</sup> Bergunder says that Pentecostal churches in the early years followed an oral tradition with a widespread view that a Christian should live without sin after conversion.<sup>36</sup> Christian ethics were commonly practiced among the believers. Believers in the church have now felt that spiritual leadership has been exchanged with a greater emphasis on the politics of the church leadership. Elections in the Church ignore biblical standards with the sole focus only on holding power and accumulating wealth. The Pentecostal churches also face issues such as materialism, a lack of concentration on youth and children, a more traditional style of worship, and lack of Bible study. All these issues can be seen to have prevented people from other Christian and non-Christian communities to be attracted to Pentecostal churches.

#### **2.4.3 Transnational Connections to Like-Minded Churches**

The Neocharismatic churches, which are also referred to as ‘Word of Faith’ churches the ‘faith movement’, the prosperity gospel, or the health and wealth gospel, are a global phenomenon.<sup>37</sup> These terms above are not always used by the churches themselves but are terms given to them by observers or scholars. In recent decades, the beliefs and practices of faith based Spirit movements have been contextualised around the globe. Hocken argues that there is a strong “networking” of churches, which is seen as a flexible “non-institutional” partnerships and collaborations.<sup>38</sup> This networking helps churches to develop supportive relationships with other pastors and churches and, crucially, financial support. Many of these networks have international connections.

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<sup>35</sup>Interview, Mathai Samuel, a senior believer in IPC, 13 January, 2015. Early Pentecostalism in India set spiritual boundaries that should not be crossed by neither pastors nor believers. Believers were not allowed to go to secular legal bodies to file a suit against another believer or a neighbour. Decisions on disputes were settled within the Church before a higher body in a spiritual manner. Believers followed all restrictions set by the Spiritual authority.

<sup>36</sup> Bergunder, *The South Indian*, 181.

<sup>37</sup> Simon Coleman, *The Globalization of Charismatic Christianity: Spreading the Gospel of Prosperity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 27.

<sup>38</sup> Hocken, *The Challenges*, 37.

Hocken lists a large number of networking churches across Europe, Australia and America:

In Britain there are several new church networks: the largest is NFI; others include Salt and Light, led by Barney Coombs; Ichthus, led by Roger Forster (South-East London); ...In Australia Brian Houston, the founder of Hillsong Network. In the USA major new church networks include Christian International Ministries, led by Bishop Bill Hamon (Santa Rosa Beach, Florida); Dove Christian Fellowship International, led by Larry Kreider (Ephrata, Pennsylvania); ... In France there is a network led by Pierre Cranga of Macon. In Belgium a network led by Raymond van de Put has over 200 churches in Africa.<sup>39</sup>

Although Hocken focuses on the networking of churches in Western countries, Asian churches also network with like-minded churches. In Kerala, “The Heavenly Feast” which is a Neocharismatic church brought forth the idea of networking with other “apostles” in the world. A detailed description about this church is described later in this research. Their website claims that,

Dr. Matthew travels around the globe, preaching the word of God, which the Lord in turn attests with signs, wonders and creative miracles. Through him the Lord opened the gates of many European and East-Asian countries for Gospel to set them ablaze with the fire of Holy Spirit.<sup>40</sup>

The Heavenly Feast has a number of local churches across India and among Malayalam speaking communities in other countries. Most of the independent churches in Kerala run their ministries self-sufficiently and in these cases, networking is not common, with the exception of the Heavenly Feast. Another attribute that connects these churches to each other is the power of their individual founders or leaders. The leader starts a church from which other churches are planted and handed over to other new leaders while the main leader moves to other locations.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Hocken, *The Challenges*, 37–38.

<sup>40</sup> No Author, “Dr. Mathew Kuruvila (Tangu Brother),” [http://: www.theheavenlyfeast.org/dr-mathew-kuruvila-tangu-brother/](http://www.theheavenlyfeast.org/dr-mathew-kuruvila-tangu-brother/) (15 April, 2015).

<sup>41</sup> Hocken. *The Challenge*, 37.

The independent churches in Kerala relate themselves to the word of faith movement, which has spread from the USA to many parts of the World over the past twenty years.<sup>42</sup> Healing and prosperity are the focus of these churches. New movement leaders like Oral Roberts, Pat Robertson, Kenneth Hagin, and Benny Hinn share similar experiences of life including personal visits of Jesus. And likewise, I witnessed the leader of the Heavenly Feast churches elucidate that Jesus came to his bedroom and hugged him, placing His hands around the leader's shoulders. Experiences of this kind are shared with people in an attempt to increase their trust and assert the authority of the leader.

As mentioned earlier, the mega crusades and their preachers brought forth an emphasis of prosperity and healing to Kerala. However, healing was part of the Pentecostal community since its inception<sup>43</sup>. Despite this, a greater emphasis on healing for all was stressed in the new movement of the spirit. In 1998, I attended Reinhard Bonke's crusade in Cochin, Kerala hosted by Christ for All Nations. Nearly one hundred thousand people attended the meeting every single day. The major emphasis of this meeting was physical healing. This crusade should be understood as a crucial point in the history of Pentecostal gatherings in Kerala apart from the annual conventions of different Pentecostal denominations.

Simon Coleman recognizes an ambiguity in the reproduction of a theology of healing mainly produced by the Western faith movement preachers to new contexts.<sup>44</sup> Believers are educated to reconsider the Abrahamic covenant and its blessing by exercising their faith in Christ to receive the healing. It is true that this ambiguity is evident in India.

During these meetings, the concept of a "Fire Conference" was introduced to the Kerala

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<sup>42</sup> Coleman, *The Globalization*, 26.

<sup>43</sup> K.E. Abraham in his biography records the number of healing through intensive prayer. In addition, Robert F. Cook in his biography explains multiple occasion of healing through fasting and prayer.

<sup>44</sup> Coleman, *The Globalization*, 28.

Pentecostal community for the first time.<sup>45</sup> The conference symbolized the Holy Spirit as fire and the preacher imparts the gifts of the Holy Spirit by laying hands upon all delegates. The pastors and believers who attended those meetings believed that they have experienced a new impartation of the Spirit through the work by the preacher. Interestingly, today, most of the Neocharismatic meetings have a special section named “Fire Conference” and the local leaders lay hands on the participants and impart the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

## **2.5 Present Church Scenario**

Indian Pentecostalism is the predecessor to the Neocharismatic movements in India in several ways. However Spirit baptism and the gift of tongues have been embraced more in Neocharismatic churches than in Pentecostal ones. Hocken comments that the Neocharismatics share both the hierarchy and the traditions of classical Pentecostalism, particularly with regards to practices involving the Holy Spirit, and worship.<sup>46</sup> Nevertheless, today the growing popularity of Neocharismatic churches has, in many ways, made the movement more dominant than its predecessor, Pentecostalism. Some Catholic and Jacobite areas of Kerala were not keen on allowing Pentecostal missionaries to settle and pioneer churches, and hence today few Pentecostal churches are to be found in these nominal Christian communities in comparison to other areas of the State. I have had trouble planting churches in these strongholds of nominal Christian communities.<sup>47</sup> However, Neocharismatics have captured the attention of these communities in which Pentecostalism was not favoured, through exuberant and demonstrative worship, healing and deliverance ministry. A good number of attendees

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<sup>45</sup> Fire Conference is a day meeting held for the delegates who register earlier. There was a nominal registration fee charged to admit the crowd. At the end of the meeting, all delegates had been prayed for.

<sup>46</sup> Hocken, *The Challenges of Pentecostal*, 52.

<sup>47</sup> Nominal Christian community or churches is a common usage in India to all churches except the spirit filled Pentecostals and Neocharismatics. This category includes Catholic, Jacobite, Mar Thoma, CSI, CNI Anglican, churches that follow the Old Testament pattern of dress code and other forms of worship.

at the Neocharismatic churches are from the older churches, and indeed, many attend their “home” church on Sunday mornings before visiting a Neocharismatic congregation later in the day.<sup>48</sup> This practice of believers worshipping in multiple churches, of “trying out” the Neocharismatic churches whilst still maintaining their membership of and attendance at a nominal Christian church, seems to be common, and means that reported church members at the new churches need to be understood in this context.

The Pentecostal media in Kerala seem to be somewhat outraged by the growth of the Neocharismatic churches, publishing a number of articles on what they term the “new generation” churches. In 2010, two major Pentecostal denominations in Kerala banned the ministries of five Neocharismatic preachers for preaching messages of heretic content in these denominational churches. Pentecostals consider preachers of Neocharismatic churches as propagators of the prosperity gospel, which is at odds with the Pentecostal aim that every born-again Christian should be separated from the world. Bergunder comments that, ‘The appearance of the Faith Movement in the 1980s and the propagation of the “financial aspects of the gospel” went parallel with an increasing turning away from the original separation.’<sup>49</sup> Probably due to their teachings on holiness and separation, from their inception, the Pentecostal movements in Kerala abstained from social engagement in the community.<sup>50</sup> The Neocharismatics open their door to all kinds of people and place little or no emphasis on separation and holiness in their churches. People from all backgrounds, caste and religion come to their churches seeking physical healing and spiritual deliverance.

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<sup>48</sup> Interview, Valson Sabu, a member of Heavenly Feast Kottayam, 17 January, 2015.

<sup>49</sup> Bergunder, *The South Indian*, 189.

<sup>50</sup> Bergunder, *The South Indian*, 189.

## **2.6 Selected Churches and their Development**

The spirituality of church goers in Kerala changed with the arrival of the Catholic Charismatic Movement. Pentecostalism, with all its set doctrinal boundaries limited people from other religions from responding to its spirituality. The spiritual transformation that occurred among the people was genuine and consequently the Pentecostal church grew. Stories of early Pentecostalism reflect true encounters with the Holy Spirit.<sup>51</sup> The Catholic charismatic revival started within Catholic churches in Kerala but then its ministry extended with the arrival of Neocharismatics to wider contexts like other Christian and non-Christian communities.<sup>52</sup> The Neocharismatic churches expanded people's ideas of what going to church was about, with increasing numbers attracted to these churches for going to church for healing and deliverance from various problems, physical and otherwise. The following section is a study of three churches, namely, the Heavenly Feast, the Exodus and the Life Fellowship, which were established during the early years of renewal within the Neocharismatic Movement. Since Heavenly Feast is the largest Neocharismatic church in terms of attendance, it is given special focus in this study. As Chapter Four focuses on the Pneumatology and faith practices of the Neocharismatic churches in Kerala, this section offers a brief outline of the history of churches that started alongside of Heavenly Feast. They are selected from two different geographic locations to show that the Neocharismatic movement is spread across Kerala.

### **2.6.1 The Exodus**

The church known as Exodus is one of the leading Neocharismatic churches in Kerala. It is located in Girinagar, Eranakulam, in central Kerala. In 1983, a group of young Christian musicians formed a rock band called Exodus. Later, it was said that each of

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<sup>51</sup> Mathew, *Kerala Penthekosthu Charithram*, 78.

<sup>52</sup> Interview, Thomas P, A former Roman Catholic Priest, 17 January 2015.

them had separate encounters with Jesus Christ, which led to the establishment of the Church.<sup>53</sup> The founders of this church are the two young people named Abey and Sam John. They have now planted nine churches across Kerala and a further ninety churches in other states of India. According to their website, the church, which was founded in 2002, started in the “hearts” of the young leaders as a prayer group. They proclaim that ‘Encouraged and empowered by the Holy Spirit, they embarked upon a purposeful journey, the Exodus to evangelize the world.’<sup>54</sup> Their vision statement says ‘we are a Church commissioned for a Global Harvest to “go and make disciples of all nations” as an end time harvest force and called to prepare a “glorious church”, for the return of the Lord Jesus’.<sup>55</sup> Despite its growth in India though, after thirteen years of operating, it has no branches or mission work outside India. The Church follows the Pentecostal faith but the wearing of jewellery depends on the personal decision of believers.<sup>56</sup> The church is popular with people in the business sector, including the secular film industry. Indeed, one of the famous Malayalam directors, Sibi Malayil, is a member of The Exodus. The church also promotes business opportunities for the believers.

#### **2.6.2.1 Pastoral Team**

The ministry leadership of The Exodus consist of a pastoral team of five key people.

The senior pastor, Sam Varghese appoints other pastors and decide on ministries those pastors should lead. A team of pastors caters for all of the church activities with the support of volunteer believers.<sup>57</sup> The young pastors are vibrant and energetic and use their time and talents for the welfare of the church and believers. During the main Sunday worship, all pastors are present and play a role in the worship services. The Exodus offers worship services in multiple languages: Malayalam, English, Hindi and

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<sup>53</sup> No Author, ‘Honouring God and Building People,’ <http://www.exoduschurch.in>, (14 May, 2015).

<sup>54</sup> “Honouring God...”.

<sup>55</sup> “Honouring God...”.

<sup>56</sup> Interview, Abey Abraham, Senior pastor, The Exodus, 02 February, 2015.

<sup>57</sup> Interview, Sam John, Associate pastor of Exodus, 02 February, 2015.

Tamil. Each of the services is led by a co-pastor who is fluent in the respective language. The majority of people attend Malayalam services. According to their website, the church claims a Christ-centred, Bible-based church, glorifying God in the truth. The church has a vision to reach out to the World with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Manifestations of God's presence within the church are exhibited through passionate prayer, anointed praise and worship, the ministry of the Word and a lifestyle of holiness.<sup>58</sup> All these are common elements in Pentecostal worship services and practice. According to The Exodus, the understanding of holiness differs from church to church and from person to person. Indeed, there are no set parameters within the Neocharismatic churches to explain what is meant by holiness. The Pentecostals in Kerala do not let certain groups of people come to their churches unless they have had a genuine salvation experience based on the set doctrines of the Bible. Although Bergunder thinks that there are no fundamental differences between the Pentecostals and Charismatics in southern India, I would argue that, differences can be seen when it comes to the open position of the Neocharismatics. This is discussed further in Chapter Five.

### **2.6.3. The Life Fellowship**

The Life Fellowship is an independent church in Thiruvananthapuram, which is the capital city of Kerala. It began in 1991, as a youth movement for mutual edification and spiritual growth. At the early days the group used the acronym "LIFE," which meant "Living in Faith Everyday" although they later changed their name to Life Fellowship. Several young people from Thiruvananthapuram were attracted to the group and converted to Christianity. Gradually, in 1996, they formed a non-denominational church

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<sup>58</sup> No Author, 'Honouring God...?'.

for everyone to come and worship.<sup>59</sup> Father of Varghese was a pastor in Sri Lanka and the southern states of India. According to Varghese, ‘the Spirit of God guided him to hand over the leadership to a team of elders led by another member in the church.’<sup>60</sup> This team takes care of the daily affairs of the church, while Varghese remains their mentor or advisor. To serve the larger Christian community, Varghese, provides leadership to the Apostolic Church Alliance (ACA) and the Eschol National Harvest Festival (ENHF). ACA is a united body of growing independent churches in Kerala which aims to promote unity, build relationships and cooperation amongst churches. Each leader in the alliance shares their vision to endorse and operate the fivefold ministry in their churches.<sup>61</sup>

The alliance has been formed with the primary purpose of addressing both the legal and spiritual issues of churches. ACA is strongly committed to building relationships between member churches, maintaining spiritual accountability, upholding character, integrity, raising righteous leadership, developing ministry excellence and promoting operational transparency.<sup>62</sup> It has been observed that Neocharismatic churches and their leaders often promote themselves in a manner which can be seen as being against biblical integrity and spirituality. Hence, the formation of the alliance is a significant move among the Neocharismatics movement in Kerala. Any attempt to stand together as a united body in the context of Christian persecution in India is highly commendable.

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<sup>59</sup> No Author, “Our History,” <http://lifefellowship.in/about-us/our-history/>, (16 May 2015).

<sup>60</sup> Sam T. Varghese, “The Year of Restoration,” <http://www.lifefellowship.org.in/transition.htm>, (16 May 2015).

<sup>61</sup> No Author. “Apostolic Church Alliance,” *Praise the Almighty* (1–15 June 2009), <http://www.praisethealmighty.com/>, (16 May 2015).

<sup>62</sup> No Author, “Apostolic Church,”.

## 2.7 The Role of Believers

According to the data collected in interviews and focus groups, there are three different groups of believers that can be identified in the Neocharismatic movement in Kerala.<sup>63</sup> The first group which is quite small in number, consists of those who accompanied a founding leader at the beginning of ministry or church. Most of them continue to worship with the founding leader, and now often hold key leadership positions in the church. In Kerala, it could be said that the vast majority of those in the first group are people from elite families and who are financially stable. The second category of people consists of those from the middle class families who, maintains dual membership of both a Neocharismatic church and another Christian church (whether Protestant or Catholic). Data suggests that this group attend the Neocharismatic churches because they are somehow feeling dissatisfied in the soul.<sup>64</sup> The third category consists of those who have converted from other religions, predominantly from lower castes of Hinduism. They are in large numbers in Heavenly Feast churches. For example, Sadasivan, who converted from the *Ezhava* caste said, that being part of that church gave him joy and confidence to share about the message of Christ to others, a feeling expressed by other interviewees.<sup>65</sup> Testimonies about significant life changes after converting to Neocharismatic Christianity and attending Heavenly Feast are commonly heard. For example, an auto rickshaw driver in Kottayam once shared his conversion story with me: he testified that he had been a drunkard for many years during which 50% of his daily earnings of 800/- Indian Rupees would be spent on liquor (with 200/- spent on fuel and only the remaining 200/- would be spent on the household and

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<sup>63</sup> The participants in the interviews and focus groups were people of second and third category. The first group consider themselves to be elite class and think they do not need to be a part of any study. They did not want them to be included in the interview or focus groups. They feel they do everything according to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

<sup>64</sup> Focus group Interview 1, Heavenly Feast, Ranni, 23 January 2015.

<sup>65</sup> Interview, Sadasivan Adoor, 12 January 2015.

family).<sup>66</sup> Neocharismatics would say that the rickshaw driver was addicted to all sorts of worldliness. Two years after the auto-rickshaw driver's wife started to attend the church after being invited by a friend, the driver joined her and became a believer. He now testifies to everyone who hires his rickshaw about the changes in his life and offers to pray for them. This reflects the Neocharismatic churches' encouragement of their believers to share the message of Christ with everyone they meet. Although Pentecostal churches were originally mission and evangelism oriented, it is rare to find believers sharing the gospel to others. In contrast, the believers in the Neocharismatic churches feel that they are responsible to share the Gospel message to everyone, and therefore, they are willing to do anything to bring people into the church.

## **2.8 Ministry of Churches**

The three churches mentioned above were pioneered during the early period of Neo charismatic movements in Kerala. In the early 1990's M. A. Varghese from Bangalore often visited Kerala to conduct revival meetings. People fell and fainted during his meetings and he saw this as an intervention of the Holy Spirit. Varghese was an employee in the Indian Air Force and later became the pastor of Bethel AG, Bangalore.<sup>67</sup> His convincing oratory skills mean that people tend to believe his interpretation of the new Spirit manifestations. Indisputably, his visit to Kerala had huge impact on churches and people began to understand and feel the importance of new strategies of ministry and worship. Due to his connection with AG, Varghese was accepted in many Pentecostal churches in Kerala. As stated earlier in this chapter; the visits of healing crusaders and miracle workers contributed to the development and shaped the ministries of Neocharismatic movements in Kerala.

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<sup>66</sup> 800/- Indian Rupees is equivalent to nearly £10 sterling. An average worker in Kerala gets around £ 9 a day.

<sup>67</sup>No Author, "M. A. Varughese," <http://pastormav.in/bethel/>, (16 May 2015).

Because of the strong orthodox doctrinal position of the Pentecostals, new churches easily found their place in the spiritual spectrum in Kerala. In general it could be seen that the founder or senior Pastor treats the church as ‘his’ church. Believers prefer to say they are attending in Pastor X or Y’s church (rather than using the name of the church). The autocratic leadership of some of these pastors points to a continuity with Pentecostal churches. Bergunder, for example, makes similar claims with regards to the Pastors of Pentecostal churches.<sup>68</sup> Like Pentecostal churches, the leaders of the Neocharismatic churches often promote their own son to be trained as a pastor and successor. Although most Neocharismatics leaders first enter the leadership in their middle age, they tend to follow this dynastic principle.<sup>69</sup> Bergunder mentions that without any theological justification, this practice was common among the Pentecostals in South India for many decades.<sup>70</sup> He expressed his concern that this practice had not faced criticism from within Pentecostal circles. My own experience of being a member of Pentecostal church for more than four decades corroborates this, and additionally, I have observed that subordinates to the senior pastors do not question this nepotism. Indeed, this seems to be the case for many leaders of various denominations in Kerala.

## **2.9 A Wider Picture**

Christianity has played a significant role in Indian society over the last two thousand years. In his address to the concluding ceremony for the centenary celebrations of the United Theological College in Bangalore, the State governor acknowledged the Christian contribution, He stated, ‘We are privileged to have so many Christian Institutions to bring the dignity of life and knowledge to the poor’.<sup>71</sup> It is recognized

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<sup>68</sup> Bergunder, *The South Indian*, 210.

<sup>69</sup> Kuruvila’s son who is in his early young age lead a church called “Jesus generation” at Kottayam. An insider said “he is under training.”

<sup>70</sup> Bergunder, *The South Indian*, 210.

<sup>71</sup>No Author, *Christian Telegraph*, <http://www.christiantelegraph.com/issue10386.html>(accessed 12 May, 2015).

that many of the senior political leaders of the BJP were students in missionary schools run by Roman Catholic Church. Although the Catholic community is highly respected for its contribution to education, the early Pentecostals, in contrast, have made no attempt to influence society.

Nevertheless, the Neocharismatic movements have churches in many parts of India, with membership numbering several tens of thousands. Most of these churches are founded by single pioneers. Members of such churches come from both poorer and richer groups of society. The leadership promotes the rich, but the poor are not involved in any significant role of leadership in the church. Publicity is an integral part of these churches: announcements of special meetings are made through multiple media, including newspapers and television, in addition to using public hoardings and flyers. The leaders of these churches use their pictures on the public hoardings to promote themselves.

### **Evaluation**

The Neocharismatic churches are a recent development in Indian Christianity. A general feeling which I gleaned from observing and studying these movements is that they have caught the socio-political attention in India. People attending these churches feel a new vigour and enthusiasm. The leaders are affluent and influential in society. They promise a blissful inheritance to everyone who attends their meetings. Friendship and commitment appear to be at higher levels; hence worshippers feel more ownership over their religious practice and experiences, and greater connection to the church. However, the Classical Pentecostals keep a distance from the ongoing development of the Neocharismatic churches. The issues faced by some of the leaders of Neocharismatic churches points to the need of a clearly designed and explained theology. There are signs in history that when spirituality is based more on excitement

and less on the Bible, the church does not last long.<sup>72</sup> The churches that are under observation and study in this chapter are case studies chosen in an attempt to understand the pneumatology of the Neocharismatic movement in India. Speaking from a theological view point, it takes the guidance and discernment of the Holy Spirit to understand the variety of manifestations that takes place in Neocharismatic movements. Smail et al, for example, argue that, ‘When the New Testament writers deal with spiritual gift, they often underline the need for the exercise of discernment, to distinguish the good from the bad, what is of divine gift from what is a human invention, what is genuine from what is imaginary.’<sup>73</sup> However, the gift of discernment is somewhat neglected in the Charismatic community. I observed that many believers and junior leaders in the churches I spent time with, for example, were willing to obey their leader without further enquiry or question. However, the Bible does warn a believer to discern and test every spirit when it manifests. (see for example, 1Corinthians 12:10; 1Thessalonians 5:19-22; 1John4:1-3). Although this gift is randomly exercised in Christian ministry, it needs to cultivate this sense of discernment when Spirit manifestations are witnessed. All manifestations identified by churches as the work of the Holy Spirit may not actually be so.

The leading churches within the Neocharismatic group in Kerala maintain that they do not belong to the category of the Pentecostals. In the interaction between independent church leadership, I observe that hardly any of them are aware of the different classifications within the twentieth century revival movements. This may be because,

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<sup>72</sup> Justus Josphe, the founder of *Kanneettukara unarvu church* (Kanneettu Reviaval Church) prophesied on October 02, early morning at 1.30 am that Christ will return soon. Hundreds of people left their churches and joined him on a ground to receive Christ. He was explaining to them about the book of revelation and the signs of the second coming of Jesus Christ. The crowd were in a mood to receive the Lord. Through the night they waited, nothing happened. Josphe became unconscious in the same place. Later Josphe in his despair founded the *Yuoyomaya church*. (Sajan Mathew, ‘Varunnu Keralathilum Anthaviswasa Nirodhana Niyamam,’ *Kerala Sabdam* 53/41 (May 31, 2015), 4.

<sup>73</sup> Tom Smail, Andrew Walker and Nigel Wright, *Charismatic Renewal*, (London: SPCK, 1995), 19.

these church leaders are neither theologically trained nor do they read any material on the current trends in revival movements. Therefore, their entire endeavour in ministry is believed to be under the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The role of the Neocharismatic movements within the wider spectrum of the modern movements of the Spirit is under serious consideration by scholarship worldwide.

Although it has close resemblance with the Pentecostal movement, the Neocharismatic churches are distinctively different from the Pentecostal churches. There are certain churches in India that allow fellowship of all kinds, including marriage and social gatherings, only with their own local church members or members of their own branch churches. Repeatedly, believers in these churches are reminded that they do not belong to the world, and everything that occurs on a daily basis within the local church, is under the direction of the Holy Spirit. Believers ought to consult the pastor before they make any decision. Probably to keep the believer in the church, a 'Holy Fear' is cultivated within them. Whilst considering various factors in the Neocharismatic community a clear adhesion to a definable theology of the Holy Spirit is necessary. The following chapter is a study of the popular practice of the Holy Spirit within the church life in an attempt to develop a Bible based pneumatology.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE PNEUMATOLOGY OF THE KERALA PENTECOSTAL MOVEMENT

#### 3.1 Introduction

The Pentecostals in Kerala have shown specific interest in the work of the Holy Spirit since its inception. It is the same with all other Pentecostal movements in the world. Early leaders and believers in the movement developed a habit of listening to the Spirit in their prayer rooms. They believed in the third person in Trinity, through whom they experience the presence of Jesus Christ and are thereby able to pray to the Father in heaven. Learning about the Spirit experiences of the first century Christians inspired Pentecostals to follow the movement of the Holy Spirit. The prayers, songs and messages always centred on the theme of the Holy Spirit. The ministry of the Holy Spirit through the lives of people strengthened the church life. It gave them strength and courage in their overwhelming situations. The Classical and indigenous Pentecostal churches emphasized the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Although the theology of the Holy Spirit is not fully developed systematically, pneumatology is a subject of interest for the Pentecostals in Kerala. As many of the Neocharismatic leaders were once members in Pentecostal churches, their claim of “New vine in New Vine skin” needs to be assessed. A brief background study is included to obtain more clarity in Indian Pentecostal pneumatology. This chapter studies the background of the Pentecostal understanding of the Holy Spirit as a platform to analyse the Spirit experiences of the Neocharismatic movement.

### 3.2 The Engagement with the Holy Spirit in the Christian tradition

More than the past, present trends in the field of theology include innovative efforts in the field of Pentecostal pneumatology. Peter Hodgson writes, ‘the resources for a theology of the Holy Spirit are rich and diverse, ranging from Eastern orthodoxy and classical western spirituality to New Age movements, folk and tribal religions, feminist, ecological and liberation theologies, and new philosophies of Spirit’.<sup>1</sup> Since the beginning of the first century, the New Testament Church has been engaged with explicating the concept of the third person in the doctrine of Trinity. Even though there have been many teachings developed over the last two millennia, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is still something of a mystical enigma.<sup>2</sup> Over time different Christian Churches and groups have attempted their best to explain the doctrine and throw light on this subject. However, it is true that the concept of the Holy Spirit has not been given adequate attention and has been greatly overlooked in the Christian tradition since the third century. In fact, in the fourth century AD, Gregory of Nazianzus referred to the Holy Spirit as *theos agraptos*, the “God about whom no one writes”.<sup>3</sup> The Western Christian tradition in particular has been influenced by a dominant Christo-centrism, and thus the role of the Holy Spirit has been diminished.<sup>4</sup> Early Church leaders and theologians concentrated on establishing their understandings on Christology and

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<sup>1</sup> Peter C. Hodgson, *Winds of Spirit: A Constructive Christian Theology* (Louisville: Westminster, 1994), 277.

<sup>2</sup> Wilson Varkey, *Role of the Holy Spirit in Protestant Systematic Theology* (Cumbria: Langham Monographs, 2011), 1.

<sup>3</sup> Donald L. Gelpi, *The Divine Mother: A Trinitarian Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Lanham: University of America Press, 1984), 4.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas J. Scirghi, *An Examination of the Problems of Inclusive Language in the Trinitarian Formula of Baptism* (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2000), 104.

Soteriology rather than pneumatology.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, Cartledge argues that the activity of the Holy Spirit has been evident throughout the history of the Christian church. He explains that, ‘In certain periods it was extremely evident while at other times it is almost as totally hidden’.<sup>6</sup> He calls the manifestation of the Holy Spirit ‘charismatic spirituality.’ It can be argued that the revivalist nature of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit has been since the fringes of the radical Reformation. Historically, the important antecedents of the Pentecostal doctrine of the Holy Spirit come from the Holiness movement that emerged toward the middle and the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>7</sup> However, many theologians observe that the upheaval of the Reformation precipitated a paradigm shift in the handling of the doctrine of pneumatology.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, the twentieth century marked a renewal of interest in pneumatology, due to the various Pentecostal revivals happening around the world. Henry Lederle states that pneumatology as a theological discipline has since blossomed, and the idea of ‘functional binitarianism’ has diminished in the church.<sup>9</sup> A Pentecostal approach has modified our traditional understanding of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Until the beginning of the Pentecostal movement at the turn of the twentieth century, the doctrine of the Spirit was not systematised nor given its place in Christian theology.<sup>10</sup> However, in the early days of Pentecostal Christianity, the renewed focus on the Holy Spirit, without a proper consideration of the pneumatology causes unintended errors and mistreatment by church leadership and people in positions of power. With the arrival of Charismatic and Neocharismatic movements, it could be seen that the doctrine of the Holy Spirit became popularised and practised by many.

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<sup>5</sup> Garry E. Gilley, *Pneumatology: A Study of the Holy Spirit* (Springfield, IL: Think on These things ministries, no date.), 1.

<sup>6</sup> Cartledge, *Encountering the Spirit*, 33.

<sup>7</sup> Cartledge, *Encountering the Spirit*, 49.

<sup>8</sup> Varkey, *Role of the Holy Spirit*, 27.

<sup>9</sup> Lederle, *Theology with the Spirit*, 161.

<sup>10</sup> Gilley, *Pneumatology*, 1.

Pentecostalism is known globally as a movement in which the Holy Spirit is very significant to its theology and practice. Pentecostals continued their emphasis on revival, which was at the heart of the movement's inception with a conviction that a worldwide revival will precede the second coming of Christ.<sup>11</sup> They expect that a repeated renewal in the church, which reflects the undercurrents of the first century outpourings, is a preparatory event for the return of Jesus Christ. The great expectation and hope for a Pentecostal believer is the parousia. However, as believers waited for the parousia as in the first century, the Holy Spirit outpourings continued to manifest globally over a period of more than hundred years. The Pentecostal movements gradually developed a doctrine of the Holy Spirit, which become central to their identity. The pneumatology discussed in this chapter is particularly relevant to the Indian Pentecostal context.

### **3.2.1 What is Pentecostal Pneumatology?**

Pentecostalism has been experiencing tremendous growth both in the Western and non-Western world. It is a movement that consists of many groups, all of which emphasize the works of the Spirit and the practice of spiritual gifts. Anderson acknowledges, 'if there is one central and distinctive theme in Pentecostal and Charismatic theology, then it is the work of the Holy Spirit'.<sup>12</sup> Pentecostalism is heterogeneous in nature, as are the different types of its teachings and emphases. However, although there are various expressions, the movement has one common experience that enables them for service: a personal encounter with the Holy Spirit.<sup>13</sup> In understanding global Pentecostalism, it can be seen that when the Holy Spirit is truly at work, this breaks down social divisions that are based on class, colour, creed, race, gender, age, and national origin.<sup>14</sup> The

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<sup>11</sup> Anderson, "Pandita Ramabai, the Mukti Revival and Global Pentecostalism," 37.

<sup>12</sup> Anderson, *Introduction to Pentecostalism: Second Edition*, 179.

<sup>13</sup> Anderson, *Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 179.

<sup>14</sup> Lederle, *Theology with the Spirit*, 73.

spread of Pentecostalism to disadvantaged and poverty stricken groups in Asia and Africa that have suffered from so much societal divisions connotes the power of the Holy Spirit to unite every believer. The first century account of the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church is above racial and social discriminations and unites everyone. Any starting point of discussion on the third person of the Trinity begins with the New Testament account of the Spirit. The Apostle Peter quotes from the book of Joel, and Luke affirms the arrival of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost:

And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; yea, and on my menservants and my maidservants in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy.. ... This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this, which you see and hear.<sup>15</sup>

Although this passage can be interpreted in different ways, Pentecostal theology of the Holy Spirit needs to begin from this passage in order to explain any Spirit manifestation. With multiple churches and movements that emphasise the works of the Spirit, it is hard to form a precise definition of both Pentecostals and their Pneumatology. Wonsuk Ma is of the opinion that ‘it is simply impossible to come up with a satisfactory definition’.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, scholars also use other terms as alternatives to Pentecostalism such as, ‘the movement of the Holy Spirit’ or the ‘Holy Spirit movement’. Ma also recognizes a problem using other terms, which is broad and has to encompass any revival or renewal in the Christian community. Furthermore, such attempts will justify all activities manifested under the title ‘spirit’.

However, although the work of the Holy Spirit has been emphasised in Pentecostalism, a formularised Pneumatology is almost absent. Since the Spirit is something that is

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<sup>15</sup> The Bible, Acts of the Apostles 2:16-33, RSV.

<sup>16</sup> Ma, “Asian (Classical) Pentecostal Theology in Context,” 73. Anderson use the term “Spirit Churches” to accommodate all different types of Pentecostal and independent churches.

invisible and believed to have no shape or personality in the non- Western world, any type of spirit manifestation can sometimes be interpreted as the work of the Holy Spirit. In explaining the difficulties of recording the history of Pentecostalism, Anderson states that most of the notable stories and events come from the memories of living people remembering the past.<sup>17</sup> Indeed this is true with Pentecostalism in India. Globally, Pentecostals have been very slow in articulating their theology because of the multiplicity of its content and freedom to exercise and interpret the passages in the Bible. Although Pentecostals do follow a theology of the Spirit it is more about being oral in nature. In the early stage of Pentecostalism, theologizing was not the prime concern for Pentecostals. Walter Hollenweger maintains that Pentecostals from the non-western context have emphasised oral traditions, dreams and visions, to interpret the gospel theologically.<sup>18</sup> The theology Pentecostal movement in Kerala is constructed from an oral tradition interpreting visions, dreams, daily experiences such as healing, exorcism, provision of daily needs etc.

### **3.2.2 The Need of Pentecostal Pneumatology**

Anselm's well-known definition of theology as "faith seeking understanding" explains theology as a cognitive articulation of the knowledge of God.<sup>19</sup> Knowing God through salvation offered humanity the opportunity to know God through Jesus Christ. A salvation experience makes a person closer to God through strengthening of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, all theological statements need to have a Christian character and this is achieved through a relationship with Jesus Christ.<sup>20</sup> Since Christology is the base for theology, it can be further argued that pneumatology serves as a pointer to the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. A cursory investigation of the Pentecostal movement will

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<sup>17</sup> Anderson, *Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 12.

<sup>18</sup> F. D. Macchia, "Theology Pentecostal" in *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, ed. Stanley M. Burgees and Gary B. McGee (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998): 1120.

<sup>19</sup> Varkey, *Role of the Holy Spirit*, 3.

<sup>20</sup> Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus – God and Man* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1968), 11.

prove that it is overwhelmingly Christo-centric in nature and function.<sup>21</sup> Macchia writes that, ‘the Christ that occupies the center of Pentecostal theology is not an abstract or ideological principle, but the living Christ who still accomplishes the will of the Father through the power of the Spirit today’.<sup>22</sup> It is significant for the study of the Spirit that Pentecostal theology advocates the active presence of God through the Holy Spirit. Paul’s epistle to the Corinthian church affirms the living Christ in a believer. In 1 Corinthians 3:16 Paul says, ‘do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?’. The presence of God being experienced in everyday life is at the centre of Pentecostal pneumatology. Christ experienced in the life of a believer is a higher form of realization in the New Testament. ‘Pentecostals see the world through an ideology in which God is near at hand and gives abundant evidence of his powerful presence in the church,’ comments Klaus.<sup>23</sup> Hence, a believer has genuine expression of the Holy Spirit and it is central to their everyday experience. Pentecostal theology follows a clearly defined Christology and biblical theology. In contemporary scholarship, it is important that theology acknowledges the vast ambiguity associated with the Spirit movements. Scholars like Harvey Cox, Allan Anderson and Burgess have appreciated non- western Pentecostalism for incorporating primal spirituality, which traditional Christianity has hesitated to work with. In the wider context of Pentecostalism in Asia and Africa, Spirit manifestations often operate within the indigenous religious background. Pentecostal missionaries who work in such areas often attempt to reconfigure local spirits in terms of the Holy Spirit. In such a context, as Macchia says, it is important that Pentecostal missionaries clarify in solidarity with other Christian traditions, a pneumatology that is Christ-centred, devoted

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<sup>21</sup> Byron Klaus, “The Holy Spirit and Mission in Eschatological Perspective: A Pentecostal Viewpoint,” *Pneuma* 27/2 (Fall, 2005): 322-342, (325).

<sup>22</sup> Macchia, “Theology, Pentecostal,” 1124.

<sup>23</sup> Klaus, “The Holy Spirit and Mission in Eschatological Perspective,” 325.

to the diverse witness of Scripture, and faithful to the ministry of the Kingdom of God that was realized decisively in the person and work of Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>24</sup>

There is no uniform Pentecostal doctrine in terms of issues such as baptism of the Spirit, the evidence of the baptism of the Spirit, sanctification, healing, church polity or eschatology, for example.<sup>25</sup> Pentecostals view the Holy Spirit as a divine initiator in real life. The daily experiences are assessed and theology considered based on the knowledge of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, pneumatology helps Pentecostals understand to a Bible-centred faith that can hardly be debated because it exists from personal experience in line with the Bible.<sup>26</sup> Also from a hermeneutical perspective, it may be argued that pneumatology is vital to understand Pentecostal theology.

### **3.2.3 Popular Views on the Holy Spirit**

The early Christian community viewed the Holy Spirit and his activities in relation to their indigenous religious belief system.<sup>27</sup> There may have been alterations in the latter understandings. Nevertheless, the early church understood the activities of the Holy Spirit as concrete facts, obvious to all, which were the object of direct daily experience and which accepted without further question or reflection.<sup>28</sup> In one of the classics in the study of Pneumatology, *The Influence of the Holy Spirit* Hermann Gunkel presents the Holy Spirit as one who is involved in the daily activity of believers, irrespective of which century they belong. In the New Testament narratives of Holy Spirit activities, especially in the Book of Acts, the Spirit renders the presence of God and persons such as Paul are completely dependent on the Spirit for guidance and directions. Levison suggests that the idea of the spirit within is the most significant nature of the Holy Spirit

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<sup>24</sup> Macchia, "Theology, Pentecostal," 1124.

<sup>25</sup> Klaus, "The Holy Spirit and Mission..." 323.

<sup>26</sup> Jose Miguez Bonino, "Changing Paradigms: A Response" in *The Globalization of Pentecostalism: A Religion Made to Travel*, ed. Murray W. Dempster, Byron D. Klaus and Douglas Petersen (California: Regnum, 1999), 117.

<sup>27</sup> Hermann Gunkel, *The Influence of the Holy Spirit* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 11.

<sup>28</sup> Gunkel, *The Influence of the Holy Spirit*, 14.

referred to in the biblical accounts. He suggests that the Old Testament characters had this spirit within them, which helped them in the crucial moments of life. For example, Daniel's Spirit as with Micah's enabled him to declare justice. The Spirit also helped Joseph to interpret dreams and Bezalel to teach the artisans the skills they needed to construct the tent of meeting.<sup>29</sup>

Pentecostals base their Spirit theology on Acts 2: 38-39 which says 'Then Peter said to them, repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call'. Turner records that the New Testament characterizes the Spirit as being 'given' and 'received' by Christians.<sup>30</sup> Protestant writers like F. F. Bruce, F.D. Brunner and J. G. Davies maintain a position that the Holy Spirit is given to a believer at the time of their conversion experience. For Gunkel, the Holy Spirit creates life. In Jesus, the Holy Spirit was not something added to his nature, but an agent who was continually and totally filled with His life, just as the Holy Spirit helped Mary to conceive Jesus.<sup>31</sup> Pentecostals believe in new life after conversion, which is initiated by Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. In Pentecostalism, a person who receives the Spirit is believed to have faith, courage and spiritual wisdom to face any challenge in life with the help of that Spirit. The life of Jesus Christ on Earth is a model for every Pentecostal to believe, supporting the notion that a successful Christian life in the midst of perilous circumstances is possible.

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<sup>29</sup> Levison, *Filled with the Spirit*, 130.

<sup>30</sup> Max Turner, *Power From on High: The Spirit in Israel's Restoration and Witness in Luke- Acts* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 39.

<sup>31</sup> Gunkel, *The Influence of the Holy Spirit*, 16.

### **3.3 The Divinity of the Holy Spirit**

Pentecostal's understanding of their theology has not been simply an attempt to interpret religious experience through song, prayer, story or cultural art forms rather they are devoted to the study of the scripture for a long time. The practice of the study of Scripture was inherited from the evangelical forbears of Pentecostalism.<sup>32</sup> Although the fundamentalists attack Pentecostals, arguing that their experiential faith denies or undermines the ultimate authority of the Biblical revelation, history proves that Pentecostals follow biblical theology as the basis of their faith. Indeed, Macchia says that, 'for all its advantages and limitations, theology for Pentecostals from the beginning has been a biblical theology, though not generally one that has consciously utilized critical methodologies'.<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, Pentecostals always envisioned a theology of the Holy Spirit based on Scripture, which is their norm in understanding the Godhead and the role of the Holy Spirit within the Trinitarian perspective. While rebuking Ananias and Sapphira for misinterpretation and attempting to deceive God and the apostles when bringing the offering, Peter questioned Ananias about lying to the Holy Spirit and declared, 'you have not lied to men, but to God' (Acts 5:4). Here the Holy Spirit is explicitly referred to as God. Macchia states that all Pentecostals have agreed to some kind of a Trinitarian structure to explain God's self-disclosure, although not all would accept a classical Trinitarian formula of intra-divine personal relations.<sup>34</sup>

#### **3.3.1 The Holy Spirit in Trinity**

In a traditional Christian viewpoint, the Trinitarian formula begins with the Father: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.<sup>35</sup> Traditionally, the inherent Trinitarian structure of the gospel that involves the threefold work of God describes the Father as the Creator,

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<sup>32</sup> Macchia, "Theology, Pentecostal," 1121.

<sup>33</sup> Macchia, "Theology, Pentecostal," 1121.

<sup>34</sup> Macchia, "Theology, Pentecostal," 1126.

<sup>35</sup> William P. Atkinson, *Trinity After Pentecost* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2013), 39.

the Son as the Redeemer and the one who sustains, and the Holy Spirit as the Giver of Life.<sup>36</sup> Most of the traditional explanations of the Trinity focus on God as the source of everything and thus claim that theology should begin with God the Father. In traditional Trinitarianism, the Father is the primordial person and the eternal source of the Son and the Holy Spirit.<sup>37</sup> Anselm's famous definition of theology is *fides quaerens intellectum*, faith seeking understanding based on faith that helps one to know God. Although the partial revelation about God is available for all humankind to experience, the fullest revelation about him is possible only through specific God given means. Abraham asserts that the incomprehensible God revealed Himself in Jesus Christ and is experienced through the Holy Spirit. The faith that Anselm recommends comprises of two aspects: "faith in God" and "faith that people live in" or situational faith. As all believers live in a particular cultural situation, their experiences are coloured by the context they live in.<sup>38</sup> For a Pentecostal, experiences of the past and present helps them to know God and reflect theologically. Our understandings of about God are a result of Spirit activity in us. Atkinson comments that, '... Pentecostal Trinitarianism that begins with human experience of God and seeks by way of imaginative analogy to trace back from this to God's own being, then it seems sensible to begin with the Spirit'.<sup>39</sup> The starting point of Pentecostal theology begins from one's own personal experience and is guided and controlled by the Holy Spirit. Since the first century, the Pentecostal task was to preach a "full" gospel, which contains salvation, healing, sanctification, baptism in the Spirit and the glorious return of Jesus Christ.<sup>40</sup> While the Pentecostal preachers conveyed the message of the gospel all over the world, they also believed that they

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<sup>36</sup> Macchia, "Theology, Pentecostal," 1126.

<sup>37</sup> Atkinson, *Trinity After Pentecost*, 39.

<sup>38</sup> Abraham, "Ordinary Christology," 20.

<sup>39</sup> Atkinson, *Trinity After Pentecost*, 39.

<sup>40</sup> Anderson, *Spreading Fires*, 211.

shared the God given messages because miraculous signs and wonders followed the preaching.

### **3.3.1.1 The Spirit and the Father**

To discuss the Pentecostal understanding of the Spirit and the Father we need to understand the Biblical passages that communicate this relationship between the Father and the Spirit. In the Old Testament (OT), the Spirit is portrayed as a separate identity of God. In the OT, the divine Spirit is denoted by expressions such as “Spirit of God” “Spirit of the Lord”, “My Spirit”, and “His Spirit”.<sup>41</sup> The Old Testament speaks about God’s spirit in various and scattered forms.<sup>42</sup> The Hebrew word *ruah* is used in the OT to convey the idea of “the Spirit”.<sup>43</sup> The same term also denotes meanings such as a storm, wind, breath, life etc. Therefore, it is not always easy to establish that the word *ruah* refers to God’s Spirit. While looking at the different books in the OT, it seems that the Spirit has multiple functions to be tender, compassionate, a counsellor, and the author of wisdom, a blessing and a liberating force.<sup>44</sup> The Spirit of God also functions as an inspirer of both religious and military leaders as well as a force with a missionary intention to deliver God’s people.

Interestingly, the New Testament (NT) writers do not seem to make a distinction between the Spirit and the Father. Atkinson states that, the usage “God” might be exchangeable in a given text without any significant shift in meaning.<sup>45</sup> Works of the persons of the trinity are unified and inseparable. There is neither action nor task on the earth that the Holy Spirit does in isolation from the Father.<sup>46</sup> However, Turner differentiates between the work of the Spirit in pre – Pentecost and post –Pentecost. He

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<sup>41</sup> B. B. Warfield, *Biblical Doctrines* (Pennsylvania: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1988), 23.

<sup>42</sup> Max Turner, *The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts Then and Now* (Secunderabad: OM Books, 1996), 4.

<sup>43</sup> Joy T. Samuel, “The Practice of Popular Manifestations of the Holy Spirit in Neocharismatic Movement: A Critical Appraisal,” (M.Th. Thesis, Bangalore: SAIACS, 2006), 62.

<sup>44</sup> Samuel, “The Practice,” 70.

<sup>45</sup> Atkinson, *Trinity After Pentecost*, 41. He uses the example of Acts 13:2 to establish the argument.

<sup>46</sup> Lederle, *Theology with the Spirit*, 188.

suggests that the Pentecostal sending of the Holy Spirit was delegated to the Son; therefore, the work of the Spirit must be differentiated from that of the Father.<sup>47</sup>

Furthermore, the primitive community of the NT views the Holy Spirit as the source of miracles when the life of Jesus Christ was proclaimed.<sup>48</sup> Apostles witnessed the stamping of the life of Christ upon believers as the most spectacular activity of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, Pentecostals believe that the Father and Spirit have an irrefutable relationship and it is the divine trinity that works together to send the Spirit upon a person. A Pentecostal view of the relation between the Father and the Spirit is that the Holy Spirit functions as an instrument of the Father's action, and the Father functions by the Spirit as a means. This interrelated work of God sustains the identity of both Father and the Spirit ontologically and functionally.<sup>49</sup>

Although Pentecostals have attempted to be biblical rather than philosophical in their approach to theology they have often neglected the Trinitarian nature of God.

Studebaker comments that even in the classical Pentecostal theology text by Myer Pearlman (1937), *Knowing the Doctrines of the Bible*, no attempt was made at a Trinitarian reflection.<sup>50</sup> They affirm the doctrine of the Trinity, but fail to integrate the attributes of God in their theology. It is a failure of the early leaders of Pentecostalism that they did not promote and study the doctrine of the Trinity, focused as they were on the study of Spirit baptism. According to Turner, Pentecostals lacked profound and deep thinking founding fathers, to give them a theological identity and direction as had the churches of the Reformation.<sup>51</sup> He further comments that they had neither a prayer book, nor a common cultural ethos. However, the diversity in Pentecostalism was no

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<sup>47</sup> Turner, *The Holy Spirit*, 170. See Atkinson, *Trinity After Pentecost*, 44.

<sup>48</sup> Turner, *Power From on High*, 24.

<sup>49</sup> Atkinson, *Trinity After Pentecost*, 44.

<sup>50</sup> Studebaker, *Defining Issues*, 72.

<sup>51</sup> Max Turner, "The Charismatic Movement and the Church – Conflict or Renewal?," *European Journal of Theology* 10/1 (2001), 49-61.

doubt increased by its lack of theological education and the tendency to encourage testimonies rather than an exposition of the epistles.<sup>52</sup>

### **3.3.2 The Holy Spirit in the Reformation**

The reformation period was hugely significant for the Christian church in terms of redefining a bible centred theology and practice. Cartledge states that the reformation period was significant for the Church as the role of the Holy Spirit was defined differently to existing theological definitions at the time.<sup>53</sup> The reformers were fighting a battle with an established church claiming validation by miracles on one side, and on the other with fanatics who discounted the Scripture and theological tradition because they claimed a direction inspired by the Holy Spirit.<sup>54</sup> Considering a theology of the Holy Spirit there are strong reasons to argue that Pneumatology at large is a gift to the church of the reformation.<sup>55</sup> According to Fred Perry Hall, ‘the Holy Spirit is a central doctrine in the theology of Martin Luther; his theology expresses his personal experience that he has been rescued in Christ by faith (*Sola Fide*); and the Holy Spirit comes through the physical means of the Word and sacrament (*Sola Scriptura*)’.<sup>56</sup> For Martin Luther, the Spirit brings the treasure of Christ to the believer enabling them to confirm themselves to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.<sup>57</sup> In terms of the Spirit and His gifts, Luther believed that gifts such as speaking in tongues were no longer needed to confirm the gospel messages. He asserted that the Bible is the Holy Spirit’s book, written by human beings; it is not of the human beings, but from God.<sup>58</sup> Luther affirmed that the Spirit speaks in the Bible or that He moved the authors of the Scripture

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<sup>52</sup> Turner, “The Charismatic,” 52.

<sup>53</sup> Cartledge, *Encountering the Spirit*, 44.

<sup>54</sup> Richard Lovelace, “Baptism in the Holy Spirit and the Evangelical Tradition,” in *Faces of Renewal*, ed. Paul Elbert (Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 1988), 209-233 (214).

<sup>55</sup> Varkey, *Role of the Holy Spirit*, 27.

<sup>56</sup> Fred Perry Hall, *The Lutheran Doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the Sixteenth Century: Development of the “Formula of Concord”* (California: Pasadena, 1993), 53. See Varkey, *Role of the Holy Spirit*, 40.

<sup>57</sup> Cartledge, *Encountering*, 44.

<sup>58</sup> Varkey, *Role of the Holy Spirit*, 41.

to write down the truth revealed by the Holy Spirit. Luther's pneumatology is a result of his studies of Augustine's *de Trinitate* which made a deep impression on him particularly between the relationship of *caritas* and the Spirit.<sup>59</sup> Cartledge writes that, 'His theology of Pentecost is expressed in his 1524 hymn as an outpouring of grace in the believer's mind and heart, bringing fervent love and a union in the faith'.<sup>60</sup>

John Calvin was a popular figure in the reformation and development of Western civilization. Calvin focused on the regenerative and creative power of the Holy Spirit. Calvin thought that, since the Spirit is the source of life and sustains everything, the Spirit also bestows gifts upon people, although those people have been affected by the fall. Thus, although natural gifts might have been corrupted and supernatural gifts might have withdrawn, people are restored back to the church through the Spirit.<sup>61</sup> He believed that the knowledge of God in Jesus Christ could only be renewed through the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>62</sup> Calvin's pneumatology facilitates a constant reference to the Holy Spirit and the person and work of Jesus Christ. He regarded the gift of healing as being discontinued and that speaking in tongues was no more required since it was given as a supernatural gift specifically for communicating the gospel.<sup>63</sup>

The radical reformation is a collective term for all those who remained in neither the Roman Catholic nor mainline Protestant churches. They rejected both these groups. Timothy George argues that it was a movement which gave birth to a new form of Christian faith and life.<sup>64</sup> Thomas Müntzer is a classic example of the tradition and I will focus on him as indicative in relation to the Holy Spirit. Although Müntzer's theology of the Spirit is significant, he employed a different scheme in his argument

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<sup>59</sup> Varkey, *Role of the Holy Spirit*, 40.

<sup>60</sup> Cartledge, *Encountering*, 45.

<sup>61</sup> Cartledge, *Encountering*, 46.

<sup>62</sup> Randall C. Zachman, "John Calvin (1509-1564)," in *The Reformation Theologians: An Introduction to Theology in the Early Modern Period*, ed. Carter Lindberg (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 184.

<sup>63</sup> Cartledge, *Encountering*, 46.

<sup>64</sup> Timothy George, *Theology of the Reformers* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1988), 255.

against Martin Luther. Varkey states that, 'he was attracted by the mysticism of Suso and Tauler in his search for an answer to satisfy both his academic curiosity and his religious uncertainty'.<sup>65</sup> Thomas Müntzer having separated from Martin Luther, tried to establish a community of believers imitating the primitive church. He believed in an inner baptism of the Spirit against the infant baptism. For Müntzer the baptism of the Spirit helps a believer to read the Bible correctly, to prophesy and to receive revelations through dreams and visions.<sup>66</sup> He also believed that Christ would return to separate the pious elect from the godless through the creative power of the Holy Spirit, and establish His kingdom and rule on the earth.<sup>67</sup> Although allegorical interpretation was unfamiliar in medieval Christianity, Müntzer interpreted "water" as "Holy Spirit". His strong conviction of the cooperation between the human nature and divine Spirit is not the result of an external act like water baptism, but with the internal experiencing of the Spirit.

The Reformation is one of the major sources of Pentecostal Spirit theology and its theologians have had an impact on the earlier stage of the formation of Pentecostal pneumatology. According to Cartledge, the nature and history of the Reformation demonstrated features of what we now refer to as Pentecostal and Charismatic spirituality.<sup>68</sup> Both Luther and Calvin had a balanced and solid focus on spirituality that helped the believers to gain potentially biblical insights. Although the clergy / laity separation, which the Medieval Church had fostered, ended, the reformation neglected the role of the Holy Spirit in sanctification thereby producing spiritual gifts for the church.

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<sup>65</sup> Varkey, *Role of the Holy Spirit*, 53.

<sup>66</sup> Cartledge, *Encountering*, 46.

<sup>67</sup> Varkey, *Role of the Holy Spirit*, 54.

<sup>68</sup> Cartledge, *Encountering*, 49.

### 3.4 Indian Pentecostalism and the Holy Spirit

Ethnographic studies on various aspects of Indian Pentecostalism provide sufficient information about the movement. However, even after hundred years since its formation, Indian Pentecostalism lacks a proper theology of the Holy Spirit. For example, as I already identified in chapter two, George observes that writing a proper history of the movement is not possible due to the lack of reliable documentation.<sup>69</sup> The formulation of a Pentecostal theology in India faces the same issue. The indigenous Pentecostal-like revivals in Tamil Nadu are not properly documented and little is known about their theology.

As I mentioned earlier, Pandita Ramabai was an Indian Christian woman, a reformist, social activist and a pioneer who assessed the indigenous revivals in India against their Western critics. Anderson quotes her words from the *Mukti Prayer Bell* 1907, a magazine published by Mukti Mission Pune. She wrote,

Why should not the Holy Spirit has liberty to work among Indian Christian people, as He has among Christians of other countries? And why should everything does not reach the high standard of English and American civilization, be taken as coming from the devil? I do not understand.... I see that God is doing great things for us and among us...What has happened here, during the revival, is not an imitation of someone. Had these people who have come under the power of the Holy Ghost been mere imitators, they would certainly have shown their inclination toward that way before the revival began... we do not find many such hypocrites among them.<sup>70</sup>

This was a response of an Indian Christian soon after the revival at Mukti Mission Pune, in 1906. Indeed, her own experience of the Holy Spirit had earlier prompted Ramabai in 1898, to ask people gathered at the Keswick convention in England to pray for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Indian Christians in the hope that ‘1000 Holy Ghost missionaries’ would rise.<sup>71</sup> The revivals in India always resulted in evangelistic

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<sup>69</sup> George, “Pentecostal Beginnings,” 215.

<sup>70</sup> Allan Anderson, “Pandita Ramabai: The Mukti Revival and Global Pentecostalism,” *Transformation* 23/1 (January, 2006), 37–48 (42).

<sup>71</sup> Anderson, “Pandita Ramabai,” 39.

outreach and conversions of people. Roger Hedlund states that the preaching bands from Mukti volunteered to spread the gospel in villages with reports of healings, speaking in tongues, prophecy and other gifts accompanying their evangelistic efforts.<sup>72</sup> In southern India, the revivals in Tamil Nadu led by Arulappan also took an indigenous course leading people in mission and evangelism resulting in conversion.<sup>73</sup> Signs, (including prophecy), tongues, (and their interpretation), dreams, visions and intense convictions of sins, were also witnessed at these revivals in Tamil Nadu.<sup>74</sup> Although the leaders did not outline a specific systematic Spirit theology, their passion for preaching the gospel to advance God's kingdom followed the revival. People came to the Lord as families, recognizing God's power in their lives. Robert Cook writes an account of a man called Njanaprakasham and his experience of Jesus appearing to him in a vision, which led to his conversion from Hinduism.<sup>75</sup> The autobiography of Cook narrates stories of healings and miracles, conversions and church plantings as groups came to the Lord. A powerful manifestation of the Holy Spirit was evident in India, especially in the south. There are stories of healings in the early years of Pentecostalism that helps us to understand the way in which the Holy Spirit worked among people. One such incident is recorded as follows:

A Pentecostal boy had a rabies dog bite and was about to die in Central Travancore. At this time, the vaccination for rabies was not yet available and the boy was quarantined in a room in his house. The villagers gathered around the house to see the boy dying. During this time a prophet of the name Pathichira Yohannachan was leading a prayer in which a woman prophesied about the death of a boy near Alapuzha. Yohannachan

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<sup>72</sup> Roger E. Hedlund, "Indigenous Pentecostalism in India," in *Asian and Pentecostal: The Charismatic Face of Christianity in Asia*, ed. Allan Anderson and Edmund Tang (Oregon: WIPF&STOCK, 2011), 175.

<sup>73</sup> Burgess, "Pentecostalism," 87.

<sup>74</sup> Hedlund, "Indigenous," 175. See A. C. George, "Pentecostal Beginnings in South India,"

<sup>75</sup> Robert F. Cook, *Dakshinendiyayile Appostholika Nettangal: Autobiography of Robert Cook* [Apostolic Achievements in South India] (Mulakuzha, Kerala: Church of God Publications Board, 2013), 204.

rushed to the place and saw that the boy was almost dying. He stayed in front of the room, praying and fasting. After three days of Yohannachan's prayer and fasting, the boy received complete healing.<sup>76</sup> This miracle helped the growth of Pentecostal churches in Alapuzha and its surroundings. Indeed, such healings and miracles helped the growth of Pentecostal churches all over the world. The fact is that many would not accept the rationale behind such supernatural interventions. Prayer, fasting, visions, and healing have all played a role in these types of miracles, as they authenticate the work of the Holy Spirit and advance evangelisation.

The autobiographies of Cook and Abraham include stories and personal experiences of their ministries in Kerala. It is a huge loss for later generations and students of Pentecostalism in India that very little information is available about the work of the Holy Spirit. Although we have a lack of information about many other leaders, we now understand that God was shaping a movement of the Holy Spirit that further led the growth of churches in India. Pentecostalism in India survived a hundred years with the preaching and teaching of God's word and yet without written theologies. However, it is necessary to recognize the fact that teachings of the Holy Spirit in Pentecostal churches was a contribution of the western Missionaries, which are propagated even today in many of the Pentecostal congregations.

### **3.4.1 Western Models of Pneumatology.**

The Azusa street revivals and its results undoubtedly assisted the growth of Pentecostalism all over the world including India. Pulikottil refers to a report that says that 38 missionaries travelled from Azusa Street to cross-cultural mission destinations within two years of the revival.<sup>77</sup> Anderson rightly points out that the missionaries also

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<sup>76</sup> Samkutty Chacko Nilambur, "Athbhuthangal Avasanicho?," [Has Miracles come to an End?] Hallelujah 20/16 (1-15 August, 2015), 1-12, (3).

<sup>77</sup> Paulson Pulikottil, "Azusa Missionaries in the Context of the Caste System in India," in *The Azusa Street Revival and its Legacy*, ed. Harold D. Hunter and Cecil M. Robeck Jr. (Cleveland, TN: Pathway Press, 2006), 161.

believed their experience of ecstatic Spirit manifestations were evidence of the end time and they therefore believed that they needed to evangelize to the world in the shortest time available. India was one of the favourite locations of these missionaries from the Azusa Street revival. Many of the missionaries had spoken in tongues of a language not known to them and they believed that these languages were the local languages of the places they finally reached. Early Pentecostal publications had such tremendous stories of missionary expectations referring to the tongues as the “gift of languages”.<sup>78</sup>

Speaking in such a language was the fundamental experience of Spirit baptism and motivated them for mission.<sup>79</sup> For example, Alfred G. Garr travelled to Calcutta as he believed had spoken in Bengali during the revival in Azusa.<sup>80</sup> Lillian Garr believed that she received Tibetan and Mandarin languages to preach the gospel. Burgess states that, Alfred was not able to preach in Bengali and thus he abandoned the utility of the gift of tongues as a missionary tool but still believed it as an indispensable sign of Spirit baptism.<sup>81</sup>

The Western missionaries in India prayed for people to receive the Holy Spirit and taught them about the need for a Pentecostal experience. Foreign missionaries mostly preached the gospel with the help of a translator and prayed for their audience.

Obviously, the revivals in India are not just the result of the preaching and evangelism of Western missionaries. As stated earlier in chapter two, the revivals in India prior to the Azusa revival contributed to further the growth of Pentecostalism in India.

However, the presence of these missionaries morally strengthened the ministry of local Pentecostal leaders and churches. Furthermore, the Indian Pentecostal churches followed a Western model of Spirit theology and by doing so they failed to develop

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<sup>78</sup> Anderson, *Spreading Fires*, 46.

<sup>79</sup> Anderson, *Spreading Fires*, 58.

<sup>80</sup> Pulikottil, “Azusa Missionaries,” 161.

<sup>81</sup> Burgess, “Pentecostalism,” 89.

their own local understanding of the Holy Spirit. Interestingly, a proper Indian Pentecostal theology does not exist in written form, although certain books with titles like ‘Pentecostal Theology’ have been published in India. However, these are reproduction of the systematic theology developed by Western theologians. Henceforth, there is scope for the development of a contextualised Pentecostal theology that would inspire Pentecostals in India to recognize and personalize the Holy Spirit.

#### **3.4.2 The Pneumatology of Pandita Ramabai**

Although the revival in Tamilnadu has a significant place in the story of national revivals in India, Pentecostalism is deeply indebted to Ramabai and her mission as she was at the forefront of propagating the message of Pentecostalism in India. The Mukti Mission became a vital link to the global Pentecostal network that was starting to be established and it helped establish Indian Pentecostalism.<sup>82</sup> Since she came to Christ in 1883, Ramabai had a burning heart's desire to evangelize India.<sup>83</sup> As mentioned earlier, her passion for ministry is seen in her call for the Indian evangelism during the Keswick convention in 1898.<sup>84</sup> Attending the Keswick Convention in America refreshed Ramabai’s spirit and she wrote until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field we shall wait. However, she continued her prayer for a spiritual awakening upon her land as her basic desire was to evangelize India, something she believed only possible through the power of the Holy Spirit. Ramabai wanted God to use Indians to evangelize their own nation. Her strong determination is evident in her words, as Dyer records, ‘...It is an easy matter with God to give us two

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<sup>82</sup> Michael Bergunder, “Constructing Indian Pentecostalism: On Issues of Methodology and Representation,” in *Asian and Pentecostal: The Charismatic Face of Christianity in Asia*, ed. Allan Anderson and Edmund Tang (Oregon: WIPF&STOCK, 2011), 155.

<sup>82</sup> Burgess, “Pentecostalism,” 90.

<sup>83</sup> Gary B. McGee, “Baptism in the Holy Ghost and Fire: The Revival Legacy of Minnie F. Abrams,” *Enrichment Journal*, (2015), [http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/199803/080\\_baptism\\_fire.cfm](http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/199803/080_baptism_fire.cfm) (21September, 2015)

<sup>84</sup> Helen S. Dyer, *Pandita Ramabai: The Story of her Life* (London: Morgan and Scott, 1906), 41. Allan Anderson, *To the Ends of the Earth*, 27.

hundred thousand evangelists, and if it seems impossible to us, then let us honour God by believing that He changes not and is able to perform a miracle today as He was 2,000 years ago'.<sup>85</sup> The news about the revival in Australia and Wales prompted Ramabai to be expectant that such a revival would come to her place. Ramabai's experience of the Holy Spirit was not so Pentecostal in nature. There is no record that Ramabai herself spoke in tongues during the revival or later, for example. Being highly educated among the early native missionaries, Ramabai learned the Bible with the utmost desire to know the truth. She wholeheartedly accepted the possibility of being treated as fool at the insights and revelations from the Holy Spirit through God's word.<sup>86</sup> Ramabai was concerned with issues of identity and dignity, as seen in her attitudes to the poor and needy: she believed that the Holy Spirit would liberate people from all such experiences if they find Jesus. Ramabai saw the Spirit as a liberator. Ma states that a Pentecostal message reinforces the concept of positive and structurally dynamic change.<sup>87</sup> Indeed, the power of the Spirit transformed Ramabai's worldview. Ramabai's understanding of the Holy Spirit is rooted in the Bible. She studied Hebrew and Greek languages while translating the Bible into the Marathi language. The Marathi Bible was the first Bible in an Indian language that was translated from the original languages of the Bible. Ramabai's meditations on the Scripture in Mukti prayer bands which is a prayer gathering in her hostel, shaped the spiritual understanding in the residence. Yong states that what is distinctive about Pentecostal theology is that it is biblically and theologically grounded with the core thematic motif of Jesus Christ alongside an

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<sup>85</sup> Dyer, *Pandita Ramabai*, 42. The details are given in Anderson, *To The Ends of the Earth*, 27-33.

<sup>86</sup> Anderson, *To the Ends*, 27.

<sup>87</sup> Wonsuk Ma, "Asian (Classical) Pentecostalism," *Dharma Deepika* (July –December, 2002), 19-33 (19).

orienting motif of pneumatology.<sup>88</sup> This is true in Ramabai's life and theology. She literally translated her love towards Jesus Christ, which further enhanced Ramabai to implement evangelism by the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Ramabai's Spirit theology was formed in an era in which there was an insignificant emphasis on the Holy Spirit. Converted from the strongholds of Hinduism and staying faithful throughout her traumatic life would never be possible, unless she had a genuine experience with Christ. A tract written by Ramabai in 1895 describes her personal experience with the Lord Jesus Christ.

When I turned my attention to searching for the truth in Hindu and Christian religions, and comparing them with each other, I found Christianity to be the better of two, and accepted it. I was duly baptised in the Church of England. I believed the Apostles' Creed and all the essential doctrines of Christianity. My mind was at rest. I trusted in God, believed on Christ and prayed in His name. I did not adhere to any special sect, nor do I now.<sup>89</sup>

Ramabai described her personal experience of salvation as more of an 'intellectual belief – a belief in which there was no life' until she had a personal experience with the Holy Spirit.<sup>90</sup> Anderson describes this experience in 1894 as "the blessing of the Holy Spirit".<sup>91</sup> Dyer records Ramabai's words: 'The Holy Spirit so got hold of me that I could not rest until I found salvation then and there'.<sup>92</sup> Such a personal and relative experience has then fashioned her passion for mission and evangelism in India.

Ramabai's place in Indian Christianity is of more significance than that of Pentecostalism in India. Leaving her Hindu faith, Ramabai became a catalyst like her contemporary Sadhu Sunder Singh. She is better known as a social reformer especially for the women in India. She aimed to rescue women from the stronghold Hindu regions like Banaras, Gaya, Allahabad, Madura e.t.c. While defending Hinduism as a world

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<sup>88</sup> Yong, *The Spirit*, 27.

<sup>89</sup> Dyer, *Pandita Ramabai*, 49-50.

<sup>90</sup> Dyer, *Pandita Ramabai*, 50.

<sup>91</sup> Anderson, *To the Ends*, 26.

<sup>92</sup> Dyer, *Pandita Ramabai*, 51.

religion, Swami Vivekananda denigrates Ramabai wherever he went.<sup>93</sup> She faced opposition from the top class religious leaders of her time. She wrote, ‘While we cannot know what will come in the next moment, yet, we have a great gift from our God, i.e. our own free will.’<sup>94</sup> It was difficult for Ramabai to confine to a particular denominational structure of which she called it “Babel of religions” in Christian countries.<sup>95</sup> However, I would argue that she is one who balanced her life both as a social reformer and spiritual giant. Her stories on how the Holy Spirit manifested in Mukti Mission which are recorded in the *Mukti Prayer Bell* are amazing.<sup>96</sup> The challenges of life from different sources shaped her worldview.

She explains that the assurance of her personal salvation by the regenerating presence of the Holy Spirit sustained her spiritual journey. Anderson says the letters from the early Pentecostal missionaries had one overriding concern in common: ‘to evangelize the nations of the world as quickly as possible before the return of Christ’.<sup>97</sup> Ramabai insisted that, after the baptism in the Holy Spirit all needs the baptism of love to accept one another in Christ. The British Pentecostal newspaper, *Confidence*, reported that Barratt found Ramabai’s statement on love so significant that he referred to in the editorial of April 1908. Her understanding of love is reflected in her service to the poor and the downtrodden. Ramabai’s emphasis on a “Baptism of love” influenced the Mukti Mission to display the love of Christ to thousands of people across the Northern part of India. She believed that baptism in the Spirit empowers for believers to witness, and the baptism of love empowers to serve other people. Being a missionary, Ramabai’s love for the people surely helped her to win souls and draw them to Christ. Undoubtedly, her

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<sup>93</sup> R.E. Frykenberg, “Construction of Hinduism at the Nexus of History and Religion,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 23/3 (1993): 523-550.

<sup>94</sup> A. B. Shah, ed., *The Letters and Correspondence of Pandita Ramabai* (Bombay: Maharashtra State Board of Literature and Culture, 1977).

<sup>95</sup> Pandita Ramabai, *A Testimony of Our Inexhaustible Treasure* (Kedgaon: Mukti Mission, 1907), 26-28.

<sup>96</sup> See *Mukti Prayer Bell*, Volume II/4, (October, 1905), Volume I/3 (March, 1904).

<sup>97</sup> Anderson, *Spreading Fires*, 212.

approach to establish a loving relationship with people was under the power of the Holy Spirit. Numerous miracles are attributed to Ramabai's ministry, which includes finding locations for water wells in times of severe drought. Ramabai's view of the Holy Spirit went beyond the so-called 'spiritual' boundaries and extended to the mission of serving the unreached and untouchables. The Holy Spirit transformed her thinking pattern to serving people especially women in India and indeed, Mukti Mission remains as a sign of Ramabai's commitment to Jesus Christ. Mukti takes good care of hundreds of girls and widows, including the blinds and disabled. Her legacy continues through the ministry of Mukti and it is a landmark in the history of Pentecostalism in India. What is seen in Ramabai is a simple faith of a curious convert from a complex religion. The strong faith and practice extracted from her spiritual Christian journey is truly indigenous and a motivating force for all Indian Christians to follow. Although Ramabai did not provide a systematic approach on the theme Holy Spirit, her conviction and teachings about the Holy Spirit paved a way for Indian Pentecostals to have a base to proclaim the gospel.

#### **3.4.4 The Formation of a Holy Spirit Theology**

The theology of the Holy Spirit is always associated with the preaching of the gospel and missionary work. Salvation in Jesus Christ is a vital part of the life of Pentecostal Christians. They therefore believe in sharing their faith, and for that purpose, they experience and are emboldened with, the power of the Holy Spirit. The revivals primarily emphasised their link to Pentecostals as a command to preach the gospel to all nations.<sup>98</sup> Pentecostals as a whole focus more on life and experience than rigid dogmatization. Rather than formulating a written theology for the movement, Pentecostals restored the miracle power of the New Testament as a sign and experience

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<sup>98</sup> Anderson, *Spreading Fires*, 212.

for unbelievers.<sup>99</sup> The Spirit by His presence empowers a believer in the work that God desires to do. Kärkkäinen comments that ‘while this empowerment often manifests itself in spiritual gifts such as speaking in tongues, prophecy or healings, it is still felt and sought by Pentecostals even when those manifestations are absent’.<sup>100</sup> Every revival resulted in experiences that changed the lives of people. V. P. Mamman Kasheesha identified that there are four characteristics common to every revival that occurred in Kerala: a deep conviction about sin, joy in the Holy Spirit, a burning desire to evangelise to people who are sinners and a powerful witnessing.<sup>101</sup> Pentecostal faith initially faced challenges in explaining the faith and theology. Pentecostals had to encounter groups like the Cessationists, who taught that miracles or extraordinary charismata ceased with the ministry of the apostolic age. Particularly in Kerala, church leaders had to explain the ministry of the Holy Spirit to Brethren groups, for example, as they believed that Holy Spirit baptism and speaking in tongues no longer existed. Although Berg preached on the need for Holy Spirit baptism at a Bretheren Convention in Kottarakkara, Kerala in 1909, the Bretheren movement considered it as a heresy.<sup>102</sup> Preachers in Pentecostal churches had to encounter the Brethren teaching against the work of the Holy Spirit in their sermons. They arranged meetings in villages and towns that they called ‘*Khandana Prasangangal*,’ in attempt to tackle the Bretheren teachings on Holy Spirit baptism.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> C. Peter Wagner, “Characteristics of Pentecostal Church Growth,” in *Azusa Street and Beyond*, ed. L. Grant McClung Jr. (South Plainfield, NJ: Bridge Publications, 1986), 129.

<sup>100</sup> Veli –Matti Kärkkäinen, “Pneumatologies in Systematic Theology,” in *Studying Global Pentecostalism: Theories +Methods*, ed. Allan Anderson, Michael Bergunder, Andre Droogers and Cornelis van der Laan, (London: University of California Press, 2010), 228.

<sup>101</sup> V. P. Philip, *Anayatha Agnijwala: Unarvinte Daivashasthravum Charithravum* [An Unquenched Flame: The History and Theology of Revival], (Thiruvalla, India: Media Mission, 2011), 249.

<sup>102</sup> Mathew, *Kerala Pentecosthu Charithram*, 47.

<sup>103</sup> See Saju Mathew, *Kerala Pentecosthu Charithram*. 121–122.

Although, during the early days of revival, a written systematic theology of the Holy Spirit was not a priority for the Pentecostals in India, every believer had a strong faith in experiencing the power of the Holy Spirit. From 1909, Pentecostal experiences of the Holy Spirit were witnessed in various places in Kerala and then later spread to other parts of the country. People experienced the power of the Spirit with the initial evidence of speaking in tongues, but they did not initially recognize this as the work of the Holy Spirit.<sup>104</sup> Many other believers also experienced the Holy Spirit through healing, exorcism, prophecy, and the discernment and interpretation of tongues. For them these experiences were understood as the confirmation of Scripture and many surrendered their life to Jesus Christ.<sup>105</sup>

#### **3.4.5 Bible Based Pneumatology**

A significant development of the Indian revival is the growing importance of God's word in the lives of people. Missionaries made the Bible available to the local people and encouraged them to read, meditate and preach.<sup>106</sup> They taught the Bible and emphasised its supreme authority in matters of faith, rituals and ethics, although people had the freedom to make decisions based on the Scripture. Western missionaries taught the Scripture according to their own interest and interpretation and thus Pentecostals followed a traditional doctrine of the Holy Spirit. However, a proper academic Pentecostal pneumatology does yet not exist. This is true in Indian Pentecostalism. Although there were attempts to describe Pentecostal theology in India but often it is compilation of ideas from Western scholarship. While talking about the need of Pentecostal theology, Kärkkäinen says that, 'one would assume that as Spirit movement was a century old, it would have had enough time to produce one'. He further states that

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<sup>104</sup>Thottumkal Pothen Abraham, "The India Pentecostal Church of God and its Contribution to Church Growth," (M.A. Thesis, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1988), 58.

<sup>105</sup> Abraham, "The India Pentecostal," 58.

<sup>106</sup> O. L. Snaitang, "The Indigenous Pentecostal Movement in Northeast India," *Dharma Deepika* (July – December, 2002): 7, 5-11.

‘as with theology in general, the few theological studies on some aspects of pneumatology written by Pentecostals represent the genre of biblical theology’.<sup>107</sup> However, Pentecostal pneumatologies are written by New Testament scholars, with most using favoured scriptures from the book of Luke and Acts, which commonly form the basis of Pentecostal spirituality and empowerment.<sup>108</sup> The early Pentecostals at Azusa Street experienced Spirit manifestations at their meetings, which they understood to be the work of the Holy Spirit and the fulfilment of revival which Scriptures promised were to come in the “last days”.<sup>109</sup> They believed, therefore, that these manifestations were a fulfilment of God’s word.

In India, although Christianity arrived in the first century in Kerala, those Christians did not have a copy of the Bible in their own language until the 19th century. The first copy of the Malayalam New Testament was published in 1829 and later the whole Bible was published in Malayalam in 1841, under the leadership of Benjamin Bailey, a CMS missionary, along with the help of eight Syrian Christian priests appointed by the Bible Society.<sup>110</sup> Without any doubt, we can affirm that the revivals in Kerala were a result of people learning the Bible from the missionaries. The work of the Christian missionaries in India is commendable because they made lasting contributions that brought about radical change. However, the complexity of the Pentecostal faith, practice and belief across the world corresponds with the difficulty of composing its pneumatology. In short, a commonly agreed Pentecostal pneumatology has not yet been fashioned.

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<sup>107</sup> Kärkkäinen, “Pneumatologies,” 230.

<sup>108</sup> Kärkkäinen, “Pneumatologies,” 230.

<sup>109</sup> Anderson, *Introduction*, 179.

<sup>110</sup> K. K. Kuruvila, *Keralathile Athmeeya Unarvu* [Spiritual Revival in Kerala], Thiruvalla: Malayalam Christian Literature Committee, 1942), 34. ‘Brief History of Malayalam Bible,’ [http://www.bsind.org/malayam\\_translation.html](http://www.bsind.org/malayam_translation.html) (28 August, 2015).

Considering the multi-religious and pluralistic context of India, the most significant person that attempted to translate the gospel to Hindu culture was Robert de Nobili (1577–1656). He took radical steps in his attempt to contextualise Christianity in Hindu terms. For Nobili, Christianity had not come to uproot a culture in its totality, but to build upon it; not to wholesale reject the cultural values, but to renew and accommodate them.<sup>111</sup> William Carey also worked towards expanding Christianity abroad and relating it to the indigenous forms rather than perpetuating denominationalism and imposing Western ecclesiastical patterns.<sup>112</sup> He translated the Bible into the Bengali language and his time was devoted to serving the Indian community in multiple ways. He became the initiator of many projects such as modern education, new agricultural methods, industries, the first steam engine, the first Indian newspaper, and social reformation.

The translation of the Malayalam Bible advanced the movement of the Holy Spirit. Most believers in Pentecostal churches came from the older traditional churches which did not have access to the Bible in their language. The translated Bible thus became accessible to all. The leadership of the Pentecostal churches, including the missionaries, encouraged people to read and study the Bible. In addition, since not all believers were literate, Bible study classes became common to help people understand the Scripture as supreme in all matters of life. Studying the important doctrines of the Bible helped people to realise the limitations of the ecclesiastical hierarchy of their former churches. Abraham states that these Bible classes and meetings enriched the biblical understanding.<sup>113</sup> The greatest advantage of the translation of the Bible into Malayalam has been that its message became accessible to all, rich and poor alike. Thousands have

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<sup>111</sup> Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* (Mary Noll: New York, Orbis Books, 1990), 99.

<sup>112</sup> Sanneh, *Translating the Message*, 101.

<sup>113</sup> Abraham, *Yeshukristhuvinte*, 31.

converted to Christianity after they were able to receive the Scripture in their own language. Although the translation of the Bible into local languages faced the ‘pressure to articulate Christian insights to the non-Christian religions,’ as Sanneh puts it, the power of the gospel makes its message understood by all cultures in the world.<sup>114</sup>

#### **3.4.6 A Pneumatology Rooted in Context.**

Considering the difficulty in formulating a common platform for Pentecostal Pneumatology, a pneumatology rooted in different particular contexts needs consideration. Africa and Asia are both multi-cultural, multi-linguistic and multi-religious. Pentecostal pneumatology can be characterised as the lively interaction of the Spirit between the foreign element and native contextual elements.<sup>115</sup> It means biblical theology trying to accommodate itself in a new context. Contextual pneumatology developed in a particular setting has always been influenced by other forces like globalisation, which also true with other forms of theology. Lukose further suggests that a contextual missiology cannot be purely local as the impact of globalisation is realised in every context.<sup>116</sup> A country like India, with its numerous cultures, languages and religions, cannot have a common ideology of the Spirit. Although the spirit is relevant in all services and worship, people understand and serve the spirits differently. As a person from another religion converts to Pentecostalism, there is a need for their existing understandings about the spirits to change, and for them to learn about the Holy Spirit. The demand for Christians to leave India and migrate to other Christian countries occurred from such a misconception that Christianity is a foreign religion. The tension between Christians and non-Christians in India began not with the arrival of Pentecostalism, but with traditional Christianity all over Asia. Ma says that, ‘Traditional

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<sup>114</sup> Sanneh, *Translating the Message*, 104.

<sup>115</sup> Wonsuk Ma, “Asian (Classical) Pentecostal Theology in Context,” in *Asian and Pentecostal: The Charismatic Face of Christianity in Asia*, ed. Allan Anderson and Edmund Tang (Oregon: WIPF&STOCK, 2011), 52.

<sup>116</sup> Lukose, *Contextual Missiology*, 162.

Christianity often perceived as a new and /or “imported” religion, and has not necessarily fared any better than the traditional religions.’<sup>117</sup> Pentecostalism based on a strong contextual Spirit theology has survived every allegation and destructive powers, because it has always been rooted in the local contexts. Local and native leadership promoted an indigenous form of Christianity in India, through which people experienced the power of salvation in the Spirit.

### **3.4.7 The Spirit Baptism and Subsequence**

Pentecostalism worldwide is known for its emphasis on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

There are particular spiritual experiences that are emphasised by the Pentecostals.

Baptism in the Holy Spirit, as it is commonly known, is one of these unique spiritual experiences which are practised by Pentecostals globally. Baptism in the Spirit or Spirit baptism was also one of the most debated issues among Pentecostals in the twentieth century. Anderson, for example, refers to Frank Bartleman, who was an eyewitness of the Azusa Street revival, as testifying that visible manifestations of the Holy Spirit controlled every meeting.<sup>118</sup> Every revival all over the world has witnessed the manifestation of the Holy Spirit with visible signs, which people call ‘baptism in the Spirit.’ However Cessationists argue that Spirit baptism is not necessary for believers since the Holy Spirit already led them to their salvation experience. And yet, Acts 10: 44-46 is often referred to as a further evidence that Spirit baptism is not limited to only the Day of Pentecost but it continues through the years and centuries.<sup>119</sup> Williams comments that since the essential meaning of baptism is immersion, for Pentecostals, baptism in the Spirit means to be immersed in the Holy Spirit. Pentecostals also use the term baptism in the Spirit as “infilling”. Williams writes that ‘Pentecostals generally

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<sup>117</sup> Ma, “Asian (Classical) Pentecostal,” 53.

<sup>118</sup> Anderson, *Introduction*, 179.

<sup>119</sup> J. R. Williams, “Baptism in the Holy Spirit,” in *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, ed. Stanley M. Burgees and Gary B. McGee (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998): 355.

acknowledge that all believers have the Spirit within them (Rom. 8:9 -11; 1Cor. 6:19); hence “filling” must refer to the full penetration of the indwelling Spirit’.<sup>120</sup>

The emphasis on Spirit baptism in Pentecostalism has been the subject of heavy criticisms, and even discounted as heresy and being inspired by Satan. A strong critic on this subject is James Dunn, an evangelical New Testament scholar. Anderson states that Dunn was the first among evangelical scholars to get into a serious debate with Pentecostals on this matter.<sup>121</sup> Max Turner, however, argues that when Dunn talks about the gifts at Pentecost, he overlook the fact that this Spirit brought power too. Although Dunn talked about the Spirit as a source of eschatological sonship and a new covenant life, the aspect of “this life” which empowered the disciples for mission is treated with no significance.<sup>122</sup>

Dunn’s main argument was that Spirit baptism is primarily an experience linked to conversion rather than an experience that the believer should subsequently seek at a later time.<sup>123</sup> Anderson explains that, “Classical Pentecostals are usually taught to believe in the two distinct doctrines of “Consequence” or “initial evidence” (that speaking in tongues is the consequence, or primary evidence of Spirit baptism), and “subsequence” (that Spirit baptism is the definite and subsequent experience of conversion).”<sup>124</sup> Richard Massey summarized the outcome of the European Pentecostal Theological Association conference at Mattersey Hall, in Yorkshire, England, as follows:

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<sup>120</sup> Williams, “Baptism in the Holy Spirit,” 355.

<sup>121</sup> Anderson, *Introduction*, 184.

<sup>122</sup> Turner, *Power From On High*, 38.

<sup>123</sup> Anderson, *Introduction*, 184. See Max Turner, *Power From On High* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996). He explains different positions of the Catholic and evangelical theologians like N. Adler, F. F. Bruce, F. D. Brunner J. D Davies, C. B. Kaiser and J.R.W. Stott. They all maintain that receiving the Spirit means to receive the Person of the Spirit. Common to both positions is the assertion that men and women had received a variety of gifts of the Spirit before Pentecost, but at Pentecost Christians began to experience the Giver of these gifts. Turner points to the dangers in maintaining such a position although it looks attractive.

<sup>124</sup> Anderson, *Introduction*, 183.

1. Classical Pentecostals hold to either a second stage experience (Assemblies of God and most “Oneness” groups) or a third stage experience (Holiness Pentecostals).
2. Neo-Pentecostals and early Charismatics usually promote a second stage experience.
3. Charismatic today has various viewpoints. Some hold to Spirit baptism as an initiation / conversion continuum, but definite and accompanied by some evidence. Others speak of it as a release or renewal (not so distinctive). These views are also found among Catholic Charismatics, and especially among the ‘Third Wave’ movement associated with John Wimber.<sup>125</sup>

Pentecostals in India believe in the baptism in the Holy Spirit as a subsequent experience of conversion and this is stated in the statement of faith of the classical and indigenous Pentecostal churches in India.<sup>126</sup> However, serious reflection on issues like baptism in the Spirit has not yet materialized in Indian Pentecostalism. Although there are several scholars working in various fields of theology in India, a common platform to bring them together is needed. The Pentecostal scholars in India mostly work within their denominational settings and are not so willing to accommodate others or collaborate with others.

It is a fact that speaking in tongues do not always follow the baptism in the Spirit. The statements of faith do affirm that the Pentecostal churches believe the subsequent experience of the Holy Spirit, but there are plenty of Pentecostals who have not experienced it. The important matter for Pentecostals is not the chronology of experience, but a logical sequence: namely that even if salvation and baptism in the Spirit are at the same moment, salvation (conversion, regeneration) precedes Spirit baptism.<sup>127</sup> The Pentecostals in India maintain a position that salvation refers to the

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<sup>125</sup> Richard Massey, “Response,” in *Pentecostal After a Century: Global Perspectives on a Movement in Transition*, ed. Allan H. Anderson and Walter J. Hollenweger (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 174.

<sup>126</sup> All Pentecostal churches in India have a common format for the statement of faith. It is mostly in unison with the American Classical Pentecostal churches like Assemblies of God and Church of God, Cleveland Tennessee. AG- <http://www.agmdc.org/index.php>; IPC- [http://www.ipckerala.org./statement\\_of\\_faith.php](http://www.ipckerala.org./statement_of_faith.php); (18 January, 2016).

<sup>127</sup> Williams, “Baptism in the Holy Spirit,” 357.

work of the Spirit in the life of a sinner, whereas baptism in the Spirit is for a saint. In the early days of revival in Kerala, Pentecostals used to conduct special tarrying meetings mostly in houses with fasting and prayer, waiting for the Holy Spirit baptism. The meetings would go on for several days, which would symbolise the waiting of the disciples in the Upper Room in the Book of Acts. They were taught to maintain holiness in life in order to receive the Spirit baptism.

### **3.4.8 Speaking in Tongues**

For many classical Pentecostals the immediate evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit is speaking in tongues. Pentecostals believe this initial evidence of baptism in the Spirit and the rest of the gifts are thought to follow after.<sup>128</sup> Anderson comments that the first Pentecostals spoke in tongues and believe that Spirit baptism is normally accompanied by speaking in tongues.<sup>129</sup> The use of the gift of tongues is, perhaps, the clearest depiction of the centrality of experience to Pentecostal theology.<sup>130</sup> Several passages in the Book of Acts narrate the story of believers in the first century who spoke in tongues unknown to them. Williams identifies that, based on five biblical passages (Acts 2:4; 9:17; 10:45-46; 19:6; 1Corinthians14:18) the Pentecostals affirm that they have adequate scriptural support for their view on glossolalia.<sup>131</sup>

A booklet published by Fred Francis Bosworth (1877- 1958) says that it is unscriptural to teach that the miraculous speaking in tongues on the Day of Pentecost was not the

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<sup>128</sup> Williams, "Baptism in the Holy Spirit," 358.

<sup>129</sup> Anderson, *Introduction*, 180. In this book, Anderson explains several instances of speaking in tongues referring to the early writings like *Apostolic faith*.

<sup>130</sup> Neil Hudson, "Strange Words and Their Impact on Early Pentecostals: A Historical Perspective," in *Speaking in Tongues: Multi-Disciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Mark J. Cartledge (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2006), 53.

<sup>131</sup> Williams, "Baptism in the Holy Spirit," 359.

gift of tongues God set in the church and which is also mentioned in Paul's writings.<sup>132</sup> The ongoing debate on glossolalia has raised theological discussion. Henry Lederle for example, analyses the recent scholarship on the issue of Spirit baptism and glossolalia in his book *Theology with Spirit*. He looks at the works of Frank Macchia, Howard Ervin, Steven Land, Koo Dong Yun, Larry Hart, Anthony Pama, Gordon Anderson, and Allan Anderson. Each of them contributed to the study of Pentecostal pneumatology, with special reference to Spirit baptism and glossolalia. However, in Allan Anderson's second edition of *Introduction to Pentecostalism* he emphatically affirms that in understanding '...Pentecostal and Charismatic pneumatology we must not lose sight of what has always been a central part of the work of the Spirit: to bring honour to the Lord Jesus Christ'.<sup>133</sup> As Paul advises the Corinthian Church in his first epistle 10:31, "...Whatever you do, do all for the glory of God". A believer is expected to glorify Jesus Christ in all circumstances. Although there are questions about the possibility of speaking in tongues after one's conversion, Pentecostals do not need to harmonise their position with other Churches and their doctrines. For Indian Pentecostals, the primary use of speaking in tongues had been identified as an indication that a believer had received the baptism in the Holy Spirit. It is derived from the first century believers' experience and became a default position for most of the Pentecostals.

### **3.4.9 Other Gifts of the Spirit**

The other spiritual gifts apart from speaking in tongues which are mentioned in the writings of the Apostle Paul have not been paid much attention by the academic world. This is probably because glossolalia has been the focus of much scholarship and remains an issue under debate. Many theological scholars, except New Testament theologians, do not pay much attention to the other gifts, although they are important in

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<sup>132</sup> Douglas Jacobsen (ed.), *A Reader in Pentecostal Theology: Voices from the First Generation* (Bloomington, IL: Indiana University Press, 2006), 139.

<sup>133</sup> Anderson, *Introduction*, 196.

Pentecostal gatherings. Within the Pauline list of nine gifts found in 1 Corinthians 12, speaking in tongues and healing are the most popular in Pentecostal churches. Other gifts such as the word of wisdom, word of knowledge, faith, miracles, prophecy, discerning spirits and the interpretation of tongues, are not as popular or commonly exercised among Pentecostals. Gunkel explains that Paul's conversion was through a pneumatic experience and he himself was pneumatic to an exceptionally high degree. He further argues that Paul personally received all the gifts of the Spirit and held them to be the most glorious and wondrous gifts of God.<sup>134</sup> Paul experienced the Holy Spirit as a living reality and saw the Spirit as an absolutely crucial part of a Christian life.<sup>135</sup> The church comprises of people of God sharing the same experiences in the Spirit who contribute to the concept of the 'body' in Pauline theology. Spiritual gifts were given to the church with the idea that believers would share their faith and experience to the community, and through which a spiritually healthy body would emerge. Romans 12:6-8 speaks of the way in which the manifestations of the Holy Spirit exemplify unity in diversity.<sup>136</sup> The wide variety of gifts is based on God's grace, shown to all by the same Lord. He is a God who bestows gifts to all His people and it comes from God because of His free favour to them.<sup>137</sup>

Pentecostals emphasise particular gifts in their churches and can undermine the importance of other gifts. Since the Holy Spirit mediates gifts, any gift that is given by the Spirit of God is to be used for His service and the service of humanity. Gifts that have been exercised cannot be attributed to the noble nature of human beings. They are an evidence of the graciousness of God through the Holy Spirit, who was supplied to

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<sup>134</sup> Gunkel, *The Influence*, 77

<sup>135</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the letters of Apostle Paul* (Cumbria: Paternoster, 1994), 1.

<sup>136</sup> Samuel, "The Practice," 82.

<sup>137</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1998), 655.

His church with the means to strengthen His community, the Church. Furthermore, the manifestation of the Holy Spirit is beyond any human capacity to limit it. In addition, it was intended that the spiritual gifts will be used for the benefit of the world outside His church and never for that of individual ones.

#### **3.4.10 Indian Christology and the Holy Spirit**

Spirit Christologies are a recent development in the Christological narratives in India.

Indian theologians of inculturation, liberation and dialogue see that the Spirit is involved with other Indian communities not just for conviction of sin and conversion to Christianity.<sup>138</sup> Indian theologians like Chenchaih and Chekkariah consciously highlighted the work of the Spirit in Indian religious and social settings. The Spirit Christologies in India were always fashioned in a way that promoted Christ as the liberator in light of the Nazareth Manifesto: the Spirit comes to the life of Jesus and enables Him to liberate people. Liberation theologians interpreted the Nazareth Manifesto according to their convenience. Samuel Ryan, a Catholic theologian presents a Spirit-Christology to promote Jesus Christ as a liberator.<sup>139</sup> Cartledge refers to Eldin Villafañe in his Presidential address to the Society of Pentecostal Studies in 1996, as challenging the Society to consider liberation not in terms of liberal enlightenment ideals but in terms of the biblical promise that is linked to the gospel.<sup>140</sup> Yong argues that the Nazareth Manifesto should have understood according to the Messianic promises of the Hebrew prophets, including that of Isaiah.<sup>141</sup> Yong further writes that,

The early messianic community understood that Jesus' proclamation of good news to the poor was intended to accomplish the renewal of Israel and the establishment of the kingdom (the year of the Lord's favour). Because the power of the same Spirit

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<sup>138</sup> Kirsteen Kim, "The Holy Spirit in the World: A global Conversation," *Anvil* 25/3 (2008), 177-193 (178).

<sup>139</sup> Abraham, "Ordinary Christology," 178.

<sup>140</sup> Mark J. Cartledge, "Practical Theology," in *Studying Global Pentecostalism: Theories + Methods*, ed. Allan Anderson, Michael Bergunder and others (London: University of California Press, 2010), 232.

<sup>141</sup> Amos Yong, *Who is the Holy Spirit? : A Walk with the Apostles* (Massachusetts: Paraclete Press, 2011), 34.

who anointed Jesus had been poured out on them, the disciples realized that their lives would be an extension of the ministry of Jesus.<sup>142</sup>

Even though the Indian Christology emphasised the work of the Spirit in the life and activity of Jesus, it failed to understand the power of the Spirit in the ministry of Jesus.

Abraham comments that, even though Spirit Christologies emphasise the work of the Spirit, they have failed to apply the work of the Spirit in the lives of suffering people.<sup>143</sup>

#### **3.4.10.1 The Spirit Guided Indian Christology**

Indian Christologies failed to minister to people as Christ ministered in the Spirit. Many

Indian Christologies did not value the New Testament testimonies about Jesus; rather they focused on non-canonical sources to support their arguments.<sup>144</sup> Pentecostalism in

India, as a Spirit movement, played a major role when the so called Spirit Christologies of liberation failed to live up to people's expectations. Pentecostalism in India put

Christ at the centre of their theology. Gospel stories record that the Spirit's primary mode of accomplishing God's work was in ways contrary to the religious and social expectations.<sup>145</sup> Yong comments that,

The poor are privileged, the rich demoted, the ruling classes are challenged to lead by servant hood, while the oppressed – women, ethnic minorities, and even people with disabilities – are central to the gospel narrative; and the religious leaders are somehow marginalized, while tax collectors, sinners and Samaritans are included in the Kingdom just as they are.<sup>146</sup>

Pentecostal practices like worship, and progressive spirituality with a dynamic theology, could accommodate local culture and language. The growth of Pentecostalism in India is the result of such expressive spirituality. The manifestation of the Holy Spirit in Pentecostal gatherings is a testimony of the powerful presence of God who transforms lives.

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<sup>142</sup> Yong, *Who is the Holy Spirit?*, 35.

<sup>143</sup> Abraham, "Ordinary Christology," 182.

<sup>144</sup> Abraham, "Ordinary Christology," 182. R. S. Sugirtharajah (ed.), "Prologue and Perspective," *Asian Faces of Jesus – Faith and Culture Series* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1993), ix.

<sup>145</sup> Yong, *Who is the Holy Spirit?*, 157.

<sup>146</sup> Yong, *Who is the Holy Spirit?*, 157.

### 3.4.10.2 Christo – centric, Pneumato - centric Theology

Fundamentally, Christ is not the antithesis of the Spirit in Pentecostal theology. The living Christ, who assures His presence to his people through the Holy Spirit is the starting point and the centre of Pentecostal theology. Studebaker observes that although a heightened charismatic experience is part of Pentecostal pneumatology, the doctrine of the Spirit is in several ways, subordinated to evangelical theology, thereby generating a picture as the Spirit as an agent of Christ.<sup>147</sup> Macchia explains that, ‘the Christ that occupies the center of Pentecostal theology is not an abstract or ideological principle, but the living Christ who still accomplishes the will of the Father through the power of the Spirit today’.<sup>148</sup> Although there is an ambiguity in the language and realm of the Holy Spirit, Pentecostal theology has the potential to define a clear Christological and biblical standard in its explanation of theology.<sup>149</sup> Pentecostal theology emphasises the immediate presence of the Holy Spirit giving power to witness Christ and empower believers to serve others.<sup>150</sup> Anderson states that the power of the Holy Spirit in Pentecostal thinking is directly connected to Jesus’ command to preach the gospel to all nations. The preaching of the gospel always followed attendant signs that demonstrated the presence of the Lord.<sup>151</sup>

It is crucial for Pentecostals to clarify a theology that is Christ centred, devoted to the diverse witness of Scripture, is Spirit guided, and is one that proclaims the Kingdom of God. Nevertheless, an overemphasis on salvation, as against other factors, is a common problem in Pentecostal theology. Pentecostal theology should be inclusive of the

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<sup>147</sup> Steven M. Studebaker, “Beyond Tongues: A Pentecostal Theology of Grace,” in *Defining Issues in Pentecostalism: Classical and Emergent*, ed. Steven M. Studebaker, (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2008), 46-47.

<sup>148</sup> Macchia, “Theology, Pentecostal,” 1124.

<sup>149</sup> Macchia, “Theology, Pentecostal,” 1124.

<sup>150</sup> Joji Mathew, “Pentecostal Theology: A Discussion of its Progressive and Dynamic Nature,” *ETJ* 2/2 (May, 2013), 41-52 (45).

<sup>151</sup> Anderson, *Spreading Fires*, 212.

Fatherhood of God, election, and creation, Trinity, Scripture and Church. Macchia argues that if any of these theological *loci* are excluded, Pentecostal theology would inevitably suffer from a lack of development.<sup>152</sup> In general, Pneumatology and Christology are interconnected in Pentecostal theology.

### **3.5 A Working Model of the Spirit Theology of Experience**

Personal experience is one of the hallmarks of the global Pentecostal movement.<sup>153</sup>

Very often Pentecostals have been accused as people with less understanding of theology, or Pentecostalism has been criticised as being about experience as opposed to theology. Pentecostalism is treated as an emotional rather than cognitive faith.<sup>154</sup>

However, in the first century, the apostles placed a great deal of value in their personal experience with Christ and the Spirit. Most of Paul's writing emphasises his personal experience as being an essential component of his spirituality. In Pauline theology, the Holy Spirit is the primary agent of God's revelation both continual and experiential.<sup>155</sup>

Indeed, since its inception, Pentecostalism has remained a movement of "high-voltage," religious experience.<sup>156</sup> In fact, such religious experiences were part of what made Pentecostalism become a leading Christian movement in the twentieth century. Even the critics of Pentecostalism would agree that the movement survived because of genuine experiences of the Holy Spirit as against the experiences in traditional churches. Many of the early Pentecostal leaders, after experiencing the power of the Holy Spirit, were then suspicious of traditional theology.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Macchia, "Theology, Pentecostal," 1124.

<sup>153</sup> Cynthia Long Westfall, "Pauls Experience and a Theology of the Spirit," in *Defining Issues in Pentecostalism: Classical and Emergent*, ed. Steven M. Studebaker (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2008), 123.

<sup>154</sup> Douglas Jacobsen, *Thinking in the Spirit: Theologies of the Early Pentecostal Movement* (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2003), 2.

<sup>155</sup> Westfall, "Pauls Experience," 127.

<sup>156</sup> Jacobsen, *Thinking in the Spirit*, 2.

<sup>157</sup> Jacobsen, *Thinking in the Spirit*, 2.

As Scripture explains, the first generation of Pentecostals experienced Spirit baptism and related manifestations of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, these genuine experiences cannot be questioned. However, the generations that followed the first generation of Pentecostals may not experience it as their ancestors did. Simon Chan states that, Pentecostal experiences make good sense only as long as the majority of the people in the community have a healthy experience of the same.<sup>158</sup> Since most of the early Pentecostals experienced both the power and manifestation of the Holy Spirit, translating such experiences in a way which aligned with the Scriptures was not a problem for the early Pentecostals. For Pentecostals, experiences and theology have been wedded together, as the relationship has always reciprocal. However, it became almost impossible to communicate the same experiences to later Pentecostal generations who have equally a narrow experience of the Holy Spirit.<sup>159</sup>

Amos Yong in his book *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh* identifies three forms of Pentecostal theology from early period to the late modern world. First, theology is doxology, which means, the Pentecostal theology as reflection on the prayers, praise and worship. Second, theology as theodicy, means the Pentecostal theology as the reflection on the fallen human nature and the divine response of the Holy Spirit outpouring and third, theology is second-order reflection of lived experience, which as a reflection on the triumph over sin, sickness and Satan.<sup>160</sup> In traditional theology, Pentecostal theology is considered to be a reflection on lived experience; but in reality, it is a reflection on the beginning of the salvation experience through the Holy Spirit.

Whilst the concern of Pentecostal theology can then be seen as focused towards

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<sup>158</sup> Simon Chan, *Pentecostal Theology and the Christian Spiritual Tradition* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 10.

<sup>159</sup> Chan, *Pentecostal Theology*, 10.

<sup>160</sup> Amos Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh: Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology* (Grand Rapids: Michigan: Baker Academic, 2005), 31.

experience, for Yong it's actually based on more than just experience, because the salvation in Jesus Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit is at the core of its theology.

### **3.6 Indian Pentecostal Pneumatology of Praxis**

Praxis pneumatology is discussed from the viewpoint of experience. Latin American theology has prioritised the place of praxis in theology while also assessing liberation theology. Since its inception, liberation theology has been a powerful voice for the liberation of the oppressed.<sup>161</sup> Although liberation theology has the colour of a political theology, it asserts the church's solidarity with the oppressed and challenges the structures that perpetuate the oppression of the poor.<sup>162</sup> In the context of India, liberation theology is called Dalit theology. Indeed, Pentecostalism in India has persisted in the context of widespread unemployment, power struggles and abject poverty.<sup>163</sup> A good number of people who have responded to the Pentecostal messages have been Dalits. Although members of the Syrian Christian community in India believed in the Pentecostal message, leaving their traditional church alliances was not always easy for these followers in contrast to the Dalits, who, in general, have found it easier to become adherents to their new faith. However, Dalit Pentecostalism in South India has led to segregation and thereby the distinctive identification of the Dalit community.<sup>164</sup> Furthermore, Thomas comments that there were attempts from the Syrian Christian missionaries to sideline the Dalits when they attempted to use Pentecostalism as a means to be emancipated from oppression and discrimination.<sup>165</sup> Thomas viewed early Pentecostalism in America as a social movement for equality and self-expression among the downtrodden of the society. Indian Pentecostalism did

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<sup>161</sup> Richard Gillingham, "Praxis and Content of Theology in Gustavo Gutiérrez's Theological Methodology: A Comparative Critique," *Quodlibet Journal* 7/2 (April–June, 2005) <http://www.quodlibet.net/articles/gillingham-gutierrez.shtml> (14 September, 2015).

<sup>162</sup> Gillingham, "Praxis and Content,"

<sup>163</sup> Yong, *The Spirit*, 54.

<sup>164</sup> Yong, *The Spirit*, 55.

<sup>165</sup> Thomas, *Dalit Pentecostalism*, 384.

change the society in a number of ways. Experiencing the Holy Spirit often meant a change to all aspects of a new believers' life. In Kerala, as the Pentecostal message was spread across the country, and particularly to the labourers in the rubber estates and tea plantations, both Syrian Christian and Hindu converts received baptism in the Holy Spirit.<sup>166</sup>

Yong identifies that Pentecostalism in general brought some involvements among many people groups as well as shared cooperation and table fellowship.<sup>167</sup> The local leaders and preachers exhibit 'divinely sanctioned and humanly acknowledged authority' in their ministries.<sup>168</sup> The Pentecostal baptism in the Holy Spirit empowered the poor and needy against all odds.<sup>169</sup> In the early years of Pentecostalism in Kerala, irrespective of colour and caste, a strong sense of ownership and belonging was displayed among the believers. Early leaders and missionaries worked with both rich and poor alike. In later years, the atmosphere has changed and churches are now often divided in respect of caste and colour.

### **3.6.1 Worship, Songs and Music**

Pentecostal congregations are generally identified as incorporating vibrant worship. Their worship involves body, spirit and mind. In contrast, traditional churches have written liturgy in which their theology is expressed, their understanding of God and their commitment to the church.<sup>170</sup> Pentecostal churches, however, do not believe in written liturgy, but instead focus on spontaneous Spirit activity in their meetings.

According to Cox, Pentecostal theology is best presented in song, prayer, sermon and testimony rather than in the format of sophisticated and lengthy treatises laced with

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<sup>166</sup> George Oommen, "The Story of the Beginning of Pentecostalism in Kerala," *Indian Church History Review* 55.

<sup>167</sup> Yong, *The Spirit*, 57.

<sup>168</sup> Yong, *The Spirit*, 56.

<sup>169</sup> Yong, *The Spirit*, 58.

<sup>170</sup> E. Alavarado, "Worship in the Spirit: Pentecostal Perspectives on Liturgical Theology and Praxis," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 21(2012), 135-151, (135).

philosophical concern.<sup>171</sup> Believers, who previously attended traditional churches, reconnected with revival spirituality in Pentecostalism, helping them to realise the inefficiency associated with the written liturgy of the older churches and creating an aversion to the ecclesiastical structure.<sup>172</sup> The common people felt liberty and joy in the new pattern of worship. A senior IPC believer comments, ‘in early days, we long to go for services like cottage meetings and Sunday worship and it was not stipulated within a time limit, sometimes the worship would go for hours together’.<sup>173</sup> Pentecostal believers are oriented to focus on God through faith and life in the Spirit through worship. In fact the vibrant worship and other spiritual activities attracted numerous traditional Christians to join the Pentecostal movement in Kerala.

The believers in Kerala and all over India come together for worship on Sunday. Even though the churches may have other services such as cottage meetings, women’s fellowship and fasting and prayer sessions on different days of the week, the Sunday gathering is known as *aradhana* (worship) and it has a pivotal role in Indian Pentecostalism. In Kerala, early believers wrote songs based on their Christian experiences, which are still sung during these services. They differ from the kind of songs other Christians use in their services. Each song praises a God who is close to the believer and the singing is believed to generate a relationship between God and His devotee. These songs assure the hope of eternity and are thus referred to as the songs of hope.<sup>174</sup> Contemporary songs have fundamental changes in their theology and content. The paradigm shift in the composition of the songs is clear while we compare modern day songs with the old.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> Baby, “Prosperity Gospel,” 61.

<sup>172</sup> Samuelkutty, *The Place and Contribution*, 55.

<sup>173</sup> Interview, Mathai Samuel, a senior believer of IPC, (12 January, 2015).

<sup>174</sup> Louiskutty, *Pentecosthu*, 132.

<sup>175</sup> Baby, “Prosperity Gospel”, 61.

Most of the worship songs composed in Malayalam today are for business purposes rather than for the spiritual edification of the believers.<sup>176</sup> People compose plenty of songs to produce CD's and DVD's which is sold in Christian gatherings. Such songs have poor content compare to the songs composed by the early Pentecostals in Kerala. During my theological studies in Vishakhapattanam, India I met Annamma Mamman, a Pentecostal preacher and composer who was in her 80s, who began to serve the Lord in a very young age. She composed a number of popular songs in Malayalam, which can still be heard in Christian worship services. Annamma Mamman said that the Holy Spirit gave both the lyrics and the tune to the writers of these *aradhana* songs. Most of these songs were composed from these writer's personal experiences and struggles, thus giving all the praises and honour to God alone. According to Cox, music is not just an incidental part of worship but provides its substance.<sup>177</sup> Thus, the Holy Spirit rejuvenates the worshipper to worship God meaningfully. Apart from the songs, the psalms are also used in worship services in Kerala. The Pastor or an elder reads the Psalm and exhorts the community from the same. Sharing the personal experience of each believer in the form of testimonies, exhortations and messages which reflect and reform the relationship between God and the people are regular components in Pentecostal worship services.<sup>178</sup> Pentecostals have had their own modes and methods of the inculturation of Christian worship, different to the Syrian Orthodox, Roman Catholic and mainline Pentecostal churches.<sup>179</sup> In India, Pentecostal styles of worship used both Indian and Western musical traditions combined in the form of light music.

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<sup>176</sup> Interview with Tomson Sam, Gospel Singer, Eranakulam, 18 January, 2015.

<sup>177</sup> Harvey Cox, *Fire From Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Cassell, 1996), 148.

<sup>178</sup> Louiskutty, *Pentecosthu*, 133.

<sup>179</sup> M. Thomas Thangaraj, "Religious Pluralism, Dialogue and Asian Christian Responses," in *Christian Theology in Asia* ed. Sebastian C. H. Kim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 174.

Thangaraj says that, ‘Pentecostals are the first in India to use such forms in their worship services’.<sup>180</sup>

### **3.6.2 Prayer and Healing**

As already acknowledged Pentecostals do not believe in or follow a written liturgy. For them, the Holy Spirit motivates individuals to pray spontaneously according to the need. The first century apostles believed in prayer and many sick were healed when they prayed. Anderson comments that the Pentecostal missionaries consider signs and wonders as an indispensable part of evangelism.<sup>181</sup> Nevertheless, referring to Isaiah 55: 3-4, Pentecostals believe that Jesus Christ atoned for all human sickness on the cross. Kay observes that Pentecostals are quick in arguing that Christ atoned for sin and sickness.<sup>182</sup>

Pentecostals all over the world believe in prayer for the sick. In the early years of Pentecostalism in Kerala, it was a common practice to pray for the healing of the sick believers. The pastor and the believers would come together and pray for the person until they witnessed a complete healing. There are a number of examples of such healings in Kerala Pentecostalism. Cook records one such incident in his autobiography. On a Friday, the 7<sup>th</sup> of September, 1929, a sister in a place called Mannoor near Eranakulam was bitten by a cobra. The snake also squirted poison into her eyes. She managed to reach home and became unconscious. Some believers under the leadership of P.T. Varghese began to pray. Many among the villagers thought it was unreasonable to think about praying for a snake-bitten lady rather than taking her for medication. The entire village gathered around the home of Ittiyavira, whose wife was on the verge of death. Although the believers had given up the hope and were waiting

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<sup>180</sup> Thangaraj, “Religious Pluralism,” 274.

<sup>181</sup> Anderson, *Spreading Fires*, 215.

<sup>182</sup> Kay, *Pentecostalism*, 237.

for her to die, on the third night she was miraculously healed as Varghese prayed earnestly for her.<sup>183</sup>

The Holy Spirit also enables people to foretell events as an answer to their prayers.<sup>184</sup>

Prophets play an important role in Kerala Pentecostalism. They are invited to visit the churches and homes to pray and foretell messages from God. Prophets operate their gifts in churches and homes during special meetings, which mostly occur during fasting prayers. Noted prophets in the early days of Kerala Pentecostalism include Variyapuram Yohannachan, Manganam Joseph are among the noted prophets in Kerala Pentecostalism. In contemporary Pentecostalism in Kerala, the ministry and life of the prophets are not as exemplary as the early prophets. Interestingly, for some reason prophetic ministry is not as popular in the north Indian Pentecostal churches as it is in south. There remains scope for a detailed study of the role of prophets and their gifts in Indian Pentecostalism.

### **3.6.3 Evangelism**

The religious revivals played vital role in the missionary movement as they propagated the gospel message to the needy. Anderson and Bergunder agree on the fact that the Pentecostal revivals contributed to the network of evangelical missions.<sup>185</sup> Further, Anderson says, ‘Azusa Street played a prominent role, perhaps even (Robeck maintains) *the* most prominent role in this regard’.<sup>186</sup> Many of the early missionary stories portray missionaries who set out on their missions after they received the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Early Pentecostal missionaries ventured abroad with limited financial resources, little preparation and almost no knowledge of the language and

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<sup>183</sup> Saju, *Pentecosthu Charithram*, 131–133. See the auto biography of Robert F. Cook 219-232.

<sup>184</sup> Jose Varickasseril, “The Presence of the Holy Spirit in the Nascent Church: Reflection on the Acts of the Apostles,” *Mission Today* XVI (2014): 346, 337-349.

<sup>185</sup> Anderson, “Varieties, Taxonomies and Definitions,” 23.

<sup>186</sup> Anderson, “Varieties, Taxonomies and Definitions,” 23.

culture of the people they were attempting to evangelize.<sup>187</sup> A.G. Gar (1878-1944) and his wife Lillian Gar (1878-1916) were the first from the Azusa Street revival to come to India in 1906.<sup>188</sup> The Acts of the Apostles maintains that the primary role of the Holy Spirit is to evangelize to people irrespective of any cultural distinctions. The early Pentecostal missionaries prioritised evangelism and church planting. Mission strategies of these early missionaries resulted in the planting several Pentecostal churches with the help of local leadership in Kerala. The evangelistic work of the pioneer missionaries in India laid the foundation for AG and the Church of God in the south.<sup>189</sup>

Early leaders of Pentecostalism in Kerala include native and foreign missionaries. Robert Cook and George Berg are among the noted foreign missionaries, while K. E. Abraham, P.T. Chacko, Paruthumpara Oommechan, K. C. Cherian and P. J. Thomas are some of the native leaders. Both missionaries and national leaders share a role in contributing towards the emergence and the growth of Pentecostalism in India.

### **3.7 Pentecostal Spirit theology and Indigenous Pentecostal leadership**

The pneumatology of Kerala Pentecostalism has not developed in a vacuum. It is derived from reading God's word and from personal experience. However, the pneumatology of Pentecostalism has not been written down properly but has, instead, been disseminated through preaching. Among the Pentecostal leaders, Abraham is the founder of the largest indigenous Pentecostal church in India, which is called the IPC. His experiences of the Holy Spirit are described in his autobiography. He narrates that his friend C. Manasseh laid his hands and prayed for him, and he suddenly felt something like an electric shock. His body began to shake and Abraham was released to a different experience which he could not control himself. He was filled with joy and

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<sup>187</sup> John Mansford Prior SVD, "The Challenge of Pentecostals in Asia Part One: Pentecostal Movements in Asia," *Exchange* 36 (2007), 8, 6–40.

<sup>188</sup> Allan Anderson, "Early Pentecostalism in India (1907-20)," a paper presented at IPC KTS, (2007) 2.

<sup>189</sup> Hedlund, "Indigenous Pentecostalism in India," 175.

began to praise God. He could not control his tongue, but began to speak in other tongues. The same experience continued for a number of days during meetings that Abraham was attending.<sup>190</sup> He taught and preached that Holy Spirit baptism is always accompanied by speaking in other tongues. Abraham had meaningful conversations with A. C. Mathai, who had been filled with the Holy Spirit during the ministry of Berg.<sup>191</sup> Abraham left the Brethren group after his experience with the Holy Spirit baptism and started worshipping with like-minded people. In fact, such stories are commonly heard in the oral history of Kerala Pentecostalism. Abraham has written a book *The Holy Spirit Baptism*, probably the first of its kind in Kerala Pentecostalism.<sup>192</sup> In this book, Abraham explained topics like the Holy Spirit and Spirit baptism. He wrote about the need and importance of Holy Spirit baptism. Abraham thought that, Holy Spirit baptism is a direct experience and that glossolalia is the initial evidence of Spirit baptism. He also wrote a critical analysis of teachings against the baptism in the Spirit, and also wrote about criteria to receive the Spirit baptism, and have greater experiences of the Spirit baptism.<sup>193</sup> This became a popular reference book used by Bible teachers in Kerala for many decades. As Abraham was a schoolteacher he had access to books written by missionaries about the baptism of the Holy Spirit. He was an itinerant preacher and pastor who would speak at conventions and travelled to different countries. Through his Pentecostal experience in the Holy Spirit, he influenced people in Kerala and founded many churches in the region.<sup>194</sup> Abraham died on 9 December, 1974.

Pastor T.G. Oommen stands out as a significant figure among the pioneers of Pentecostalism in India. He was a preacher and Bible teacher who was known for his

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<sup>190</sup> Abraham, *Yeshukristhuvinte*, 67.

<sup>191</sup> Abraham, *Yeshukristhuvinte*, 64.

<sup>192</sup> T K Mahew, "Abraham K. E." <http://www.eden.co.uk/pdfs/0310224810.pdf> (24 September, 2015).

<sup>193</sup> Abraham, *Yeshukristhuvinte*, 70.

<sup>194</sup> Mathew, "Abraham K. E.,"

authenticity and deep knowledge. Oommen is considered to be the greatest theologian of early Pentecostalism. He authored eighteen books on the doctrines of the bible and other subjects. He believed that all the biblical stories are literal and it is the Holy Spirit that prepares the Church of God.<sup>195</sup> He relies on Scriptural evidences and quote biblical references in all his writings on doctrinal issues. In his book *The Ecclesia* he takes the reader through the New Testament and placed special importance to the book of Acts. These two stalwarts of Indian Pentecostalism, Abraham and Oommen, have shaped the faith of Pentecostalism in India, the practices and the doctrines of the Holy Spirit, and others have followed in their footsteps. These men played a significant role as they were the trailblazers of Indian Pentecostal pneumatology.

### **3.7 Reasons for the Survival of Pentecostal Pneumatology in India**

Looking at Pentecostalism in India over the last hundred years, it has survived both external and internal challenges. As Anderson says, the fundamental presupposition of Pentecostal theology and praxis is its central emphasis on the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>196</sup> There are several reasons for the growth and development of Pentecostalism in India and the survival of its theology, including pneumatology.

The powerful intervention of the Holy Spirit is significant and has probably been the most important factor in the growth and survival of Pentecostal theology. The operation of all the spiritual gifts listed by Paul in 1 Corinthians 12 is believed and practised in Pentecostal churches. Gifts like speaking in other tongues, and the interpretation of the languages spoken when speaking in tongues were common practices in early Pentecostalism. The faith of the early pioneer leaders, including the missionaries, to boldly preach the gospel in unfavourable situations is another factor. Each of these

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<sup>195</sup> T. G. Oommen, *The Ecclesia*(Pathanapuram, India: T.G. Oommen Publications, 1991), 16.

<sup>196</sup> Anderson, "Global Pentecostalism," 214.

leaders and missionaries had strong religious experiences and experienced deliverance from evil forces, which strengthened them to face any and every situation.

The salvation experience is not only for the spirit alone, but also for the body and soul.

The full gospel contains the power to equip a believer to face all of life's problems.

The Holy Spirit has been referred to and recognized as the source of supernatural

power. Thus, these early believers challenged all evil forces that stood against them as

individuals and their community. The People of other faiths knew that the Pentecostals

safeguard their testimony and their prayers are effective in difficult circumstances. The

untrained and inexperienced missionaries preached the gospel by the power of the Holy

Spirit and prepared people for the second coming of Jesus Christ. In fact, the

Pentecostals always were thoughtful about the imminent return of Jesus Christ.

### **Evaluation**

Pentecostals in India believe that the Holy Spirit is the real driving force in mission and

evangelism. An emphasis on the ministry of the Holy Spirit has advanced the

movement in Kerala and several other states of India. It is a movement that has survived

for over one hundred years, based on mostly oral theology. For Cox, 'the great strength

of the Pentecostal impulse is its power to combine, its aptitude for adopting the

language, the music, the cultural artefacts, the religious tropes, even the demigods and

wraiths of the settings in which it lives'.<sup>197</sup> Pentecostals all over the world share some

common ethos as they witness the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

In recent years, the growth experienced by Pentecostal churches in India, especially in

Kerala is diminishing. Some states of India have witnessed growth as many of the

people groups in India are responding to the gospel. Most of these people hear the

gospel for the first time and witness a healing or a miracle, which leads them to Christ.

Although there may be multiple reasons for the lack of growth in Kerala, the most

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<sup>197</sup> Cox, *Fire From Heaven*, 259.

prominent among these is a love for money and positions in the church. As Pentecostalism has grown in number and in the strength of its churches, several spiritual values have constantly been under attack. A movement that has the help and power of the Holy Spirit has not maintained this in its most crucial situations.

On contrast to the inactive participation of the early Pentecostal community, Hedlund says, ‘...emerging young theologians from Kerala have the prospect of indigenous theology in new directions’.<sup>198</sup> He further says, many Pentecostals are found in leadership roles in a number of Indian evangelical institutions and organizations.<sup>199</sup> The Pentecostal community in India was a church of the poor, but a church with Spiritual power! The transformation of communities, including the Dalits was a result of that power of the Holy Spirit. Today there have been drastic changes in the life of the church. The oral culture of India articulates an oral Pentecostal theology by the power of the Holy Spirit for witness and service. Indian Pentecostalism fits well with the statement of Hesselgrave ‘...to be widely accepted, a religious movement must be meaningful in its indigenous world views and values, and traditional ways’.<sup>200</sup> The Spirit based faith and practice of the early fathers of Indian Pentecostalism is the driving force for this movement to further focus on and articulate its theology.

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<sup>198</sup> Roger E. Hedlund, “Nationalism and the Indian Pentecostal Church of God,” *Indian Church History Review* XXXIX/ 2 (December, 2005) 91-106 (102).

<sup>199</sup> Hedlund, “Nationalism and the Indian,” 103.

<sup>200</sup> David J. Hesselgrave, “What Causes Religious Movements to Grow?” in *Dynamic Religious Movements* edited by David J. Hesselgrave (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), 304.

## CHAPTER 4

### NEOCHARISMATIC PNEUMATOLOGY

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter will explore the pneumatology practiced by believers in Neocharismatic churches in India. These churches promote a pneumatology which is different from that of classical and indigenous Pentecostal churches. The significance of a practised pneumatology has been the focus of studies of the Holy Spirit for many centuries. The Bible portrayal of Spirit manifestations is based on personal experiences of the early believers, which often revealed issues not accessible by academic knowledge. Most of these believers' experiences are a result of struggles in their life. A daily experience with the Lord Jesus Christ is essential for a lay believer to live a victorious life as the world around is tempting and challenging. Basic knowledge about God is widened through the daily spiritual experiences that each believer encounters. In the Neocharismatic movement, the mystical experience of the Holy Spirit, through signs and wonders, challenges traditional theology. This chapter is an attempt to trace the way in which the Spirit practices is understood among the Neocharismatic community in Kerala.

#### 4.2 Methods of Approach

In the discipline of theology empirical methods include both quantitative and qualitative research which is widely accepted and probably practical theology is the dominant one in the academy.<sup>1</sup> Empirical method comes under the subject of practical theology, which comments on the nature of the discipline as it is practiced globally. Practical theology helps evaluate the religious practices in contemporary ecclesial and religious

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<sup>1</sup> Mark J. Cartledge, "Practical Theology," in *Studying Global Pentecostalism: Theories + Methods*, ed. Allan Anderson, Michael Bergunder, Andre Droogers and Cornelis van der Laan, (London: University of California Press, 2010), 268.

communities. Theology is multi-faceted. The liberation branch of theology would consider the discipline as ‘providing a challenge to values embedded in existing unjust practices in order to transform them;’ but for the empirical strand of theology, it is confirming value based on contemporary practices, with recommendations for a renewal of practice.<sup>2</sup> These branches of theology are referred to as the theology of practice and renewal of practice respectively. Cartledge refers to Jeff Astley’s view that religious beliefs should not be called theology unless they are articulated and reflected upon, to an extent.<sup>3</sup> Astley further thinks that most believers make reflections on the basis of their personal experience, which help them to draw answers to their own theological questions. Based on such reflection this chapter looks at the Heavenly Feast Church as a case study to understand the Neocharismatic movement in Kerala. The survey was prepared to have a face to face interview to 100 Heavenly Feast believers in Kerala. The Researcher had specially chosen four HF churches to conduct the survey. They are located in Kottayam and Pathanamthitta revenue districts. The interview consists of church information and personal questions to the believers. Some typical questions are also in reference to the size of their church, the level of the leadership’s education, spiritual background and so on. The next section asked the various ways in which the church exercises the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

### **4.3 Major Struggles in this Study**

Heavenly Feast Church in Kerala is a Neocharismatic free church that is seen as a counterpart to Pentecostals. Hence, many Pentecostals were sceptic about the church. So it was difficult for me as a researcher with a Pentecostal background to contact the leadership of the church, to have interviews or telephonic conversations. Although they were contacted, their personal secretary did not give appointments to meet them. The

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<sup>2</sup> Cartledge, “Practical Theology,” 269.

<sup>3</sup> Mark J. Cartledge, *Testimony in the Spirit: Rescripting Ordinary Pentecostal Theology* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2010), 16.

interviews are taken from believers of the heavenly Feast church who attend worship services in four different locations. It was time consuming to gather information through interviews as most of the people are from middleclass background; they depend on public transport and are in a hurry to reach home immediately after the meetings. Many are not willing to acknowledge publically that they are the members of the Heavenly Feast Church, because they are members from other religions. People who come from poor and middle class families are reluctant to co-operate thinking that, it is unnecessary to share what their faith means to them. For the rich it is time consuming to stay back to provide information. For most of them spirituality is a very personal affair with God and hence they are reluctant to share their views with others.

#### **4.4. The Heavenly Feast Church and its Leadership**

Heavenly Feast church is one of the largest Neocharismatic churches in Kerala, which has recently experienced a remarkable growth in Kerala. The leader of this group is Mathew Kuruvila and is generally known as ‘Tangu Brother’.<sup>4</sup> Initially Kuruvila was involved in a small business, although this was not a success and he subsequently became bankrupt. Finding it difficult to survive financially, and with creditors chasing unpaid debt, Kuruvila suffered a crisis in faith.<sup>5</sup> In 1992, he was diagnosed with Steven Johnson syndrome and his health suffered greatly. According to Kuruvila, his eyesight was failing, he developed sores all over his body, and his doctors gave up hope of his survival. However, Kuruvila claims he then experienced a gradual healing in the ministry of Amos Singh, a preacher and supposed “miracle worker” from north India. Singh also prophesied over Kuruvila to be the anchor of a revival beginning in

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<sup>4</sup> Tangu is the pet name of Mathew Kuruvila. In Kerala anyone in the ministry is respected using a prefix like, Evangelist, Pastor, Brother etc. Pentecostal use the term Evangelist and Pastor. Therefore the Neocharismatics in Kerala use the prefix “Brother”.

<sup>5</sup> Telephone Interview, Mathew Kuruvila, (22 January 2015). Jeswine James Baby, “Prosperity Gospel and South Indian Pentecostalism: A critical Study of Prosperity Gospel in South India and the Shifting Paradigm of South Indian Pentecostals towards the Prosperity Gospel,” (M. A. Thesis, Doncaster: Mattersey Hall, 2013), 56–57.

Kottayam.<sup>6</sup> Kuruville, asserts that his personal experience with Jesus changed the destiny of his life. He became a member of an IPC church in Kottayam, Kerala, where he was baptised in 1998. The same year, he started a prayer group in his house, which had an emphasis on healing and other visible manifestations of the Holy Spirit.<sup>7</sup> His colleague, Thomas Abraham, generally known as ‘Thomaskutty Brother’ had his salvation experience in 1984.<sup>8</sup> Before this, Abraham had served as the pastor of a local church in Kerala which was within the Church of God movement. After a family member had received healing, Abraham joined with Kuruville. Little is known about the early phase of Abraham’s ministry with the Church of God. At present Kuruville and Abraham are the two lead ministers at Heavenly Feast. Although they recently developed their leadership, Kuruville remains the first in command in ministry and administration.<sup>9</sup> On their church website, the two ministers have been compared to Peter and John in relation to the healing and supernatural miracles that happen in their meetings.<sup>10</sup> Since both these leaders previously worshipped at Pentecostal churches, it is perhaps no surprise that they share many of the Pentecostal values. They believe in the Trinity, repentance, water baptism, the Holy Spirit, and the existence of spiritual gifts, and in the second coming of Jesus Christ. However, one way in which they differ in their practice in comparison to Pentecostalism in Kerala, is that they allow worshippers to use jewellery in their church. Pentecostal pioneers in Kerala taught their believers not to use the ornaments, as a symbol of separation from the world and their emphasis to holiness. For a Pentecostal in Kerala an alteration in this teaching is considered to be transgression against the teaching of the ancestors.

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<sup>6</sup> Telephone Interview, Mathew Kuruville, 12 January, 2015.

<sup>7</sup> No Author, *Hallelujah Pentecostal Year Book Trial Edition 2014* (Thiruvalla: Hallelujah, 2014), 270.

<sup>8</sup> No Author, “Thomas Abraham, (Thomaskutty Brother)” <http://www.theheavenlyfeast.org/dr-thomas-abraham-thomaskutty-brother/>, (16 May 2015)

<sup>9</sup> Interview, Joji, a believer of Heavenly Feast, (18 January, 2015).

<sup>10</sup> No Author, “History,” <http://www.theheavenlyfeast.org/history/>, (16 May, 2015).

#### **4.4.1 From One City to Many**

The Heavenly Feast had a membership of six thousand people in Kottayam alone.

Irrespective of religious or social barriers there were thousands attending the meetings, a crowd so large that the police have to control the traffic around the church on Sundays. People used to travel from different villages and towns to attend the worship service at Kottayam, which is a town in central Kerala. In 2008, Heavenly Feast faced strong opposition from various Hindu organizations, who were mainly concerned with the place of gathering, filing a court case against the church for using a public place for a private meeting.<sup>11</sup> The court agreed, forbidding the church from gathering in its existing location. Because of this setback, Heavenly Feast then spread its message and services to different towns in Kerala, renting buildings and indeed again using public grounds. To date, the church has planted churches in all fourteen districts of Kerala.<sup>12</sup> According to a church insider, the court case hindered the conversion of Hindu families in and around Kottayam.<sup>13</sup> The Heavenly Feast also faced opposition from Hindu groups on other occasions. For example, their prayer and healing centre offers special weekly sessions on Fridays and it was during one of these sessions that Sree Narayana Dharma Parpalana Sngam (SNDP), Vishwa Hindu Parishat (VHP) and Rashtreeya Swayam Sevak Sangh (RSS) led a protest march to the facility in Kottayam. An altercation with police personnel took place after they blocked the protesters from marching to the venue of the prayer session. The Heavenly Feast leadership remained controversial. According to a leading National News Paper in India, *The Hindu*,

The police on Saturday raided the office and residential premises of Abraham Kuruvilla, alias Brother Thanku, head of the Heavenly Feast Ministries, and seized documents, including those of land deals, and foreign currency among other things. Speaking to *The Hindu*, District Superintendent of Police Mathew Policarp said foreign currencies including dollar, to the tune of Rs.1 lakh, were

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<sup>11</sup> No Author, *Hallelujah Pentecostal Year Book*, 271.

<sup>12</sup> No Author, "Locations," <http://www.theheavenlyfeast.org/locations/>, (18 May, 2015).

<sup>13</sup> Interview, Thomas Chacko, Ernakulam, 12 January, 2015.

seized from his house. Travellers' cheques for more than Rs.20,000, documents relating to more than half-a-dozen land deals and two passports have also been confiscated. People travelling to Israel are given two passports on account of the difficulties they face while travelling in the Gulf countries, Mr. Policarp said. The police are still verifying the articles, Mr. Policarp said, but added that most of the issues that emerged from Saturday's raid will have to be looked into by agencies handling economic offences. The police first entered the facility of the organisation at Nagambadom. The police also raided the building that was under construction near his old house. The faith healer has been under public scrutiny for some time now. The Sangh Parivar organisations held public rallies on Thursday and Friday, seeking police action against him. The march on Friday witnessed violent scenes.<sup>14</sup>

However, the church leadership did not make any statement about the issue and considered it as evidence of the demonic tactics to destroy the church. Although Kuruvila was later acquitted, it raised doubts about the misuse of Christian ministry for personal benefits and Brother Tangu's acquisition of wealth and fame.

#### **4.4.2 The Church Life**

The Church and its believers are at the foundation of Christianity. In practice, the life of a believer is focused around the activities and ministry of a church. The function of a Neocharismatic church is based on the attendance of its believers. However, more recently, there has been a change in the demographics of Neocharismatic church attendance.<sup>15</sup> Thomas states that, 'earlier, when we start the church, we had people from all social status in the society. But today the trend has changed and we get more people to attend in the service from a non-Christian background and mostly from the middle and lower class people'.<sup>16</sup> He further noted that there are wealthy business people who come to the church, although they are small in number in comparison to the whole crowd.<sup>17</sup> At the same time it is understood that these business people are the main source of income; they all regularly pay large sums of money to the church. One of the business-men in the city, who previously attended the Heavenly Feast church, reports

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<sup>14</sup> Staff Reporter, "Raid at House, Office of Heavenly Feast Head." *The Hindu*, 25 May, 2008.

<sup>15</sup> D'Souza, "The Charismatic-Pentecostal Movement in Mumbai," 170.

<sup>16</sup> Telephone Interview, Thomas Abraham, Co-Pastor, Heavenly Feast, Kottayam, 11 January, 2015.

<sup>17</sup> Interview, Raju, Adoor, 12 January, 2015.

that he was contacted by the church leadership to contribute money every month.<sup>18</sup>

Interestingly, during this research no one I talked to came from the Pentecostal churches to join the Neocharismatic churches. On the contrary, Neocharismatics have joined the Pentecostal churches after their conversion to Christianity. For Neocharismatic believers, church is a place to go and worship God mostly on Sundays. Churches like Heavenly Feast advertise in the local newspaper about worship services and who will be preaching each Sunday. One interviewee explained that ‘I go to church only on Sundays, if Tangu Brother is preaching. I usually know that from the advertisement in newspaper on Saturdays. The church advertises this with his photograph’.<sup>19</sup>

#### **4.4.3 The Personal Experience of the Leader**

The leadership in the Neocharismatic churches is of great importance as most of the functions of the church revolve around the pastor. In line with the Faith Movement, Neocharismatic leaders are the self-proclaimed authority within their church or organization. The general practice of American leaders like Benny Hinn, Kenneth E. Hagin, Kenneth Copeland as well as the leaders of the selected churches in this study, believe themselves to be people who receive guidance and direct motivation from the Lord on a daily basis. Benny Hinn, Copeland and others who claim to be teachers, confess that their messages come directly from the Holy Spirit.<sup>20</sup> The Neocharismatic leaders in the churches I studied also believe that the Holy Spirit guides them and tells them what to do in everyday life.<sup>21</sup> For example, Kuruvila, on one of the Sunday worship services expressed that ‘this morning the Holy Spirit told me that Jesus will visit me. I waited for His visit, and He came and sat with me on my bed. Jesus put His hands around my shoulder and said, “Do not be afraid, I am there with you in all these

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<sup>18</sup> Interview, Simon, Kottayam, 24 January, 2015.

<sup>19</sup> Interview, Jessy, Kottayam, 24 January, 2015.

<sup>20</sup> Tom Smail, Andrew Walker and Nigel Wright, ‘Revelation Knowledge and Knowledge of Revelation: The Faith Movement and the Question of Heresy’ in *Charismatic Renewal* (London: SPCK, 1995), 134.

<sup>21</sup> This is something that all leaders of Neocharismatic churches agreed.

difficult circumstances”<sup>22</sup>. The personal experiences of the leader are always treated as important in the church services. They encourage their believers and associates to practice the same kind of experiences in faith. Most of these leaders in Kerala are heavily influenced by the television programmes of people like Benny Hinn, Joyce Meyer, and other American Neocharismatic preachers. When discussing Kuruvila’s claim of Jesus’ visit to him, Varghese states that, the notable feature of such divine communication is that it motivates, provides insights, information and discernment that are not accessible through the usual academic study.<sup>23</sup> It does not allow any human reason to qualify itself. Any such attempt is always interpreted as being anti-spiritual and coming from the devil. According to Robert Beckford, divine communication is a form of supra-human insight that enables believers to transcend everyday knowledge and tap into the divine.<sup>24</sup> There are other leaders in India who also follow the teaching style of the Faith Movement. Although there have been attempts to mark the leaders of Faith movements as heretics, thousands of people all over the world follow their teachings.

#### **4.2 The Place of Biblical Doctrines**

James Packer has referred to Charismatic renewal as a movement looking for a theology, which is indeed a true and valid observation. Neocharismatics in India have not subjected their renewal to serious theological scrutiny because the movement lacks scholarship in contrast to the West. As mentioned in Chapter Two, the leadership of the Neocharismatic movement decides what to teach and what the people should learn in the worship services. Theological arguments or discussions have no role in the Neocharismatic movements in India. The leaders and pastors in its churches have

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<sup>22</sup> This was during a sermon preached on a Sunday service in 2008, when their church faced opposition from another religious group in Kottayam, Kerala.

<sup>23</sup> Varghese, “Reversing the Scandal of the Cross,” 112.

<sup>24</sup> Robert Beckford, *Jesus Dub: Theology Music and Social Change* (London: Routledge, 2006), 133. See Varghese, “Reversing the Scandal of the Cross,” 112.

neither theological education nor do they have any experience in Christian ministry.<sup>25</sup> However, their teachings in Neocharismatic churches are taken as doctrine by their followers. People hear a lot about the Holy Spirit when they first come to church.<sup>26</sup> Biblical doctrines are not taught or emphasized in their meetings. Thomas, a senior believer in the Mizpah Pentecostal church explains, ‘the important biblical doctrines such as salvation, water baptism, Holy Spirit, Sanctification and the return of Jesus Christ are not significant in their preaching’.<sup>27</sup> The theology of a church is useful only when it is motivated to act upon the experience in the renewal of the Holy Spirit.<sup>28</sup> True understanding of the Bible and its theology are fashioned upon what matters most and what matters least in renewed church life. The pastors whom I talked to have had personal experiences with Jesus Christ, and thus they do not seek extra help or advice from anyone else in the ministry. Five pastors interviewed feel that Pentecostal churches have burdened people with unnecessary emphasis on the ‘law’.<sup>29</sup> All of them are engaged in an ongoing spiritual relationship with Jesus Christ and they teach their adherents to have the same. A senior pastor of a Neocharismatic church in Kerala confessed that ‘my spiritual experience was like that of the Apostle Paul, who heard the voice of the Lord clearly asking him, ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?’ Although I was not persecuting the church as Saul did, but I had the similar attitude towards believers’.<sup>30</sup> Correspondingly, these independent churches preach that people should enjoy a daily experience with Jesus Christ, rather than relying on the doctrine of the Neocharismatic churches.

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<sup>25</sup> No Author, “Durupadeshakarum, Kallapravachakarum Arangu Vazhunna Penthecosthu” [Pentecostalism Ruled by False Doctrines and False Prophets], *Believers Journal* 8/20 (25, October, 2015): 4, 1-12.

<sup>26</sup> Interview, Sam, believer in Heavenly Feast, 12 January, 2015.

<sup>27</sup> Interview, Thomas V. Mizpah Pentecostal Church, 8 January, 2015.

<sup>28</sup> Tom Smail, “The Cross and the Spirit: Towards a Theology of Renewal,” in *Charismatic Renewal* (London: SPCK, 1995), 51.

<sup>29</sup> Although the law refers to the OT laws in the Bible, the Neocharismatic use that term for the teaching of Pentecostal churches and their emphasis on separation and sanctification.

<sup>30</sup> Interview, Joe Thomas, 18 January, 2015.

#### 4.2.1 The Place of Christology

The Christology in the Neocharismatic movement stems from a genuine experience of people and it is the way that they comprehend Jesus Christ. Their Christology is neither systematised nor discussed under the title Christology. Rather, it could be described as their ordinary knowledge of daily experiences. In writing about an Indian Pentecostal Christology from a North Indian context, Abraham uses the term ‘Ordinary Christology.’<sup>31</sup> It is an apt term that could be used for the Neocharismatic understanding of Jesus Christ as they have an ordinary knowledge about Jesus Christ as healer, saviour, provider and the returning Lord.<sup>32</sup> Their Christology is shaped around the victory of Jesus Christ over suffering, defeat, weakness, rejection and death.<sup>33</sup> It is a popular Christology which is taught and preached in their churches. The Neocharismatics teach that heaven is a place for sinners who are covered by the blood of Jesus, and therefore, everyone who is covered by Jesus’ blood has access to heaven.<sup>34</sup> The Apostle Paul argues that it is the blood of Jesus that cleanses a sinner from their sin, and indeed the cleansing of sin an important aspect in apostolic preaching. Another leader from the Neocharismatic church preached that, it is not the death of Jesus that is significant to Christianity but the resurrection. In this way, the importance of the death of Jesus on the cross is destabilized. While countering this teaching of Kuruvila, the senior pastor of the Heavenly Feast, Mathew C. Varghese identifies that the theology of success and prosperity articulates that prosperity preachers undermine the importance of the centrality of the cross in the Bible.<sup>35</sup> Kuruvila preaches highly questionable and distorted theology including differentiating

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<sup>31</sup> Abraham, “Ordinary Christology,” 185.

<sup>32</sup> Participant observation, Heavenly Feast, 18 January, 2015.

<sup>33</sup> Participant Observation, Heavenly Feast Kottayam, 13 June 2012.

<sup>34</sup> Thomas Abraham, Sunday Sermon in Heavenly Feast, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PFDDtTfyIvY> (accessed 15 October, 2015)

<sup>35</sup> Mathew C. Varghese, “Reversing the Scandal of the Cross: Understanding Cross and Atonement in Prosperity Theology,” *Faith Theological Review* 12/1 (January, 2011): 92, 91-119.

between Jesus and Christ. Varghese quotes from Kuruvila's sermon, 'Jesus is God incarnate. He is fully human, but He is not the saviour. In His earthly life, Jesus did not save anyone. He was meant to become the saviour and anointed of God, the Christ, which He attained only after His resurrection from the dead'.<sup>36</sup>

There are other preachers of the Neocharismatic movements who also teach that Christ and Jesus are two different personalities. The controversy in Kuruvila's sermon is discussed in an article written by K. C. Chacko in Malayalam. The pastor preaches that Jesus was an earthly figure and a name, but that Christ is heavenly and knowing Christ is the greatest privilege of a believer.<sup>37</sup> The sermon was based on 1 Corinthians 5:17. It could be argued that the Neocharismatic preachers in India have the tendency to preach something new so as to be identified differently from other preachers. In fact, differentiating Christ and Jesus was known as Docetism, which was considered as heresy in the second century and, condemned by the Nicene Council in C.E.325. Since the primary medium of communication in the Neocharismatic churches is through the preaching in weekly meetings and crusades, no further discussion of the idea in the sermon takes place, and the lack of a developed Christology helps the preachers to present Christ in the way they want to.

For Neocharismatics, the notion of the Lordship of Jesus Christ is proclaimed in the daily activities of the believers. They are happy to confess and witness about the saviour to anyone they come across. One interviewee a man, who had previously led a worldly life, confessed that now Jesus Christ is everything in his life.<sup>38</sup> Jesus changed his entire life and today the man and his family serve Him. He further said that Jesus had brought peace to his family and now they sleep well at night. Many believers had

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<sup>36</sup> Varghese, "Reversing the Scandal of the Cross," 113.

<sup>37</sup> K. C. Chacko, "Mahanakan Raison Thomasinte Noothana Velippadu," [The New Revelation of great Raison Thomas] *Christhavachintha* 12/186 (3 December, 2014): 9, 1–12.

<sup>38</sup> Interview, Vinod, Kochi, 8 January, 2015.

similar experiences and saw the hand of the Lord leading them. The uniqueness of Jesus, which these believers affirm and proclaim in their daily encounters, is one that is derived from their own subsequent experiences.<sup>39</sup>

The highest form of recognition of the Lordship of Jesus Christ in the Neocharismatic movement is the confession that He is the only saviour. Believers' experiences are based around this concept, which is widespread in their worship services. Their churches often have large banners attached to the stage wall with inscriptions like, 'Jesus is the Lord of all,' 'Jesus is the Saviour,' 'Jesus is Lord' in both Malayalam and English.<sup>40</sup> Such banners might give the impression that Jesus is at the centre of their worship, but practically the Neocharismatics' emphasis is placed more on the Holy Spirit and Spirit activities.

### **4.3 The Holy Spirit in Neocharismatic Movements**

The Neocharismatic churches are a movement that follow the Holy Spirit. As their beliefs are closely related to Pentecostalism, they believe and affirm almost all experiences that Pentecostal and Charismatic Christians believe are central to their lives.<sup>41</sup> The faith in the Holy Spirit informs the world view of the Neocharismatics and should also structure their own theology. However, at present the Neocharismatic churches in Kerala have different views and perspectives on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in comparison to Indian Pentecostals. The Neocharismatic churches in India come under the rubric of Prosperity teaching churches which are part of the large umbrella Word of Faith movements.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Interview, Molamma, Vyttila, 2 February, 2015.

<sup>40</sup> Participant Observation, Heavenly Feast, Exodus, Life Fellowship, Covenant People.

<sup>41</sup> Millar and Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism*, 28.

<sup>42</sup> Varghese, "Reversing the Scandal of the Cross," 111. Anderson, *To The Ends*, 6.

#### **4.3.1 The Holy Spirit, Acts in Necessity**

One of the predominant understandings that occur among the Neocharismatics is that the Holy Spirit acts in need. During the research this was emphasised by many believers. For example, Shibu who is a business man felt the presence of the Holy Spirit while he was experiencing tough times in his business.<sup>43</sup> He said, ‘I heard about the ministry of the Heavenly Feast through a friend; that they pray for success in business. I went to one of the prayer groups with another friend while I felt God speaking to me. Later, many times I felt the overwhelming presence of the Holy Spirit when I was in need of God’.<sup>44</sup> According to Shibu, having experienced the presence of the Holy Spirit, he had decided to join the particular church where he received the knowledge about God’s presence through the Holy Spirit.

Another believer experienced the presence of the Holy Spirit, while he was driving a truck. For this man, it was an overwhelming experience as he had felt that it related to his relationship with family, and especially his wife, something that he had been concerned about at that time. Although he did not explain his concerns about his family, he said, ‘as I was driving the truck back home after a long journey, I was crying in the vehicle. Because I could not drive further, I parked the truck under a tree and began to cry out to God. All of a sudden I had peace in my heart and I gained strength to continue the life journey. Since that day on we live a happy life without any negative feeling towards one another’.<sup>45</sup>

There are several others who felt the Holy Spirit’s presence in their pain and agony which has inspired them to witness to others about Christ. The Neocharismatics believe that the presence of Jesus Christ can be experienced through the Holy Spirit. The Spirit’s presence is the extension of the presence of Jesus through His death,

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<sup>43</sup> Interview, Shibu Thomas, 18 January, Kottayam.

<sup>44</sup> Interview, Shibu, Kottayam, 13 January, 2015.

<sup>45</sup> Sajan, Focus Group, Life Fellowship. 13 January, 2015.

resurrection and exaltation.<sup>46</sup> Prior to His ascension, Jesus told the disciples that the Holy Spirit would come upon them. There were mixed feelings among the people as to when the Pentecost event occurred. Without interpretation, these people were clueless and prone to misunderstandings. Many of the interviewees were convinced that the Holy Spirit is a Spirit of mystery and that the Spirit works in any way He wishes. They believe that it is impossible to recognize the presence of the Spirit in a person unless one moves in the gift of discerning.<sup>47</sup> It is also believed that no one can control or specify that the Spirit will manifest in a particular way. It is the responsibility of the believer to recognize the presence of the Holy Spirit whenever it is needed. The Spirit can be experienced anywhere at any time.<sup>48</sup> The Spirit falling upon a believer can be exemplified with the household of Cornelius receiving the Holy Spirit in Acts.<sup>49</sup>

#### **4.3.2 The Spirit Communicates**

The Neocharismatic movement is familiar with the idea of the communicating Spirit. They believed that the Spirit reveals and communicates with people in a way that is as clear as it was in the times of the apostles in the first century. The Holy Spirit speaks through anybody as He chooses the person, but in a Neocharismatic church one finds that the Holy Spirit speaks mostly through the leader or the pastor. The church believes that the Holy Spirit speaks to a community that is attuned to God and dedicated to His ministry.<sup>50</sup> The Holy Spirit is believed to be the speaker through the human being at a meeting. During the sermons, the pastor often speaks common phrases like, ‘this is what the Holy Spirit says....., the Spirit of God commands....., the Holy Spirit is talking

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<sup>46</sup> G. F. Hawthorne, “Holy Spirit” in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament & its Developments*, ed. Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids, (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1997), 489.

<sup>47</sup> Interview, Sebastian, Heavenly Feast, Kottayam, 18 January, 2015.

<sup>48</sup> Chacko, Focus group, Life Fellowship, Thiruvananthapuram. 21 January, 2015.

<sup>49</sup> Jose Varickasseril, “The Presence of the Holy Spirit in the Nascent Church,” *Mission Today XVI* (2014):339, 337-349.

<sup>50</sup> Interview, Shaun, Ernakulum, 28 January, 2015.

to individuals....<sup>51</sup> Most people in the congregation pay careful attention to the speaker when he/she uses phrases of this kind. They believe that every word the Holy Spirit communicates through the speaker is divine and that none go in vain.<sup>52</sup> Women are more careful than men in following the speaker literally. The speaker pauses for a while between the sermon, then the congregation applauds or express their approval with words like glory, hallelujah, *sthothram*, a word used in Malayalam to express a person's gratitude and praise to God. Some people speak in other tongues. All these expressions are in response to the communication of the Spirit and are based on a belief that the Spirit communicates to the spiritual emptiness of people through reaching beyond the levels of any other religious practices. As an observer in a church service in the Heavenly Feast, I witnessed people who continued to praise God, using the gift of other tongues for almost a quarter of an hour. The meeting started with a song and continued without any interruption. It looked like the congregation enjoyed the song and the music. At the end of that service I met a woman in her seventies who said, 'I felt relieved from my burden during the worship, but after the worship I feel heavy in my heart'.<sup>53</sup> She thought that she needs to always be in such a Spirit-filled atmosphere, if she needs to be relaxed. Ultimately, such experiences in the Holy Spirit are not explained to the common believers who come to these meetings to receive comfort and strength. For ordinary believers, the experiences of the Holy Spirit speaking to them through other tongues or through a speaker not only gives them mental satisfaction but it also affects the totality of their lives. Many interviewees expressed having been more satisfied from attending a worship service in the church than from praising God when they were alone. In fact, many of these participants who worshipped at these services

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<sup>51</sup> Participant observation, Heavenly Feast, 13 January, 2015.

<sup>52</sup> Interview, Koshy, Adoor, 16 January, 2015.

<sup>53</sup> Interview, Aleyamma Mamman, 22 January, 2015.

were already members of other churches. They came to experience the power of God's presence in a community gathering. For many it is a time of great joy and enthusiasm. The preachers of these churches place much emphasis on listening to the Spirit. They have been taught to listen to the Holy Spirit through prayer and reading the Bible. In one of the cell group meetings I attended, the leader gave practical tips to those present to develop their skills in listening to the Spirit. One of them said, 'I enjoy doing it early morning, when everyone is asleep'. When asked about the method followed, she said 'I read two chapters of the Old Testament and one chapter of the New Testament and also take time to reflect on these portions'.<sup>54</sup> It is to be noted that such a dedicated life helps these believers to continue their spiritual journey. They believe that there is refreshment in the Word of God and the Holy Spirit prompts them to encounter God's presence in life.

#### **4.3.3 The Holy Spirit Heals**

Healing is one of the major components in a Neocharismatic service. Throughout the field work it was clear that healing has become predominant among Neocharismatic Christians. Although Kerala stands remarkably high in its standard of health care in comparison to other states in India, plenty of people are affected by cancer.<sup>55</sup> Poverty is a common menace in India. The economically deprived are those who have suffered most "from under-nutrition, poor sanitation and exposure to infection."<sup>56</sup> The privatization of hospitals and healthcare hinders the ability of poor people to access appropriate care. Those who are admitted to government hospitals are generally from poor and lower middle-class families and the care they receive is usually at the whims

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<sup>54</sup> Vilasini, Focus Group, Adoor, 20 January, 2015.

<sup>55</sup> Nithya N. R. "Kerala –Model of Health: Crisis in the Neo-Liberal Era," International Journal of Science and Research-India online, <http://www.ijsr.net/archive/v2i8/MDIwMTMyNjQ%3D.pdf>, (25 November, 2015).

<sup>56</sup> Roger E. Hedlund, "The Witness of New Christian Movements in India," A Paper Presented for the IAMS assembly in Malaysia, [http://missionstudies.org/archive/conference/1papers/fp/Roger\\_Hedlund\\_Full\\_Paper.pdf](http://missionstudies.org/archive/conference/1papers/fp/Roger_Hedlund_Full_Paper.pdf), (25 November, 2015).

and fancies of the hospital authorities.<sup>57</sup>The family of a patient in a government hospital has to bribe the doctor lest the patient's condition worsens. Obviously, in such situations people often seek out alternative methods to cure their sickness. Several interviewees testified that they had been taken to a church service or charismatic crusades by their friends who had promised that they will be healed if they attended the meeting and were prayed for. People come to church with all kinds of sicknesses to be prayed for, not just cancer. Many have come to the Christian faith through healing either in their life or someone close to them. An example of one such experience is the life of Asha, who is from a low caste Hindu family.

I was suffering from neck pain for years together. Although I had undergone treatment, both in Allopathic and Ayurvedic medicine, I found no cure. Finally, my neighbour told me about a healing crusade happening in our town. She said if you can come I will ask our pastor to pray for you. Hence, I went with her without the permission from my family. There was a big crowd present in the meeting. At the end of the sermon, the pastor called people who need healing to come in the front and I also went. I did not understand anything that they said. But during the mass prayer pastor said to lay our hands on the body parts where there is sickness. So I did. After a few days, I was completely relieved of my pain. I am completely well now and have started attending their worship services on Sunday.<sup>58</sup>

In this event, Asha believed that Jesus healed, through the mediation of the Holy Spirit. According to her, the role of the Holy Spirit in healing is not often emphasised and yet, this type of healings helps other people to believe in God. When Asha started attending the church, several other people from her community were willing to accept the fact that Jesus can heal people from any religion.

One of the leaders of the church testified that the majority of sick people attending the church have experienced some form of healing.<sup>59</sup>This healing is believed to be a part of the evangelistic standard of the early church. The Neocharismatics churches encourage all their believers to pray for healing as it is given by the Lord. They believe that as the

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<sup>57</sup> N. R. "Kerala –Model of Health."

<sup>58</sup> Interview, Asha, Ranni. 22 January, 2015.

<sup>59</sup> Interview, Sam Chacko, Heavenly Feast, 18January, 2015.

apostles healed people, every believer needs to pray in faith for other sick people.<sup>60</sup> However, very few people exercise this gift if they are in a situation in which they are alone with the sick. The healing ministry is an important part of the Neocharismatic worship. They have ‘healing time’ during every service; sick people stand together at the front of the church as the leaders pray for them.<sup>61</sup> People with all kinds of sicknesses are prayed for and in every gathering testimonies of people who have been healed can be heard. Sometimes these testimonials are from people who experienced healing over a week or a month. Some sicknesses need a proper diagnosis from the doctors, and in these situations it might take weeks for a patient to return to church to testify that prayers have worked. But such testimonies are given focus and priority as they are seen as more of a miraculous healing.<sup>62</sup> This does not mean that the Neocharismatics undermine other healings, but when diseases like epidemics and cancer are healed, it is seen to be of paramount importance to glorify God. According to Nigel Wright, the free independent and Charismatic churches train their believers to heal the sick.<sup>63</sup> This is primarily done in relation to the advancement of God’s kingdom. To advance God’s kingdom people need to be delivered from the clutches of the devil. Sickness and Satan are closely identified with the Neocharismatic movement.<sup>64</sup>

Casting out demons falls under the category of miraculous healing and this will be dealt with separately in this research. A person who was healed in a Neocharismatic service had the following experience while praying for another sick person.

I had a swelling in my knee and could not walk properly. I consulted many doctors and tried traditional healing methods, but had no result. Once, a lady from a nearby

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<sup>60</sup> Mathew Kuruvila, Sunday Sermon: Heavenly Feast, 18 January, 2015.

<sup>61</sup> Participant Observation, New Life, Trivandrum, 21 January, 2015.

<sup>62</sup> Interview, Chacko.

<sup>63</sup> Nigel Wright, “The Theology and Methodology of ‘Signs and Wonders’” in *Charismatic Renewal* (London: SPCK, 1995), 75.

<sup>64</sup> Wright, “The Theology and Methodology,” 76.

place came to my home and prayer over me. She often visited and prayed for me. I felt a power within my body and a mental strength to face any situations. After two months [the] swelling on my knee began to decrease and I was completely healed. I haven't felt the pain and difficulty to walk thereafter. This helped me to believe in Jesus and I go to church and also pray for people who are sick. I have seen people receiving instant healing as I prayed.<sup>65</sup>

There are inconsistencies in the reports of healings from all these churches. At times there may be many of people receiving healing but on other occasions the number would be fewer. Sometimes no-one receives healing. To explain such a situation, one of the pastors explained that, 'It depends on the faith of the person who comes to be prayed for. I don't think it is the ability of the pastor or the leader, but healing completely depends upon the faith of the sick person.'<sup>66</sup> This is a common trend I have seen in Kerala, that if someone is not healed the leader would conclude that the sick person lacks faith. Wright argues that the contemporary rhetoric about healing ministries exceeds the reality. He further says that it is different from the healing stories in the first century because the very purpose is distinct.<sup>67</sup>

Nevertheless, there are plenty of believers who receive healing in both Pentecostal and Neocharismatic churches. People who are strong advocates for healing are under the impression that healing is essential to attract a person to the Lord. In fact, not everyone who is healed converts to Christianity. Thomas, a friend of mine, who work as a missionary in rural India, often receives visits from local villagers who come to him regularly to ask him to pray for their sick family members. Many have been healed. However, according to Thomas, for nine long years he did not witness any conversion. There are occasions when people are not healed even in the big crusades organised by the Neocharismatics. Furthermore, healing in the Neocharismatic churches does not always help to bring people into the churches to worship. Many of the Neocharismatic

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<sup>65</sup> Mathai Thomas, Focus Group Interview, Trivandrum, 12 January, 2015.

<sup>66</sup> Interview, Sunil Joshua, Naranganam, 15 January, 2015.

<sup>67</sup> Wright, "The Theology and Methodology," 76.

leaders are tempted to use healing as a method to promote their ministry. Any sign of healing in a sick person is often used to highlight God's intervention.

Given what we know about healing in Neocharismatic churches, people claim that it is certainly the work of the Holy Spirit.<sup>68</sup> They believe that healing is enacted by the Holy Spirit when there is sufficient faith in the person who needs healing. Often people come with body pain, cold, fever, thyroid problems and other invisible sicknesses.<sup>69</sup> In most of the Neocharismatic meetings, a general prayer is offered and the leader announces that people should come to the stage if they have received the healing. Thereafter, a group comes and testifies about the healing of their sickness. Probably, due to large crowds in such meetings, no scientific method is adopted to test their health and further follow ups are often impossible. The purpose of healing testimonies in these meetings, are to confirm that Jesus is present in the meetings. The healings performed by Jesus Christ encompassed a wide range of sickness, including emotional ones.<sup>70</sup> Kydd states, by healing the sick Jesus was trying to bring the person that had slid into rebellion, back to God.<sup>71</sup> Wright explains that healing in the ministry of Jesus helped people to re-enter the worshipping community of Israel.<sup>72</sup> The Neocharismatic movement in India reflects truly what German theologian Adolf von Harnack said about Christianity: "a religion for the sick".<sup>73</sup> Although Pentecostals do use healing as a means of ministry in south India, the Neocharismatics exercise this gift in greater measure.

#### **4.3.4 The Holy Spirit is Active in Salvation**

Salvation in Christianity is always explained as belief in Jesus Christ. The revivals in the history of the Christian church have been understood as believers empowered by the Holy Spirit towards mission and evangelism. The role of the Holy Spirit in salvation is

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<sup>68</sup> Saramma, Focus Group, New Life Assembly, Adoor, 12 January, 2015.

<sup>69</sup> Participant Observation, Heavenly Feast, 21 January, 2015.

<sup>70</sup> R. A. N. Kydd, "Healing in the Christian Church," *IDPCM*, 698.

<sup>71</sup> Kydd, "Healing in the Christian Church," 698.

<sup>72</sup> Wright, "The Theology and Methodology," 77.

<sup>73</sup> Kydd, 'Healing in the Christian Church,' 698. Abraham, "Ordinary Christology," 206.

part of Pentecostal theology.<sup>74</sup> Many theologians like Hollenweger, Menzies and Turner have emphasised the role of the Holy Spirit in the salvation process. However, the Neocharismatics also believe that salvation is actualized through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. During the fieldwork it was observed that both pastors and believers think and believe that the greater infilling of the Holy Spirit in a person helps him or her to draw closer to God.<sup>75</sup> One of the pastors said, ‘it was the infilling of the Holy Spirit that helped the first century believers to proclaim about the crucified and resurrected Jesus. Peter and his team stood up and spoke to the large crowd about the crucified and resurrected saviour’.<sup>76</sup> There is a tendency in Neocharismatic churches for the preaching and teachings to be centred on the Holy Spirit. Thus, any doctrinal teaching needs to begin from the Holy Spirit. When the individuals and groups are filled with the Holy Spirit, they are encouraged to go and begin mission work in their own neighbourhood, to proclaim the word. The churches believe that the proclamation of the word of God is the first step to lead people to Christ.<sup>77</sup> There are many life stories of people who come to Jesus Christ through the ministry of preaching and teaching. There are also specific events showing that reading the Bible changes lives. For example, Rajendra was an agnostic. In 1982 he was dabbling in occult activities including palmistry. He even practiced transcendental meditation popularised in India by Maharishi Yogi. He also tried various other forms of meditation, but none of these forms of art and meditation quenched his spiritual thirst. In the later part of his life, he encountered the Lord Jesus Christ through a vision, which led him to confess his sins and join the church. One evening, while Rajendra was reading the Bible in his room, he felt the presence and power of the Holy Spirit upon his body and he lay unconscious for several hours. When

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<sup>74</sup> Yong, *The Spirit*, 83.

<sup>75</sup> Monachan, Focus Group, Kottayam, 18 January 2015. Interview, Pr. Sam Samuel, Ernakulam, 02 February, 2015.

<sup>76</sup> John D. Focus Group, Kottayam, 18 January, 2015.

<sup>77</sup> Interview, Sam John, Ernakulam, 02 February, 2015.

he regained his consciousness, he felt a great relief and believed that a heavy burden had been lifted away from him. He confessed that ‘I truly believe it was the spirit of transcendental meditation leaving me.’ He believed that experience was a baptism in the Holy Spirit, which led him to a full commitment to the Lord.<sup>78</sup> Rajendra is now in his sixties and serving God as a pastor of a small independent church in Hyderabad. Many converts who are members of the Neocharismatic churches were once members of the older churches in Kerala. Some of them have a deeper connection to the Roman Catholic Charismatic movement. Nevertheless, a thirst for God and a deeper spirituality prompted them to leave their older churches and come to join the Neocharismatic movement.<sup>79</sup> This trend has occurred in different parts of India. Research done in Mumbai, central India, among believers who were part of the Roman Catholic Charismatic movement, shows that people left the older churches and joined free independent Pentecostal gatherings.<sup>80</sup> The Neocharismatic believers did not leave their older faith because of any animosity, but in search of true spiritual satisfaction. Most of the believers in the Classical and indigenous Pentecostal churches became Pentecostals in search of a true spirituality.<sup>81</sup> Spirit manifestations in all aspects of Pentecostal and Charismatic spirituality are seen globally. The powerful presence of the Holy Spirit is at work in an ordinary believer from the beginning of their salvation experience and then all through their life.

#### **4.3.5 The Holy Spirit as Giver – Prosperity Approach**

The Prosperity gospel is generally understood to be a teaching that all God’s blessings can be inherited including material wealth in this world. Coleman defines prosperity theology as ‘accumulation of wealth and good health based on one’s good work or

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<sup>78</sup> Interview, Rajendra, 24 January, 2015.

<sup>79</sup> Interview, John, 02 February, 2015.

<sup>80</sup> Leela D’Souza, “The Charismatic–Pentecostal Movement in Mumbai: A Socio- historical Analysis, Part I (The Neo-Pentecostal Movement in Mumbai),” *Indian Church History Review* XLVI/2 (December, 2012), 163, 154-183.

<sup>81</sup> Louiskutty, *Pentecosthu*, 21.

giving power to the church'.<sup>82</sup> Prosperity teachings are part of some Charismatic and Pentecostal churches, and also can be preached by televangelists.<sup>83</sup> Prosperity preachers claim that God wants Christians to be abundantly successful in their finances and in all other ways possible.<sup>84</sup> The theological base for prosperity is the Abrahamic covenant. Prosperity preachers believe that prosperity was God's promise and provision to Abraham and his descendants and that it is passed on to all who are heirs of that covenant through the Lord Jesus Christ. Varghese records that, 'fundamental to prosperity doctrine is the appropriation of the salvation history represented in the life and mission of Jesus Christ'.<sup>85</sup>

According to Coleman, the Charismatic movement that promotes prosperity is also known as 'Faith, Faith Formula, Prosperity Health and Wealth or Word Movement'.<sup>86</sup> Today the movement has become global in its significance and many churches all around the world are attracted to it. Countries in South America, Africa and Asia, (most importantly India) are in the frontline of propagating prosperity among believers.<sup>87</sup> The Indian form of the prosperity gospel has originated from the American Christian-based television programmes that are broadcast in India.<sup>88</sup> Robert Stephens refers to Jonathan D. James, who states that Indian Charismatic televangelists are highly influenced by the plethora of American televangelists and their marketing techniques.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Simon Coleman, *The Globalization of Charismatic Christianity: Spreading the Gospel of Prosperity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 27. Eric Z.M. Gbote and Selaelo T. Kgatla, Prosperity Gospel: A Missiological Assessment, *HTS Teologiese Studies/ Theological Studies* 70(1), Art. #2105, [http:// dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v70i1.2105](http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v70i1.2105), 2.

<sup>83</sup> Baby, "Prosperity Gospel and South Indian Pentecostalism," 22. See Bowens Jeffrey, *Prosperity Gospel and its Effect on the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Church: A Historical and Theological Perspective on the Prosperity Gospel*. Kindle Edition.

<sup>84</sup> Baby, "Prosperity Gospel and South Indian Pentecostalism," 22.

<sup>85</sup> Varghese, "Reversing the Scandal of the Cross," 111.

<sup>86</sup> Coleman, *The Globalization*, 27.

<sup>87</sup> W. Jones and Woodbridge, *Russell, Health, Wealth and Happiness- Has the Prosperity Gospel Overshadowed the Gospel of Christ?* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2011), 15.

<sup>88</sup> Baby, "Prosperity Gospel and South Indian Pentecostalism," 43.

<sup>89</sup> Robert Stephens, Book Review on Jonathan D. James. *McDonaldisation, Masala McGospel and Om Economics: Televangelism in Contemporary India*, (New Delhi: Sage Publications. 2010), <http://www.lindenwood.edu/jigs/docs/volume3Issue2/bookReviews/156-160.pdf>, 03 December, 2015.

It is also true that the foreign practices and perspectives of Western-based spirituality have indeed changed India's cultural and religious spectrum.<sup>90</sup> This change is visible in the spiritual realm, including in worship, prayer and preaching. Most of the Neocharismatic churches in India have their own television channels or rented programme slots, which have changed the shape of Christian ministry in India. Although this research is focused on Neocharismatics in Kerala, Neocharismatic churches that preach and promote prosperity are also present in cities like Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad and Mumbai.

It is interesting that special meetings are arranged in the cities mentioned above by Neocharismatic churches from Kerala. Chandran who attended one such meeting in Bengaluru says that the first time he came to a Christian gathering was in a "financial breakthrough service." At that time, he was thousands of rupees in debt and one of his friends invited Chandra to join him at a meeting organized by a Neocharismatic church in a nearby sports ground. He says, 'as I walked in, they were singing songs which meant about the blessings assured to anyone who believes in Jesus. Although I did not know how to respond, I just stood there for an hour'.<sup>91</sup> He further said that although he has not had any change in his situation, he likes to come to the church whenever time permits and he believes in Jesus. He comes to the worship not to receive anything but because he loves the Lord. There are plenty of people who come with similar problems to these congregations. In reality, many don't receive any financial deliverance and indeed, several of them left the church or attended only once in their life time. The promise of financial deliverance is used as a medium to bring people into the church, most of whom are labourers on the lowest incomes. The promise is derived from a basic understanding that, when one comes to Christ, the person receives financial prosperity

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<sup>90</sup> Stephens, Book Review.

<sup>91</sup> Focus Group, Chandran, Kottayam, 13 January, 2015.

in addition to well-being in the believers' family. It is true that God gives promises and blessings to His children, but when the focus is only given to the financial prosperity, often it does not align with the teachings of the Bible.<sup>92</sup> To attract people into the church, the Heavenly Feast even phrased its main caption in advertisements as "*Kavinjozhukunna Anugrahathilekku*", which means 'overflowing blessing.' Through these advertisements they have popularised the message of prosperity in Kerala, and thousands of people were attracted to their meetings in Kottayam. Since their presentations of all kinds are based on the Bible, without any reluctance, people attend their meetings and believe that God would give everything they ask for, with the help of the Holy Spirit. They use scriptures such as Malachi: 3:10, Mark: 11:14, John 14:14. John 14:14 is popularised as "if you demand anything in my name, I will do it". The blessings they propose do not help the common believers grasp the Biblical meaning. Financial breakthrough is offered to all who attend the meetings, who are taught that financial struggles are the result of a curse on a family or individual. The pastors pray for them, pronounce deliverance, and are given money as a gift.<sup>93</sup> Anyone who, questions these methods is asked to leave the church. Another prosperity and healing preacher in Kerala prays for the sick people and charges money from each person as a contribution to the ministry needs. The money is taken from all people irrespective of their religious or church background.

The Holy Spirit as a life giver is reinterpreted as the giver of material blessings. These churches teach that God is in control of everything that takes place in the life of a believer and therefore He also knows the financial struggles of each person. They also teach "faith" as an important element that one needs to have in order to receive the blessings. This proves that the Neocharismatics in India have their foundation in the

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<sup>92</sup> Mathew Chacko, Focus Group, Thiruvananthapuram, 22 January, 2015.

<sup>93</sup> Interview, Sunu, Kottayam, 13 January, 2015.

Word of Faith movements. “Name it and claim it” is another term the Word of Faith movement usually uses in their meetings.<sup>94</sup> It is usually used as a criticism against the Neocharismatic churches. The Neocharismatics claim that they are reclaiming territories that are lost to the devil. In the Indian context, this helps the churches to attract both the urban and rural people alike.

#### **4.4 Visions, Dreams and other Spirit Activities**

The Neocharismatic churches claim that all their practices operate under the divine guidance of the Holy Spirit. Their faith is translated through mass media communication, and in doing so, they consider themselves to be of high importance. The attendance of people is important to their meetings; hence their sermons and oral testimonies are delivered with the idea of cementing relationships between believers, united in the Spirit.<sup>95</sup> They believe that the Holy Spirit is active in the life of all believers. Dreams and visions are interpreted through a spiritual lens and are thought to help the person to grow spiritually. It is common for ordinary believers to see religious significance in everything they see, do or experience.<sup>96</sup> They expect the pastor to explain or interpret their experiences spirituality. The popular interpretations for such visions and dreams come under the religious experience, and Caroline Franks Davis calls it non-cognitive.<sup>97</sup> The intellectual mind is not involved in the process of interpretation. It is common for believers in the Pentecostal, Charismatic and Neocharismatic churches to come to the Pastor with their dreams and visions.<sup>98</sup> After dreaming at night, churchgoers call their pastor in the morning to ask for the interpretation of the dream’s relevance and meaning. The believers expect pastors to

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<sup>94</sup> Baby, “Prosperity Gospel and South Indian Pentecostalism,” 43.

<sup>95</sup> Coleman, *The Globalization*, 67.

<sup>96</sup> Cartledge, *Testimony in the Spirit*, 89.

<sup>97</sup> Cartledge, *Testimony in the Spirit*, 89.

<sup>98</sup> Participant observation.

interpret their dreams and bless them. In many cases, pastors are obligated to give them a word of encouragement.

Exorcism is another important ministry related to the Holy Spirit. There are plenty of stories of people delivered from evil attacks and malevolent spirits. Some diseases are also caused by the evil spirits. Ramkumar is a young man who was possessed by an evil spirit. His family was unaware about the attack of the evil spirit until they came to a prayer group in Eranakulam.<sup>99</sup> The people in the prayer group prayed together and Ramkumar was healed. Churchgoers believe that exorcism is a special authority rendered to people by the Holy Spirit.<sup>100</sup> All who attended the focus group testified that unless a person is filled with the Holy Spirit, exorcism cannot be performed. They also believe that if a person tries to perform exorcism without the baptism in the Holy Spirit, there is every possibility that the performer can be attacked by the evil spirit.<sup>101</sup>

In many cases there are specially gifted people who cast out demons. Although there are a few such people in Kerala, all who have this gifting are still involved in the ministry of casting out evil spirits. It is believed that a believer needs to have a holy lifestyle, in addition to a clear authority and guidance from the Holy Spirit, to be able to cast out demons. However, Classical Pentecostalism is sceptical about those claiming to have the gift of exorcism, because many exorcists do not live a practical holy life.<sup>102</sup> Hence, the Charismatic movement, which includes the Neocharismatics, does not separate clergy and laity in the performance of exorcism because they believe and promote the biblical teaching of the priesthood of all believers.<sup>103</sup> Even today, it is considered to be a valid form of ministry and is exercised by missionaries and pastors who work in the

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<sup>99</sup> Pappachan, Focus Group, Alwaye, 28 January, 2015.

<sup>100</sup> Pappachan, Focus Group, Alwaye, 28 January, 2015.

<sup>101</sup> Thankam, Focus Group, Alwaye, 28 January, 2015.

<sup>102</sup> L. G. McClung Jr. 'Exorcism' *IDPCM*, 625.

<sup>103</sup> McClung Jr. 'Exorcism,' 625.

villages in India.<sup>104</sup> It should be noted that Neocharismatics place greater value on exorcism and healing of sickness. In the context of Kerala, exorcism rarely happens during the meetings but has greater significance. This may be because the authority over the evil powers is directly proven and hence people recognise and appreciate more the ministry of the exorcist.

Another form of the manifestation of the Holy Spirit found in Neocharismatic churches is what is termed “falling in the Spirit”. This can be widely seen in Neocharismatic churches in Kerala, although it has become a controversial practice recently. A group called “Fire Wings” led by Finny Stephen, with a group of young people, has become popular over the last five years.<sup>105</sup> According to Stephen, “it is a new generation of people and the history will be repeated.”<sup>106</sup> Stephen’s team of people are his co-ministers, and he has always worked with them since the inception of the group. As he preaches in special conferences and meetings, his associates walk among the people exciting the crowd which moves accordingly. They always use words and language that stir up people’s emotions. At one time, prominent Neocharismatic churches like Heavenly Feast introduced this ministry to the wider Neocharismatic community in Kerala, although they no longer promote this manifestation of the Spirit. Despite this, there are still individuals who promote this ministry today. Many people who participated in the focus group said that they do not appreciate such manifestation practised in the name of the Holy Spirit.<sup>107</sup> None of them are sure that falling in the Spirit is from the Holy Spirit. People who have experienced such manifestations of the Holy Spirit cannot explain what contribution or further advancement has been added to their spiritual life. It is observed that people who practice such popular manifestations

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<sup>104</sup> Abraham, “Ordinary Christology,” 208.

<sup>105</sup> n.a. Special Report, *Sworgeeya Dwoni* 13/9 (6 May, 2105), 1-8(1).

<sup>106</sup> Finny Stephen, Message, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PQg4e0nWZgg>, 04 December, 2015.

<sup>107</sup> Focus Group, Kottayam, Ernakulam, Thiruvananthapuram.

cannot prove from a biblical account that such ministry was part of the New Testament church. The Spirit of God is working always in accordance with Scripture and is never contrary to it. Every genuine spiritual experience has a divine and human component.<sup>108</sup> The activity of the Holy Spirit always liberates people towards freedom and helps them to take responsibility and also to exercise dependence on God.

There are examples of ordinary believers' literal encounters with Jesus. For example, a girl from a lower class family was struggling in her studies. She explained the following in a Heavenly Feast video:

As it was taught in the church, while I was studying in my home, I put another empty chair for Jesus to sit. I was struggling to understand the lessons. I prayed to Jesus. Suddenly I saw a light on the chair opposite to me. I was terrified; I tried to push the chair. But it was very heavy. When I touched the chair I felt it was like a bunch of cotton. Something like electric waves pass through my body, and boils on my palm was healed. Jesus came to my room and he helped me to write my exam.<sup>109</sup>

Such testimonies serve as a background for preaching the message in each service. The sermons are interactive as the preacher pauses for the participants to respond with clapping and shouting out, 'Hallelujah!, glory!', or other words praising God. Cartledge rightly observes that, the sermons in Charismatic worship do not allow those listening 'to go to sleep'.<sup>110</sup>

#### **4.5.2 Worship Songs and Music**

A major reason for the growth and development of the Neocharismatic churches in India is their acceptance of a different pattern for worship. They adopt a contemporary style of music which attracts people, and especially the younger generation.<sup>111</sup> Some of the old Malayalam songs are performed using contemporary instruments and music.<sup>112</sup> Critics say that worship tunes and songs are given to the composer by the Holy

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<sup>108</sup> Samuel, "Popular Manifestations of the Holy Spirit in Neocharismatic Movement," 108.

<sup>109</sup> Testimony, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DFJsDEPduCc>, (02 December, 2015).

<sup>110</sup> Cartledge, *Testimony in the Spirit*, 58.

<sup>111</sup> Interview, Sam, Worship Leader, Eranakulam, 03 February, 2015.

<sup>112</sup> Interview, Sam.

Spirit, and therefore they should remain the same over time. It is the same case with charismatic worship globally. Cartledge comments that the older hymns in English are given a contemporary feel with the addition of different melodies and a drummer's backbeat. Smail comments that Charismatic worship has had a transforming effect on all churches across the world.<sup>113</sup> The worship has become more sophisticated with bands and sometimes an orchestra in attendance.<sup>114</sup> Cartledge states that Charismatic Christians have taken their inspiration from the Bible to worship and praise God like some of the notable worshippers such as the Song of Moses and Miriam, David, Solomon and also the twenty four elders in Revelation.<sup>115</sup>

The worship in Neocharismatic churches is the main attraction for all believers. According to Ninan, who was a participant in a focus group, 'it is the worship that motivates us to go to the church. When we worship with hundreds of people it is heavenly experience'.<sup>116</sup> Every prayer meeting starts with at least thirty minutes of worship. On Sundays the service is different from services during the week. All worship services have a group of people to lead and sing. At the Heavenly Feast church, many people gather on the stage for worship, including children from the age of five. In other churches, however, they have a choir who is assigned to lead the worship songs. The Heavenly Feast choir sing songs which are linked to blessing and prosperity.<sup>117</sup> The dress code is also different from that worn in traditional churches. Worshippers

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<sup>113</sup> Tom Smail, "In Spirit and Truth: Reflections on Charismatic Worship" in *Charismatic Renewal* (London: SPCK, 1995), 109.

<sup>114</sup> A. E. Dyer, "Worship" in *Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies: A Reader*, ed. William K. Kay and Anne S. Dyer (London: SCM Press, 2004), 144- 166 (145).

<sup>115</sup> Cartledge, *Encountering the Spirit*, 51.

<sup>116</sup> Ninan, Focus Group, Exodus Kochi. 03 February, 2015.

<sup>117</sup> Participant Observation. Heavenly Feast, 18 January, 2015. One of the song that is popular among the Neocharismatics in Kerala is this,  
*Deshathil Njan Anugrahikapedum*  
*Joliyil Njan Anugrahikapedum*  
*Ente Veetil Aaharam Kurayukila*  
*Avashyangal Onnume Kurayukila*  
 (The meaning of the song is: I will remain blessed in my land, job. I lack no food in my house and all my needs be met).

attending Neocharismatic services are not restricted by the colour or pattern of the clothes they can wear and hence, people often prefer to attend these services instead of a Pentecostal service where there are dress codes. Among the Pentecostal churches TPM has a strict dress code, (of the colour, white), but other Pentecostal denominations are more open: believers can wear coloured dress in the church, although light colours are preferred. Interestingly, the Neocharismatics believe that coming to God as we are (i.e. without restrictions on clothing) helps one to understand God better.<sup>118</sup> Your appearance, dress code or place of worship is not considered to be vital in worshipping God. It is one's attitude to God that should matter. A father is not concerned about how his child looks when he or she is before him; the Father always accepts the child as His own.<sup>119</sup> The worshippers spontaneously worship God when the service is led by the complete guidance of the Holy Spirit.

#### **4.5.3 The Role of the Bible**

The place of the Bible is significant in forming the theology and practice of a believing community. It is generally accepted among most of the Christians that the Bible is God's Word to humankind. However the complexity of the task of interpreting the Bible remains a problem for many.<sup>120</sup> The Neocharismatic churches depend solely on a simple reading of the text. A direct connection of God's promises to Abraham and others in the Old Testament is applied to believers in churches. The leaders encourage believers who are facing problems, including sickness, to find a situation in the Bible, which is thought to help them to identify, and meditate on those problems.<sup>121</sup> Furthermore, they are taught to look at their problem based upon God's promises to them. Perriman suggests that the Word of Faith churches tend to regard 'the Bible as a

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<sup>118</sup> Mathew, Focus Group, Kottayam, 13 January, 2015.

<sup>119</sup> Thomas Abraham, "Video Message," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DFJsDEPduCc>, (07 January, 2015).

<sup>120</sup> Andrew Perriman, *Faith, Health and Prosperity* (Cumbria: Paternoster, 2003), 88.

<sup>121</sup> Participant Observation Heavenly Feast, Ranni, 21 January, 2015.

uniform contractual document containing the detailed legal basis for the life of faith'.<sup>122</sup> There is no hermeneutical principle used to interpret the passages and stories in the Bible. More than the propositional truth in the Bible the movement focuses on the fundamentalism of promises. In a mega-church, one respondent stated, 'it is not necessary to have a Bible when a person comes to the service because we go to worship God.'<sup>123</sup> The Neocharismatics feel that the Bible is not of much importance in a worship service. The leader continues speaking about the experiences of people rather than preaching on the basis of a text from the Bible. For example, to a crowd of thousands, Kuruvila said, "God is determined to show his power and have come to forcefully do miracles. In 2017, not a single one will have financial crisis, the supernatural will happen in your life."<sup>124</sup> He often says 'Bible says,' but does not give specific references to prove the statements made. Further he interprets that the name of Jesus is wonderful which means extra ordinary strategist, doing miracles and solve financial troubles. According to him, miracles need a miracle atmosphere. Miracles will take place when a person runs with the Holy Spirit.<sup>125</sup> The Neocharismatic hermeneutic should synergise between the biblical text and the present experience. The Word and the Spirit play a key role to shape the spirituality in a believer. Suurmond states that the baptism with the Word and Spirit shapes the experiential dimension of a faith life and manifests a number of spiritual gifts.<sup>126</sup> The essential contribution of Pentecostal and charismatic spirituality lies in its relationship with the Word and the Spirit. The role of the Holy Spirit is seen in writing the Scripture, guiding those who formed the canon, preserving,

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<sup>122</sup> Perriman, *Faith, Health and Prosperity*, 88.

<sup>123</sup> Jayasree, Focus group, Heavenly Feast, Kozhencherry, 22 January, 2015.

<sup>124</sup> Mathew Kuruvila, 'Message: Glory magnified, Glory visible' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5TcfU4UNCSQ&t=306s> (12 May, 2017).

<sup>125</sup> Mathew Kuruvila, Heavenly Feast @Nehru Stadium, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pLz81wE8R-M> (12 May, 2017).

<sup>126</sup> Suurmond Jean-Jacques, *Word and Spirit at Play: Towards a Charismatic Theology*, (London: SCM, 1994), 222.

interpreting and illuminating the Scripture to its readers today. Noel records that, the help of the Holy Spirit is imperative for an accurate interpretation of the Scripture.<sup>127</sup> Scholars like Clark Pinnock, French Arrington and John Goldingay have argued that the Holy Spirit is vitally important in the exercise of Scriptural interpretation. For example, Pinnock states that the Holy Spirit does open up the Word for individuals to develop their personal relationship and friendship with God.<sup>128</sup> Such a view is maintained in the writings of John Wesley that the Spirit of God not only inspires the original authors of the Bible but continually inspires the reader.<sup>129</sup> Indeed, critics have noted that the interpretation of the text in Neocharismatic preaching is shallow as it does not address the literary or argumentative context in which it was originally written. The Neocharismatic preachers make less attempts to interpret the Scripture and communicate its original meaning to their audience. The consequence of such an interpretation is that people are perplexed on the subject, thus their understandings are not rooted in God's Word.

#### **4.5.4 The Spiritual Gifts**

Neocharismatic churches in Kerala exist in the context of a spiritual bankruptcy of Pentecostalism. Therefore, they claim to bring about a spiritual renewal that reflects that of the first century church. Presumably, the Neocharismatics' emphasis on miracles and healings extends to a point where they are expected to live what is being said about them. There is no doubt in Christianity that the divine is manifest when people come together in the name of Jesus Christ.<sup>130</sup> They believe that the manifestation of the Holy

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<sup>127</sup> Bradley Truman Noel, *Pentecostal and Postmodern Hermeneutics: Comparisons and Contemporary Impact*, (Oregon: WIPF&STOCK, 2010), 149.

<sup>128</sup> Clark Pinnock, "The Work of the Holy Spirit in Hermeneutics" *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 2 (1993), 3-23, (22).

<sup>129</sup> Pinnock quoted John Wesley in "The Role of Spirit in Interpretation" in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 36/4 (1993), 491-497.

<sup>130</sup> Miller and Yammori, *Global Pentecostalism*, 134.

Spirit in congregations allows people to exercise their gifts. However, not all of them exercise their spiritual gifts. Thomas had an experience which he describes as follows,

Once I was in the church worshipping God. Suddenly I felt the Spirit telling me to pray for a person in the third isle on my right side. I went and prayed for him. Later he told me that he was struggling with a mental agony but was healed after the prayer. Until that day, I [had] not prayed for anyone. It was my first experience, but after that I gain[ed] confidence and believe that God can use anyone if we obey Him.<sup>131</sup>

Such religious experiences of ordinary believers are the strength of the movement.

Neocharismatics believe that the use of spiritual gifts recorded in 1 Corinthians 12:9-11 strengthens the spiritual life of their adherents.<sup>132</sup> It is interesting to note that practicing spiritual gifts in an individual's life brings about healing and deliverance in another's life. The most practised gift in the Neocharismatic churches is healing, followed closely by speaking in other tongues.

As is mentioned earlier in this chapter, Neocharismatics believe that the Spirit heals a person when he or she is submissive and desires God to heal them. The use of the spiritual gifts is not limited to within the church and believers are expected to use their gifts at every opportunity. Neocharismatics travel around propagating their faith to other people. During the church service, whenever there is need of prayer for a person or a group of people, the congregation is encouraged to place their hands upon the person who needs prayer. On such occasions, a number of people gather around the person who needs prayer and pray for them for several minutes, even up to one hour.<sup>133</sup> Meanwhile the rest of the congregation supports them by holding their hands and some pray in other tongues.

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<sup>131</sup> Interview, Thomas, Ernakulam, 28 January, 2015.

<sup>132</sup> Interview, Sam, 18 January, 2015.

<sup>133</sup> Participant Observation, Heavenly Feast, 18 January, 2015.

#### 4.6 Theology of the Neocharismatics in India

The theology of the Neocharismatic churches in Kerala offer promises such as financial prosperity, health, happiness, and goods, and promotes the idea that the best of this world belongs to the believer. As mentioned earlier, the Neocharismatic churches and groups are greatly influenced by Word of Faith churches. Perriman states that the Word of Faith movement developed doctrines that are idiosyncratic in nature and undermine theological scholarship from the wider Christian community.<sup>134</sup> Furthermore, for a Neocharismatic, any assessment based on a solid theology may be considered unspiritual or irrelevant. Anderson states that the Word of Faith churches emphasise physical health and material prosperity, which are made possible by faith.<sup>135</sup> The association of independent Neocharismatic churches with other denominations or independent churches across the globe adds difficulty to any examination of their theology. Most Neocharismatic churches in India have some kind of association with churches or individuals who follow ambiguous theology. Since there is an obvious lack of published materials the public have had few opportunities to collect information about them.

The Heavenly Feast is the largest Neocharismatic church in Kerala and can be seen as the trailblazer church. In this way, their practices and teachings serve as a basis for other Neocharismatic churches in Kerala. In general, the Heavenly Feast leaders place an emphasis on prosperity in their teachings, often using the term “bless” in their sermons and talks. Since there is a lack of printed documents, their theology can only be analysed from their preaching and talks. Varghese identifies the Heavenly Feast churches in Kerala as following Word of Faith movements.<sup>136</sup> Tangu preaches sermons that stimulate passion and also fulfils desires of people. Heavenly Feast is characterized

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<sup>134</sup> Perriman, *Faith*, 81.

<sup>135</sup> Anderson, : “Varities, Taxonomies and Definitions,” 19.

<sup>136</sup> Varghese, “Reversing the Scandal of the Cross,” 111.

by an orientation of satisfying the desires of people. Thomas Abraham, one of the senior pastors writes in a blog that, ‘A general request of “bless me” does not need any faith. But a specific prayer needs a lot of faith and it will work. So pray with desire and step out to fulfil the desire and you can see God’s hand going forward to remove every obstacle in your way. Brother/Sister, your desire decides your future’.<sup>137</sup> Such emphasis prompts people to desire anything and encourage them to pray for it. The ordinary people do not question the statements of their leaders, but instead pray for their blessings. If they don’t get what they desired they go feeling rejected, which can lead them astray from the faith. In the consumerist society desire is the driving force, to which a lot of Neocharismatic believers are attracted. According to Sturla J. Stålsett “In mainstream Christian tradition human desire holds a central although ambivalent place. In the Augustinian and Lutheran strands, desire has been closely associated with sin and rebellion against God.”<sup>138</sup> Heavenly Feast re-establish desire for material blessings as a legitimate form of spirituality when it is practiced by faith.

Recently, the news spread across Kerala that Tangu Brother was stepping into the political field. According to him, “The State politicians who are making a joke of us who voted them to power. I really desire that a new political movement will arise in Kerala comprising of non corrupt people who will have a nation above self and will not talk religion, but will live in true spirituality.”<sup>139</sup> His focus and theology is clear in some of his statements. More than the desire for the advancement of God’s kingdom his desire is to refine state politics. Jesus Christ taught the denial of the self and the advancement of God’s kingdom as a priority. Tangu Brother teaches the denial of the

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<sup>137</sup> Thomas Abraham, “Desire Decides,” Heavenly Feast Blog, <http://www.theheavenlyfeast.org/blog/desire-decides-2/> (22 December, 2015).

<sup>138</sup> Stuarla J. Stålsett, “Offering On Time Deliverance: The Pathos of Neo-Pentecostalism and the Spirits of Globalization” in *Spirits of Globalization*, ed. Stuarla J. Stalsett, (London: SCM Press, 2006), 203.

<sup>139</sup> Tangu Brother, “Live in True Spirituality,” Heavenly Feast Blog, <http://www.theheavenlyfeast.org/blog/live-in-true-spirituality/> (22 December, 2015).

self against the advancement of the nation. They believe in the confession of the mouth. This is at the heart of the Word of Faith movement: the belief that the force of faith is released by words, and that faith-filled words can always put the law of the Spirit of life into operation.<sup>140</sup> These Indian Neocharismatics believe that faith is core to all archetypal positive confessions in Christian life. Anything that does not involve faith is nonsensical in the life of a believer, including learning, thinking, calculating and reasoning. The mind is absolutely passive in the matters of God.<sup>141</sup>

Many a times human mind interferes by bringing in the memory of our human weakness and past experiences and tells us that you are a failure and you can't win anymore. Then we have to reply to our mind, 'mind' your own business: Let Jesus say, the word of God say who am I, what I can and what I am going to be! So let not the limited human mind lead you but the unlimited Word and Spirit of God lead you.<sup>142</sup>

Their theology visualises what a person can achieve from God. More than a question of who God is, their theology understands God as a giver of material blessings. For the Neocharismatics, the Spirit serves as a channel to distribute God's blessings. They believe God's Word to be the most powerful source that carries God's blessings. Since God created everything in this world through His Word in creation, a believer can obtain what they desire to possess in the world. God cannot work without raw materials. He expects people to have a desire and a dream to begin with.<sup>143</sup> Furthermore, the Neocharismatics teach that a general request placed before God to bless a person does not need faith, but rather a specific request takes a lot of faith. Beyond a doubt, this is in line with the teachings of Yonggi Cho's 'fourth dimension' which has also been translated and published in Malayalam. Several churches recommended church goers read this text to expand their spiritual horizons. It is a common practice among the

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<sup>140</sup> Perriman, *Faith*, 39.

<sup>141</sup> Thomas Abraham, "Tell Your Mind: 'Mind' Your Own Business," Heavenly Feast Blog, <http://www.theheavenlyfeast.org/blog/tell-mind-mind-business-2/> (22December, 2015).

<sup>142</sup> Abraham, "Tell Your Mind."

<sup>143</sup> Abraham, "Desire Decides."

Neocharismatics in Kerala that the daily experiences are tapped into divine intervention and then such experience is interpreted in the light of the Bible.

#### **4.7 A critique of the Heavenly Feast Church**

Based on the study conducted in the Heavenly Feast church in Kerala, it is understood that there are clear distinctions between the Pentecostal and Neocharismatic churches. The Heavenly Feast Church or the Neocharismatic movement as a whole is not interested in developing a systematic approach to theology or specific pneumatology. If at all any discussion on the Holy Spirit is elementary because the church emphasis on experience. This is probably because the movement is popular in Kerala; therefore any attempt to critique or discuss the core theological issues would be labelled as blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. The practice of the Holy Spirit is used in the broad canvas of all churches with similar experiences. The Heavenly Feast church is trying to plug in to all traditions of Christianity in Kerala. They include people from Catholic, Jacobite and Mar Thoma churches as well wishers and Television audience. This inclusive nature does not place any importance to separation and holy life. The claim of the apostolic authority for the Heavenly Feast leadership needs clarity. The early pioneers of Pentecostalism were credited to be people with spiritual authority and were recognised as true followers of the apostolic faith. The Heavenly Feast leaders are lay people who claims that either they have experienced a healing themselves or a member from their family. That should not be the criteria to claim the apostolic authority. The ministry of the apostles in the Scripture should be the norm if at all one claims the apostolic authority as we understand the ministry of the Apostles from the Scripture.

Given primary place to preaching God's Word Pentecostals set a pattern of faith. The Word of God is often given less importance in the Heavenly Feast gatherings earlier but currently they do preach sermons after criticism from other churches. The Heavenly Feast church has adopted own church structure and practices as against other traditional Pentecostal order. However, the mission for them is key to their teaching and practice. The Heavenly Feast emphasise mission relating to the context in which the church exist.

### **Evaluation**

The Neocharismatic churches in Kerala unwittingly lack a genuine emphasis on a strong ontological identity of the Holy Spirit. His relationship and role in the Godhead is undermined to the limit as a mere source of power and giver of material blessings. There are attempts to manifest the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of believers, but superseding prominence is given to the power of the Holy Spirit. Daily life relates to the Spirit which generates an interest in the ordinary believer in focusing on and living for God. Every ministry member creates space for spiritual democratisation which equips believers to confess their faith boldly to people from other religions. Although the Neocharismatic healing ministry bridges the gap between people from different religions, sometimes it becomes controversial. The prosperity teachings (or 'health and wealth gospel' or the 'name it and claim it' approach) have distorted the movement in India and made it controversial. The Neocharismatics prioritise pneumatology over ecclesiology. Church is a place where pneumatology is tested and practised. Churches like the Heavenly Feast have emphasised charismatic spirituality as central in contrast to the 'traditional' approaches of the Pentecostal churches.

The Neocharismatic churches are structurally distinct from the Pentecostal churches and have become known for unfamiliar spiritual practices. It is obvious that the Neocharismatic leaders want to differentiate their ministry from their Pentecostal

counterparts, because most of the leaders were once part of those Pentecostal churches in Kerala. It is true that the Neocharismatic churches in India have produced some energetic and dynamic leaders to represent Christianity in the country. It is also significant to note that a large number of people are coming to the faith from other religions in India through being attracted to the Neocharismatic churches and their ministry in society. Doctrinal teaching on the Holy Spirit often becomes controversial and therefore a strong theological critique is inevitable.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### EVALUATING THE SPIRIT THEOLOGY OF NEOCHARISMATICS IN INDIA

#### 5.1 Introduction

Chapter Four discussed the faith and practice of Neocharismatics churches in Kerala, with particular focus on the Heavenly Feast church. It is important to note the influence of the practice of Spirit theology in these church services. The Spirit practices of the Neocharismatics have touched many lives, both within the church and outside the church. Theology is generally defined as “speaking about God”. Speaking about God can take many forms such as reading the Scriptures, the works of Christian writers, giving testimonies, singing songs, preaching, praying, or even sharing prophetic messages. According to Cartledge, ‘all discourse within the church is theological in some sense, either explicitly or implicitly.’<sup>1</sup>

The overarching questions that are discussed in this chapter are concerned with the nature of Spirit theology in the Neocharismatic movement. In the context of Indian Pentecostalism, the Eastern tradition approach to the doctrines (such as the doctrine of the Trinity) is significant. The Charismatics often affirm an emphasis on the Spirit over and above ecclesiology. Therefore, this chapter attempts to answer the question, how does Neocharismatic Spirit theology applies to their understandings of the Trinity and ecclesiology? These two are selected because of the particular context in Kerala. The Trinity and Ecclesiology are significant to all Christian churches in Kerala due to the Eastern liturgy followed. A church is expected to explain primarily their understanding of the Trinity and evaluated on the basis of their function as a church. The Neocharismatic churches in Kerala are criticised for their lack of understanding on

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<sup>1</sup>Cartledge, “Charismatic Theology: Approaches and Themes,” *Journal of Beliefs and Values* 25/2 (August , 2004):178, 177-190.

Trinity and unstructured church practices. This chapter also considers if this movement's pneumatology is in any way related to the pneumatology of the Classical Pentecostal and indigenous Pentecostal denominations in India. The relationship of the practice of the Spirit to the New Testament testimony is also a matter of consideration. This chapter also attempts to critically analyse how neocharismatic pneumatology is practised.

### **5.1 The Holy Spirit Manifestations in the Church and Public**

Neocharismatics, along with other Protestant movements, stress the necessity of personal experience of the Holy Spirit as an essential component of Christian life. They propose a gradual development of their theology on a grass root level. They believe and preach that God can accomplish what a human being cannot do. The growth of the church depends on the way it exhibits itself outside the church community. Public meetings are organised to create opportunities for the public to come and attend the meetings, so that thus they may experience God's power. A close scrutiny of the Neocharismatics will allow for the eradication of doubt and confusion about the way the outside world often evaluates the practices of the movement. In this respect, I would like to reflect on the visible manifestations of the Holy Spirit in Neocharismatic churches in Kerala which are discussed below.

#### **5.1.1 Lay ministry**

The Neocharismatic movement believes that all worshippers can experience the gifts of the Holy Spirit in their church and public gatherings. This reflects what Martin Luther referred as "Priesthood of all Believers".<sup>2</sup> The present day Neocharismatic churches use term like 'equipping the saints' or 'authorising the laity' to a level beyond that of the Pentecostal churches. Their approach of involving all people is in contrast to the rigid hierarchy of roles within other churches, including Pentecostals. The 'body ministry' is

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<sup>2</sup>Lederle, *Theology*, 139.

applicable in worship, service and evangelism. Ideally, the main characteristic that differentiates a minister from a believer is in the way they minister, according to the gifts each receives from the Spirit. Although their ministry differs, all have received the same Spirit and all have a role in the ministry of the Spirit. In public meetings, the leaders on the stage do not physically come forward to pray for each person who has come to the front for prayer. Instead, the cell group leaders and other people who exercise the gift of the Holy Spirit step in and lay their hands on each person who needs prayer and prays for them. Nevertheless, the question of having the spiritual authority to lay hands on people does arise in this setting. Lay members exercise their gifting not as an ordained minister, but their ministry is recognized in the Neocharismatic churches. Even though the ministry of the laity has been prominent in all levels of the Neocharismatic movements, often their distinctive functions and responsibilities may not be properly recognised in many congregations. The lay ministries cannot be identified by their titles or the office they hold in a church. For example, Heavenly Feast churches use the title 'Brother' for their leaders, a term which is commonly used among Neocharismatics in contrast to the use of Pastor or Reverend in the Pentecostal churches in India. However, the title 'Brother' is mostly used for a lay person in the Pentecostal churches. Apart from the Brethren usage of this title, it is probably P.G. Varghese, a missionary to north India, and founder of the Beersheba Church of God, who first used this title for himself and promoted it among the independent Churches in India. This adoption of a different ecclesiastical title was intended to show a clear difference between the existing Pentecostal and Brethren denominations. All Pentecostal denominations in India use the title 'Pastor' before the name of a clergy. Today there are also many leaders and pastors of independent Charismatic churches who use this as an ecclesiastical appellation. In Kerala, some Neocharismatic church

leaders also use this title, such as Damien, John Lawrence and John Tharu. Many of these leaders were members of the Charismatic laity who rose to leadership and were ordained by a local, independent charismatic church. In writing about the Catholic Charismatic renewal, George Martin observes that the difference between clergy and laity is not a major issue because the focus is on the gifts for service that every follower of Christ receives.<sup>3</sup> It can be argued, however, that although what Martin articulates is the true sense of the cooperative role of the clergy and laity in the Charismatic movement, this also has widespread influence in the Neocharismatic movement. The working together of clergy and laity has, historically, been less common in Christendom, the result of which is that many Christian communities have suffered. When compared to other revival churches, it could be seen that Neocharismatics promise a more balanced state of ministry within the church. Involving all people in the ministry builds the body of Christ without jeopardising the role of others in the church.

### **5.1.2 Spiritual Authority**

More than ever in recent times, churches talk about spiritual authority. In the beginning of the twentieth century, people had spiritual authority to cast out demons, heal sickness and deliver people from other forms of evil attacks. Later, such a spiritual authority became something more often discussed in churches rather than practised by lay Christians. The Charismatic movement became the proponent of the authority of the Holy Spirit towards the end of the twentieth century. Spiritual authority has produced a new unity of believers who act upon the words of Christ. The Neocharismatic churches share a common experience which leads them towards the theological truth of spiritual authority. It is believed that God shared the same authority which was evident in and used by the apostles in the first century church. The Neocharismatics base their

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<sup>3</sup> George Martin, "Charismatic and the Church of Tomorrow," in *As the Spirit Leads Us*, ed. Kevin and Dorothy Ranaghan (New York: Paulist Press, 1971), 242.

emphasis on spiritual authority on the words of Jesus Christ in John 14:12 ‘...Whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father’. This Scripture is constantly used to explain each healing or miracle. They believe that every believer is close to the heart of the Father and wields the power of God. Neocharismatic believers can find unity in every new experience with the Holy Spirit and indeed, this is what Christ desired and prayed for during his ministry on earth. Addressing a similar approach of the Catholic Charismatic movement, Richard Quebedeaux records that leading people to a theological truth based on common experience is normally seen in the Charismatic and Neo-Pentecostal movements.<sup>4</sup> Many of the members in these churches believe that God speaks and works with the same authority that He used in the Biblical times. Although they believe in the authority and sovereignty of God in general, the Acts of the Apostles serves as the primary source that validates an experience of the Holy Spirit.<sup>5</sup> In this way, the common experiences of people are connected with the first century believers; their struggles and tensions are interpreted with the help of the daily experiences of these early believers. These Neocharismatic believers also seek to relate to the struggles experienced in the early church, although these struggles were not necessary identical. The context of the struggles faced by the church in the first century is entirely different in comparison to the present day. Leadership crises, political instability and harassment, and persecution from the ruling emperors were some of the major difficulties faced by the early church. Considering the context of India, although the persecution still exists in some form, it is in no way identical to the suffering of the early church. However, all believers who are baptised in the Spirit believe that they are endowed with special gifts of the Holy Spirit that can be used to strengthen church worship. Each

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<sup>4</sup> Richard, Quebedeaux, *The New Charismatics* (New York: Double day & Co., 1976), 111.

<sup>5</sup> Some of the Sermons heard during the participant observation and earlier are from the Book of Acts.

believer wants to use the opportunity to use their gifts to minister in the church, but in the church worship services it is the leader who ministers. Others may participate but they don't lead the worship. Mostly one finds that it is people who have a prophetic gift or the gift of healing who usually exercise their gifts in the church. What can be observed in many of the Neocharismatic congregations is that spiritual authority and human authority are not clearly distinguished.

Neocharismatic believers often invite their friends and relatives to special meetings in which the messages are aimed at the unevangelised. Newcomers are not required to renounce their present church membership in order to attend these Neocharismatic churches. Today there is a change in the character of the membership in these churches. Referring to the Roman Catholic churches in Mumbai, D'Souza explains that former Catholics encourage people from their church to be part of the Neocharismatic group.<sup>6</sup> This tendency is seen nationwide: as people experience a difference in the worship and lifestyle, they may then invite their friends to come and experience this for themselves. This was also true with the early Pentecostals in India. However, it is observed that people who explore the new spirituality of the Neocharismatic churches do, gradually become members and leave their membership of the previous church. Ponnama, a Jacobite believer earlier says, 'When I came in the first time, I was told by the pastor to explore and see the differences.'<sup>7</sup> I was also warned about the opposition I may face in my life due to the change of faith, but [he] encouraged me to stand strong, that the church will give me spiritual support'.<sup>8</sup>

Spiritual authority in a believer should be operated with an attitude of service and fellowship. It cannot be exercised using a secular understanding of authority. Spiritual

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<sup>6</sup> D' Souza, "The Charismatic," 171.

<sup>7</sup> Jacobite Syrian Christian Church commonly and erroneously referred to as 'Jacobite' is an integral part of the Syriac Orthodox Church headed by the Syriac Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch.

<sup>8</sup> Interview, Ponnamma, Kottayam, 12 January, 2015.

authority is not about one person ruling over the other, but rather it is concerned with mutual respect and love. Moltmann states that the Spirit is felt as a revitalising energy for a charismatic Christian. He does not see the Spirit as the distributor of gifts but instead sees the Spirit himself as being poured out through the gifts.<sup>9</sup> The Neocharismatics believe that spiritual authority is given to people as a gift from God and that any such gifts given should be used to glorify God. Moltmann refers to the pictures drawn in the earlier times that had a form of halo, which was understood to depict the shining power of God. This was seen to communicate that a life which is charismatically possessed becomes the image of God and is illuminated with God's glory.<sup>10</sup> In the healing crusades and conventions the gospel ministers are people with special gifts, mostly in healing, and in having command over the demons. They feel that because they exercise spiritual authority, they are above others and beyond question. Our embodied gifts from God are the proof of divine radiance in us: we may not be aware of them, but other people who look at us may see the light.

### **5.1.3 Church beyond Boundaries**

Neocharismatic churches are not merely places of worship and spirituality based on the Pentecostal understanding; rather they are places that bring in people from different walks of life. For example, several Neocharismatic groups host fellowships specifically for businessmen. The Heavenly Feast leader blogged that, 'Kerala has all the resources to attract global investment and tourism, but none dare to invest as they are not sure what will happen next'.<sup>11</sup> Yong states, Pentecostals influenced by North American fundamentalism in the early part of the twentieth century, have been biblical literalists

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<sup>9</sup>Jürgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation*(London: SCM, 1992), 195..

<sup>10</sup>Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, 196.

<sup>11</sup>Tangu Brother, 'Kerala Global Investment,' Blogg, <http://www.theheavenlyfeast.org/blog/kerala-global-investment/> (18 January, 2016).

who have interpreted the Bible directly.<sup>12</sup> Pentecostals have always focused on Jesus as the coming King and hence emphasised mission and evangelism over any political and business engagement.<sup>13</sup> Many Pentecostals believe that they are the mouthpiece of God, and thus they should not propagate the ideology of a particular party (although they do believe they have the right to speak against oppression and injustice).<sup>14</sup> Since the beginning of the Pentecostal movement in India, it has stayed away from business and politics, most likely because the church had humble beginnings and none of its early pioneers were influential in the society. In Indian politics, it is commonly thought that, ‘might is right’. Democracy in India legitimises the mighty, and the rich rarely think the same as the majority thinks.

However, at present, Pentecostal believers are politically involved in several parts of the state. The Pentecostal media in Kerala appreciate and promote such people and the churches seek their help at times of need. In the recent government elections in 2015, several believers were elected as representatives of political parties.<sup>15</sup> Many in the Pentecostal churches believe that politics helps them to be involved in the social struggles of the people. Furthermore, when Pentecostal believers get involved in the social struggle, they are able to combat corruption and attempt to ensure justice. Moreover, in the context of Indian politics, parties always prefer to co-operate with groups that have a major vote share, and at the present time, the Pentecostals have a majority of the vote share in a few constituencies in Kerala. We see, therefore, political leaders on Pentecostal and Neocharismatic convention platforms greeting the audience.

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<sup>12</sup> Amos Yong, *In the Days of Caesar: Pentecostalism and Political Theology*, (Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 2010), 4.

<sup>13</sup> Yong, *In the Days of Caesar*, 5.

<sup>14</sup> Yong, *In the Days of Caesar*, 5. See Allan Anderson with Samuel Otwang, *The Faith of African Pentecostals in South Africa* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1993), 61.

<sup>15</sup> See *Believers Journal* 9/4 (February 25, 2016), 6.

Gabriel writes about what he sees states the true picture of Indian politicians and Pentecostal relations,

Pentecostals in India work at vision that is ever-widening their base. Hence, Pentecostalism in the years ahead could become the only force capable of retarding the influence of renascent Hinduism on the masses. Even in the present, political leaders to seek to befriend Pentecostal churches rather than take issues against them. They like to be seen on the podiums of these churches and make it a point to visit them during election time.<sup>16</sup>

The phenomenon of Pentecostalism gaining political significance is not restricted to India alone. Pentecostals in countries like Brazil, Zambia and Nigeria can be seen to be involved in national politics. For them, the people power of Pentecostalism has created an opportunity to be a social-political force. Pentecostals and Charismatics can be found in the parliaments of the United States, Brazil and several other nations in the world.<sup>17</sup> Heavenly Feast also holds meetings for the public in which political leaders are present, and through this, they tend to establish relationships with both the ruling and opposition parties. The involvement of spiritual communities in politics is not common among the Indian Revival movements. The leaders of these movements have always seen politics and the church as two different entities because the church is believed to maintain God's holiness.

Remarkably, both Pentecostal and Neocharismatic groups in India consider extending the role of the church beyond spiritual matters to business and politics engendering conditions conducive with increased prosperity. In Heavenly Feast and other Neocharismatic churches, most of the business-people donate large sums of money to the ministry on a monthly basis, and encourage other like-minded people to also contribute. It is also observed in this study that the leaders or pastors of these churches come from low income families and hence, possess a large amount of investments and

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<sup>16</sup> Reuben, Louis Gabriel, "Reflections on Indian Pentecostalism: Trends and Issues," *Dharma Deepika* (July- December, 2002): 67-76, (71).

<sup>17</sup> Gabriel, "Reflections on Indian Pentecostalism," 71.

assets in their name. In short, there has been a major shift in the Pentecostalism's entire approach to business and politics in India. Yong suggests that the prophetic nature of Pentecostal rhetoric functions against the perceived evil in the public sphere.<sup>18</sup> He uses examples to highlight the boldness of Pentecostalism in Nigeria and Latin America, where the movement is considered to be anti-establishment. Indian Pentecostal preachers are apolitical in the conventional sense, and yet at the same time their actions are not apolitical. Meanwhile, the Neocharismatic preachers, who are not political, recognise the political leadership although as Yong says, they approach it with a prophetic sense. Paul Dhinakaran, the leader of Jesus Calls ministry in Chennai, visits the chief ministers and other political leaders of different states and shares the love of Christ with them. He has a specific prophetic word for India, as follows:

1. The greater number of jobs will be created in the realm of technologies, Interest rates will increase, buying power will decrease. 2. Deficiency in the availability of certain commodities relating to basic needs. 3. New deceptions to entice the youth to decay spiritually and morally shall rise through new technology. But there will be an army of youth to proclaim God's righteousness through their sacrifice and obedience. They shall shine being bold as a lion doing miracles. 4. Those who obey my commands alone shall be exalted in the country. They will not be the tail, but the head. I will not rest until this is accomplished. 5. There will be overall peace across the land. 6. God's favour will come upon the land with His generosity and blessings showered wherever the gospel has been preached.<sup>19</sup>

The prophecies of the nation can involve believers in the public sphere. The Pentecostal and Neocharismatic churches in India may become involved in politics with an aim to shape society through Pentecostal spirituality and piety. Yong highlights an example from Argentina, to show how a society is transformed when the Pentecostals are actively involved in neighbourhood patronage networks.<sup>20</sup> The Pentecostals have advanced in their thinking on involvement in politics and related activities. However,

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<sup>18</sup> Yong, *In the Days of Caesar*, 12.

<sup>19</sup> No Author, "Prophecies for India as Revealed by God to Dr. Paul Dhinakaran," Jesus Calls Ministries, <http://www.prayertoweronline.org/events/prophecy2016.html>, (03 March, 2016).

<sup>20</sup> Yong, *In the Days of Caesar*, 12.

there are strong oppositions to such an approach within the Church. Nevertheless, the Neocharismatic churches stand together with the leader on issues like politics because the leader of the group decides and implements them.

## **5.2 Baptism in the Spirit–Pentecostal and Charismatic views**

Most of the scholarship acknowledges that the classical Pentecostals maintain the position of baptism in the Holy Spirit, which is evidenced by speaking in tongues. In the Holiness movement Spirit baptism was first seen as designating an experience of entire sanctification.<sup>21</sup> It was developed and further promoted by the support of stories from the Book of Acts and became a norm for the Pentecostals to follow. Today, Pentecostals see the power of the Holy Spirit through supernatural miracles and changing lives. Virtually all Christians believe in the Holy Spirit, but Pentecostals have an intense belief that the Spirit dramatically works in the lives of God’s people.

Satyavarta states that the work of the Spirit is the personal experience of a believer that assumes the reality of the transforming power.<sup>22</sup> For Pentecostals, the Holy Spirit transforms life during an encounter with the living God through Jesus Christ. Every person goes through this experience, which revolutionises them radically so that they may forget their past and follow Jesus Christ. While discussing about the complexity of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit within Pentecostalism, Chan comments, ‘what comes through over and over again in their discussions and writings is a certain kind of spiritual experience of an intense, direct, and overwhelming nature focused on the Person of Christ which they schematize as “baptism in the Holy Spirit” ’.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, a generation that desperately seeks a genuine encounter with the ultimate reality can be advised to come to the Saviour.

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<sup>21</sup>Ledrelie, *Theology*, 139.

<sup>22</sup>Satyavarta, *The Holy Spirit*, 18.

<sup>23</sup> Simon Chan, *Pentecostal Theology and the Christian Spiritual Tradition* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003), 7.

Each independent church has stories of the Spirit working in the lives of people. For Neocharismatics, to have God in the daily life of individuals is seen as the experience of Spirit baptism. They believe that Spirit baptism, which is seen as always strengthening their lives is more than a one-time experience. The Spirit is not a visitor in worship services, but has a primary place in the life of a believer. He is active and helps as a counsellor in difficult situations. The Neocharismatics realise that the presence of the Holy Spirit is as relevant to the Church today as He was in the first century. The pneumatology of both the Pentecostals and the Neocharismatics emerged as a response to the context at the time. For example, as identified in Chapter two, Pentecostalism in the early twentieth century in India emerged as a movement of the Holy Spirit's power and was a response to the unimpassioned spirituality of the older churches.

Neocharismatics have followed the same path of the Pentecostals and claim that they are the result of several divisions in the church over a period of a hundred years.

D'Souza asserts that as the church progresses, faith and practices get revised in the context of new experiences.<sup>24</sup> The Neocharismatics believe that the same faith in God that was so prevalent in the early Church is also present among them.<sup>25</sup> They believe that all manifestations of the Holy Spirit, even if they are extraordinary, are real and they are given to them as a gift from God.

The extraordinary manifestations of the Holy Spirit are normally seen in the Western Charismatic movements like the Word of Faith. In a study about the Spirit manifestations in the "Toronto Blessing" Poloma identified more than fourteen different types of manifestations, which included holy laughter, falling backwards, resting in the Spirit, stimulating child birth, uncontrolled jerking, roaring like a lion and so on.<sup>26</sup>

Some of these manifestations are also popular among the Neocharismatics in India.

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<sup>24</sup> D' Souza, "The Charismatic," 179.

<sup>25</sup> K. C. Kunjachan, Heavenly Feast, Kottayam, 12 January, 2015.

<sup>26</sup> Poloma, "The 'Toronto Blessing' in Postmodern Society," 369.

Falling in the Spirit (or being “slain in the spirit”) is common among these groups. Charismatics use such manifestations to designate the supposed movement of the Spirit upon a person. It is explained that when the Holy Spirit heavily descends upon a person, the person is “slain” and falls down to the ground and is completely under the influence of the same Spirit.<sup>27</sup> Such experiences are explained as the ‘visitation of the Holy Spirit’ and are understood to be equivalent to the baptism in the Spirit. The Neocharismatic churches were founded by evangelists who had local roots, and as mentioned in Chapter Four, most also had an affiliation with a local Pentecostal church. These evangelists left their local Pentecostal churches with only basic knowledge and experience of running a church. The general lack of prerequisite credentials for leadership in the local church setting in India has helped these evangelists to declare their leadership of the newly-founded Neocharismatic churches and start ministering in the local area. They interpret any primary spiritual experience of their adherents as the manifestation of the Holy Spirit and consider such experiences equal in importance to the doctrine of baptism in the Spirit of the Pentecostals. This is done primarily because they expect to have supernatural activity in the ministry, so that people may believe in, and become part of, their church.

In most cases, the leader or preacher touches the foreheads of churchgoers causing them to fall down. People wait for the preacher to come and touch them and they fall as a group, all at once. Benny Hinn commonly performs this in his meetings. There is an ambiguity about such manifestations as they lack clarity. It could be argued that such performances are nothing more than the emotional expression of a person since they are unverifiable and ostentatious. It is dangerous to place significant emphasis on such an experience if practised in isolation, without support from the Scriptures and the practice

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<sup>27</sup> Matt, Slick, “What Does it mean to be Slain in the Spirit,” <https://carm.org/questions/about-church/what-does-it-mean-be-slain-spirit>, (22 January, 2016).

of the early church.<sup>28</sup> The Spirit baptism should allow the believer to discern the reality and vitality of the Scripture based on their experience. To be baptised in the Holy Spirit is an expression gleaned from the Scripture. Jesus said to His disciples, ‘...You have heard from Him; for John truly baptised with water, but you shall be baptised with the Holy Spirit not many days from now...But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth’ (Acts. 1:4-5, 8). The first century Church witnessed Christ as a result of being baptised in the Holy Spirit. Primarily, the power of God is more essential than emotional experiences in being able to witness for Christ and preach the gospel to the world.

Anderson states that the central concern of Pentecostals is to live a life by faith in Christ by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.<sup>29</sup> It has to be accepted that some Pentecostals have fallen from the state of living in the Spirit and have lost the power of God to witness for Christ. Many others may struggle to keep up the expected standards of the Scripture. Meanwhile, the Spirit is at work in many countries in the world and Pentecostalism is advancing with a passion to evangelize the world. Most Pentecostals believe in a ‘subsequent’ experience of Spirit baptism. In the book of Acts the Spirit baptism is characterised by a missiological bent, and the pneumatology of both Pentecostals and Neocharismatics has this missiological meaning, that the Spirit enables a person to witness for Christ.

In the Old Testament great significance is given to the life-giving role of the Holy Spirit. This was already firmly established in the first passage of the Bible in which the Spirit of God is mentioned. The word *rûach* is used 377 times<sup>30</sup> and translated as

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<sup>28</sup>Quebedeaux, *The New Charismatics*, 124.

<sup>29</sup> Anderson, *An Introduction*, 188.

<sup>30</sup> The number differs in different authors. For Moltmann it is 380 times. (Jürgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation* (London: SCM, 1992), 40. )

“breath”, “wind,” “air” or soul<sup>31</sup>. Turner records that, the word *rûach* originally denoted air in movement, but by the time of earliest OT writings, it carried the idea of senses, including wind, breath, human vitality, mood, inclination, mind or inner being.<sup>32</sup> From the creation narrative, the Spirit hovers over a chaotic creation as a force that preserves life (Gen.1:2). It is the same Spirit that breathed life into the nostrils of Adam. The Spirit soon takes on a new role in the story, blowing the floodwaters away from the deluge so Noah’s ark could rest on dry land. Furthermore, Moses and the Israelites song says that ‘you blew with your wind (*rûach*), the sea covered them...’ (Exodus 15:10)... Although, the image of wind / Spirit is portrayed as giving life, saving life and taking life, the most important role of the Spirit is as a life giver in the OT. Ultimately breath signifies the activity of life.

The NT writers used *pneuma* 250 times, in most cases translating the word as “Spirit” and in another 49 cases as “wind.”<sup>33</sup> Kilian McDonnell makes an interesting observation, that just as a dove brought good news of dry land to the floating ark of Noah, so the Spirit proclaims a baptized Jesus to a broken world.<sup>34</sup> In the discourse to Nicodemus in John chapter three Jesus mentions that the birth by Spirit is the spiritual birth. The Spirit does not merely cause the birth but also sustains the new life because the Spirit dwells in the believer.<sup>35</sup> The life giving Spirit enables a believer throughout life and always helps them to have a direct experience with Him. In the experience of the Spirit, God is not a detached counterpart but primal and embracing presence.<sup>36</sup> When Pentecostals usually place an emphasis on the life-giving Spirit, at the time of new

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<sup>31</sup>Friedrich Baumgärtel, “Pneuma,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids: Erdmans, 1976), 360.

<sup>32</sup> M. Turner, “Holy Spirit,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. Alexander T. Desmond (England: Inter Varsity Press, 2000), 836.

<sup>33</sup> E. Kamlah, “Spirit,” in *Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 690-692 (690).

<sup>34</sup> Kilian McDonnell, *The Baptism of Jesus in Jordan: The Trinitarian and Cosmic Order of Salvation* (Collegeville, Liturgical Press, 1996). 128.

<sup>35</sup> Cornelis Bennema, *Excavating John’s Gospel: A commentary for Today* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2005), 46.

<sup>36</sup> Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, 196.

experiences, the Neocharismatics, in contrast, focus on daily Spirit-filled experiences. It is important both for Pentecostals and Neocharismatics that doctrinal issues like Spirit baptism cannot be easily detached from the spiritual framework, since these doctrinal issues through experiences shape their theological understanding of how God is at work.

### **5.2.1 Experience of the Spirit – Jürgen Moltmann**

Most Pentecostals and Charismatics believe that the Holy Spirit is a person who is active and functionally within the Church. The word ‘holy’ restricts the Holy Spirit to a narrower notion of experience: believers tend to limit the manifestation of the Spirit to worship, meditation on God’s Word, speaking in tongues, performing healing and miracles or any other such spiritual behaviour. The German Reformed theologian Jürgen Moltmann developed a holistic pneumatology relating to the daily life of a believer in the secular world. He recognises the restrictions mentioned above as part of the problem in understanding the Holy Spirit. Beck states that the problem Moltmann sees in a very narrow approach is that the Holy Spirit is thought to be too holy to be concerned with everyday life.<sup>37</sup> Moltmann emphasised that the Spirit is not to be conceived within the sacrament and the ministry, but rather this should be understood to lie within the movement of the Spirit. The ministry of the church in the power of the Spirit to the public is an important aspect in the pneumatology of Moltmann. This is where his theology can be applied to the Pentecostal movement. His book *The Spirit of Life* interacts with Pentecostal and Charismatic perspectives. He interrogates Western thinking which asserts that the Spirit can only be accessed either by revelation or by experience. This reflects the “theology from above” and “theology from below” proposed by Barth and other dialectical theologians. Moltmann argues that this theory

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<sup>37</sup> T. David Beck, *The Holy Spirit and the Renewal of All Things: Pneumatology in Paul and Jürgen Moltmann* (Eugene, OR: PICKWICK, 2007), 180.

offers a false dichotomy because the Spirit cannot be revealed unless experienced and the Holy Spirit is not experienced unless revealed.<sup>38</sup> If a church feels that God's Spirit is bound to sacraments, authority, institutions and the ministry, such thoughts impoverish the congregation. The Spirit does not stay in the church but migrates to spontaneous groups where the Spirit is welcomed wholeheartedly.<sup>39</sup> The Pentecostals and neocharismatics allow the Spirit to function freely and become attuned to Him. It is evident from the worship services of the Neocharismatics that they obey the Spirit much better than the Pentecostals do. They accept any manifestation of the Spirit without further question. The very confession of a person that "God loves me" exhibits their own indestructible and inalienable dignity. Although it is a simple confession, they experience the Spirit inwardly.<sup>40</sup> The presence of the Holy Spirit allows people to participate in the eternal life of God and He thus participates in their transitory life.<sup>41</sup>

### **5.2.2 The New Community in the Spirit – Clark H. Pinnock**

Clark H. Pinnock was raised as a Baptist, but as he experienced the baptism in the Holy Spirit and the subsequent healing of his poor eyesight in 1982, he became closely acquainted to the Pentecostal and renewal movements.<sup>42</sup> Pinnock is well known to Pentecostals as a theologian who emphasises the need for a bounded Pentecostal theology, exhorting Pentecostals to follow a more reflective theology of their experience with the Holy Spirit, rather than an inherited scholastic theology.<sup>43</sup> There is a significant openness in his theology with regards to the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Although there are various terms for his experience such as "Spirit indwelling", "Spirit

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<sup>38</sup> Kirsteen Kim, *The Holy Spirit in the World: A Global Conversation* (New York: Orbis Books, 2007), 60.

<sup>39</sup> Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, 2.

<sup>40</sup> Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, 3.

<sup>41</sup> Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, 196.

<sup>42</sup> Clark H. Pinnock, "Church in the Power of the Holy Spirit: The Promise of Pentecostal Ecclesiology" *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 14/2,(2006): 148, 147-165.

<sup>43</sup> Clark H. Pinnock, "Divine Rationality: A Pentecostal Contribution to the Doctrine of God" *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 16/2,(2000): 22, 3-26.

anointing” and “Spirit infilling”, Pinnock encourages people to receive this spiritual phenomenon irrespective of the names they call it. He also observes that ‘the graciously given presence of the Spirit is surely the most wonderful thing one experiences and that which brings God unspeakably close.’<sup>44</sup> In writing about the Spirit, Pinnock remarks that, ‘There is a flowing that manifests itself as power to bear witness, heal the sick, prophesy, praise God enthusiastically, perform miracles and more.’<sup>45</sup> He recognises that knowing the Spirit is experiential, and that the work of the Spirit is concerned with transforming of individuals, rather than the transmission of information.<sup>46</sup> Pinnock presents the Holy Spirit as one whom he has personally experienced. Pinnock identifies the need for the presence and gifts of the Holy Spirit in Christian ministry in order to revitalise the mission for Jesus Christ in contemporary society.<sup>47</sup>

Another significant aspect of Pinnock’s pneumatology is his recognition of the Charismatic community as a genuine movement of the Holy Spirit. He writes, “I agree with Karl Barth that there may often be too little of the pneumatic in the Church, but never too much. Therefore, it thrills my soul to see multitudes of people allowing the Spirit to operate freely in their midst’.<sup>48</sup> Studebaker identifies that the Charismatic movement provided a way for Pinnock to correct what he perceived to be the imbalance of expression of Christian faith and helped him to achieve a dynamic form of spirituality.<sup>49</sup> While Pinnock embraces the work of the Holy Spirit, he also realises the risk in any call for openness. He states that, ‘under the guise of Charism, there can be undocumented claims, irresponsible prophecies, elitism, charismania. There can be

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<sup>44</sup> Clark H. Pinnock, “The Recovery of the Holy Spirit in Evangelical Theology”, *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 13/1,(2004):4, 3–18.

<sup>45</sup> Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 129.

<sup>46</sup> Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 14.

<sup>47</sup> Samuel, “The Practice of Popular Manifestations,” 98.

<sup>48</sup> Clark H. Pinnock, “The New Pentecostalism: Reflections by a Well-Wisher”, *Christianity Today* 17 (June, 1974): 6, 4 –12.

<sup>49</sup> Steven M. Studebaker, “Clark H. Pinnock: A Canadian Charismatic Pilgrim” [https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/cjpcc/01-1\\_001.pdf](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/cjpcc/01-1_001.pdf) , (accessed on 1 March, 2017), 7.

inspired utterances that contradict the word of Scripture and refuse to be subject to the discernment of the community'.<sup>50</sup> As a theologian who observed the Neocharismatic movement with great interest Pinnock cautions against three potential dangers the movement might face. First of all, any questions related to the manifestation of the Holy Spirit are directed towards personal experience. Second, Pinnock observes that it is easy to equate the presence of the Spirit with changing human emotions. God's promises concerning the manifestation of the Holy Spirit should not be devalued in this way. His third observation is the impression that believers ought to change in two movements of faith, one in Jesus Christ for salvation and the other is in His Spirit for power. This dual faith leads to tri-theism. It is not that the Church practices communion separately with the three persons of the Godhead, but rather they trust and believe in the triune God.<sup>51</sup> Pinnock identifies that the leaders of churches impede revival if they are not cautious. Although leaders are important to churches, it is important that community is not too tightly controlled by them; rather leaders should foster life and discern the gifts of the Spirit of those who are under their care.<sup>52</sup> The Church is a place of mutual concern and order in which both the leaders and lay people should function together for common good. Pinnock calls it "harmonious synergism" (of gifts and offices).<sup>53</sup> Moltmann and Pinnock, both non-Pentecostal theologians, base their writings on the Holy Spirit according to the teachings of the Scriptures. What is seen in their work is a significant openness towards the presence and manifestation of the Holy Spirit. Both affirm the need for vitality in communities which are charismatically-empowered through the power of the Holy Spirit, so that they may witness Christ and work towards the common good. Pinnock strongly opposes the notion of power fixation associated

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<sup>50</sup> Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 139.

<sup>51</sup> Pinnock, "New Pentecostalism", 8-10.

<sup>52</sup> Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 140.

<sup>53</sup> Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 140.

with the Charismatics. The Spirit led Jesus in to the wilderness and the same Spirit bids believers to share the suffering of Christ. He tries to balance the theological view of Christian suffering and triumphalism through the Holy Spirit. Pinnock records that ‘the charismatic life can be a partially trodden mystical way where the facet of struggle is suppressed, where the element of “the dark night of the soul” may be eclipsed.’<sup>54</sup> Moltmann’s connection with the charismatic pneumatology is optimistic and helped him to have a concern for spiritual gifts as a means of holistic liberation. His view of the eschatological nature of the Spirit as the life giving Spirit applies to the Neocharismatic movement. The Neocharismatics emphasis is on the Spirit filled life which enables a person to overcome struggles in life. Moltmann’s pneumatology is relative to the life and ministry of Jesus Christ on earth. The Spirit of life is intricately related to Jesus Christ in his ministry of forgiveness of sin and healing the sick which helps the Neocharismatics to identify with Moltman’s pneumatology. The Spirit grants us a proleptic foretaste of what is yet to come in God’s kingdom. Both Moltmann and Pinnock’s pneumatology promotes Christian principles based on the Scriptures and encourages the believing community to live by the unity of the Holy Spirit.

#### **5.4.3 Faith that Claims Human Desires.**

The basic epistemology of Christian theology is drawn from the Scriptures that we explain that we know by faith, not by sight and that faith is a gift from God through the Holy Spirit. (Hebrews 11:1; Ephesians 2:8). Tomlin says that faith comes about through a variety of means such as testimony of Scripture, intellectual enquiry and personal experience.<sup>55</sup> The early Pentecostals reject the use of medicine as evidence of a strong faith. There are plenty of testimonies of miraculous healing from severe diseases. There

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<sup>54</sup> Clark Pinnock, “The Recovery of the Holy Spirit in Evangelical Theology” in *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 13.1(2004): 16, 3–18.

<sup>55</sup> Graham Tomlin, *The Prodigal Spirit: The Trinity, the Church and the Future of the World* (London: Alpha, 2011) 61.

were many who kept their faith in those early days of Pentecostalism in India. Among the early Pentecostals in the twentieth century, faith was mostly exercised in healing from sickness and calling for God's provision.

It can be seen that Neocharismatic spirituality identifies the law of faith as the most important concept to live by in daily life. They claim that if a person confesses or prays with faith then anything is possible.<sup>56</sup> Believers are encouraged to pray for things that cannot be accomplished by mere human abilities. For example, one of the believers shared a story of a person named, Mohan, a churchgoer from Kottayam, who was in need of a large van for his business. Someone informed him about a Neocharismatic church that meets in the city centre and in which miracles were being witnessed on a daily basis. Mohan attended a worship service at this church, and when the preacher asked everyone to come to the front and pray for their needs, Mohan also prayed. He shared his needs with a cell group leader who was his neighbour. However, even after months of prayer, Mohan's desire was not fulfilled and consequently, he never returned to that church.<sup>57</sup> There are plenty of people like Mohan who attend Neocharismatic meetings in the hope of receiving material blessings or physical healings.

The Neocharismatics, like the Word of Faith Movement believe that faith is as a raw material from which everything is made.<sup>58</sup> Faith is interpreted as a tangible gift that reveals God's resources to people who are in need. God is pictured as a source of material wealth with plenty of resources that can be supplied to believers whenever they ask for it. This poses a problem in our knowledge of God. Immanuel Kant in the eighteenth century shed light on the human conception of the knowledge of God. Our subjective picture of God brought about a new level of understanding of the world.

Based on practical philosophy, Kant proves that human experience is only based on the

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<sup>56</sup> Participant Observation, Heavenly Feast, 12 January, 2015.

<sup>57</sup> Paappachan shared this experience in one of the informal meeting in Eranakulam.

<sup>58</sup> Perriman, *Faith*, 138.

representation of a necessary connection of perceptions.<sup>59</sup> All that we can be sure about from our perception is that there is a God as well as a world outside. The theological problem occurs when people try to access God in order to have pleasurable and comfortable living in the world. Schleiermacher's theological thinking towards human experience reconstructed knowing God from a Divine-human to a human-Divine approach. He explained that the problem is not so much in God revealing Himself to us, but whether we have the apparatus to receive that revelation.<sup>60</sup> Nevertheless, in reality faith becomes a tangible experience of the reality of God, and specifically an experience of the love of God. More than claiming a favour and gift from God, one should aim to divert their personal experience to God, who revealed himself through His son Jesus Christ. Even if personal desires are not satisfied, our faith in God may be strengthened. NT writers never contemplated a faith which was devoid of obedience to God's Word. The Neocharismatics place emphasis that a believer can claim anything they need.

#### **5.4 Healing and Miracles**

One of the unique characteristics of the Neocharismatic movement is its emphasis on healing and miracles. The gospel accounts accord that the ministry of Jesus Christ on the earth is not only about the proclamation of the Kingdom but also healing and performing miracles. Healing becomes an important element of the evangelism of the Church after Jesus performed both healings and exorcisms in his public ministry. Before His ascension the gospel also witnessed that the spiritual authority is passed on to his disciples to enable them heal and cast out demons. Welker observes that anyone who comes to Him in faith has the freedom to use the power in His name.<sup>61</sup>

Pentecostals and Charismatics exercise the gifts to heal, to cast out demons and other

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<sup>59</sup> Immanuel Kant, "The Critique of Pure Reason: Preface to the Second edition," translated by J.M.D. Meiklejohn, [www.msnencarta.com](http://www.msnencarta.com), (accessed 15 February, 2016).

<sup>60</sup> Tomlin, *The Prodigal Spirit*, 62.

<sup>61</sup> Michael Welker, *God the Spirit*, (Minneapolis; Fortress Press, 1992), 196.

miraculous signs, more than any other Christian movement. Healing ministries need to be based not merely on God's word.<sup>62</sup> Fundamentally, healing has played a significant role in the growth of Pentecostals and Neocharismatic churches in India. In the northern part of India, people who are unable to travel to medical and hospital facilities, primarily due to poverty, recognise Jesus as their healer.<sup>63</sup> In contrast, it can be observed in the south of India, where better medical aid and travel facilities are more readily available, that Pentecostals no longer practise a complete dependence on God for healing in ways that were practised by the early Pentecostals. However, despite less dependence on healing on the part of existing followers, the Neocharismatics in Kerala still place prime emphasis on healing as it serves as a platform to bring people to their meetings. For example, one can easily find flyers advertising "healing crusades" accompanied with the photo of the prominent local preacher around local towns and advertised in the daily newspapers. Hundreds of people attend such healing crusades, and because of this, the leaders find themselves becoming recognized and they then expect their churches to grow. If healings and miracles take place in the meetings, they are used to promote the ministry of the individual leader, with the aim that they will be invited as a guest to the prayer meetings or crusades of other like-minded groups and churches. Other gifts of the Spirit can be witnessed, such as prophecy, which includes a preacher calling people by their names. It's also possible to observe a word of wisdom and other manifestations of the Spirit, all of which are enthusiastically embraced by the Neocharismatics. In these ways, they offer a challenge to the traditional Protestant churches and particularly to Pentecostals.

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<sup>62</sup> Joy Kachappilly. "Healing as an Integral Element of Evangelization" *Mission Today* XVIII (2016): 4, 4-9.

<sup>63</sup> Abraham, "Ordinary Christology," 195.

Anderson is correct in his observation that many Pentecostals have rejected the Word of Faith's biblical teachings on healing because of inconsistencies.<sup>64</sup> Pentecostals in Kerala often view the Spirit manifestations in Neocharismatic churches with an element of doubt and disregard their spirituality as based on elementary principles. The Pentecostals believe that God can heal people, but such healings should lead them to be true followers of Jesus Christ. In many cases, however, the healing of people from dreadful illnesses have been used as an opportunity to promote the church and its ministry, and some people who claim healing are not part of the worshipping community. In one notable example, a Neocharismatic church declares that instance, that a person's cancer had been totally healed. The person who had been apparently healed was taken to different public meetings of the church in order that he could share his testimony, but after three years, this particular individual died of the same sickness.<sup>65</sup> This anecdote is popular among the observers of such healing crusades in Kerala and it questions the authenticity of these churches' claims of healing. The Neocharismatic movements' emphasis is on physical healing rather than the healing of mental illness or emotional problems. It could be argued, therefore, that the belief in the Spirit's capacity to engender a total healing of an individual could be questioned. The spirituality of a movement forms its theology. Therefore, in considering the development of a Charismatic theology it is important to understand its spiritual practices including that of healing, since this is particularly significant to the Neocharismatics. According to Moltmann, along with the proclamation of the gospel, the healing of the sick was Jesus' most important testimony in proclaiming the dawning of God's Kingdom.<sup>66</sup> Martin refers to healing as a particular charismatic specification of the general power to preach the gospel conferred upon the whole body of believers

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<sup>64</sup> Anderson, *To the Ends*, 222.

<sup>65</sup> Kochumon, Focus group, Kottayam, 18 January, 2015.

<sup>66</sup> Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, 188.

and realised in different ways within the body.<sup>67</sup> James 5:13-16 described the function of the healing ministry in the early Church. In the early Church, a physically weak person may call the elders in the community (church) that they may anoint the weak with oil and pray with faith in the name of the Lord. Healings need to be acknowledged as tokens of faith in Christ. In the context of faith, healings are signs of a new creation and a rebirth of life with Jesus Christ. Moltmann further explains this concept and states that Jesus did not heal all the sick; rather that healing through Jesus Christ is ‘about an *interaction between Jesus and expectation*, a person’s faith and will’.<sup>68</sup> Healings take place not as contrived, but contingent. They occur when God wills. It is not necessarily that healings are set within a guided framework, or repeated in all instances.

Moltmann takes a different approach to healing and says that ‘Jesus healing power is not to be found in his supreme power over sickness and disease. His power to heal is *the power of his suffering*’.<sup>69</sup> Isaiah 53:5 records that ‘...with his stripes we are healed’. Jesus heals people today by carrying our sickness on His body. The vicarious sufferings of Jesus on the cross bring change by the faith in which sick person believes. Such theological observations on healing certainly contradict the way that Neocharismatics practise healing and promote their “healing” activities. In Neocharismatic healing meetings, it is common to hear the minister, at the end of a sermon, announcing that the Holy Spirit had healed someone in the congregation. This could be described as the healing of pain in different organs of the body, or a tumour (usually in the belly) disappearing. Invisible sicknesses are also claimed to have been healed in most of the meetings. People who are healed from their sickness are brought to the platform and encouraged to share their experience with the congregation. There are no medical

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<sup>67</sup> F. Martin, ‘Healing, Gift Of’ in *IDPCM*, ed. Stanley M. Burgees and Gary B. McGee (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998) 696.

<sup>68</sup> Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, 190.

<sup>69</sup> Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, 191.

facilities or personnel present to verify these experiences. Kathryn Kuhlman (1907-76), a leading healing evangelist in America, was conscious of the need to verify the miracle claims that were heard in her ministry. She also accepted criticism and other negative evaluations which led to a comprehensive analysis.<sup>70</sup> It is interesting to note that many of the healing crusaders in India do not accept criticism, and indeed preach against anyone who attempts to do so. Therefore, people are reluctant to evaluate such phenomena, and instead, simply accept everything as it is presented. As closely as I have observed the healing ministries of Pentecostal, Charismatic and Neocharismatic movements in Kerala in the recent past, I have not known of any record of a significant healing of a blind, lame or deaf person. In evaluating the healing ministry of Neocharismatics in India, based on Moltmann's theology on healing, there are two things in particular that should be noted.

First of all, the Neocharismatics attempt to teach that sickness hinders one's ability to come to Jesus because sickness is the activity of the devil, and understood as both sin and sickness. Healing is thought to help a person defeat the devil and fully concentrate on Jesus. People who come to Jesus for healing are not referred to as sinners but sick. Although the Pharisees were eager to know the reason behind a sickness, Jesus always disappointed them by not explaining the reason. All the Neocharismatics in Kerala known to me believe that children of God always have the right to be healthy. They believe that a child of God has the right to be physically well because they are in a relationship with their heavenly Father who is good and does not do evil to His own children. Healing is seen as a result of the healer exercising his or her spiritual authority. In most cases, the preacher in a public meeting prays for the sick and allows the person who has been healed to testify to the congregation. I suggest that this is often

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<sup>70</sup> R.A.N. Kydd, "Healing in the Christian Church," in IDPCM, *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, ed. Stanley M. Burgees and Gary B. McGee (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 710.

done with the aim of promoting the ministry of the evangelist rather than to glorify the name of God. As established, the Neocharismatics have been influenced by the Word of Faith movement, as they both emphasize divine healing as the right of a child of God.

This is a major pneumatological departure from the Pentecostals.

Emphasis on divine healing is a significant aspect in both Pentecostal and Neocharismatic movements in India. Jesus' ministry was to heal both physical and mental ailments of a person, thereby restoring their fellowship with God.<sup>71</sup> Jesus was a healer of body, mind and soul; he saw wholeness and the wellbeing of the total person.<sup>72</sup> Although the healing of the body is given a prominent place in the Neocharismatic worship in India, it is doubtful that many sick people are restored back to their relationship with God.

The second aspect is the relationship between suffering and healing in the Bible. The Neocharismatics do not have such an emphasis on the suffering of the believer as the Pentecostals do. As mentioned in the second chapter, Pentecostalism in the twentieth century has been popularised among those who in society who could be described as weak and suffering. The people sought God in their struggles of life. At present the Neocharismatics believe and teach that God's children do not need to suffer in life, because God is merciful, and provides and blesses His people. Therefore, many people in the Neocharismatic churches do not grasp the value of Christ's suffering on the cross. For Moltmann, 'God heals the sickness and griefs by making the sickness and the griefs His suffering and his grief.'<sup>73</sup> He presents Christ as identifying with the physical sickness of people and thereby embracing them to have a new life in Him. The Neocharismatic movement teaches that if healing is in the atonement of Christ, then the certainty of the healing is as important as salvation. The Pentecostals also emphasize

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<sup>71</sup> Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, 191.

<sup>72</sup> Kachappilly. "Healing as an Integral Element of Evangelization", 19.

<sup>73</sup> Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, 191.

healing as an important factor, but maintain a position that not all sickness can be healed. It depends on the purpose for which God allows a person to suffer. Many Pentecostal pioneers died with sickness believing that God can heal; death was also considered as a way of healing from all physical sufferings.

The healing ministry thus became an important method for the Church to proclaim the wholeness of the salvation message. The Neocharismatic leaders, while performing a healing ministry, must see it as a gratuitous ministry which aims at the total well-being of the sick. I suggest that such practices should not be charged for, nor should the ministries who conduct healing claim gifts of any form from the beneficiaries. The commercialization of healing is not a gospel method to follow. In addition, churches should focus on praying for people in private rather than making it a public performance.

### **5.5 Revival Versus Renewal**

The spiritual awakening, particularly the specific manifestations of the Holy Spirit began to spread across the world in the middle of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century – a phenomenon which can be understood as the continuing activity of the Spirit that began in the first century church. Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal historians see the founding of the Pentecostal movement as a result of this revival. As mentioned in Chapter Two, Neocharismatic movements are the result of this awakening within Christianity. In contrast, the Indian Neocharismatic movement claims to be the result of a fresh revival that occurred after the 1980s. They see Pentecostalism as a separate movement that could not accomplish what the Holy Spirit intended them to do. Therefore, they feel that the mantle has been passed to the Neocharismatics to accomplish what the Pentecostals did not. This section is an evaluation of this claim of the Neocharismatics in light of the historical and theological evidence.

Christian life is one that is lived with the help of the Holy Spirit. The Bible is replete with references to the interaction of the Holy Spirit with God's people.<sup>74</sup> Yong explains three different perspectives on the human- divine interaction. First of all, the Spirit is depicted as an embodied Spirit who cultivates life in order to bring a person to salvation and lead a life that produces the fruits of the Spirit. Secondly, the Spirit is seen as a guide that leads that person to the truth about Jesus Christ and promotes spirituality in them. The third function of the Spirit, according to Yong, is to empower that person and endow them with insight not previously possessed, which leads them to divine action.<sup>75</sup> God's Spirit changes the life of a person and reveals His power in and through them. Each individual experiences the Spirit in some form, although the measure of such experiences differs according to the will of God. For Paul, it is God Himself who bestows the Spirit to whom He wills. However, God does not make Himself known to a single individual alone, nor does He act only in a particular place or among a particular group.<sup>76</sup>

When they experience the power and presence of the Holy Spirit, Neocharismatics assume that this is a fresh start specially sent from God only to them. Many believers in these churches are under such an impression that their church is the only true church and that their leader is somehow singularly correct and truthful. It is perhaps unsurprising then that many of these believers attend Sunday worship services only if the leader is present. Welker records that God acts in and through people in our times, irrespective of their geographical location, but also in times both before and after us.<sup>77</sup> God exercises an influence on us through individual people, through whom we may come to know the Lord. The leaders of the Neocharismatic groups and independent

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<sup>74</sup> Amos, Yong. *The Spirit Renews the Face of the Earth* (Eugene, Oregon: PICKWICK, 2009), 192.

<sup>75</sup> Yong, *The Spirit*, 193.

<sup>76</sup> Michael, Welker. *God the Spirit* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 3.

<sup>77</sup> Welker. *God the Spirit*, 3.

churches are usually led to the Lord by someone who shared the gospel with them or prayed for them.

Historically, the Neocharismatics are the most recent of the Spirit-filled movements. Classical and indigenous Pentecostals, Charismatics, and Neocharismatics are different movements that have developed as a result of the work of the Holy Spirit. Historians of Christianity have marked the beginning of the twentieth century as significant for the number of different Spirit-filled revivals that were witnessed in different locations, such as Azusa Street in the United States, Wales in the United Kingdom and the Mukti Mission in India; they resulted in the formation of local churches and the spread of revivals. Christian understanding of evangelism and mission brought forth believers to share the gospel in their native languages. According to Kärkkäinen, for many Christians the presence of the Spirit is just that: a *presence*, but for Pentecostals the Spirit means empowerment.<sup>78</sup> This empowerment helps them to seek to practise gifts of the Holy Spirit such as speaking in tongues, prophecy, and healing, even when such manifestations are absent.<sup>79</sup> By this, Kärkkäinen means that the Spirit enables a person to continue experiencing the after-effects of such Spirit manifestations. In fact, many Pentecostals in India experience the gifts of the Spirit while they are away from a church meeting. Although the Neocharismatics claim that the revival for them is fresh and new, what they need to ensure is that the revival continues in the life of a believer if the believer has had a genuine Spirit experience.

According to Kärkkäinen, Pentecostalism offered a challenge to all who denied the manifestation of the Holy Spirit. It should also be noted that in the present context of India, Pentecostalism has challenged not only the established churches, but all the

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<sup>78</sup>Veli-Matti Karkkainen, "Pneumatologies in Systematic Theology," in *Studying Global Pentecostalism: Theories + Methods*, ed. Allan Anderson, Michael Bergunder, Andre Droogers, Cornelis Van DerLaan (London: University of California Press, 2010), 228.

<sup>79</sup>Karkkainen, "Pneumatologies," 228.

independent Neocharismatic churches that believe that Spirit manifestations can only be known and experienced in a worship service. The Neocharismatic movement is a renewed form of the revivals of the twentieth century. They have gained knowledge about the Spirit experience from both the Pentecostal and the Catholic Charismatic movements. Edward O' Connor also refers to the Charismatic movement as being the result of the Pentecostal-type revivals in the twentieth century.<sup>80</sup> In many charismatic renewals, people who gathered to share their deep religious experience knew no denominational boundaries, and therefore, these were accepted as Spirit renewals in most of the ecumenical circles. The pneumatology of the Neocharismatics is close to that of the Pentecostals with minute differences of interpretation. Although they claim their movement to be a fresh start, there are strong antecedents, such as their theology and leadership, which connects them to the former Pentecostal revivals.

### **5.6 Pentecostal and Neocharismatic Ecclesiology**

With the emergence of new churches and movements after the revivals in the early twentieth century, the question of what we mean by church has been a major concern to many. The divisions between East and the West, Catholic and Protestant, and others, are still encapsulated within the body of what we call 'the Church'. Focusing on the limits of Pentecostalism and Charismatic Christianity in India, it should be understood that these are complex movements with many denominations and free independent churches. Many of these denominations and churches have not even bothered to define the Church; rather they follow some model favourable to them.

The Pentecostals have not sufficiently made an effort to define the Church or its theology. According to Yong, with a greater interest and focus on world mission and evangelism, the Pentecostals have, in fact subordinated the theology of the Church. He

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<sup>80</sup> Edward O'Conner, "The Hidden Roots of the Charismatic Renewal in the Catholic Church," in *Aspects of Pentecostal Charismatic Origins*, ed. Vinson Synan (New Jersey: Logos International, 1975), 172.

refers to Melvin Hodges, a missiologist in the Assemblies of God, who asserts that the Church is not merely a mission agency that travels to the ends of the earth, but it should also minister the gospel in various situations by the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>81</sup> It is clear from the history of Pentecostalism in India that is available, that the prime focus of the Church was to win souls for Christ. Although not on a large scale, Indian Pentecostals have been involved in cross-cultural missions across the nation. Whatever was learnt from the first generation of Indian Pentecostals has been practised by the following generations. One of the oldest theological texts written by an Indian, and used by Indian Pentecostals is *The Ecclesia* by T. G. Oommen. In his book on the Church from a Pentecostal perspective, Oommen explains the New Testament understanding of the Church which leads to worship, ordinance, characteristics, stability, salvation, the return of Christ, and a thousand year reign and the new heaven and new earth.<sup>82</sup> These are significant topics, which formulate the theology of a Pentecostal in India. Chan has urged Pentecostals to rethink their understanding about the Church in the context of the wider Christian spiritual tradition.<sup>83</sup> Pentecostals in India did not consider rethinking their traditional understanding of the Church. The Pentecostal understanding of the Church as a whole exists from their perspective on their view of God. The Eastern view of the Father as the source of the Son and the Spirit has significantly shaped the ecclesial view of the Pentecostals. Yong remarks that the Pentecostal ecclesial relations are symmetrical, but have a hierarchical fashion.<sup>84</sup> Most probably, the bipolarity in the Pentecostal Church between the clergy and laity or the pastor and the believer has derived from the Eastern understanding of God.

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<sup>81</sup> Amos, Yong. *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh: Pentecostalism and the Possibility of a Global Theology* (Michigan: Baker, 2005), 123. See, Melvin L. Hodges, *The Indigenous Church* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1976).

<sup>82</sup> See T. G. Oommen, *The Ecclesia* (Pathanapuram, Kerala: T. G. Oommen Publications, 1991).

<sup>83</sup> Simon Chan, "Mother Church: Toward a Pentecostal Ecclesiology," *Pneuma* 22/2 (2000): 177-208, (186).

<sup>84</sup> Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out*, 126.

There is a strong and a clear distinction between a pastor and the believers in Pentecostal churches. The role of the pastor and the laity is relatively clear, with the former being thought to be bestowed with Charismatic power, and with the latter being actively involved in the ministry. The ministry of the Pastor also differs from that of the evangelists, prophets and teachers.<sup>85</sup> It is generally desirable that the local pastor has a direct calling from God and is expected to be in full time ministry. Pentecostal denominational churches expect their pastors to be trained in the theological colleges owned by their church movement, in order for them to have a strong attachment to that movement. Therefore, people who are trained in other theological institutions are often asked to complete a short term specialised course to qualify for pastoral ministry. This is because theological educators in the past were prone to shun Pentecostals. Hedlund states that Pentecostal beliefs and practices have been ridiculed in the classrooms of ecumenical and evangelical theological institutions. In some colleges, Pentecostal students were discriminated against by the non-Pentecostal faculty and staff.<sup>86</sup> Indeed, some Pentecostal students left their theological studies due to the harassment of the teachers and their fellow students in such institutions. Today the Pentecostals have at least fifteen major theological institutions in India, ten of which are in Kerala.<sup>87</sup> Hedlund identifies more than sixty theological institutions in Kerala, and in the last thirty years, several Indian Pentecostal theologians have been trained at the most prestigious universities in the world. In these ways, Hedlund sees a change in the field of theological education, from “rejection to acceptance.”<sup>88</sup> However, it has also been identified that theological contributions from these Pentecostal theologians are

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<sup>85</sup> Bergunder, *The South Indian*, 192.

<sup>86</sup> Roger E. Hedlund. “Nationalism and the Indian Pentecostal Church of God,” *Indian Church History Review* XXXIX/2 (December, 2005): 91-106, (100).

<sup>87</sup> These are seminaries and Bible Colleges with more than hundred students in residential programmes. There are number of small Bible colleges which train missionaries and pastors.

<sup>88</sup> Hedlund. “Nationalism and the Indian Pentecostal Church of God,” 101.

few. It has been observed that after their theological education, many of these Indian theologians have remained abroad, in the Western countries where they studied, establishing themselves as pastors of Malayalam congregations (and a few in English-speaking churches). Producing theological material for the following generation to use has not been personally beneficial to those theologians. Hence, present-day students in Indian Pentecostal theological institutions depend heavily on materials produced by Catholic theologians in India. Therefore, emerging Pentecostal theologians in India should work towards a Pentecostal theology that is truly indigenous. The change in the social status and education should reflect on the formation of Pentecostal theology as a corrective force.

Yong identifies five major reasons related to Pentecostal ecclesiology. The first is that Pentecostalism in general does not have a formally developed ecclesiology per se, but their ecclesiology is uncritically drawn from the free-church tradition. The second reason is the missional nature of Pentecostalism, the church prioritizes evangelisation and therefore, theology is side tracked. Third, the focus of their ecclesiology is inherently based on pneumatology. The fourth reason is the Pentecostal's critical approach towards the ecumenical conversation; without a positive approach, an ecclesiology is not possible. The final reason is the intimate connection between Pentecostal ecclesiology and the doctrine of salvation. Their ecclesiology is based on their definition of what it means to be saved.<sup>89</sup> However, not developing a theology which is based on the cultural and religious context, may lead Pentecostalism, especially in India, into a crisis. Although salvation, baptism and ordinances are all part of the Pentecostal ecclesiology, the church is not willing to welcome a sinner who is still some way from God, to the church in the hope that they may receive salvation. The

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<sup>89</sup> Yong. *The Spirit Poured Out*, 127.

church is too often only interested in people who are already saved. Most of these Pentecostal churches survive only because the younger generations are brought along to church by their parents. Very few churches experience numerical growth through mission and evangelism. The majority of the Pentecostal churches are self-sufficient: they financially support their pastor and family, and use the excess money for material development (including church building and maintaining cemeteries and so on). Few Churches use part of their income to support mission works in north India, where Christianity is less popular.

In contrast, the Neocharismatic churches experience far better growth. They use innovative methods in mission and evangelism, like cell groups in local areas, healing meetings, meetings for business people and youth church to bring people into their churches. Some churches also run schools, first aid clinics, and feeding programmes for the hungry, as part of their responsibility to, and engagement with society. However, although they are active and involved in mission, it seems that they are not interested in an ecclesiology of their own.

Unlike liberation theologies such as the Minjung, Dalit, and buffalo theologies, Pentecostal theology does not point to a structural change.<sup>90</sup> Theologies of all kinds are expected to prove the change. Ma says the Pentecostal movement brought a spiritual dynamic to deprived lives: the Pentecostalism focuses on changing lives because the renewal begins with a change in the individual, embedded with the power of the Holy Spirit. He further states that when asked by a Latin American Pentecostal leader what

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<sup>90</sup> Minjung Theology is a liberation theology from South Korea. The word Minjung means people. The Minjung are those who have suffered from political oppression, poverty and economic exploitation. Dalit Theology is a liberation theology from India. It emerged in 1980s in response to the exploitation of poor people from the high class Indian society. Buffalo Theology written by Kosuke Koyama, rooted in the Thai, Buddhist culture. Its a mission experience of Koyama in Thailand.

the Pentecostal social program is, Ma expressed that “we are the program”.<sup>91</sup> In the Indian context, Neocharismatic mega-churches are more influential in society than some of the Pentecostal churches. In Kerala, the Heavenly Feast is the largest Neocharismatic church with more adherents than any single church. As mentioned earlier, the leadership of the Heavenly Feast believes that they are influential in society. The pneumatology of the Pentecostals is centred on strong Christology and eschatology. Their ecclesiology serves as a platform from where the Spirit prepares the Church for the second coming of Jesus Christ. Yong argues that the Pentecostal experience in Azusa Street overcame many barriers, including those based on gender, ethnicity, race and socioeconomics. His eschatology is what the Spirit is doing then and now surpasses all patriarchy.<sup>92</sup> The Spirit unites sons and daughters together with both female and male servants. The Spirit is active among all classes of people irrespective of colour, caste, creed and religion. While many of the Pentecostal churches are divided in the name of colour and caste, the Neocharismatics unite and accommodate all people. The Pentecostals and Neocharismatics in India primarily follow an ecclesiology based on their pneumatology. It is an inspirational ecclesiology. Inspiration is the action that secures Scripture for the Church.<sup>93</sup> Inspiration is also a part of a larger action of the Holy Spirit that forms and sustains communities. The Spirit works through the Scripture in strengthening and vitalizing the people of God.<sup>94</sup> Anderson states that, for most Pentecostals and Charismatics, theology is inseparable from the Bible, from which they find their central message.<sup>95</sup> The Pentecostals have always considered themselves to be thoroughly biblical and have even been accused of using a literal interpretation of the Bible. The Spirit interacts with believers as they read the Scripture and illuminates their

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<sup>91</sup> Ma, “Asian (Classical) Pentecostalism: Theology in Context,” 19.

<sup>92</sup> Yong, *The Spirit*, 137.

<sup>93</sup> Clark Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1996), 226.

<sup>94</sup> Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 228.

<sup>95</sup> Anderson, *An Introduction*, 222.

minds to the truth of God. Pentecostals are people of the Scripture, while Neocharismatics place an emphasis on the personal experience of believers. The Pentecostals test their experience against the Scripture, but the Neocharismatics try to interpret it from their own perspectives, although they sometimes misinterpret the Scriptures. A Biblical hermeneutics for Neocharismatics is highly recommended to avoid such issues.

### **5.7 Spirit Manifestations in the New Testament Testimony**

Pentecostals believe that the Holy Spirit can be understood from the Scriptures, especially in the New Testament and therefore they consider it mandatory for believers to have a thorough knowledge about the Bible. It is interesting that the spirituality of a Pentecostal is often measured on the basis of their knowledge of the Bible. Pentecostals believe that the spiritual illumination and individual experience of the Spirit makes the Bible alive in their lives.<sup>96</sup> Some Neocharismatic churches only preach from the New Testament in Sunday worship services because they identify closely with the life and message of the first century Church. In addition, certain Neocharismatics also believe that the OT should not be used in the sermons and worship services. The Pentecostal churches in Kerala read a Psalm during Sunday services and exalt God from it. They also read from Psalms during other special occasions such as marriage, child dedication services, house and church dedications, first days of conventions and funeral services. However, the Neocharismatics in Kerala totally discourage the use of Psalms and they don't read it in any of their services. All of these Scriptural concerns are closely related to ideas of the illumination and Spirit guidance. Both groups believe that the Holy Spirit guides them in every step and manifests His presence to them. However, since there are

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<sup>96</sup> Anderson, *An Introduction*, 223.

disagreements among Pentecostals and the Neocharismatics, this section evaluates the New Testament testimony of Spirit manifestation.

### **5.7.1 The Holy Spirit in the Synoptics**

Unlike the Old Testament, the New Testament refers to the Spirit of God as the Holy Spirit, who empowers the Church and helps it to fulfil its mission. Most of the New Testament scholars believe that the Gospel of Mark was written first. Since it is not significant to my research I shall follow the canonical order of the Bible in this section. The Gospel of Matthew presents the manifestation of the Holy Spirit manifest as the power of God. In the birth account of Matthew, the Spirit creates life. Therefore the belief in God's unique creative intervention is linked with the manifestation of the power of the Spirit to which the OT bears witness.<sup>97</sup> For example, this can be seen in Ezekiel 37:9-10, where the Spirit of God is spoken of as the one who creates physical life, and in vs.14 the Spirit is said to be the one who injects life into His people. In Moltmann's analysis, the Spirit as giver of life is a powerful theme in the Old Testament.<sup>98</sup> This OT understanding of the Spirit as giver of life irradiates all misconceptions about its function, and indeed, it remains present in the NT writings.<sup>99</sup> While Matthew understood the Spirit manifestation from an OT point of view Mark does not narrate the birth account of Jesus.

The description of the Spirit's activity in relation to the conception and birth of Jesus is unique in the gospel narrative of Luke.<sup>100</sup> He also differentiates John the Baptist from Jesus in relation to the anointing of the Holy Spirit. John the Baptist is the precursor, Jesus the Messiah. John was "filled with Spirit" while in his mother's womb (Luke 1:15) whereas Jesus' conception was the work of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35). In both

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<sup>97</sup>Kleinknecht, "πνεῦμα," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol.VI, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Freidrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Erdmans, 1968), 332.

<sup>98</sup>Moltmann, *Spirit of Life*, 41.

<sup>99</sup> Welker, *The Work*, 6.

<sup>100</sup>Kleinknecht, "πνεῦμα," 332.

Luke and Acts the words ‘filled with Holy Spirit’ designates short bursts of spiritual power rather than the inception of long term endowments of the Spirit. Turner states that, the Lukan usage has been misunderstood in Acts 2:4, with its assertion that the disciples were ‘filled with the Spirit.’ The synoptic account of the Jordan experience of Jesus, where the Holy Spirit descended upon Him and heaven testified about Him are imperative and fundamental.<sup>101</sup> The baptism of Jesus is recorded with different variations, in Matthew 3:13-17, Mark 1:9-11 and Luke 3:21-22; however, certain elements are common to all. After Jesus was being baptised, the testimony from heaven shows that it was not at this stage that the Holy Spirit possessed Jesus; rather it was an affirmation from heaven which is related to the sonship of Jesus Christ.<sup>102</sup> Dunn too refers to this event as cementing a relationship confirmed by the heavenly voice. He asserts that Jesus Himself is not related to the new age until the Spirit descends upon Him. There is also a further implication that, at the river Jordan, Jesus began to experience something archetypal of the Christian existence: living the covenant life.<sup>103</sup>

The term *pneuma* is used in Matthew and Mark with a thorough OT understanding of God’s power to perform special acts.<sup>104</sup> In Matthew 12:28 Jesus referred to the Spirit of God as the one who can even drive out demons. Jesus said, ‘But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come to you’. The presence of the Kingdom is defined in terms of the effective power of the Spirit. The Pharisees in this story did not realise that the Spirit of God has the power to drive out demons.<sup>105</sup> Matthew 12:18-21 explains the manifestation of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus

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<sup>101</sup> Turner, *Power from on High*, 168.

<sup>102</sup> John McIntyre, *The Shape of Pneumatology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 18.

<sup>103</sup> JDG Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit: A Re-examination of the New Testament Teaching on the Gift of the Spirit in Relation to Pentecostalism Today* (London: SCM Press, 1970), 32–35.

<sup>104</sup> Max Turner, *The Holy Spirit Then and Now* (Secunderabad: OM Books, 1996), 22.

<sup>105</sup> Turner, *The Holy Spirit*, 22.

as appointed by God to bring peace and justice to the community as they expected. Jesus was conscious of a joint venture with the Spirit to bring the Kingdom near. To do this He was anointed with the Holy Spirit and His power (Acts.10:38).

Luke presents the manifestation of the Holy Spirit with regards to the life and ministry of Jesus in his gospel. The birth of Jesus is a work of the Holy Spirit (Luke1:35). Luke 3:21-22 describes the baptism of Jesus, where the Holy Spirit descends like a dove from heaven. The Holy Spirit came down and led Jesus in His ministry.<sup>106</sup> This event indicates that He had now been equipped by the Holy Spirit with all official gifts to appear openly as Messiah and Redeemer.<sup>107</sup> In the temptation narrative, Luke 4:1 again talks about the manifestation of the Holy Spirit before his public ministry. Jesus was led and strengthened by the Spirit to face the seductions of Satan.<sup>108</sup> He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, which proves that He was under the Divine influence and guidance.

Luke continues to explain the presence of the Holy Spirit in the life and ministry of Jesus. He says in 4:14, ‘Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit...’. The power of the Holy Spirit had already been exhibited in Jesus since His baptism. The verse introduces Jesus’ public ministry in Galilee as the culmination of his baptismal anointing with the Spirit<sup>109</sup> (3:21-22, 4:18, Acts.10:38). Another important passage in Luke with regards to the Spirit’s activity is the Nazareth manifesto of Jesus in 4:18-19. Marshal says that the important point is not the identification of the speaker as a Messianic figure, but the functions of Jesus as a fulfilment of the Old Testament

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<sup>106</sup> Alfred Plummer, *The New International Critical Commentary: The Gospel According to Luke* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1981), 107.

<sup>107</sup> Noval Geldenhuys, *The New International Critical Commentary: The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Erdmans, 1951), 146.

<sup>108</sup> John Nolland, *Word Biblical Commentary 35 A: Luke 1:9-20* (Dallas, Texas: Word Books, 1993), 128.

<sup>109</sup> Plummer, *The New International*, 110.

prophecy.<sup>110</sup> It is noteworthy that possession of the Holy Spirit in the lives of Christians is made possible by Jesus' unique possession of the Spirit in the Christ event.

Kleinknecht says that, 'it is no doubt a historical fact that Jesus Himself seldom referred to the Spirit. This may be because He regarded Himself as the Messiah *designatus*, or because the understanding of His disciples was given to such teaching only after the conclusion of His work'.<sup>111</sup> Luke's gospel narrates how the Holy Spirit manifested in the life and ministry of Jesus as a continuing experience. In the temptation story, the Holy Spirit empowered Him to face every challenge of Satan. In these three gospels the Holy Spirit is manifested and is viewed as the power of God, which makes possible speech and action that are not capable by humans alone. The Charismatic dimension was prominent in Jesus' ministry as He inaugurated the Kingdom with words of authority and deeds of power. It was by the Holy Spirit that Jesus was conceived, anointed, empowered, commissioned, encouraged, directed and raised up from the dead. His ministry proved His role as a liberator, when He healed the sick and forgave the sinners.

### **5.7.2 John's Pneumatology**

As in the Synoptic gospels, John's gospel presents Jesus as the anointed one on whom the Spirit rests from the beginning of His ministry. John's gospel has more to say about the person and work of the Holy Spirit than any of the synoptic Gospels. Bennemahas also commented that the Holy Spirit comes to rest on Jesus, empowers Him for the mission of salvation and functions as the mode of communication with the Father. Jesus is seen as being provided with revelatory knowledge by the Spirit.<sup>112</sup> This means that the Holy Spirit manifests upon Jesus as the Spirit of wisdom and knowledge to reveal what

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<sup>110</sup> I Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Erdmans, 1978), 183.

<sup>111</sup> Kleinknecht, "πνεῦμα," 356.

<sup>112</sup> Bennema, *Excavating John's Gospel*, 14.

should be spoken and how to act in any given situation. In relation to the life of believers, the Holy Spirit helps them in the process of salvation and enables them in the moral life. The Spirit causes new birth in the believer, so that they can live a life worthy of a citizen of heaven.

It is significant that one of the biblical claims in relation to the manifestation of the Holy Spirit among the Neocharismatics is from the gospel of John. In relation to the phenomenon of slaying in the Spirit, they claim that Jesus breathed the Spirit upon the disciples in John 20:22. Since there is a biblical account that Jesus breathed the Spirit, during the services, the Neocharismatics practise breathing upon people, who often then fall. Such phenomena were widely seen at the Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship revival.<sup>113</sup> This experience should also be understood in relation to Genesis 2:7, when God breathed the breath of life into Adam, and to Ezekiel 37:9 when dry bones came to life. When surveyed through a theological lens, this experience in the OT can be understood in terms of giving life to mortal bodies in which there was previously no life at all. As the life of Adam existed due to the breath of God, so the spiritual life of the Apostles was imparted by the ‘breath’ of Christ.<sup>114</sup> For John, the quickening power of the Holy Spirit could not be released until glorification; that is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This idea is better understood in John 7:39, in which the Holy Spirit was to be received by the believers only after the glorification of Jesus Christ. We can see, then, that John represents the Spirit as being given and received on the day of His resurrection.<sup>115</sup> Interestingly, although the Neocharismatics interpret the

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<sup>113</sup> See Margaret M. Poloma, “The ‘Toronto Blessing’ in Postmodern Society: Manifestations, Metaphor and Myth,” in *The Globalization of Pentecostalism* ed. Murray W. Dempster, Byron D. Klaus and Douglas Petersen (California: Regnum, 1999), 363- 385. see Samuel, “The Practice of Popular Manifestations of the Holy Spirit in Neocharismatic Movement: A Critical Appraisal,” M. Th. Thesis, SAICAS, Bangalore, 2006)

<sup>114</sup> J.H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary According to Gospel According to John*, Vol. II (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1976), 677.

<sup>115</sup> Turner, *Holy Spirit*, 360.

biblical account of the disciples falling down when Jesus blew the Spirit upon them as central to their practice of being slain by the Spirit, no scholars have mentioned this. It should also be commented that, in the accounts mentioned in both Genesis and John, the 'blowing' was done by God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. There is no evidence in the Scriptures to support human involvement in such actions, and therefore, these Scriptures cannot be taken as valid evidence to prove the manifestation as biblical. John presents the activity of the Holy Spirit as very much related to the life and ministry of Jesus Christ in the gospel. John stressed the life-giving activities of the Spirit over and above its charismatic prophetic function. It is Jesus who gave a clear indication to the disciples that the Holy Spirit will minister to them in His absence.

### **5.7.3 The Spirit in the Book of Acts**

The Book of Acts serves as a background to understand the Spirit's actions at the inception of the Christian Church in the first century. Most of the Pentecostal and Charismatic churches follow the book of Acts in understanding the function of the Holy Spirit in the first century churches, and then expect their church to follow the same. This is because the transforming power of the Holy Spirit was evident throughout the early Church. The birth of Christianity at Pentecost was a charismatic work of the Holy Spirit: three thousand repented, following the Spirit-filled proclamation of Peter and other charismatic elements which were visible in the ministry of the disciples.<sup>116</sup> Moltmann states that the birth of the Christian Church was with speaking in tongues, and the same Holy Spirit empowered the church in its ministry and miracles.<sup>117</sup> The Holy Spirit manifested in different ways in the church, empowering it in ministering to the people. Acts 1:8 is a key verse in which the Spirit is involved in to

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<sup>116</sup>Veli-Matti Karkkainen, *Pneumatology: The Holy Spirit in Ecumenical, International and Contextual Perspective*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2002), 31.

<sup>117</sup>Moltmann, "The Spirit gives Life: Spirituality and Vitality," in *All together in One Place: Theological Papers From the Brighton Conference on World Evangelization*, ed. Harold D. Hunter and Peter D. Hocken (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993), 26.

the mission of the Church. Reading the Lukan pneumatology in Acts leads one to the conclusion that the reception and the manifestation of the Holy Spirit often took place with visible signs (Acts 4:31; 8:15-19; 10:44-47; 19:6). Such signs were essential for the church to minister to the unbelievers. It is also to be noted that in the most pivotal moments in the life of the church, the Holy Spirit was manifested as the source of an extraordinary power. The first and foremost mission of the Church in Acts was to preach that Christ was crucified and resurrected. This was central to Pauline theology: the Apostle Paul emphasises the theology of the Holy Spirit in his writings.

#### **5.7.4 Pneumatology in Pauline Corpus**

For Paul, Pneumatology was something that he had experienced throughout his life. Fee states that, ‘for Paul, the Spirit as an experienced and living reality, was the absolute crucial matter for Christian life, from beginning to end.’<sup>118</sup> Since the study of the Holy Spirit is only part of the larger picture of the Pauline theology, the major concern of this section is to understand how Paul talks about the Spirit manifestations in selected writings. This helps us to understand the ministry of the Holy Spirit in relation to the function of the local church.

In the epistle to the Romans, there are many themes of interest such as the nature of the flesh, the law of the OT, and the suffering of the creation. For example, Fee states that “the life in the Spirit” is the most significant designation of the Spirit in Pauline theology.<sup>119</sup> What is seen in this epistle is that it is the Spirit that gives life to an individual. This “Spirit of life” refers to the life that believers now live as the direct result of the indwelling Spirit. Paul presents the OT law as the one that results in death, whereas the Spirit gives life to the people.<sup>120</sup> The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of life

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<sup>118</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Cumbria: Paternoster, 1994), 1.

<sup>119</sup> Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, 525.

<sup>120</sup> Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, 525.

because He is the Spirit of God. In Romans 8:3-8, Paul says that the Holy Spirit is God's response to sin, which leads people to death. Paul believes that having the Spirit of God means having Christ in the life of each individual.<sup>121</sup>

On account of Romans 8: 9-11, Paul argues that the manifestation of the Holy Spirit means that none is experiencing Christ and that without the work of the Holy Spirit, one cannot understand Christ.<sup>122</sup> Dunn makes an important note that some Pentecostals interpret the idea of the "Spirit of Christ" in these verses not as referring to the Holy Spirit but instead, 'the Christ like life'.<sup>123</sup> Furthermore, he clarifies that any teaching that tries to differentiate the Holy Spirit and Spirit of Christ is not foundationally sound and cannot stand on the basis of New Testament teaching. Interestingly, there are Neocharismatic preachers in Kerala who try to make this differentiation between the Spirit of Christ and the Holy Spirit. Dunn's argument is correct because Romans 8:11 clearly says, 'If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through the Spirit that dwells in you'. If a person does not have the indwelling of the Spirit of Christ, such people do not belong to Christ.<sup>124</sup> Therefore, any act of the believer should reveal the Spirit of Christ in them. Believers in Christ need to identify with Him in their actions. What is attributed to the Holy Spirit's action in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ can also be attributed to the Christian believer and in the church.

Another significant view in Pauline pneumatology regards the use of spiritual gifts. Since the Holy Spirit mediates gifts, any gift that is given by the Spirit of God is to be used for His service and the service of people. God bestows gifts and they come as a

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<sup>121</sup> Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, 149.

<sup>122</sup> William Sanday and Artur C. Headlam, *A Critical Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Romans* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1980), 358-359.

<sup>123</sup> Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, 149.

<sup>124</sup> C.E.B. Cranfield, *The International Critical Commentary*, Vol. 38 A: Romans Vol. 1. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975), 388.

result of His favour. Dunn comments that Paul clearly envisages the body of believers functioning charismatically: members having charisms function in the body of Christ. So charism and the body of Christ are inextricably intertwined in Paul's thought.<sup>125</sup> Paul understood the body of Christ as a charismatic community. Any community that is driven by the Spirit of Christ can be defined as Charismatic. The use of spiritual gifts depends on the attitude of the believers. Paul emphasises that gifts are received in proportion to faith, to an individual's faith, and to their receptivity and readiness to be used by God's grace for the benefit of others.<sup>126</sup> The list of spiritual gifts mentioned in Romans 12:6-8 and 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 complement each other and are never contrary. Spiritual gifts that are exercised should not be attributed to the noble nature of human beings. Instead, they are evidence of the graciousness of God through His Spirit, who has supplied the community with the means to strengthen and edify itself. Each gift in the church is a product of God's grace which all believers have in common. Therefore, ultimately, the work of the Holy Spirit cannot be limited by any human capacity. Meanwhile, any manifestation of the Holy Spirit will always be for the benefit of the community and never for the individual alone.

### **Evaluation**

The purpose of this chapter was to evaluate the pneumatology of the Neocharismatic movement in India. They place an emphasis on the manifestations of the Holy Spirit in their church activities. Although both Pentecostals and Neocharismatics claim the active role of the Holy Spirit in their movements, often the Spirit theology in the Bible is less practised. Spirit theology in the Bible breaks through racial and denominational barriers and works toward the Kingdom principles of Christ. The Neocharismatic churches network with other likeminded groups, often with an apostolic figure or

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<sup>125</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *Word Biblical Commentary*, Volume 38b: Romans 9-16 (Dallas, Texas: Word Books, 1998), 725.

<sup>126</sup> Dunn, *Word Biblical Commentary*, 732.

charismatic exemplar to solidify the relationship. They deliberately organize themselves differently from the Pentecostal denominational churches. They use these differences as ways to reach a large audience and draw a range of people to their churches.

The church is expected to function beyond social, cultural and denominational boundaries. Most often it is divided in itself as different groups follow a variety of interpretations of the same Bible, and different ideas of theology and practice. The ministry of the Holy Spirit in the world is to prepare people who are willing to hear the voice of the Spirit and follow what God speaks to the churches. The New Testament refers to the manifestation of the Holy Spirit as the one who dwelt in and is with the people of God. The Gospels explain the Holy Spirit as an agent from heaven that came to guide and help Jesus in His life and ministry. The Acts of the Apostles refers to the Holy Spirit in the preaching ministry and mission of the church. Paul views the Spirit as being more of a counsellor to believers, a guide to help followers of Christ care for others and use the gifts of the Spirit for the common good of their community. He explains that Holy Spirit manifestations are the key factor in the proclamation of the truth. For Paul, the fruits of the Spirit reveal the qualities of a life in which the Holy Spirit manifests.

Neocharismatics have a unique focus on including every member in ministry.

Sometimes the congregation is asked to pray by laying their hands upon people who are sitting near to them. The neocharismatic movement recognises the ontological work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit serves as a base for God's loving plan to redeem the fallen creation through the atoning death of Jesus Christ. They also understand the Spirit as the agent of new birth, which they call as "new life". Both Pentecostals and Neocharismatics understand the conversion experience of a believer as denoting new birth. Experiencing conversion is seen as an elementary requirement for a person to

come to church and to be able to fellowship with the rest of the believing community.

The next chapter is a discussion of the global impact of the Neocharismatic movement with recommendations derived from this thesis.

## CHAPTER SIX

### NEOCHARISMATIC AFFILIATION TO GLOBAL PENTECOSTALISM

#### 6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the relationship between the Indian Neocharismatic movement and global Pentecostalism. Since the Neocharismatic movement is globally seen as part of Pentecostalism, this chapter aims to affirm that the Neocharismatic movement in India is part of Global Pentecostalism. Specific focus of Spirit practices in the Heavenly Feast church and their understanding of the Holy Spirit is in agreement with Neocharismatics globally. Brother Thanku travels worldwide to likeminded churches in Thailand, China, United States and to other countries. They embrace a holistic approach to the Pentecostal understanding and relate them to the Global Pentecostalism.

As mentioned earlier in Chapter one, in the field of Pentecostal and Charismatic studies has related the establishment of new charismatic churches to worldwide Pentecostalism. As the new millennium rushes forward, globalization reaches to the most remote corners of the globe, and indeed, Roland Robertson observes how Pentecostalism also developed within the spectrum of globalization. According to Robertson, the economy occupies the lower level of a hierarchy as it influences and controls human life.<sup>1</sup> The second level in the hierarchy is politics for the national state is far from irrelevant to global society. The third level of Robertson's hierarchy is where both economy and politics are major factors. Finally, in the present era of globalisation, he then places culture and religion at the top of this hierarchy, because they influence everyday life.<sup>2</sup>In relation to this, we can see that Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity has spread to a

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<sup>1</sup> His view is discussed by Tomas Sundnes Drenen in his book *Studies in Africa: Pentecostalism, Globalization and Islam in Northern Cameroon: Megachurches in the Making (I)*.

<sup>2</sup> Tomas Sudness Drønen, *Studies in Africa: Pentecostalism, Globalization and Islam in Northern Cameroon: Megachurches in the Making (I)* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 15.

range of different social contexts throughout the world, appearing among both the urban and the rural classes. It is demonstrated through speaking in tongues, healing, prophecy and power encounters and reflects spiritual power in the current era of cultural globalization. Pentecostalism has now become deeply embedded in all classes of people in society and has become the fastest growing religious movement worldwide.

India has progressed in science and technology, and in terms of market capitalism, more than any other time in the past. According to Cox, even though capitalism may now be slowing down and becoming stagnant in the cradle of the first industrial revolution, it is soaring in China and India.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, it is fascinating that Pentecostalism along with globalisation, is spreading in the developing world. Indeed, it is in the non-Western world where Pentecostalism is growing, leaving the former term “Christendom” obsolete.<sup>4</sup> Meyer rightly points out that many Pentecostal churches and movements describe themselves with terms such as “global” or “international”.<sup>5</sup> This can even be observed in names of Pentecostal churches in rural Indian villages, even though most members of their congregations are local. Most of these churches do not necessarily understand the meaning of the term they use when naming their church. They also use media technologies to propagate the gospel message and attract crowds in hundreds and thousands.

## **6.2 Globalization Explained**

A number of subjects in the academy have been interested in the concept of globalisation. Wilkinson identifies that to some, globalisation is understood to refer to economic liberalisation with free trade and fewer borders, whereas others view it as the

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<sup>3</sup> Harvey Cox, “Spirits of Globalization: Pentecostalism and Experiential Spiritualities in a Global Era” in *Spirits of Globalization* ed. Sturla J. Stålsett (London: SCM Press, 2006): 12, 11–22.

<sup>4</sup> Cox, “Spirits of Globalization,” 13.

<sup>5</sup> Birgit Mayer, “Pentecostalism and Globalization” in *Studying Global Pentecostalism: Theories + Methods*, ed. Allan Anderson, Michael Bergunder, Andre Droogers and Cornelis van der Laan (London: University of California Press, 2010): 113, 113–130.

spread of modern structures and culture throughout the world.<sup>6</sup> Much of the discussion about globalisation has tended to presume that it is a process which overrides locality and different ethnic and national cultural differences.<sup>7</sup> According to Robertson, this tendency neglects two major facts. First and foremost, it neglects what is constructed locally, because of what is to a large degree constructed on a global scale. The second is that there has been little attempt to relate the discussion of “time-and –place” to the issues of “universalism- and particularism”.<sup>8</sup> It is crucial to consider that in recent times, humanity has become a “single society” although people live in various parts of the globe. Marshall McLuhan’s idea of the “global village” is as expressed in his book *Explorations in Communication* published in 1960 influenced the technological revolution and promoted a global community. His idea of the global village became influential in the time of what Robertson calls “expressive revolution.”<sup>9</sup> This referred to a revolution among the youth in numerous parts of the world, including the hippie movement in Western countries.<sup>10</sup> Undoubtedly, the 1960’s revolution in consciousness, which had a focus on the themes of individual liberation and love, had a strong influence on people in different parts of the world, sharpening a sense of unity and preparing people for a more global society. The rise of what was then called the “third world”, the proliferation of international, transnational and supranational institutions, and the attempts to coordinate national economies have played significant

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<sup>6</sup> Michael, Wilkinson, “What’s ‘Global’ about Global Pentecostalism,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 17 (2008): 97, 96–109.

<sup>7</sup> Roland Robertson, “Globalisation or Glocalisation?” *The Journal of International Communication* 18:2 (2012): 191-208, (192).

<sup>8</sup> Robertson, “Globalisation or Glocalisation?,” 192–193.

<sup>9</sup> Robertson, “Globalisation or Glocalisation?,” 192–193.

<sup>10</sup> Hippie subculture began as a youth movement in the United States during the early nineties and then developed around the World. Its origins may be traced to European social movements in the 19th and early 20th century such as the Bohemians and the influence of Eastern religions and spirituality. From around 1967, fundamental ethos of the subculture — including harmony with nature, communal living, artistic experimentation (particularly in music), and the widespread use of recreational drugs — spread around the world during the counterculture of the 1960’s, which has become closely associated with the subculture.

roles in the spread of globalisation.<sup>11</sup> Even the concept of the global village is a result of the media's influence in globalisation.

The world has become increasingly accessible in ways that enable people to communicate and express their opinions. Robertson argues that the societal role of different communities that operate with relative independence contributes to the globalization process.<sup>12</sup> He also says that different forms of societal participation make a crucial difference to its precise form in the whole process of globalisation.<sup>13</sup> Major religions in the world played significant roles in globalisation. The religious scenario that we are familiar with – Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Confucianism did not simply emerge over the long course of human history but were cultural constructions mostly from the nineteenth century.<sup>14</sup> According to Wuthnow, the concept of global Christianity emerged because of the fact that the religion was spread across continents.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, according to Jenkins, by 2050 only one Christian in five will be non-Latino and white, and the centre of gravity of the Christian world will have shifted firmly to the Southern Hemisphere.<sup>16</sup> His suggestion that the centre of gravity in Christianity will shift resonates with discussions of global Christianity. It is significant to note that Christianity's shifting centre of gravity is a primary focus of scholarship in Christian studies. Andrew Walls popularised the idea of the shifting centre of Christian faith, which has since been accepted by other sociologists and missiologists. He observed that Christianity is at the threshold of a new epoch in which its base will be in the southern hemisphere, and therefore, Christian faith will be shaped by the culture of

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<sup>11</sup> Robertson, *Globalization*, 9.

<sup>12</sup> Robertson, *Globalization*, 60.

<sup>13</sup> Robertson, *Globalization*, 60.

<sup>14</sup> Tomoko, Mazuzawa. *The Invention of World Religions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 13.

<sup>15</sup> Robert, Wuthnow. *Boundless Faith: The Global Outreach of American Churches* (London: University of California Press, 2009), 35.

<sup>16</sup> Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of the Global Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 2.

those countries.<sup>17</sup> In many parts of the globe, people have discovered Christianity on their own with little effort from the missionaries. Christianity has therefore been shaped by the cultural practices of different places. Since World War II, Pentecostal churches have been growing at a furious pace in Latin America, Africa and Asia, so much so that one could say that, a new Christendom was being born.<sup>18</sup> According to Jenkins, ‘In 1950s, emerging African and Asian nations tried to distinguish themselves from what then seemed the rigid separation of the globe between the capitalist West and communist East, proclaiming their membership in a nonaligned Third world’.<sup>19</sup> The term third world was a term not seen to be related to prosperity and dignity but instead was understood to relate to poverty and uncontrollable population growth. The term generalised Asian countries and classified them as economically poor rather than by political ideology.<sup>20</sup> Because observers and critics hold negative impressions of third world countries societal position even today, such categorisation may hinder the development of people in Asian countries. Therefore, it is important to have a theology in Asia that addresses its various religious and social practices. Cox argues that biblical theology which is prophetic in nature needs to address anything that a culture endangers with false values which are destructive to God’s will for the human community.<sup>21</sup> Many theologians think that economics is material and has no relevance to religion or Christianity. This is highly risky in the Asian context, because faith is shaped by the daily experience of people who struggle economically. In particular, early Pentecostalism in India was shaped by the struggles of people and it was a battle for

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<sup>17</sup> Andrew, Walls. *The Missionary movement in Christian History: Studies in Transmission of Faith* (Mary Knoll, NY: Orbis, 1996), 22.

<sup>18</sup> Wuthnow. *Boundless Faith*, 37.

<sup>19</sup> Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*, 3.

<sup>20</sup> Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*, 3.

<sup>21</sup> Harvey G. Cox. “Pentecostalism and Global Market Culture: A Response to Issues Facing Pentecostalism in a Post Modern World,” in *Globalization of Pentecostalism: A Religion Made to Travel*, ed. Murray W. Dempster, Byron D. Klaus and Douglas Petersen (Oxford: Regnum, 1999):388, 386–395.

them to balance their faith and daily survival. The Pentecostal community in India reflects on a biblical theology which is based on the mission of the Holy Spirit in the world, particularly in other religious communities. In the Indian context, a lot more people are willing to listen to something about God when they go through struggles and pain. Thus, it is doubtless that Pentecostal churches in the similar context can evangelise more people than Christians in other contexts.

### **6.3 Pentecostalism in a Globalised Era**

Pentecostalism has become a major force of transformation within Christianity, as the ecstatic experience of the Holy Spirit has become domesticated.<sup>22</sup> Berger states that the Pentecostal version of Evangelical Protestantism is the most important popular movement, serving as a vehicle of cultural globalisation.<sup>23</sup> The Pentecostal form of Christianity in which people experience the natural endowments of the Holy Spirit and have ecstatic experiences such as healing, speaking in tongues and prophesying, is one of the big success stories of cultural globalisation.<sup>24</sup> With the globalisation of Pentecostalism being studied from many viewpoints, including theological, sociological and economical, Droogers observes that the rapid expansion of Pentecostalism is the most significant characteristic that has drawn the attention of the religious spectrum.<sup>25</sup> The development of Pentecostalism over a hundred years has included Charismatics and Neocharismatic movements. Demographers of religions have refined their estimates and concluded that the worldwide communion of Pentecostal and Charismatics may

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<sup>22</sup> Miller and Yamaori, *Global Pentecostalism*, 18.

<sup>23</sup> Peter, L. Berger, "Introduction: The Cultural Dynamics of Globalization" in *Many Globalizations: Cultural Diversity in the Contemporary World*, ed. Peter L. Berger and Samuel P. Huntington, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 8.

<sup>24</sup> Joel Robbins, "The Globalization of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity" *Annual Review of Anthropology* 33 (2004): 117, 117–143.

<sup>25</sup> Andre Droogers, "Globalisation and Pentecostal Success," in *Between Bethel and Pentecost: Transitional Pentecostalism in Africa and Latin America*, ed. Andre Corten and Ruth Marshall-Fratani (London: Hurst, 2001), 57–59. See also, Lukose, *Contextual Missiology of the Spirit*, 141–145.

include 600 million people.<sup>26</sup> Although it is an approximate estimation, this figure indicates an extraordinary change in global Christianity. Casanova identifies it as the “most dynamic and fastest developing sector of Protestant Christianity worldwide.”<sup>27</sup> He further predicts that Pentecostal and Charismatic movements will soon surpass Catholicism to become the global principal form of Christianity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>28</sup> Pentecostal and Charismatic movements appear across the globe among the urban and rural regions, among the emerging middle classes and even among the poor.<sup>29</sup> In the context of Pentecostalism in Kerala, the church is in uniform with the rest of the world. The Indian way of Pentecostal and Neocharismatic worship is totally in line with world Pentecostalism. Many pastors in these churches believe that the Spirit is the same; hence the worship can be identified anywhere in the world. The power to replicate itself to any culture without bringing damage to the cultural practice is an important character of Pentecostalism. However, Indian Pentecostalism is still indigenous, although it has adopted Western models in worship, as part of a cultural acceptance of this global movement. Pentecostalism in contemporary India is not an isolated movement; rather it is connected to the different strands of global Pentecostalism.

The rapid growth of the Pentecostal movement throughout the world has shown that the movement cannot be dismissed. As new trends and patterns have emerged within Pentecostalism, historians and theologians have shown a greater interest in understanding the movement. The speed with which Pentecostalism is spreading appears all the more noteworthy when one recalls the short a period of time in which

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<sup>26</sup> Robert W. Hefner, “The Unexpected Modern – Gender, Piety and Politics in the Global Pentecostal Surge” in *Global Pentecostalism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, ed. Robert W. Hefner (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2013), 1.

<sup>27</sup> José Casanova, “Religion, the New Millennium and Globalization,” *Society of Religion* 62 (December, 2001): 435, 415–441.

<sup>28</sup> Casanova, “Religion, the New Millennium and Globalization,” 435.

<sup>29</sup> Robbins, “The Globalization,” 118.

this Christian movement has attained its global scale.<sup>30</sup> As noted in Chapter One, global Pentecostal scholarship is in consensus that Pentecostalism and its Charismatic cousins have multiple places of origin. Locations such as North America, Africa, China and South East Asia are significant in the history of the growth of Pentecostalism.

Nevertheless, with regards to the global face of Pentecostalism, the scholarly consensus has not yet clearly marked its borders. Although there has been much academic discussion of Pentecostal demography, history, theology, and other related issues, it still remains debatable whether the independent churches in Africa and Asia can be considered to be part of the Pentecostal movement. Contemporary writings about Pentecostalism includes voices from different countries of the world, voices that were somewhat ignored by the earlier Pentecostal writers. Robeck and Yong explain four reasons for the discussions surrounding Pentecostalism's history and theology. First of all local stories of Pentecostal revivals, including the revivals in countries like India, challenges what had been broadcast from America. Interestingly the second reason Robeck and Yong list is that the definition of Pentecostalism is no longer confined to the traditional framework, but has become more inclusive as the movement grows.<sup>31</sup>

Many of the American based authors assume that the history and definition of the movement should be defined solely by them. However, Pentecostal writers like Anderson and Burgess explained the importance of Pentecostalism in countries such as India. As noted in Chapter Two, Pentecostal manifestations in India were present prior to the dates of the Azusa Street revival.

The third element is that a Pentecostal can be a person without any reference to speaking in tongues. There are other disciplines such as theology, sociology,

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<sup>30</sup> Hefner, "The Unexpected Modern," 1.

<sup>31</sup> Cecil M. Robeck JR. And Amos Yong, "Global Pentecostalism: An Introduction to an Introduction," in *The Cambridge Companion to Pentecostalism*, ed. Cecil M. Robeck JR. and Amos Yong, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 1–2.

anthropology, economics and political science that have observed and studied Pentecostalism. They have come up with important insights into our understanding of Pentecostalism as well as put forward questions that deserve thoughtful answers. Since plenty of non-Pentecostal researchers from other disciplines have studied the movement, it has acquired global significance. Eventually the growing complexity of the term Pentecostal and its modifiers has led a number of historians to observe that no single definition may now be possible. The movement includes classical, holiness, “finished work”, Oneness, deliverance, the word of faith, and others. Indeed, it is suggested that Pentecostalism should be used in the plural rather than the singular as it has with multiple definitions. Yet, every movement that takes its own unique contributions within Pentecostalism helps it to deliver an individual identity. The seeming diversity within global Pentecostalism can be seen as its outstanding significance. Although the Pentecostal movement is complex, with a mixture of churches and multiple forms of practice, Anderson labels them all as Pentecostalism. He further mentions that, ‘if we do further justice to this global movement, we must include its most recent expressions in the independent, Charismatic and neo-Charismatic movements’.<sup>32</sup> Inside the fabric of such expertise opinion, including Indian Pentecostalism, twenty first century Pentecostalism appears to be living in a stratified way like all the rest of India. To understand Pentecostalism in India, one must understand the ways in which groups or individual churches develop. The history, theology and practice of these churches need to be considered to understand their identity as Pentecostals. Many of the churches in India neither keep a written history nor are they aware about the need for a theology. Mostly denominations have a statement of faith, which is applicable to all local churches under them. Therefore,

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<sup>32</sup> Anderson, “Varieties,...” 14–15.

individual churches rarely have a separate written document outlining their beliefs and practice.

#### **6.4 Indian Pentecostalism in the Global Arena**

The scholarship on Pentecostalism has often focused on the Azusa Street revival of 1906 as the origin of all forms of Pentecostalism worldwide. However, recent scholars have begun to stress the “polycentric”, “multiple” or “many Jerusalems” origins of Pentecostalism, which recognises a number of precursors to the Pentecostal movement in different locations aside from Azusa. At this juncture, it should be noted that the Indian revivals of the early 1860s, at Khasi Hills and Mukti have also caught the attention of contemporary scholars. Indeed, the Mukti revival which has been discussed in Chapter Two is significant because of the Pentecostal phenomena of healings, tongues, and prophecy that occurred in the Mukti Mission.<sup>33</sup> This places Indian Pentecostalism as a central part of the global history of the movement.

Pentecostalism in India started as a rural phenomenon and developed within a specific religious and socio-cultural context. The indigenous churches have experienced growth in the number of churches across the land with a smaller group of people in each local church. Indian Pentecostal native missionaries had been trained under Western missionaries like Robert Cook to spread and evangelise the masses on their own, without supervision. Indeed, indigenous Pentecostal churches like the IPC can be seen as a result of such training and mission work. Meanwhile, it's also important to note that K. E. Abraham was influenced by the leadership and ministry of the Ceylon Pentecostal Mission (presently known as TPM). Abraham's mission trip to Western countries such as Sweden and the United States helped IPC as an indigenous Pentecostal Church to relate to the world mission. Indian Pentecostalism is deeply indebted to D.G.S.

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<sup>33</sup> Anderson, “Varieties...,” 25.

Dhinakaran, for introducing Indian Pentecostalism to the global scene. Later Dhinakaran joined the CSI Church as a freelance healing evangelist, and from the 1980s until the early years of the twenty first century, he was a central figure in advancing the profile of Neo-Pentecostal faith principles.<sup>34</sup> His gospel meetings were attended by thousands of people across many states of India. Dhinakaran's personal warmth, affectionate approach and love for people, combined with his dynamic sermons which always closed with a healing prayer were similar to Oral Roberts' style. Although many others have followed his lead in preaching and healing ministries, his ministry remains distinct.

However, currently, the Neocharismatic movement in India influences the urban and rural classes alike. Research done in 2010, within one and a half kilometres of the metropolis of Bangalore, identifies 117 Christian churches in that area, of which 99 congregations belongs to some form of Pentecostal or Charismatic movement.<sup>35</sup> Out of the 99 congregations, 87 are independent charismatic churches, whereas only five belong to the traditional Pentecostal denominations such as the Assemblies of God and TPM. This pattern is reflected in several other cities such as Chennai, Hyderabad and Mumbai. Meanwhile, in urban centres like Bangalore and Chennai, the classical Pentecostal churches that have some link to North American Pentecostalism have grown into mega-churches. Nevertheless, not all American based classical Pentecostal churches in other places grow as in Bangalore and Chennai.

Classical and indigenous Pentecostal churches in Kerala have not experienced the growth that can be seen in other states of India. One reason for this lack of growth could be that these churches are unwilling to change their traditional patterns of worship. The

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<sup>34</sup> Rebecca Samuel Shah and Timothy Samuel Shah, "Pentecost Amid Pujas: Charismatic Christianity and Dalit Women in Twenty- First- Century India," in *Global Pentecostalism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, ed. Robert W. Hefner (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2013): 198, 194–222.

<sup>35</sup> Samuel Shah, "Pentecost Amid Pujas," 199.

growth of any church is always seen in terms of numerical growth rather than spiritual. In that respect, factors like place of worship, the pastor, the kind of people attending services, the number of services on Sunday, and the location of the church are to be considered in order to fully come to any conclusions about the growth and development of a church. According to Rebecca Samuel Shah and Timothy Samuel Shah, ‘mega churches serve the urban middle class young people who favour its Western style worship and its understanding of the demands that the modernity places of upwardly mobile people’.<sup>36</sup> Beside this there are also other factors like global evangelism using various methods, the global nature of the work of the Holy Spirit that makes Pentecostalism global. This will be discussed in detail in the following section in this chapter. The manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the Indian Neocharismatic movement relate to other likeminded movements across the globe.

#### **6.4.1 Pentecostal Identity and Culture**

Pentecostal expressions and practice across the world are diverse, and are even more variegated in South Asia due to racial, regional and linguistics diversities which exist in both church and society. Therefore, the typologies developed in other contexts do not necessarily fit the south Asian context.<sup>37</sup> Satyavrata identifies five categories of Pentecostal groups in South Asia. They are: Pentecostals with trans-national organisational links, Pentecostal- Charismatics with a national and indigenous identity, regional or local Pentecostal and Charismatic churches, Catholic Charismatics, and indigenous Pentecostal- Charismatic mission agencies and nondenominational /Para-church Charismatic networks.<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless, it should be noted that the Catholic

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<sup>36</sup> Samuel Shah, “Pentecost Amid Pujas,” 195.

<sup>37</sup> Ivan M. Satyavrata, “Contextual Perspectives on Pentecostalism as a Global Culture: A South Asian View,” in *The Globalization of Pentecostalism: A Religion Made to Travel*, ed. Murray W. Dempster, Byron D. Klaus and Douglas Petersen (California: Regnum, 1999), 206.

<sup>38</sup> Satyavrata, “Contextual Perspectives,” 206–207.

Charismatic do not fit into the Pentecostal category except for their Pentecostal expressions.

Certainly, the Pentecostal identity in each local culture can still be seen as identifying with the global Pentecostal movement. Dayton refers to Pentecostalism as a new innovative movement within the Christian tradition which is distinct from traditional Christianity.<sup>39</sup> This is certainly true with regards to Pentecostalism in India. When the Western missionaries introduced their style of practising Pentecostalism, the then native leadership, instead of accepting this imported religious practice, developed their own spirituality which fitted their local context. Undoubtedly Pentecostalism in Kerala does omit certain practices of traditional Christianity in India. For example, Pentecostals practise a different life style, including abstaining from wearing jewellery, wearing simple clothing and removing themselves from all worldly practice. These changes were not adopted in opposition to traditional Christianity, but rather they were seen as a sign of the believers' commitment to God and to following a holy life. Even today, some of these practices are still observed as a part of a holy life.

Politically, the colonial era and the resulting battle for independence witnessed the growth of national and cultural pride, with people wanting to ensure their own identity as Indians.<sup>40</sup> This also resulted in a quest for cultural indigenous identity among the Pentecostal believers. Self-identity among the Pentecostals in India is indeed part of a rich Eastern theological tradition. Several large Pentecostal groups in India are well recognised for their indigenous identity. There are plenty of churches in South India and in North –East India planted by local charismatic leaders and are accepted by most people. Nevertheless, it is observed that many of these leaders fail to accurately reflect the cultural identity of the local people and instead attempt to provide their own rules

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<sup>39</sup> Donald W. Dayton, "The Holy Spirit and Christian Expansion in the twentieth –century," *Missiology: An International Review* 16/4 (October, 1988):403, 397–407.

<sup>40</sup> Satyavrata, "Contextual Perspectives," 208.

which most people are disgruntled about. The Neocharismatic churches frequently focus on emotionalism which emerges mostly from their leader. This often results in a superficial hype, which has become a way of identifying these kinds of churches.

#### **6.4.2 Global Identity in Worship**

Worship is a key element in the life of the Church. During the early years of Pentecostalism in India, particularly in Kerala, the vibrant worship of the Pentecostal churches attracted people who worshipped in the older traditional churches. The traditional musical instruments, like drums and the tambourine, were still used until recently. The congregation would clap their hands and sing together. With the arrival of Neocharismatic congregations, modern instruments are now used in worship. This should be seen as a result of globalisation. Coleman rightly argues that modern mass communication media is a significant factor in the globalisation of Charismatic Christianity.<sup>41</sup> Coleman's argument can be applied to Pentecostalism in Kerala, where even the smallest Pentecostal church affords to have minimum a keyboard to use during the worship. There are only few churches that use the traditional musical instruments in worship and these churches are seeing fewer worshippers attending their services. The Neocharismatic churches use sophisticated instruments with high volume sound systems in their services. The Neocharismatic churches use the phrase "praise and worship", a term used globally by Charismatic churches to refer the practice of singing with modern musical instruments. The use of such terminologies proves these Indian Neocharismatic churches' commitment to the international charismatic community. Scotland defines praise" as jubilation and declaration of God's greatness and power, whereas he suggests that to "worship" is to sing to God.<sup>42</sup> Churches like Heavenly Feast have more than fifty people on the platform, including children aged five and above.

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<sup>41</sup> Coleman, "Globalization of Charismatic Christianity," 66.

<sup>42</sup> Scotland, *Charismatics*, 64.

They all actively participate in praising God and singing, little of which is traditional. Common instruments used include electronic keyboards, guitars, and drums, sometimes supplemented by a violin, a flute and sometimes a trumpet. The lyrics of the song being sung are displayed along a screen using an overhead projector. In most Neocharismatic churches the singing time extends to an hour or more. In other words, it occupies a significant place in the church service.

Even after the singing session the praise and worship team remain on the platform throughout the service. Although the source of such practice is unknown, this identifies their worship services as different from other churches. The Neocharismatic worship exhorts the believers to what the leaders of these churches call a “victorious” life in this world. In Heavenly Feast churches, they preach that healing will occur during the praise and worship session. For example, in one service Thomas Abraham, one of the leaders of the church announced that he had a vision of Jesus coming to heal people, to “break their curses” and “open the shut doors”.<sup>43</sup> The audience moved in praises as they heard such encouraging words and continued to sing songs in both English and Malayalam. The use of the English language in these Neocharismatic services, when the crowd speaks Malayalam, highlights their interest to be part of a global movement. Even in the scorching heat of the summer in Kerala, some of pastors continue to wear ties as they see wearing such attire an indicator that they are a part of an international community. The common view expressed during interviews and personal conversation with believers is that they all enjoy the worship in these churches. Ponnamma, for example, said, ‘we are not restricted in any way to worship God. We take freedom to dance, jump and praise. We worship for hours together and the whole church participates, including our

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<sup>43</sup> No Author, “Sing For Joy Hallelujah,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pmQen6D-3DM>, (accessed 21 April, 2016).

pastors'.<sup>44</sup> It is noted that the style of worship in Neocharismatic churches makes them a favourite choice of believers. Of course, the participation of their leaders in worship has to be appreciated. More than the faith and theology, it is the "feel good factor" that makes the worship distinctive. In most Neocharismatic worship, regular members are free to be spontaneous and take part in the worship through prayer, prophecy or words of wisdom.

Pentecostals are often expressive in their worship, with spontaneous prayer, the practice of some spiritual gifts, signs and wonders, exorcism and a quick acceptance of the supernatural.<sup>45</sup> Caplan refers to this as experiential Pentecostalism, a reaction against the cerebral coldness, shallow activism and external formalism of the traditional churches.<sup>46</sup> Globalisation has influenced the way churches practice their worship. The singing, dress code of the choir, and indeed, the entire atmosphere in the church, is modern rather than traditional in character. As Cartledge asserts, 'The musical style of charismatic worship is very obviously contemporary'.<sup>47</sup> Most of the songs used in the Neocharismatic church services are simple in content and often have a thematic emphasis on "blessings". For example, the lyrics of a popular Malayalam worship song can be translated as 'your job will be prosperous; in the land, you shall be blessed; you will not lack food in your home; no accidents shall take place in life'.<sup>48</sup> This song has become influential among the Neocharismatics because it reflects the contemporary music style and content that this movement prefers. These songs are often sung repeatedly in an attempt to create a feeling among the worshippers that all will be safe and sound in God's hands. The congregation sing these songs and express their

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<sup>44</sup> Interview, Ponnamma, 18 January, 2016.

<sup>45</sup> Satyavrata, "Contextual Perspectives," 211.

<sup>46</sup> Lionel Caplan, *Class and Culture in Urban India*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 3.

<sup>47</sup> Cartledge, *Encountering*, 57.

<sup>48</sup> In the Malayalam language the song is – "Joliyil nee anugrahikkappedum, deshathil nee anugrahikkappedum: Ninte veettil ahaaram kurayukilla; anarthangal onnume bhavikkukilla."

devotion to God through clapping and praising; some dance and yet others fall on their knees, lifting their hands to heaven. This energetic worship, which emulates a Western style, creates hype among the crowd.<sup>49</sup> Cartledge recommends that praise and worship should be contextualised in different cultures.<sup>50</sup> Meanwhile, Neocharismatic worship can accommodate other patterns in worship such as preaching the Word, prayer and breaking the bread as their priority.

#### **6.4.3 Identity with Global Spirit Manifestations**

Scholars like Cox and Hollenweger have accepted that there is a tension among the Pentecostals about the globalisation of their movement.<sup>51</sup> Lukose notes that the issue at stake is whether the church should follow the early Pentecostal ethos or to embrace the success-oriented global market culture of some contemporary churches.<sup>52</sup> Within this existing tension, Pentecostalism in general faces the issue of the commonality of Spirit manifestations across different regions of the world. Since the beginning of Charismatic type renewal in the 1960s, several Spirit related practices have global acceptance.

Michael Wilkinson and Peter Althouse writes,

...a relational encounter with Jesus as the living Lord; spontaneity of praise and worship, charismatic gifts, and contemporary singing; love of the Bible and a renewed interest in devotional reading; the belief that God speaks in personal and corporate contexts; an emphasis on evangelism; an awareness of evil and the practice of spiritual deliverance and exorcism; the use of spiritual gifts, especially tongues, prophecy and healing; an eschatological expectation of the imminent kingdom of God; and an emphasis on spiritual power accompanied by all forms of gifts and phenomena.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> The term “hype” first emerged from the drug culture of the 1960s. To hype is to stir up and artificially contrive to raise the intensity level of worship or prayer. During the worship it is achieved by leaders turning up the volume and demanding the congregation to sing the worship song loudly and repeatedly, because the preacher says that God likes to hear it. (see Nigel Scotland, *Charismatics and the New Millennium*, 1995).

<sup>50</sup> Cartledge, *Encountering*, 56.

<sup>51</sup> Harvey G. Cox. “Pentecostalism and Global Market Culture,” (394). See Walter J. Hollenweger, “Crucial Issues for Pentecostals,” in *Pentecostals After a Century*, 188.

<sup>52</sup> Lukose, *Contextual Missiology*, 209.

<sup>53</sup> Michael, Wilkinson and Peter Althouse, *Catch the Fire: Soaking Prayer and Charismatic Renewal* (Illinois: NIU Press, 2014), 25.

However, it is doubtless that early Pentecostalism had witnessed all these experiences, although they were certainly witnessed during the early days of the Pentecostal movement in India. Similar manifestations of the Holy Spirit were also present during Charles Finney's revival in the 19th century.<sup>54</sup> There is no doubt then, that the charismatic renewal of the 1960s cannot be credited for being the first to experience manifestations of the Holy Spirit. Meanwhile, many of these emphases have become prominent in Neocharismatic spirituality particularly in their praise and worship. Globalisation has meant that spiritual practices, including praise and worship, have become accessible to different cultures through multiple forms of media such as television and the internet. For example, the Hillsong worship CDs and DVDs are readily available in Christian shops across India, and Hillsong's music even beamed into the homes of rural villagers through television. Many of these songs are translated into local languages by educated Christians and then used as worship songs in local churches. The tune of each song is maintained often using electronic instruments to keep the beat and rhythm while the choir sings. Many of these songs are disseminated by video, and worship leaders watch and then imitate them. Globalisation has now reached the grass-roots level of ministry in the Pentecostals and Neocharismatic churches in India: what is seen today in many of these churches is the repetition or the imitation of Spirit activities across the World. The most popular manifestation of the nineteenth century, Spirit, speaking in tongues and healings were founded in the evangelicalism particularly in the Wesleyan Holiness movement.<sup>55</sup>

In the contemporary era, modern charismatic preachers like Benny Hinn and others have claimed to be the proponents of such manifestations, ministries which they assert

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<sup>54</sup> V. Raymond Edman, *Finney Lives On: Study in Finney's Revival Methods and Message* (Illinois: Scripture Press, 1951), 57-65.

<sup>55</sup> Wilkinson and Peter Althouse, *Catch the Fire*, 24. See Michael McClymond, *Embodying the Spirit: New Perspectives on North American Revivalism* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2004). 25.

they have received through the direct intervention of Jesus Christ. In the Toronto Blessing in 1994, ecstatic phenomena such as uncontrollable laughing, weeping, and bodily jerks, falling to the ground and audible animal noises, were experienced. These phenomena soon captured the attention of both the Christian and secular media. Indeed, technology played a crucial role in popularising these manifestations.<sup>56</sup> It was the Toronto Blessing that popularised these ecstatic phenomena to the rest of the world. The Toronto revival had already spread through established Vineyard networks. People travelled from far and wide to witness these events. During the first year alone cumulative attendance exceeded two hundred thousand people from across the world.<sup>57</sup> According to Hyatt ‘a secular magazine Toronto Life, billed the revival as Toronto’s top tourist attraction in 1994’.<sup>58</sup>

### **6.5 Summary of Research Findings**

The long journey this research has taken signifies the importance of the work of the Holy Spirit in the Neocharismatic churches in Kerala. As mentioned in the first chapter, although there are a number of churches in Kerala, the research focused on the Heavenly Feast church, which is one of the pioneer Neocharismatic churches in the state. Although until 2010 the church consisted of a single congregation with 5000 members at the present time Heavenly Feast is spread across the state in smaller congregations. Heavenly Feast became the first of its kind to influence a large number of people from other churches in Kerala, both Roman Catholic and others. Nowadays, there are numerous Neocharismatic congregations in Kerala, who would probably outnumber the Classical Pentecostals. Thus, in the following section I present some of the findings of the research which will clarify certain questions about, and increase our understanding of the movement.

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<sup>56</sup> Wilkinson and Peter Althouse, *Catch the Fire*, 34.

<sup>57</sup> Daina Doucet, “What is God Doing in Toronto?,” *Charisma* 20/7(February, 2005), 21.

<sup>58</sup> Eddie L. Hyatt, *2000 Years of Charismatic Christianity* (Florida: Charisma House, 2002), 184.

### 6.5.1 Pentecostal Heritage

There is a clear difference between Neocharismatic and Pentecostal church practice.

There has been a purposeful effort by the Neocharismatics in Kerala to create a visibly distinct character, different to Pentecostals. It is significant that this thesis acknowledges that the terminological debate among scholars about the categorisation of independent churches also applies to the Neocharismatic churches in India. Bergunder observes that, from the outset, Pentecostalism was always conceived as a movement that has a network of churches. In his discussion of about the growth of independent churches in China, McClymond is hesitant to call them Pentecostal.<sup>59</sup> Although these churches are somehow separated from a network, and have been known to practise spiritual gifts since the 1960s, their lack of a genealogical connection to Pentecostal churches means that, according to McClymond they do not fit the category of Pentecostal.<sup>60</sup> This model can also be seen to be relevant to the Indian context. Without a doubt, prophecy, healing and speaking in tongues are not enough on their own for a church or movement to be deemed Pentecostal. Interestingly, most of the Neocharismatic churches are not interested in identifying with Pentecostalism. Significantly, the growth of Neocharismatic churches accelerated in India, and indeed, around the world, from the 1970s onwards.<sup>61</sup>

Of the 120 believers who participated in this research, 85 of them did not think identify as being part of the Pentecostal movement. Ten people did not know the difference between Pentecostalism and other movements, indeed, were not interested in such denominational classifications. Furthermore, all of the ten leaders who were interviewed asserted that they have no connection with Classical Pentecostalism in

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<sup>59</sup> Michael McClymond, "I will Pour Out My Spirit Upon All Flesh: An Historical and Theological Meditation on Pentecostal Origins," *Pneuma* 37 (2005): 367, 356–374.

<sup>60</sup> McClymond, "I will Pour Out...," 368.

<sup>61</sup> Chad M. Bauman, *Pentecostals, Proselytization, and Anti-Christian Violence in Contemporary India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 27.

India. Instead, they all believed that they are part of a distinctive group which has a clear vision from the Lord Jesus Christ, in addition to believing that they are part of the worldwide revival movement. These leaders were not aware of the scholarly discussion on the issue of identity. Despite this, however, both the Christian and non-Christian community in Kerala conflates Neocharismatics Christianity with Pentecostals.

Discussions on the social media, for example, exhibit a general understanding that all people who practise Spirit baptism, glossolalia, divine healing, prophecy and other supernatural manifestations are “Pentecostal”.

The genealogy of the Neocharismatic movement is important because Pentecostalism has a history of more than a century. Pentecostalism in India promotes the need for believers to maintain a holy life by abstaining from worldly pleasures’. Indeed the early Pentecostals in India, especially in Kerala, practised this holy life to a great extent.

Apart from smoking and drinking alcohol, other practices that were thought to be “worldly” included court cases, practicing law, wearing jewellery, watching dramas and movies or even having a daughter that entered to the health care profession. In contrast, the Neocharismatic churches have no restrictions on things mentioned above which makes their churches more popular than Pentecostal churches in Kerala. Martin states that, “Classical Pentecostals in the Holiness tradition are more alert to the dangers of possessions, whereas Neo-Pentecostals are more conscious of the constrictions of poverty and consumerism.”<sup>62</sup>As a movement that claims the supernatural manifestation of the Holy Spirit, the Neocharismatic church is still young. Therefore, it should be observed closely.

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<sup>62</sup> Martin, “Pentecostalism: An Alternative Form of Modernity and Modernization?” in *Global Pentecostalism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, edited by Robert W. Hefner, (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2013), 38. In Neo-Pentecostalism he includes all new generation independent churches.

### **6.5.2 Theology of the Holy Spirit**

The Pentecostals in India claims to have a theology which is based on oral tradition. It is true that the theology of the Pentecostal movements in India has been mostly derived from the existing older church traditions and from the contributions of the early Pentecostal missionaries to the country. All the indigenous leaders of Pentecostal churches in the early twentieth century had some orientation about Christianity. It can be seen then, that it was their understanding of the Holy Spirit that transformed their life to become servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the beginning of twentieth century, several local Christians received the baptism in the Holy Spirit, many have received water baptism and became Pentecostals. The distinctive theology of the Spirit baptism, with glossolalia understood as the initial evidence of such embodiment of the Spirit, was an important teaching in early Indian Pentecostalism. It clearly differentiated Pentecostals from mainstream Protestants, Catholics and Orthodox Christians who consider that the Holy Spirit is only a part of the Trinity. The Spirit theology of the Pentecostals is centred on nine gifts which are mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10. Bergunder rightly observes that early Pentecostals experienced xenoglossic tongues (missionary tongues) to help them carry out mission work.<sup>63</sup> However, Bauman states that the use of missionary tongues is no longer exercised in Pentecostal churches.<sup>64</sup> Today, glossolalia is not as regularly practised, but it can be witnessed in private prayer and in church services on Sundays. Currently, the emphasis on the use of speaking in tongues has reduced in Pentecostal churches. In an interview, one senior pastor said, for example, ‘In the olden days we had tarrying meetings in the church just to receive the Spirit baptism. Most people receive the Spirit baptism with the evidence of speaking in tongues. But today I am sad that neither many pastors nor believers are interested to

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<sup>63</sup> Bergunder, *The South Indian*, 5.

<sup>64</sup> Bauman, *Pentecostals*, 33.

have such experience.’<sup>65</sup>The gift of interpretation of glossolalia has ceased in the church. It is a gift mentioned among the nine spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12 by Apostle Paul. There are many Indian Pentecostals who believe that one should not speak in tongues in the church unless someone interprets it.<sup>66</sup> However, the Classical Pentecostals agree that speaking in tongues is a physical or a phenomenological indicator that one has indeed been baptized in the Holy Spirit.<sup>67</sup>

The Neocharismatics use the gift of speaking in tongues during their worship services; however, instead of following the Pentecostal method of glossolalia, they take the gift of speaking in tongues in another direction. Wilkinson and Althouse state that Neocharismatic glossolalia is understood as a prayer language, groaning in the Spirit, in which the Spirit of God moves in and through the individual.<sup>68</sup> While the context and the religious orientation of a community can influence the way each church understands this phenomenon, in the Indian context, it is thought that speaking in tongues continuously at a worship service gives the believer spiritual satisfaction.<sup>69</sup> During periods of singing in Neocharismatic churches in India, it is common to hear people speak in other tongues, and there are always congregational speaking in tongues at the end of each song, with the same tune and rhythm. This is a common style of worship among both Pentecostals and Neocharismatics in India. It is believed that the Holy Spirit enables believers to worship God during the singing time. The Spirit is thought to speak to people through the lyrics. As mentioned earlier, the songs address such themes as the daily struggles of the people and God’s deliverance.

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<sup>65</sup> Interview, Philip Thomas, 13 January 2015.

<sup>66</sup> Bauman, *Pentecostals*, 33.

<sup>67</sup> Wilkinson and Peter Althouse, *Catch the Fire*, 98.

<sup>68</sup> Wilkinson and Peter Althouse, *Catch the Fire*, 98.

<sup>69</sup> “Heavenly Feast Worship,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rPCLeu8k49s> (accessed 23 May, 2016).

Prophecy and healing are regarded highly by both the Indian Pentecostal and Neocharismatic community and usually take place during congregational worship. Prophecy is more of a common ministry, close to healing in the Neocharismatic services. Frequently the preacher can be heard calling out names of people in the congregation and talking about their sickness. Naming a particular individual who was the focus of a specific message for healing or spiritual edification was also practised in the early days of Pentecostalism in Kerala. However, today this practice is more commonly seen at Neocharismatic gatherings. For example, the healing evangelist Dhinakaran popularised this method in his crusades. Although these methods were criticised by Pentecostals, even today they are a very popular method of prophecy. The critics question the way such prophecies are practised in large gatherings. Preachers often call out certain characteristics to identify a member of the congregation (such as “woman in red sari”, or “dark coloured man”, for example) or sometimes they call out names that are common in that culture. In a gathering with thousands of people, it is obvious that there will always be a person with that name, or a woman in a red sari, or a man with a darker complexion. The question of spiritual authenticity in these prophecies is a matter of consideration. There are also prophetic schools in Kerala, where people are trained to prophesy in groups.

Hence, the Pentecostals adopt a different method for prophecy. Bergunder states that it is the women and laity who predominantly prophesy in Southern Indian churches.<sup>70</sup>

Nevertheless, at present they have “professional prophets” who travel from place to place and minister to local people.<sup>71</sup> They are invited by local Pentecostal churches,

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<sup>70</sup> Bergunder, *The South Indian*, 171.

<sup>71</sup> The ‘Professional Prophets’ are people who believe that they are specifically called for prophetic ministry. In most cases, they do not pastor a local church because their ministry is not concentrated in a particular place. They are paid well after every meeting. They live an elite life and do not entertain other prophets. Believers invite them to their homes and the “Professional Prophets” conduct special prayers to

mostly during periods of fasting and prayers of three, seven, twenty one or forty days at the most. It is believed that during preaching, prayers, or on special occasions, the Holy Spirit comes upon the prophet. Prophecies in Pentecostal churches sometimes involve actual predictions of future, social, geopolitical, or environmental events.<sup>72</sup>

In Indian Pentecostalism, mostly each individual comes to seek God's presence in their struggles in life. When the gospel is preached in the Indian context it is natural that the basic needs of people are addressed, and common themes in the evangelistic message include issues of suffering. The Holy Spirit is thought to help people and directs them to celebrate their life. Ordinary people always base their faith on the daily experiences they encounter. Badcock recommends that theology must be a source for all experience. The Holy Spirit calls us to the source described in the biblical passages.<sup>73</sup> Badcock refers to Anselm, who suggests that it is the authenticity of the source that lends value to the experience.<sup>74</sup> For Pentecostals and Neocharismatics the Bible has to be the authentic source used to validate any spiritual experience. Nevertheless, the Neocharismatics generally place an emphasis on their personal experiences without cross-checking with the Bible. The dynamism and spontaneity of the charismatic revival ceases when an individual's experience does not fall in line with the Bible. People are dissatisfied, and seek new churches and ministries to quench their thirst for the teachings of God's Word. For example the Heavenly Feast church in Kottayam which attracted more than five thousand people to its Sunday services, had to leave their worship place because of reports of social nuisance. They have since relocated to

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know God's will for the family. There are prophets who claim that they receive God's guidance and advice for particular individuals' marriage, job, and sickness and so on.

<sup>72</sup> Bauman, *Pentecostals*, 34.

<sup>73</sup> Badcock, *Light of Truth*, 142.

<sup>74</sup> Badcock, *Light of Truth*, 142.

different small towns, but a lot of people left the church because of the lack of teaching of God's word.

While the charismatic churches are rooted in openness to the Holy Spirit, this creates a sense that Spirit manifestations are beyond any intellectual knowledge. The Sunday church services inspire believers to connect with the Holy Spirit not just on Sundays, but to instead, remain tuned to God and the Spirit throughout the week. The believers in the Charismatic churches testify that they feel inner warmth and love throughout the week which enables them to share the gospel with their neighbours. In this way we can see that the ordinary believers are key in guiding other people to God. They testify to God's intervention in their life, being freed from emotional hurt or family problems. Such testimonies take place in an ordinary local setting such as at the corner of a local grocery store or at the side of a road. The rediscovery of the Holy Spirit as the Lord and Person is significant to Pentecostal pneumatology, but the Neocharismatics in Kerala limit the Holy Spirit as a source of power rather than a person. Phrases such as, "receive the power" or "take hold" are commonly heard from the pulpits, which can be seen to make the congregation feel that Spiritual gifts and anointing are distributed to individuals from the pulpits.

#### **6.5.4 Extra-Biblical Revelations**

As Pentecostals, the Charismatic and Neocharismatic Christians are diverse groups with multiple practices. It is commonly accepted among scholars that Charismatics hold little theology or no theology at all. Scotland rightly observes that, if these movements do have some theology, it is more pastoral than academic.<sup>75</sup> James Packer referred to the Charismatic movement as one looking for a theology because it desperately needs one.<sup>76</sup> Since the movement is more intuitive than rational, experiential rather than

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<sup>75</sup> Scotland, *Charismatics*, 274.

<sup>76</sup> Smail, "The Cross," 49.

textual, it satisfies believers' emotional and spiritual needs rather than deepening their understanding about the major creedal concerns. Its understandings of such subjects as creation, sin, salvation and Christology are replaced with Kingdom, prophecy, revival, healing and exorcism. This does not mean that these are not necessary or unimportant, but that all emotional and spiritual feelings should lead a person to the ultimate knowledge of God's rule in their personal life.

The Neocharismatics are engaged in an emotional realm to do more than what Jesus did during his earthly ministry. For example, Stephen, the leader of a Neocharismatic group in Kerala known as "Fire Wings" which is popular among young people, taught his disciples to write "Acts Chapter 29."<sup>77</sup> Studebaker writes about the Canadian educator Karel Marek who wrote comments in the same title 'Acts Chapter 29: In case you hadn't noticed recently there are only 28 chapters recorded in the Book of Acts in your Bible.'<sup>78</sup> Studebaker suggests that this preacher calls the Pentecostals to a renewed posture for the reception of a contemporary Pentecost to ensure and to empower to continue in the Lukan narrative into the contemporary period.<sup>79</sup> The activities of Fire Wings should not be observed as a theological emphasis, but instead, mere emotional outcry due to the lack of knowledge of the biblical text. It is also an attempt to identify as part of global spiritual movement. The role played by electronic media is crucial in popularising such teachings. Hence, these groups use social media like Facebook and Twitter to promote their ministry and encourage young people to attend their meetings. Stephen, lies on the floor while preaching, carries chairs, takes the wooden podium and walks with it, claiming that he performs this under the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>80</sup> They claim that they receive revelations from God, and ask people to open the door and take

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<sup>77</sup> No Author, "Fire Wings," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-fY7uaHkRAc> , (accessed 25 May, 2016).

<sup>78</sup> Studebaker, *Defining Issues*, 149.

<sup>79</sup> Studebaker, *Defining Issues*, 149.

<sup>80</sup> Fire Wings, (accessed 25 May, 2016).

what they need, ‘because we are not beggars’ says Stephen.<sup>81</sup> The Pentecostal notion of “baptism of the Spirit” is replaced with the idea of “anointing” among the Neocharismatics. When physical manifestations do not happen in a meeting they interpret this to mean that the Holy Spirit was not present. Therefore, young people scream, shout, jump, and stare at people as if they are anointed.<sup>82</sup> It is general practice in many Neocharismatic churches in Kerala to show that they move in the power of the Holy Spirit. In the New Testament, revelation is always an activity of God, not a faculty of human beings. The Spirit reveals the mysteries of God; hence human beings have knowledge of God rather than knowledge of facts about God.<sup>83</sup>

The biblical text is sometimes misinterpreted in their preaching.<sup>84</sup> In one of the sermons Tangu Brother stated that the Old Testament is not revealed nor given by God; Moses wrote the OT according to his understanding about God. Many things that Moses has written which we are carrying (the Bible) are not from God. He also teaches his church that instead of giving Old Testament to a new believer they should be given the copy of the New Testament only.<sup>85</sup> He also preached that just because the OT and NT are together in the Bible, it does not become the complete Bible.<sup>86</sup> M. Stephen states that both the Old Testament and the New Testament is God breathed. The OT has to be understood in light of the NT. The inerrancy of the OT cannot be denied. Christianity

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<sup>81</sup> Malayalam Christian Sermon: Overwhelming Joy, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IFY8WafyZAA>, (25 May, 2016).

<sup>82</sup> Fire Wings, (accessed 25 May, 2016).

<sup>83</sup> Brian Wintle and Ken Gnanakan, *Asia Bible Commentary: Ephesians* (Bangalore: TBT, 2004), 42-43.

<sup>84</sup> In one of the sermon Stephen says, the people of God walked around Jericho. If the wall of Jericho falls forward, it will fall on their blessings; if it falls backward, it would fall on the people of Israel. Therefore, on the first day, while Israelites circled the Jericho wall, God’s angels began digging a huge canal underneath the wall, so that the wall is swallowed by the earth. For that reason God delayed the fall of the wall for seven days. On the seventh day, while people were still shouting for God, billions of angels came down and pressed upon the wall, so that the wall would be under the earth. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IFY8WafyZAA>. (25 May, 2016).

<sup>85</sup> “Vedapusthakathinte Nishwasiyathaye Chodhyam Cheythu Tangu Brotherum Ezhamkulam Samkuttyum Rangathu” [Tangu Brother and Ezhamkulam Samkutty on scene questioning the inerrancy of the Bible] *Swargeeya Dwoni* 15/9 (1 May, 2017): 1, 1-8. See also <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TnjKPROs3e8>.

<sup>86</sup> Daiva Nishwasyathakkethire Newjanamaar Veendum [ New Generation is again against the divine inerrancy] in *Bleleivers Journal* 10/9 (10 May, 2017): 1, 1-8.

cannot survive by questioning the revelation of the biblical canon. It is false teachers who teach against the authenticity of the biblical canon. The Bible believing community should ignore the distorted views of the false teachers in Pentecostalism. Bible explicitly reveals the plan of God for the humankind and it also is the means of God's communication. When the Neocharismatic churches educate its believers with distorted views about the Bible, it affects Pentecostalism as whole.

Pentecostals use narrative theology to approach the text, which helps them and shapes a believing community. More than individual experiences, the source of such experience is always a matter of concern to Indian Pentecostals. The Spirit theology of the Pentecostals is always centred on the person of Jesus Christ. Cole says that the Spirit-Christology is the most productive systematic Christological model to interpret and informs the unique contributions of Pentecostal and Charismatic spirituality.<sup>87</sup> A solid ecclesiology should be one that proceeds from an awareness of our communion with God, and therefore one ought to be thoroughly grounded in his or her relationship with Jesus Christ, and fellowship with the Holy Spirit.<sup>88</sup> Pinnock remarks that the Spirit has a vested interest in the church, where believers confess the lordship of Christ and participate in divine life.<sup>89</sup>

The greatest criticism centred on the renewals of the 1980s onwards, in which unusual manifestations were witnessed. It is likely that one of the most well-known of these manifestations was the "slaying in the Spirit" promoted by renewalist John Wimber. It is now believed to be the most fashionable and palpable demonstration of the Spirit experienced by thousands of believers in Neocharismatic churches. Hanegraaff one of the prominent critiques of the Neocharismatic movement suggests that this

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<sup>87</sup> Ralph Dell Cole, "Spirit-Christology: Dogmatic Foundations for Pentecostal- Charismatic Spirituality," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 3(1993): 92 -93, 91-112.

<sup>88</sup> Cole, "Spirit-Christology," 92.

<sup>89</sup> Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 117.

manifestation has much more in common with the Hindu gurus, hucksters and hypnotists.<sup>90</sup> Interestingly, he generalises the agents of popular manifestations of the Spirit as “Counterfeit Revival leaders” because he suggests that they twist the Scripture according to their need and use tactics to dupe their followers.<sup>91</sup> Hence, it is given wide publicity by churches and leadership across the globe and many believers admit that it is a new era of the Holy Spirit. Testimonies of life transformations, healings, visions and intense spiritual encounters are highlighted and given importance during Neocharismatic meetings. Observers like Hanegraaff, and MacArthur have published books and articles that question the biblical and historical authenticity of such manifestations.<sup>92</sup> In fact, the criticisms and comments about these unusual manifestations have helped many to become more informed and educated. There has long been a fear of addressing issues related to the Spirit in the church. It is been commonly taught that anything that is assumed to be caused by the Spirit does need further inquiry or reasoning. In Indian Pentecostalism, for example, reasoning about spiritual matters is equated to a form of sin. Since the Neocharismatics have been grounded in Pentecostalism, they also do not question any form of reported spiritual activity. Hyatt identifies that some detractors believe that the manifestations were demonic in origin.<sup>93</sup> Meanwhile, no parameters have yet to be developed that can identify manifestations in the Neocharismatic churches as being demonic. In the complexity of Charismatic renewal movements, the lack of a proper pneumatology, which is accepted by all, causes problems. These unusual manifestations represent the

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<sup>90</sup> Hank Hanegraaff, *Counterfeit Revival* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1997), 16.

<sup>91</sup> Hanegraffe, *Counterfeit Revival*, 16.

<sup>92</sup> See Hank Hanegraffe, *Christianity in Crisis* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2009), *Counterfeit Revival*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001), John F. McArthur, Jr., *Charismatic Chaos* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992).

<sup>93</sup> Hyatt, *2000 Years*, 188.

excessive and the subjective nature of human expressions that indeed might be considered an enthusiasm of the flesh.

#### **6.5.5 General Observations on the Neocharismatic Movements in Kerala**

Apart from the specific facts mentioned above, there are other details that characterise a church as being part of the Neocharismatic movement. Even though many of the following characteristics are visible in the Heavenly Feast churches in Kerala, they are also common to other Neocharismatic churches. Since there are plenty of local churches that are independent and self-governing, and which have a particular emphasis on healing, worship and miracles, the following characteristic may fit with many such congregations.

The majority of the leaders (pastors) have no theological training, which is actually considered to be a positive attribute. The Neocharismatics relate this lack of theological training to the early days of the Pentecostal movement in Kerala, in which the early pioneers lacked this formal theological education (which was indeed reflected across India at the time). God used lay people to plant churches and provide leadership, and most of these people had only a basic level of schooling; others were illiterate. In fact, there was no evangelical theological institution in India where these leaders could have trained. However, with the power of the Holy Spirit, God used them with the power of the Holy Spirit to evangelise people. Nowadays, therefore, Neocharismatic leaders believe that the growth of the church is the work of the Holy Spirit. In their belief system, any activity in the church is observed as the activity of the Spirit, because the Spirit has complete freedom to do what He wants. During this course of this research I have seen pastors who regret that they lacked the opportunity for theological education. One said, for example, that ‘when I came to the ministry, some of our leaders told me that there is no need for theological education because it is God who uses His servants,

by the power of the Holy Spirit. So I did not bother to study, but started the ministry'.<sup>94</sup> He further stated that he struggles at present because he cannot give answers to some of the questions raised by his believers in the church, and he feels that this is because he lacks biblical training. Even some of the Pentecostal pastors face similar issues because there are plenty of educated believers in the church. Many of the believers have access to the published theological material and other forms of communication.

Although the personality of the Holy Spirit is accepted among the Neocharismatics, often the Spirit manifestations are given prime importance. Among all the Spirit manifestations, healing is considered most significant. While the phenomenology of healing is similar in Indian Pentecostal and Neocharismatic churches, the practice differs in each movement. Pentecostals offer general prayers for healing in public meetings, while the Neocharismatics place a high emphasis on, and pray for, specific healings. In these churches it is usual that the specific healing is announced by the leader, as the patient is expected and encouraged to share their experience with the public. In most instances, people testify that they are healed from a pain in the body or a throbbing sensation, because if they do not testify so, it is concluded that they lack faith and that is why the expected healing was not obtained.

The Neocharismatics have a greater emphasis on the idea that the church is a place for all people, a concept that can be described as a 'Church in the marketplace.' The gospel is taken to the marketplace and among the public instead of them coming to the church. Pentecostal churches often do not allow a sinner to come to the church, unless the person is saved. There are instances in which some people in the church look down upon them as criminals. Cyprian of Carthage in the Third century taught that the church is an indispensable ark of salvation and it serves as a womb apart from which no one

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<sup>94</sup> Interview, Suresh Mohan, Kottayam, (12 January 2015).

can live and breathe spiritually. The church is a place of fellowship for all people, irrespective of the colour, caste, creed or religion. The Neocharismatic churches serve as a platform for all people to come together in the name of Jesus. This is significant in the context of both classical and indigenous churches, which can be seen to classify people on the basis of their cultural context. The Neocharismatics train their believers and equip them to witness the gospel in any and all places.

In the context of globalisation, “marketplace church” has become an effective method of bringing people to salvation. Compared to Pentecostals in Kerala, the arrival of Neocharismatic churches has created awareness that the church can be involved in society. These churches are actively involved in helping the poor, providing food for the people after Sunday services and some special occasions, which attract lots of people. With regards to the active participation of local churches in social issues, this activity differentiates the Neocharismatics in Kerala from the Pentecostals, who are less interested in tackling issues of society. A Neocharismatic church leader affirmed the commitment of his church, saying that, ‘we are doing what the Pentecostal churches in our town cannot make out. They worship in the church, but we find places to worship God in the streets.’<sup>95</sup> The Great Commission, from the gospel of Matthew, is commonly cited and used as a scriptural reference for evangelism. It asserts Christ’s power over the world to make disciples of all nations. Believers in these Neocharismatic churches, including women, are educated about the need of evangelising people and bringing them to the church. All people, including children and youth, participate in the church’s evangelism programmes. In the contemporary period, the vigour to preach the gospel in public and make disciples is more deeply rooted in the Neocharismatic church in India

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<sup>95</sup> Interview, Thampi John, Kottayam, 15 January, 2015.

than among the Pentecostals. It is clear that people believe evangelism is the most significant tool for church growth.

The Neocharismatics use different multimedia, including the internet, to promote the ministry of every local church. Testimonies, messages and prophecies are recorded and used in meetings, which help them to disseminate their message to more people. This also helps them to broaden their vision to a wider perspective, and motivates people to exercise their faith by praying for the sick and the poor. Pentecostals in Kerala were against the use of multimedia such as television when it was popularised. The ministry was limited to the four walls of the church and the use of contemporary media was categorised as the activity of the devil. It has been observed in this research that Pentecostalism failed to use the advantage of multimedia to promote the gospel until 2000. In contrast, now a Pentecostal pastor in Kerala owns his own television channel. With the arrival of the Neocharismatic churches, and their use of such media for evangelism, the Pentecostals in India have now opened up and use all possible media to communicate the gospel. Most of the secular Malayalam television channels broadcast gospel messages for a specific period of time each day, and interestingly, most of these are the products of Neocharismatic churches. These television programmes usually last thirty minutes and are often sponsored by wealthy believers. The programmes consist of short words of encouragement, testimonies of a miracle healing, and calls for viewers to financially support the ministry. Surprisingly, more people watch such broadcasts than attend church services. Heavenly Feast arranges meetings exclusively for their TV audience, and thousands of people attend.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Video, "Miraculous Healing at TV Viewers meeting at Kollam," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nRslbQNSvhg>, (accessed 18 June, 2016).

### **6.5.6 Neocharismatic Spirit Experiences as Glocal Driving Force**

The powerful manifestations of the Holy Spirit witnessed in the global Neocharismatic movement lead the discussions in the field. It takes the glocal context seriously as it shapes the face of the movement. The Neocharismatic movement, shaped within an Indian context, has a strong resemblance with churches which have been pioneered in other countries. Common features such as being Spirit motivated and prosperity oriented, individualistic and evangelistic, and having an ethos of voluntarism, unite them with other churches around the world. Although the spirituality of these Neocharismatic churches in India was not a Western import, they certainly exhibit similarities with other churches across the world. However, certain factors can be seen as strictly indigenous as the church formulates its own methods and approach to be independent.

Theological emphases on prosperity, blessings, miraculous healings and other Spirit manifestations are practised in churches across the world. While focusing on the blessings that the Spirit movements enjoy, it is important to be able to admit the failures also. Lederle states that over the last thirty years journalists have focused on the personal failures of leaders in all “three waves” which has discredited these Christian movements in the eyes of the public.<sup>97</sup> Pastors and leaders of these churches project themselves as men of high standard, but they lack integrity in their dealings. Examples of such cases are also reported in India. However, the upcoming generation of Pentecostals and Neocharismatics look for sound mentors, fathers and mothers who they find trustworthy.

The churches in Europe, America, Africa and Asia have their own minute doctrinal differences based on the context in which they exist. For example, alcohol is strictly

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<sup>97</sup> Lederle, *Theology*, 161.

prohibited among the Pentecostals in India, but many Pentecostals in Western countries drink it. The Neocharismatics also differ in practice because of the different cultural backgrounds in which they have developed. Apart from such differences, it is the Power of the Holy Spirit that places Pentecostalism in the global arena.

Any discussion about Pentecostalism can no longer be limited to its classical or indigenous forms, but should include all Charismatic and Neocharismatic movements. The work of the Holy Spirit has widened in the spiritual realm, and it can be seen that more people openly respond to the call of the Spirit. With more recognition of the poor and the needy in our society, churches in all contexts have greater responsibility to fulfil. Yong states that effective leadership, ministry and church life must represent and respect the perspectives and languages of the people who need the service of the church.<sup>98</sup> Churches have become multicultural, multi-ethnic, and multilingual communities where the service has to be offered with both great care and great enthusiasm. The global nature of churches therefore demands leadership from those who are committed to the cause and move in the power of the Holy Spirit. This should not be merely an emotional move of the Spirit, but rather a deep sense of the service required in each church and a response to the call of the Holy Spirit. The impact and influence of a globalised Neocharismatic Christianity interconnects with locally-grounded church communities, which are in themselves influenced by the global movement of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the local church has some influence on the global Charismatic movement. Neocharismatic pneumatology maintains certain common factors while, at the same time, the particular cultural context of different localised movements determines the rest, with the help of the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>98</sup> Yong, *Who is the Holy Spirit?*, 73.

## **Evaluation**

This chapter articulates globalisation in relation to the Neocharismatic movement. Pentecostalism as a global movement has been recognised in the contemporary religious arena. It is true that Pentecostalism as a global movement has influenced the Neocharismatic movement to be more effective in evangelism and the mission of the Church. The presence of the Holy Spirit in a Neocharismatic church is generally recognised as being visible through the popular manifestations of the Holy Spirit that have been witnessed in the era of globalisation. The spirituality of a church is determined by praise and worship, healings and the constant occurrence of other Spirit manifestations. The number of people attending Sunday worship services, the size of the church building, and the number of pastors and cell group leaders are also important elements in life of the church. There has been a lot of discussion in the religious arena about the quantity not the quality. Major modifications have taken place in the worship pattern of churches in India since 2000. At present the music ministry has become an international commercial business. Famous artists like Joel Houston, Ron Kenoly, Darlene Zscheck, Ruben Morgan, Chris Tomlin, Matt Redman, Don Moen and David Crowder are a few of the notable gospel artists who have influenced the worship of church-goers in the contemporary era. The contemporary worship and music of these churches is a sign that the work of the Holy Spirit can be only manifested with a song. The personality of the Holy Spirit, His role in the Trinity, and His post-resurrection work on earth, is undermined in many Pentecostal and Neocharismatic churches. Critics have noted that believers seem to be in a hallucinatory state rather than being mature in their understanding of the distinctiveness of the Holy Spirit. In such situations, leaders claim all their personal experiences as if they are authentic and genuine expressions of the Spirit. For an ordinary believer, their pneumatology is shaped mostly by their

personal experience. It is the pastor who authenticates and confirms the believers' personal experience as godly intervention. This is to be done in terms of testing such experiences against the biblical narratives. Hence, the quality and wisdom of individual church leaders is important for church growth.

The controversial nature of the Neocharismatic movement is connected to its preaching and practice. The concept of charismata is wide and includes even those that are not mentioned in the Bible. One comes to recognise and receive the Holy Spirit through the Scripture; therefore, the manifestations of the same Spirit can be in light of the Scripture. Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit should not be limited to Spirit baptism alone; rather believers should be prayerful to receive more from God, who lavishly distributes various gifts to His people. The Holy Spirit's work in the life of an individual believer, and thereby his or her relation to Jesus Christ, is fundamental to the New Testament teaching.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### CONCLUSION

This research is the result of a long held passion to study the mushrooming Neocharismatic movement in Kerala. As a Pentecostal, I have always had queries about the personal experience of individuals with the Holy Spirit. My interest in this subject increased when personal experiences of believers in independent churches began to spread to other congregations around the world. The previous chapters were based on the pneumatology of the Neocharismatics in India with particular emphasis on the state of Kerala. This final chapter summarizes the whole thesis and also highlights the significance of Neocharismatic Pneumatology in the Indian context.

#### **7.1 Summary**

In the introduction, keywords used in the research are defined and questions concerning the research, which focuses on Neocharismatic movements are raised. Also included in this chapter are the literature review and methodology. Since the Neocharismatic churches are a recent development in India, it was proposed that a practical approach was essential to complete this study and thus, the empirical research was carried out on the Heavenly Feast church in Kerala. This introductory chapter serves as a basis for the following chapters, which discuss in more detail the main questions of the research and considers the pneumatology used by Neocharismatics in Kerala.

The first Chapter provides a brief history of the Pentecostal movement in India. The Holy Spirit was significant in the history of early Indian Pentecostalism and this serves as a background for this study. Chapter Two is an attempt to construct a brief history of the Neocharismatic movements particularly in Kerala. Most Neocharismatic churches in Kerala developed from the older and more established churches under the leadership of

former Pentecostal believers. The Neocharismatic movements differ in several ways from the classical and indigenous Pentecostals in Kerala. Both Pentecostal and Neocharismatic history provides a basic knowledge about the movements.

Chapter three then, highlights distinctions between the classical Pentecostal and indigenous Pentecostals in Kerala. Understanding the differences between the Classical Pentecostals and Neocharismatics with regards to the baptism of the Holy Spirit is fundamental to this study. Chapter two also discusses important revivals that occurred in the beginning of the twentieth century, and the Pentecostal missions that developed as a result. In the Indian revival, Pandita Ramabai, a strong proponent of indigenous Indian Pentecostalism and Indian Christianity, was particularly significant. Ramabai developed her own mission focused Spirit theology which was distinct from the existing Pentecostal pneumatologies at that time. This is important in this chapter. She realised that the Spirit was the primary initiator and motivator for mission and evangelism.

Chapter Three explores the way both the classical and indigenous Pentecostal movements in India recognised their pneumatology, which can be seen as a mission-focused biblical pneumatology rooted in the local context. As Pentecostals emphasise the importance of speaking in tongues as initial evidence of baptism in the Holy Spirit, unsurprisingly prime focus is placed on this practice during church worship. The Holy Spirit gives power to people to preach the gospel. In the early days of Pentecostal growth in Kerala, the gospel advanced among ordinary people. As the preachers were uneducated in the Scriptures, it is believed that it was the Holy Spirit that enabled people to receive the gospel.

Chapter Four discusses the Neocharismatic pneumatology. This chapter is constructed on the basis of interviews held in the Heavenly Feast church. The Spirit is active in multiple ways in the church, as healer, communicator, motivator of mission activity,

giver of all material prosperity and exorcist. It has been identified that the experiences of Neocharismatic believers shape their understanding about the Holy Spirit and His work. The personal experiences that they cherish stem from the spiritual life they lead. Their understanding of the Holy Spirit totally depends on the immediate context in which they live. It is also recognised that the leadership of each church has a deep influence on their believers. The leader's personal experiences energise the churchgoers to claim the same kind of experience through prayer.

Chapter Five is an evaluation of Neocharismatic pneumatology from the perspectives of the common believers. It elucidates the way a Neocharismatic believer understands Spirit practices. The Pentecostal concept of baptism in the Spirit is more comprehensive and less doctrinal in the Neocharismatic movement. For example, it is not necessary for a believer to speak in tongues in the Neocharismatic church, although they do allow speaking in tongues as they have a wider understanding of the ministry of the Holy Spirit. They are not restricted to a particular form of Spirit manifestation. Healing and miracles, exorcism, financial miracles, and curse breaking are all considered valid manifestations of the Holy Spirit and every believer has the freedom to exercise any gift of the Spirit. It is also observed that the Neocharismatics in India do not follow the Pentecostal understanding of Holiness and separation. Neocharismatic leadership is also interested in influencing the political spheres along religious lines, and they thereby identify with the church and state approach of the older churches. However, it is remarkable that the Neocharismatics are strikingly integrated and equal in their use of the Spirit. All people irrespective of class, colour, culture and religious background are considered to be God's people. In contrast, the Pentecostals in India did not maintain their egalitarian roots as they became divided among themselves.

The second part of the chapter looks at the biblical idea of the Spirit manifestations. Both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, the manifestation of the Holy Spirit was fully dependent upon the need for God's dealing in a particular situation. More than the method of the Spirit's operation, it was the result that was vital in the Old Testament. In the New Testament amidst vigorous teaching on the Spiritual gifts and manifestations in First Corinthians, Paul writes the value of love, illustrating a better way ahead above all chaos and confusion.

Chapter Six deals with the Neocharismatic relationship with the global Charismatic movement. The global nature of the Neocharismatic movement in Kerala is visible in three different ways. First of all, evangelism must be understood as an important part of the Neocharismatic movement; and local evangelical efforts are supported by their use of contemporary internet-based media which brings them to the attention of the rest of the world. Secondly, the worship services are spontaneous and exuberant; people are eager to experience the next level of Spirit manifestation and this compels them to attend every service. Thirdly, their openness to the local spiritual language differentiates them from the Pentecostals. As the context changes, the spiritual language also changes. The local congregations maintain the common psyche and identity of the global Neocharismatic movement.

## **7.2 Contributions**

This thesis has wider significance in the area of Charismatic Pneumatology in the Indian, Asian and global contexts. Primarily, it contributes to the study of the Holy Spirit and its related movements across the world. The thesis highlights the importance of indigenous Indian revivals which were parallel to the historic revivals in North America. It is also equally important to note that the Pentecostalism in India is not confined to the format of Western revivals, but it is truly an indigenous revival. Instead

of being occupied by the influence of Western Pentecostal revivals, the indigenous views and practices of the Indian revivals resonate well with the local culture and worship style. The thesis identifies Ramabai as the first indigenous missionary to have her own pneumatology, which shaped the early Pentecostal understanding of mission and evangelism. The Spirit of Pentecost who equipped believers for the mission in the first century is the same Spirit that empowered believers to witness for Christ in the twentieth century.

The second significant fact that the thesis highlights the contribution to the field of theology, in the way ordinary believers understand God by their experience of the Holy Spirit. This is done only when the daily experiences of believers are considered to be similar to experiences of the New Testament period. Healing, exorcism, and deliverance from daily struggles bring people close to the church and a relationship to Christ. We understand from the Bible that the Holy Spirit is God Himself, who took a permanent dwelling in His people. Hence this thesis asserts that the pneumatic experiences of believers are aligned with the stories of the Bible. These experiences release people from their daily struggles and help them to find peace in their family, society and religious settings. Pentecostal experiences are not just propositional truths; rather they help believers to experience not only God, but also the transformation of their lives.

Thirdly, it is clear from the research that the Neocharismatic church reaches all kinds of people in society. Its friendly approach assures people of hope, and allows for newcomers to easily conform to Christian practice and adopt a Christian identity. This shows that the Neocharismatic community is a group of people that is fully integrated into those that are in need in society. Its inclusive nature accepts different religious traditions, castes, races and creeds. In the context of caste discriminations, each local

church functions as an open community which accommodates everyone and becomes a witness of the love of Christ among other groups.

The fourth contribution is the focus on the Neocharismatic relationship to globalisation. Its success as a globalising movement is not just because of its growth, but also the range of social contexts into which it has spread across the world. In India Neocharismatic churches appear in both rural and urban locales, are attended by both the poor and the rich and both males and females, and crosses religious boundaries. The involvement of Neocharismatics in society makes them responsive to the subaltern people. The Neocharismatics have ventured out to areas where Pentecostals in India were reluctant to go and have responded to both the social and spiritual needs of people.

### **7.3 Areas of Future Research**

This thesis forms an initial enquiry focused solely on the direction and manifestation of the Holy Spirit in the Neocharismatic movement in Kerala. During the last decade the Neocharismatic churches proved to be hotbed of doctrinal innovations in India. Many new ideas brought forth in other parts of the globe have garnered widespread popularity among the Indian Neocharismatics. The prosperity gospel, authority over territorial spirits which serves as a platform for “deliverance ministries”, curse breaking, exclusive prayer on special themes (such as school or college examinations, for example) are just a few that can be noted. The complex nature of the Neocharismatic movement can be a hindrance resulting in a limited study. The probable possibility is to study each individual congregation separately to analyse its history, theology and function. The great range of churches grouped under the rubric of Neocharismatic movements must be understood when considering the theology of the movement. Indeed, serious research is necessary to verify the Christological articulations of the Neocharismatics. It is important to see their understanding of the Holy Spirit in relation

to Christology in the contemporary context. Only a contextual Christology that serves mission can achieve results in India. Theology fashioned around the dynamic power and gifts of the Holy Spirit is an integral part of the church. Both the Pentecostal and Neocharismatic movements must work together to develop a theology that strengthens the messages that are preached in public and church services. I am hopeful that such inquiry would bring forth new insights in the area of Pentecostal and Charismatic studies in India.

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## APPENDIX 1

### Interview Questions (Semi Structured Approach)

#### Section 1 -: Personal

Name:

Age:

Sex:

- 1) Can you tell me about the church you attend for worship?
- 2) What is your religious background? If not, how long have you been a member in this church?
- 3) Why do you prefer to attend this church?
- 4) How many days a week do you come to the service?
- 5) What is your role in the ministry of this church?

#### Section 2-: Doctrinal

- 6) What is your understanding about the Holy Spirit?
- 7) Do you believe in the Holy Spirit/ do you believe in supernatural work of the Holy Spirit?
- 8) Have you experienced the manifestation of the Holy Spirit in your life?
- 9) Can you tell me a story of someone who has been such experience?
- 10) Are there any biblical texts that inform your understanding about the manifestation of the Holy Spirit?

#### Section 3-: Ecclesial

- 11) Do you see your church, different from other Pentecostal churches ?
- 12) What category, would you see your church is in?
- 13) Can you explain the reason behind the growth of this church?
- 14) How influential your church is in relation to the theology and teachings?
- 15) Is there anything else you would like to say that you haven't had an opportunity to say during the course of the interview?

- The questions are prepared and asked in Malayalam. In a later stage translated for the purpose of the research.

## APPENDIX 2

### Focus Group

#### Section 1 -: Personal

1. What is your religious background? If not, how long have you been a member in this church?
2. Why do you prefer to attend this church?
3. How many days a week do you come to the service?
4. What is your role in the ministry of this church?

#### Section 2-: Doctrinal

5. What is your understanding about the Holy Spirit?
6. Do you believe in the Holy Spirit/ do you believe in supernatural work of the Holy Spirit?
7. Have you experienced the manifestation of the Holy Spirit in your life?
8. Can you tell me a story of someone who has been such experience?
9. Are there any biblical texts that inform your understanding about the manifestation of the Holy Spirit?

#### Section 3-: Ecclesial

10. Do you see your church, different from other Pentecostal churches ?
11. What category, would you see your church is in?
12. Can you explain the reason behind the growth of this church?
13. How influential your church is in relation to the theology and teachings?
14. Is there anything else you would like to say that you haven't had an opportunity to say during the course of the interview?

- The questions are prepared and asked in Malayalam. In a later stage translated for the purpose of the research.