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AS EAST AND WEST MET IN GOD'S OWN COUNTRY: ENCOUNTER OF WESTERN PENTECOSTALISM WITH NATIVE PENTECOSTALISM IN KERALA

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1. Introduction

During 1920s in the Southern State of India called Kerala,[1] Pentecostalism from the West had the opportunity to meet the home grown brand of Pentecostalism. This encounter has some significant lessons for Pentecostal churches and missions agencies, particularly in their relationship with native churches and organisations. This case study of the encounter between western Pentecostalism and the indigenous Pentecostalism also illustrate the use of insights from postcolonial theory and historiography.[2]

1.1 Postcolonialism

A postcolonial approach to historiography is different from traditional approaches in its content and as well as its perspective. A postcolonial approach has a distaste for grand narratives instead it believes in locality and historical particularity. Those who use this approach try to construct more limited and specific accounts of particular events and incidents, stressing the fact that each episode has a local and

[1] Because of its scenic beauty, the Indian state of Kerala is described as "God's own country."

[2] Those who are new to Postcolonial theory will find P. Mongia, ed., *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader* (London: Arnold, 1996) a useful introduction. Mongia has offered an introduction to the history, various aspects, and critique of postcolonial theory along with selections from the leading scholars.

particular colour. This approach thus ensures a place for those who are not given their due place in history.[3]

A postcolonial approach to history is also different in its perspectives. A postcolonial approach to history is considered as "history from below" or "voices from the edges." It tries to reconstruct history from the perspective of those who are left out by traditional histories or those who were not given their due place in history. This is what qualifies the Subaltern Studies project to be called a postcolonial approach.[4]

Another important dimension is that it provides categories to understand relationships between dominant groups and the subalterns, those who have placed themselves at the centre of history and those who are pushed to the periphery.

1.2 Postcolonialism and Pentecostal Studies

What relevance does the postcolonial approach have to Pentecostal studies?

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[3] A postcolonial critique of traditional historiographic approaches can be found in R. Guha, "On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India," in *Selected Subaltern Studies*, eds. R. Guha and G. C. Spivak (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 37-44.

[4] The Subaltern Study Group which began in the 1980s attempts to rewrite the history of India by focusing on those who were on the fringes and by reconstructing specific, local and particular accounts of history. See the series Subaltern Studies and other works listed below: R. Guha, ed., *Subaltern Studies I: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, 10 vols. (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982); R. Guha, ed., *Subaltern Studies II*, 10 vols. (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983); R. Guha, ed., *Subaltern Studies III* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1984); R. Guha, ed., *Subaltern Studies IV*, 10 vols. (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985); R. Guha, ed., *Subaltern Studies V* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987); R. Guha and G. C. Spivak, eds., *Selected Subaltern Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); R. Guha, ed., *Subaltern Studies VI* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989); P. Chatterjee and G. Pandey, eds., *Subaltern Studies VII* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992); D. Arnold and D. Hardiman, eds., *Subaltern Studies VIII: Essays in Honour of Ranajit Guha*, 10 vols. (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994); S. Amin and D. Chakrabarty, eds., *Subaltern Studies IX*, 10 vols. (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996); R. Guha, ed., *Subaltern Reader: 1986-1995* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997); G. Bhadra, G. Prakash, and S. Tharu, eds., *Subaltern Studies X*, 10 vols. (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999).

First of all, it would help us to recover Pentecostal history which has not found a place in the grand narratives. Pentecostalism is (still) the religion of the subalterns in most parts of the world; they are not the subjects of their history. It remains an undisputed fact that in the grand narratives that the historians belonging to the historical churches created, Pentecostalism has not been given due recognition. The elitist historiography presented by the groups that are dominant either by their place in history or political or economic advantage, Pentecostalism and especially Pentecostalism in the non-western cultures did not get the due place.

Secondly, it promises a deeper appreciation of the work of the Holy Spirit irrespective of the limits of time and space. The work of the Holy Spirit is universal and it is not limited to any place or time. The postcolonial historiography does help us to look at particular historical events from the perspectives of the natives. Pentecostal histories that are Euro-centric in nature describes Pentecostal history beginning with the Topeka revival and gaining momentum at the Azusa Street Mission and spreading all over the world. The following quotation illustrates this attitude. While introducing the article on how Pentecostalism came to city of Calcutta in India, the editor comments:

> Pentecostal church history has revealed that a common thread runs from Azusa Street through contemporary pentecostal denominations and their missionary expansion.[5]

Such a conviction does not allow us to explore the possibilities of the work of the Holy Spirit in the rest of the world and the ways in which people in various parts of the world responded to its manifestation.

Thirdly, it helps us to explore voices from the contact zones of West and East or the intersection of their spaces. Pentecostalism in the present forms made its appearance either in the last phase of European colonialism or at the dawn of the emergence of new nation states. In other words, Pentecostal missionaries entered the territories which had been colonial contact zones for centuries. How did the natives respond, what sort of resistance and acceptance did they receive from these natives who have already been through political, economic and sometimes even ecclesiastical domination? This would help us to learn some useful lessons for enriching relationship between East and West. "As East is far

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[5] Maynard Ketcham and Wayne Warner, "When the Pentecostal Fire Fell in Calcutta," in *Azusa Street and Beyond*, ed. L. Grant McClung, Jr. (South Plainfield: Bridge Publishing, 1986), pp. 26-31 (26).

from the West…" the Psalmist says, but on Pentecost, East and West were made to meet each other through the confession "One God, One Baptism and One Spirit." However, did the confession and experience of the third person of the trinity erase their historical memories? What happens when East and West so far from each other as far as political, economic, social and ecclesiastical spaces meet is for us to explore.

I claim no authority or command over Postcolonial theory and does not endorse it as beyond limitations, but only try to explore its use for Pentecostal studies.

2. Short History of Pentecostalism in Kerala

Indigenous Pentecostalism in India first emerged from the Syrian Christian community in the state of Kerala. Its History is very much tied to the history of Christianity in Kerala. Christianity in Kerala claims its origin in AD 52 when the Apostle Thomas arrived and preached the gospel to Jews and the native high caste Bhramins.[6] In addition, there were evidences of migrations of Christians from Syria in the fourth century and the eighth century to Kerala.[7] However, there was an ancient Christian community in Kerala which claimed its ecclesiastical allegiance to the Syrian Orthodox Patriarch in the Middle East. The community, though now divided into two factions, one in allegiance to the Patriarchate in Damascus and one in India continues in the same ecclesiastical and liturgical traditions.

The three stalwarts of native Pentecostalism in Kerala and host of their leaders and laymen came from this community. Pastor K. E. Abraham co-founder and President of Indian Pentecostal Church until 1974 was raised in order to become an Syrian orthodox priest. Another co-founder, Pastor P. M. Samuel, and the first President of Indian

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[6] Acts of Thomas, written in Syriac and dated in the fourth century A.D., mentions that Saint Thomas, one of the twelve apostles, went to India to preach the gospel. See A. F. J. Klijn, ed., *Acts of St. Thomas* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1962) for an English translation of this work. Also see, A. E. Medlycott, *India and the Apostle St. Thomas* (London: David Nutt, 1905). Though the work is described as apocryphal, scholars see in it a second-century tradition about the Apostle of Thomas.

[7] For a detailed discussion on the various sources regarding the origin of Christianity in Kerala, see A. M. Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India: From the Beginning up to the Middle of the Sixteenth Century (up to 1542)* (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 1984), pp. 21-66.

Pentecostal Church of God received training to become an Orthodox priest in their seminary. And another founder, Pastor K. C. Cherian, was a teacher in the church-run school and active in the church activities.

The Syrian Christian community had recorded instances of revivals since the second half of the nineteenth century. Edwin Orr describes how, as a result of these revivals new groups professing evangelical faith emerged from among the Syrian Christian community.[8] The first was the reformed Syrian church called Mar Thoma Church and then a movement called Viyojitha Prasthanam (literally translated as the Separatist Movement) which can be rendered as the Holiness Movement. One stream of the Holiness movement under the leadership of noted Malayalam poet K. V. Simon ended up in the Christian Brethren and the other led by K. E. Abraham in Pentecostalism later.

K. E. Abraham, a leader in the Holiness movement who had been in alliance with Church of God (Anderson) was baptised in the Holy Spirit in April 20, 1923 in a meeting held by some native believers who believed in the baptism of Holy Spirit and tarried for it. This is a turning point in the history of Syrian Christians in Kerala. The following years saw a great number of prominent Syrian Christian leaders embracing Pentecostal faith. K. C. Cherian, another school teacher and a former colleague of K.E. Abraham joined the folds of Pentecostals in November 1924. P. T. Chacko became a Pentecostal believer in 1925 while he was a college student.

Pastor K. E. Abraham was leading a denomination called Independent Separatist (Holiness) Church since 1918 but was deserted by most of his followers for his doctrinal position on the Holy Spirit. He founded the South India Pentecostal Church of God with the "faithful remnant" of his group who stood with him. In 1924 the Syrian Christian leaders who have been working independent of each other formed what was known as the South India Pentecostal Church of God (SIPCG). This can be considered as the first indigenous Pentecostal denomination in India, now known as the Indian Pentecostal Church of God.

2.1 Arrival of Western Pentecostalism

The Pentecostal message from the West arrived in Kerala in 1909 through the visit of George Berg. This American missionary of German descent arrived in Banglore in 1909 and preached in a Brethren

[8] J. E. Orr, *Evangelical Awakenings in Southern Asia* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1975), pp. 134-39.

convention in Kerala.[9] Berg visited Kerala again in 1910 but he had to confront tremendous opposition from the Brethren missionaries forcing him to organise meeting on his own. Berg's third visit to Kerala was in 1911 in the company of an Indian missionary called Charles Cummins, and two Brethren expatriate missionaries Aldwinkle, Bouncil, et. al who received the baptism in the Holy Spirit in the meetings of Thomas Barrett. However, the first Pentecostal congregation was formed through the efforts of Berg in Kerala only in 1911. This was among first generation Christians. Berg was the first missionary to reach out to the natives who did not speak English. Otherwise, Pentecostal (foreign) mission was limited to people of foreign origin who spoke English.

The next key player is Robert F. Cook who came to India in 1912 following the trails of Berg. Some of the congregations that Berg had founded joined the mission of R. F. Cook. At this stage, Cook was assisted by the former colleagues of Berg who were expatriate missionaries. Cook was able to establish many churches particularly among the low caste Hindus and Christians in Kerala. During his early days of mission work in India, Cook was an independent. Later R.F. Cook had become a missionary affiliated with the Assemblies of God in U.S.A. Until 1926 R. F. Cook was leading a new Pentecostal denomination by the name South India Full Gospel Church (SIFGC).

Next in the line was Ms. Mary Chapman who came to India as the missionary of Assemblies of God in the US in 1915. However, she was not involved in Kerala actively until 1921 since she stayed in Madras and only did itinerary work in South Kerala.

The work of western missionaries was mainly evangelistic. They reached out the non-Christian (mainly low caste Hindus) and Christians who are the products of western missionary efforts during the colonial period. However, their impact on Syrian Orthodox Christians was very low.

Their influence on the spiritual formation of the leaders of the native movements was also very minimal. Pastor K. E. Abraham co-founder of Indian Pentecostal leaders and the first to receive baptism in the Holy Spirit describes the two leading figures of western Pentecostalism, namely Ms. Chapman and Rev. Cook only after he received Pentecostal experience.[10]

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[9] In a town called Kottarakara in south Kerala.

[10] K. E. Abraham, *Yesukristhuvinte Eliya Dasan* [Humble Servant of Jesus Christ] (Kumbanad: Pentecostal Young Peoples Association, 1965), pp. 86-87 mentions that it was two months after he received the baptism in the Holy Spirit

2.2 The Meeting of East and West

In 1923, there were three important Pentecostal movements in Kerala, the indigenous movement by the name, South India Pentecostal Church of God, Assemblies of God under the leadership of Mary Chapman and South India Full Gospel Church under the leadership of R. F. Cook. In 1926, South India Pentecostal Church of God and South India Full Gospel Church merged to form, Malankara Pentecostal Church with R. F. Cook as President and K. E. Abraham as Vice-President. However, this did not last long; in 1930 January 30, Malankara Pentecostal Church of God was split to SIPCG and SIFCG again.

This split was a rebellion of sort and a very adventurous decision. The native leaders were very much dependent upon the financial support that was extended by the western missionary. Financial and spiritual support from the western missionary was very crucial because as they embraced Pentecostal faith, they were ostracised by their own community and also had to relinquish their own ancestral property. Though, penniless and socially and economically vulnerable the native leaders did take a decision to part ways with the western missionary.

The native leaders' version of the conflict is reflected in various articles, leaflets and the autobiography of Pastor. K. E. Abraham. The native leaders described their experience of the western missionaries as "being under the yoke of slavery," and "surrendering the freedom," and their work as "building for money" in the manner of "those who are employed by the state." Their denial of financial support was described as refusing to drink "the milk of the white cow." In clarifying their position expressions like "autonomy of native churches" and "independence" etc were common.

3. Response of Indigenous Pentecostalism

I would like to examine three important sources that reflect the relationship and attitude of the native Pentecostal leaders towards the western Pentecostal missionary. The first is a speech made by Pastor K. E. Abraham in 1938 to a meeting of the representative of IPC Congregations. The second is a short history of Pentecostalism titled,

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that he met pastor Cook and this too was at the initiative of Cook. It was after three months that he met Ms. Chapman. He devoted a section on how he met the "western missionaries."

"Early Years of I. P. C." and the third is the autobiography written by K. E. Abraham.

The "Early Years of I. P. C." was written by K. E. Abraham in 1955. Whether he realised it or not it was published on the 25th anniversary of the native Pentecostal leaders parting way with the missionaries from Azusa street! The purpose of this narrative is very clearly stated in the introduction as:

> The purpose of the publication of this book is that, those who have come to the Pentecostal fellowship recently and those youngsters who belong to the second generation of Pentecost must know about the details of early days Pentecostal ministry.[11]

K. E. Abraham, the co-founder of the Indian Pentecostal Church of God, was the first to come up with an autobiography as well. Published in 1965 and entitled *Humble Servant of Jesus Christ*, it gives useful insights into how the native perceives himself and the alien.[12] Though it is an autobiography, he claims that it is the history of the denomination that he headed: "My history, it is also the history of India Pentecostal Church of God."[13]

There are three important aspects of the natives' response to the western missionary in these narratives.

3.1 Insurgencies and consciousness

I follow the lead of Ranajit Guha in exploring the reasons for such responses. In his studies on peasant insurgencies in India, Guha has pointed out that the reasons for rebellion should not be sought in external factors but in the consciousness of the native.[14] He goes on to say that there are six elementary aspects of this consciousness: negation, ambiguity, modality, solidarity, transmission and territoriality. The fourth of these namely solidarity which I would like to pay special attention to is explained by Chatterjee as,

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[11] K. E. Abraham, *The Early Years of I.P.C. (Malayalam)*, Second Edition (Kumbanad: Abraham Foundation Printers, 1986) p. i.

[12] K. E. Abraham, *Humble Servant of Jesus Christ.*

[13] K. E. Abraham, *Humble Servant of Jesus Christ*, p. ii.

[14] Guha, Ranajit, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983).

> …the self-definition of the insurgent peasant, his awareness of belonging to a collectivity that was separate from and opposed to his enemies, lay in the aspect of solidarity.… Often it was expressed in terms of ethnicity or kinship or some such affinal category. Sometimes one can read in it the awareness of a class.[15]

Chatterjee also suggests that this consciousness must have a history which he describes as,

> Their experience of varying forms of subordination, and of resistance, their attempts to cope with changing forms material and ideological life both in their everyday existence and in those flashes of open rebellion, must leave their imprint on consciousness as a process of learning and development.[16]

It is thus important to explore the history of this consciousness of the native leaders in order to understand this particular historical incident.

3.2 Consciousness of the Pentecostal Leaders

One important aspect of this consciousness of the native is the fact that they are Syrian. This Syrianness is evident in various auto-ethnographic remarks found in these narratives, especially in the autobiography of Pastor K. E. Abraham. It is evident in his description of his birth, education, marriage of his brother and his own. In all these the leaders of native Pentecostalism imaged themselves as Syrian Christians. The Syrian historical consciousness is evident in his comment on this issue where he draws on the analogy of the relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and the Syrian Orthodox Church:

> Everybody knows that the Syrian community in Malankara was absorbed in the Roman Church for about fifty years in the seventeenth century and it came to its former state through the crooked cross resolution by rejecting the relationship to the Roman church. This does not mean that the Malankara church was founded after the resolution of crooked cross. Similarly, Indian Pentecostal Church of God had allied with the movement led by pastor Cook for a period of three years.[17]

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[15] P. Chatterjee, "The Nation and Its Peasants," in *Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial*, ed. V. Chaturvedi (London: Verso, 2000), pp. 8-23 (12).

[16] Chatterjee, "The Nation and Its Peasants," p. 21.

[17] Abraham, *The Early Years of I.P.C.*, p. ii.

This Syrian consciousness of the native has influenced their imaging of the missionary; a fact of which the missionaries from the West were totally uninformed.

3.3 Assertion of Syrianness

The Syrian church always had an openness to the brethren from overseas. However, they did not allow the brethren from overseas to invade their cultural, social and ecclesiastical spaces. I would like to illustrate this with two examples from outside the realm of and prior to the advent of Pentecostalism in India.

As India became a British colony, evangelical missionaries from the various European countries entered the scene in Kerala. The Syrian metropolitans did encourage the missionaries to preach in their churches as long as they did not interfere with their own traditions and liturgical practices. However, they did control their activities. The cooperation with western missionaries (mainly Anglican) went on in the area of Bible translation, production of literature and allowing missionaries to hold evangelistic and revival meetings after the regular *Korbana* (liturgical service) in the church. Metropolitan Mar Dionysius sought the help of Claudius Buchanan to get the Bible in Syriac to be printed. In 1806 Buchanan got 100 copies of the Syriac Bible printed. These were the first printed copies of Bible in Syriac that this community had. During this time Mar Dionysius also got the Syriac version translated into the local language, Malayalam, and got it printed by the help of Buchanan. Another metropolitan, Matthews Mar Athanasius encouraged western missionaries to visit and preach in the churches. However, this did not last long since the revival took dimensions that Syrian church could not tolerate. In 1830 the Syrian Metropolitan Chepad Mar Dionysius (1827-1856) prohibited the work of the western missionaries through an encyclical.[18] This did have its repercussions in the Syrian Christian community as a number of enlightened Syrian Christians left the Church and joined the Church Missionary Society. The major break came in about half a century later by the formation of the Mar Thoma Church, a reformed Syrian church in 1876.[19] The effect of this desertion and split is

[18] See, D. Ayroor, *Keralathile Penthacosthu Sabhakal* [Pentecostal Churches of Kerala] (Mavelikkara: Beer Sheba Bible College, 1985), p. 24.

[19] Ayroor, *Keralathile Penthacosthu Sabhakal*, p. 27.

that the Syrian Christian community could distance themselves from the western missionary. What was important for the Syrian Christian is to protect his cultural and ecclesiastical space from invasion than spiritual revival. Spiritual revival at the cost of ethnic and ecclesiastical identity was not negotiable.

Another significant instance is the alienation of the native leaders from the western missionaries in the evangelical domain. The Christian Brethren movement gained momentum in Kerala from 1897. It also commanded a good following and the founding leaders were a German missionary by the name Nagel (originally from Basel Mission) and an Anglican missionary by the name Grayson. Sometime in the early 1920s, the Christian Brethren also faced a split. One of the native leaders P. E. Mammen advocated that the native churches should not be controlled by the foreign missionaries and began a movement for the cause of freedom of native churches. Abraham mentions that he had published a number of leaflets to promote his view that western missionaries should not have control over the native churches. However, this led to a split in the Christian Brethren. The native leaders named their group "Syrian Brethren!"[20]

The above two incidents indicate how the consciousness of being a Syrian Christian superseded all other concerns.

3.4 Formation of the Syrian Consciousness

There are two aspects to the formation of this particular Syrian consciousness and a third historical factor that conditioned their imaging of the West. The first is the autonomy they enjoyed while being Christians belonging to the Syrian Orthodox tradition and the second being the high social status they enjoyed under the Hindu rulers.[21] The third is the affect European colonialism had on Syrian Christian community.

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[20] Abraham, *Humble Servant*, p. 30.

[21] An anthropological study of the Syrian Christians is found in S. Visvanathan, *The Christians of Kerala: History, Belief and Ritual among the Yakoba* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999). In this study Visvanathan brings out the unique features of the Kerala Syrian Christian life, ritual and beliefs and their relation of the Syrian culture to that of Hindu culture.

3.5 Ecclesiastical Autonomy

The Syrian Christian community in Kerala belongs to the Syrian Orthodox tradition and they still maintain very lively contact with their counterparts in the Middle East, particularly with the Syrian Patriarchate of Damascus. From time immemorial, the Syrian Orthodox See in Antioch has been the spiritual head of the church with administration in the hands of the local metropolitans. The relationship with the Middle East gave them an identity and determined their historical consciousness. However, this contact with the parent church had a set back due to the advance of Islam to the Christian countries of the Middle East in the sixth century but is revived in the modern days.

3.6 Social Status

Historically, the Syrian Christian community in Kerala enjoyed high social status as well. Around the seventh century, the local rulers of Kerala (*rajas*) recognised Christians as a higher caste and awarded certain privileges and rights. This in fact helped Christians in Kerala to develop a sense of dignity and worth. The break up of communication with the parent church in Syria helped in developing a sense of independence promoted by the Hindu rulers. In the Indian society, which is caste-ridden, this social status was crucial and had a great impact of their collective sense of dignity.

Mundadan comments:

> Thus at the arrival of the Portuguese in India towards the close of the 16th century the Christians of St. Thomas were leading a life full of reminiscences of their past, and enjoying a privileged position in society and an amount of social and ecclesiastical autonomy. They had been leading a life at the core of which was an identity consciousness which, if not expressed in clear-cut formulas, was implicit in their attitude towards their traditions, their social, socio-religious and religious customs and practices, and their theological outlook.[22]

3.7 Syrian Christians under European Colonialism

This situation changed with the arrival of Vasco da Gama in Kerala on May 21 1498. With the arrival of the Portuguese, the Syrian

[22] A. M. Mundadan, *Indian Christians: Search for Identity and Struggle for Autonomy* (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publishers, 1984), vol. 4, p. 28.

Christians of Kerala found themselves slipping slowly to the control of the Pope. In the year 1595, Alexis de Menezes the newly appointed Archbishop of Goa, landed in Kerala in order to submit the Church in Kerala to the control of the Roman Catholic Church.

The following statement by Menezes betrays the domination that was planned. In a letter Menezes wrote to Rome in 1597 he said his aim was to:

> …to purify all the churches from the heresy and errors which they hold, giving them the pure doctrine of the Catholic faith, taking from them all the heretical books that they possess.… I humbly suggest that he be instructed to extinguish little by little the Syrian language, which is not natural. His priests should learn the Latin language, because the Syriac language is a channel through which all that heresy flows. A good administrator ought to replace Syriac by Latin.[23]

The Synod of Diamper which Menezes convened on 1599 was successful in forcing the Syrian Christians of Kerala to accept Portuguese domination. Firth points out that after the Synod, Menezes even burnt a large collection of books and documents belonging to the Syrian Church wherever he could.[24]

This was something that the Syrian Christians who have been enjoying freedom and autonomy for more than sixteen centuries could not stand. Revolt against foreign religious domination had already began in 1595. This led to a large scale revolt in January 1653 where a multitude of Christians took an oath to fight for freedom. In the revolt that ensued many Jesuit priests were targeted. This is known as the "crooked cross" resolution where they declared themselves independent of the Roman Catholic Church.[25]

The freedom and the social status that they enjoyed for two thousand years have helped the Christians to achieve dignity and independence. The Syrian Christian community's imaging of the western missionary

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[23] A. A. King, *The Rites of Eastern Christendom* (London: Burns Oates, 1947), vol. 2, pp. 449-50.

[24] C. B. Firth, *An Introduction to Indian Church History* (Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1968), p. 96.

[25] Those who took a solemn oath to depart from the Roman Catholic Church and fight for the independence of the Syrian Church tied a rope to a cross and took the pledge by holding the rope. According to the tradition the cross was bent owing to the force of people trying to hold it, and later known as the crooked cross pledge/resolution.

was conditioned by their experience of ecclesiastical domination under the Portuguese rulers and Catholic church. Theirs was one of ecclesiastical and theological domination from which they have delivered themselves. While the Portuguese were still the political rulers, they made their church ecclesiastically free! They imaged themselves as one who were invaded and who freed themselves from the colonial powers.

There are three important aspects of the native Pentecostal response to the western missionary.

3.8 Refusal to Reinvent the Holy Spirit

The first is their refusal to reinvent the Holy Spirit in their contexts. The native Pentecostal in these narratives makes successful attempts to snatch history from the western historians by guarding against any move to reinvent Holy Spirit in Kerala. This he does by stressing that Pentecostal revivals regularly occurred in Kerala before western Pentecostal missionaries arrived.

In contradiction to what a representative from the West, namely Edwin Orr, has to say about revivals in Kerala is evident. Orr is wrong in concluding that until 1896 there had been no 'Pentecostal outpourings where individuals exhibited a profound conviction of sin.'[26] There are reports of the manifestation of the Holy Spirit in the second half of the nineteenth century (1872 onwards). The revival movement led by Justus Joseph (his English Christian name), a Brahmin convert to Christianity, was one of that sort. The non-Pentecostal native historian K. V. Simon has noted that in the services of this Christian movement there was revelation, dancing in the spirit etc, though he is critical of it.[27]

Abraham begins his history of Pentecostalism in Kerala by insisting that the revivals that took place in Kerala in 1873, 1895 and 1908 have to be taken as Pentecostal revivals.

> There were three powerful revivals has happened in the Malayalam speaking land during M.E. 1048, 1070, 1083 (A.D. 1873, 1895, 1908).[28] In all these three revivals people were filled with the Holy

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[26] Orr, *Evangelical Awakenings in Southern Asia,* p. 109.

[27] K. V. Simon, *Malankarayile Verpadu Sabhakalude Charithram* [History of Holiness Churches in Malankara] (Idayaranmula, Kerala: n.p., 1938), p. 99 quoted by Ayroor, *Keralathile Penthacosthu Sabhakal*, p. 29.

[28] M.E. stands for Malayalam Era, the calendar used in Kerala. A.D. 2001 is M.E. 1176-1177.

> Spirit and spoke in other tongues. However, those who had these experiences in those days did not realise that they were speaking in tongues as they were endowed with the Holy Spirit; they did not have sufficient knowledge of scripture in this matter.[29]

Abraham snatches history again from the West by emphasising the Pentecostal revival had reached Kerala before the first Pentecostal missionary from the West came. This he does by an indirect reference that he had witnessed revivals before the advent of Pentecostalism in Kerala:

> I too was a participant in the spiritual revival that took place among the Christians of Kerala in 1908. I was only nine then.... I witnessed the power of God being poured out on many people and as a result of this their bodies being shaken, and they speaking with stammering lips. But I did not know what it was. However, only after been obtained the Pentecostal blessing I came to know what it really was.[30]

We have seen earlier that he had attempted to exile the western missionary from his own person experience of the Holy Spirit by clarifying that it is after his Pentecostal experience that he met the two Pentecostal missionaries from America.

3.9 Objection to Eurocentrism

The second aspect of their response is objecting to Eurocentrism. Reaction against the Eurocentric presentation of Pentecostal history can be dated as early as 1955 in India. This is twenty years after the foundation of the Indian Pentecostal Church. In his work *The Early Years of IPC*, Pastor K. E. Abraham, one of the founders of Indian Pentecostal Church (IPC), struggles to clarify that his denomination existed before the Pentecostal missionaries from the Azusa street established Pentecostal churches in India. In describing the purpose of the book, he says:

> Many people think that India Pentecostal Church of God is formed after the break with Pastor Cook. This is because of their ignorance of the early history of this movement. Readers of this book will realise that this movement (Indian Pentecostal Church) has been in existence under

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[29] Abraham, *The Early Years of I.P.C.*, pp. 5-6.

[30] Abraham, *Humble Servant*, p. 60.

> the name "South India Pentecostal Church" and for over three years worked in co-operation with the movement that was under the leadership of Pastor Cook and since the beginning of 1930 has been de-affiliated from this alliance.[31]

Earlier in his presidential address to the meeting of the representatives of IPC congregations in 1938 (eight years after the split) he asserted that:

> Those who joined this fellowship recently may be surprised to know that it has been fifteen years since this movement started. Many think that this movement began after we left the relationship with Pastor Cook. It is not so! This movement was founded fifteen years ago by those ministers and congregations who accepted Pentecostal truth and decided to minister independently in central Travancore.[32]

He went on to assert that:

> Since Mr. Cook had convinced us that he is willing to work within the framework of independence of native congregations, we associated our movement then called 'South India Pentecostal Church of God' with his movement along with the local congregations and ministers.[33]

He lists the number of congregations of South India Pentecostal Church of God that they brought to this alliance and goes on to conclude his speech saying that,

> From this it may be clear now that those who allege that Abraham and others ran away with Mr. Cook's people have not understood the reality of the matter. It may be now clear that it has been fifteen years since Indian Pentecostal Church began and has worked in association with the ministry of Cook for three and a half years.[34]

This illustrates that the native who already had experienced the West insist on being subjects of their own history. This important aspect of the

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[31] Abraham, *The Early Years of I.P.C.*, p. i.

[32] T. S. Abraham, ed., *The Sermons of Pastor K. E. Abraham* (Kumbanad, Kerala: K. E. Abraham Foundation, 1985), p. 1.

[33] Abraham, *The Sermons of Pastor K. E. Abraham*, p. 2.

[34] Abraham, *The Sermons of Pastor K. E. Abraham*, p. 4.

native is something that needs to be taken seriously in considering relationships between West and the East.

3.10 Rejection of Colonial Mimicry

The third aspect of this response I would call the rejection of colonial mimicry. Postcolonial scholars have shown that colonialism has produced a class of interpreters between the coloniser and the colonised. This is a class of people who are natives by birth and physical features but in taste, opinions, morals and intellect are the colonisers. Frantz Fanon uses the phrase, "black skin/white masks," to describe them and V.S.Naipaul calls them "mimic men." This concept has been developed by Homi Bhabha and others as "colonial mimicry." In colonial mimicry, the colonised pretend to have become one like those who have colonised them. V. S. Naipaul has described it as:

> We pretend to be real, to be learning, to be preparing ourselves for life, we mimic men of the New World, one unknown corner of it, with all its reminders of the corruption that came so quickly to the new.[35]

For the part of the coloniser, they want to produce men who would resemble them in their tastes and morals, while for the part of the native there is an attempt to wear the colonial mask, to be one like the coloniser. Whatever direction this process takes in producing mimic men, the coloniser is constant and the change is towards that constant centre.

Menezes has tried to produce such mimic men in the Syrian Christian community in Kerala who would speak Latin instead of Syriac and would become Roman Catholic in every way. The Crooked Cross resolution has to be understood as a refusal by a certain section of the Syrian community to become such mimic men. In this line of those who refused to do colonial mimicry stand the Syrian metropolitans and the leaders of the Syrian Brethren movement to be joined by the native Pentecostal leaders.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion I should add that Pentecostal scholars from the non-western countries need to explore ways in which they can write the

[35] V. S. Naipaul, *The Mimic Men* (London: Penguin, 1967), p. 146 cited by H. K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London & New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 88.

natives back into history and give them their due place. I must also say that even in the West, where historiography is mainly the venture of historians belonging to historical churches, Pentecostal historians need to engage in reconstructing the history of the Christian church from the edges.

In the light of the present study, I submit that there is a great need to understand the historical consciousness of the native. We need to ask what sort of historical memories do they carry and form their consciousness of themselves and the other.

Pentecostal historians need also to understand the language of domination and control in the contact zones of Pentecostalism. There are already rhetoric and discourse in place in almost all countries which are developed as a results of their experience of colonialism. In trying to communicate the gospel, it is important to understand how the native looks at the Other. In India at least, Christianity and colonialism are considered synonymous by those who advocate the Hindutva Ideology. Hindutva reasons that Christianity was brought to India by the colonial powers beginning with Roman Catholic missionaries who followed the trails of the Portuguese and finally the Anglican missionaries during the British Raj in India. They allege that the message and method of missionary work of the native Indian church is in continuity with that of the colonial missionaries. For them, the native missionary is just another mimic man of the colonialism.[36]

The Holy Spirit has been in work all over the world. We need to continue to do research on non-western Christian traditions to understand how they understood the work of the Holy Spirit and how this would help us to better communicate the full gospel truth. I hope scholars from other countries and cultures would find in this example from India, though preliminary in nature, a stimulus for similar explorations.

[36] See A. Shourie, *Missionaries in India: Continuities, Changes, Dilemmas* (New Delhi: ASA Publications, 1995).