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CRITIQUE OF PENTECOSTAL MISSION
BY A FRIENDLY EVANGELICAL

Roger E. Hedlund

1. Introduction

In the conclusion of his 1997 revision of his study of the Pentecostal-Charismatic movements, Vinson Synan states, “Christian affairs of the twenty-first century may be largely in the hands of surging Pentecostal churches in the Third World and a Roman Catholicism inspired and revived by the charismatic renewal.”¹ Hollenweger likewise indicates that Pentecostalism today is centered outside the West in a growing Third World movement.²

Indeed Pentecostalism during the twentieth century has emerged from the status of a marginalized sect to become a major tradition of Christianity. With 193 million (19.3 crores) members in 1990, the Pentecostals were the largest Protestant group of churches in the world.³ In addition to these denominational Pentecostals, if one includes mainline Charismatic Protestants and Catholics, the total is more than 372 million (37 crores) which is 21.4 percent of the world’s Christians.⁴ Also in 1990, out of an estimated 4 million (40 lakh) full-time Christian workers, 1.1 million (11 lakh) were Pentecostal-Charismatics.⁵ “Fully

¹ Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition: Charismatic Movements in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1997), p. 298.

² Walter J. Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments Worldwide* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997), p. 301. “Third World” terminology refers to the non-western, developing Majority World.

³ Vinson Synan, *The Spirit Said ‘Grow’* (Monrovia: MARC, 1992), p. 1.

⁴ Synan, *The Spirit Said ‘Grow’*, pp. 10-11.

⁵ One lakh is 100,000 and one crore is ten million in the normal measurements used in India/South Asia.

one fourth of all full-time Christian workers in the world are from the Pentecostal-charismatic persuasion.”⁶ Part of this expansion is taking place in India where Pentecostals are active and growing.

In this paper, I have been asked to offer a critique of Pentecostal mission. This I attempt with a bit of reticence having personally benefited and learned much from the Pentecostals. This paper is predominantly a positive critique. The Pentecostal mission has been highly successful! Along with success inevitably some apparent weaknesses may be seen, and certain questions arise. In order to appreciate strong and weak points, it will be helpful to have a brief look at certain aspects of Pentecostal mission history.

2. Pentecostalism: A Missionary Movement

2.1 Azusa Street Revival

Azusa Street in Los Angeles generally is regarded the birthplace of the modern Pentecostal movement, and the black Holiness preacher William Seymour its founder, a thesis which may however be challenged. The largest black Pentecostal denomination in the world, the Church of God in Christ, historically preceded the 1906 Azusa Street revival. Juan Sepulveda sees Pentecostal growth in Latin America “as the emergence of an indigenous Christianity” and notes that Chilean Pentecostalism had no connections with Azusa Street.⁷ Chilean Pentecostalism is seen as a local incarnation of the gospel different from the classical Pentecostalism of other cultures.

In India, likewise, even prior to the Azusa Street revival, Pentecostal phenomena were reported both in South India and in Maharashtra.

2.2 The Italian Experience

In a report on one hundred years of Pentecostal missions, Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen notes, “The significance of Pentecostal/Charismatic missions

⁶ Synan, *The Spirit Said 'Grow'*, p. 13.

⁷ Allan H. Anderson and Walter J. Hollenweger, eds., *Pentecostals after a Century: Global Perspectives on a Movement in Transition* (Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 1999).

has escaped the notice of missiologists.”⁸ That is similar to my own observation. In the 1960s in Italy, the Pentecostals were largely overlooked by other evangelicals. Yet they had grown to become larger than the Waldensians and all other historical Protestant denominations combined. Membership in the Assemblies of God in 1969 stood at 120,000, whereas all non-Pentecostal Protestants totaled about 55,000.⁹ Lessons were there to be learned, but were missed by other missions:

The Assemblies of God is an Italian church, run by Italians in an Italian way.... It is “national” and not “missionary” in orientation. Its American missionaries work under the Italian church—an arrangement sometimes difficult for the missionary, but apparently beneficial to the church.¹⁰

Other missionaries tended to present the gospel in foreign dress, whereas the Pentecostals responded with local cultural distinctives. Pentecostals offered a meaningful alternative to the people of post-war disrupted Italy. Reasons for Pentecostal growth, in contrast to other groups as observed in that country, include: 1) an Italian identity, 2) a distinctive identity not as Protestants but as *evangelista* (evangelists), 3) aggressive witnessing by the laity, 4) family house churches, 5) a few large churches which attract growth, 6) the presence of the Holy Spirit communicated in a dynamic community, 7) spiritual experience, and 8) simplicity of doctrine.¹¹

The Italian experience of the past century has affinity to what has transpired in other parts of the world. David Barrett has shown us that at the start of the twenty-first century, Pentecostals and Charismatics constitute the second largest body of Christians in the world, exceeded

⁸ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, “One Hundred Years of Pentecostal Missions: A Report on the European Pentecostal/Charismatic Research Association’s 1999 Meeting,” *Mission Studies* 16:1-2 (2000), pp. 207-16 (207).

⁹ Roger E. Hedlund, *The Protestant Movement in Italy* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1970), pp. 131-38.

¹⁰ Hedlund, *The Protestant Movement in Italy*, p. 142.

¹¹ Roger E. Hedlund, “Why Pentecostal Churches Are Growing Faster in Italy?” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 8:3 (Spring 1972), pp. 134-35.

only by the Roman Catholics in size.¹² The rapid growth and impact of Pentecostalism in the last century caused Harvey Cox to modify his secularization thesis, because Pentecostalism proves that something noteworthy is happening in the world of religion.¹³ Allan Anderson and others have demonstrated the reality of Pentecostalism as a global phenomenon among the poor.¹⁴ Grant Wacker, however, argues that the first generation of American Pentecostal converts were not necessarily from the poorest and marginal sections but represented a cross-section of American lower-middle and middle classes.¹⁵ Leaders likewise included persons of social, financial and educational prominence. The story is one of “men and women of modest birth who proved resourceful, hard working, fired by ideals and, above all, determined to get the job done.”¹⁶ It is not surprising, then, that Pentecostalism flourished. This is because Pentecostalism was and is a missionary movement.

2.3 Brazil

In a recent study, Waldo César (of Brazil) speaks of modern Pentecostalism as “a religious phenomenon” which takes its originality from the Day of Pentecost at Jerusalem (Acts 1:13-14; 2:2). With signs reappearing at Azusa Street in Los Angeles in the early 1900s, a movement began which spread to Asia, Africa, Europe and Latin America within the same decade. “The historic and symbolic efficacy of Pentecost has been reproduced in the twentieth century.”¹⁷ Initially subjected to ridicule or rejected as sectarian, “the existing churches underestimated this new form of Protestantism.”¹⁸

¹² David B. Barrett and Todd M. Johnson, *World Christian Trends AD 30-AD 2200: Interpreting the Annual Christian Megacensus* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2001).

¹³ Anderson & Hollenweger, eds., *Pentecostals after a Century*.

¹⁴ Anderson & Hollenweger, eds., *Pentecostals after a Century*.

¹⁵ Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2001), p. 199.

¹⁶ Wacker, *Heaven Below*, p. 213.

¹⁷ Waldo César, “From Babel to Pentecost: A Social-Historical-Theological Study of the Growth of Pentecostalism,” in *Between Babel and Pentecost: Transnational Pentecostalism in Africa and Latin America*, ed. André Corten and Ruth Marshall-Fratani (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), p. 24.

¹⁸ César, “From Babel to Pentecost,” p. 25.

In its essence, Pentecostalism always was a missionary movement. In Brazil, for example, by the 1930s, nearly 10 percent of the Protestants had converted to Pentecostalism. In the 1990s, the Assemblies of God in Brazil converted half a million members in one year; the Christian Congregation of Brazil baptized 100,000 converts in one year; and the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God built a cathedral to seat 20,000 worshippers in Rio de Janeiro. "In global terms, in the Third World alone, Pentecostals must amount to over 150 million individuals."¹⁹ The significant global expansion of Pentecostalism "demonstrates the inversion of traditional missionary activity, from the Third World to the developed countries of Europe and North America."²⁰

2.4 Nepal.

To the north of India, in Nepal, where Christianity has been growing rapidly during the last three decades, the Christian movement from its inception is said to have a Pentecostal character. Even before Nepal opened its doors in 1951, Pentecostal missionaries in India were active on the Nepal border. Some of the converts were trained at the North India Bible Institute of the Assemblies of God at Hardoi. In Nepal converts were exposed to Pentecostal teaching. Besides the Assemblies of God, the Agape Fellowship and many independent churches are Pentecostal or Charismatic.²¹

3. Roots of Pentecostalism in India

3.1 Ramabai Mukti Mission.

According to various authorities, Pentecostalism in India has its roots in Maharashtra at the Ramabai Mukti Mission, Kedgaon.²² In 1897

¹⁹ César, "From Babel to Pentecost," p. 25.

²⁰ César, "From Babel to Pentecost," p. 25.

²¹ Bal Krishna Sharma, "A History of the Pentecostal Movement in Nepal," *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 4:2 (July 2001), pp. 295-305.

²² Ivan M. Saatyavrata, "Contextual Perspectives on Pentecostalism as a Global Culture: A South Asian View," in *The Globalization of Pentecostalism: A Religion Made to Travel*, eds. Murray W. Dempster, Byron D. Klaus, and Douglas Petersen (Carlisle: Regnum, 1999), pp. 203-21 (204). See also Gary B. McGee, *This Gospel Shall Be Preached: A History and Theology of Assemblies*

Pandita Ramabai invited Minnie Abrams, a Methodist missionary from America, to minister at Kedgaon.²³ In 1905 a spiritual revival at Mukti was to reverberate far beyond Kedgaon.²⁴ A first-hand account by Minnie Abrams describes the weeping and praying of the repentant Mukti girls as well as the dramatic manifestations which accompanied the new “baptism of the Holy Ghost and fire.”²⁵ Preaching bands from Mukti volunteered to spread the gospel in the surrounding villages. The message of Pentecost made its way to other parts of India. Healings, speaking in tongues, prophecy and other “gifts of the Spirit” were in vogue.²⁶

J. Edwin Orr documents the spread of the revival as the Mukti bands carried the message throughout the Maratha country. Characterized by emotional phenomena, the impact of the awakening was long-lasting in terms of conversions and changed lives.²⁷ The spiritual movement spread across various denominations, e.g. Alliance, Anglican, Baptist, Friends, Methodist, Presbyterian, etc. At Mukti, Ramabai channeled the enthusiasm of the believing community into famine relief work as well as social rehabilitation.²⁸ The spiritual awakening had an enduring influence in Maharashtrian society.

3.2 Growth in South India: Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

There were also, however, earlier precedents in South India both in Tamil Nadu and in Kerala. Historian Gary McGee states that “the most

of God Foreign Missions to 1959 (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1986), p. 54.

²³ Basil Miller, *Pandita Ramabai: India's Christian Pilgrim* (Pasadena: World-Wide Missions, n.d.), p. 64.

²⁴ Miller, *Pandita Ramabai*, pp. 86-87.

²⁵ Minnie F. Abrams, *The Baptism of the Holy Ghost and Fire*, 2nd ed. (Kedgaon: Pandita Ramabai Mukti Mission, 1906, rep. 1999), pp. 1-3. Walter J. Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments Worldwide* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), p. 120 states that in 1963 the Mukti Mission leadership claimed they were totally ignorant of the Pentecostal revival,

²⁶ Abrams, *The Baptism of the Holy Ghost*, p. 36.

²⁷ J. Edwin Orr, *Evangelical Awakenings in India* (New Delhi: Masihi Sahitya Sanstha, 1970), pp. 111-14.

²⁸ Jessie H. Mair, *Bungalows in Heaven: The Story of Pandita Ramabai*, rev. ed. (Kedgaon: Pandita Ramabai Mukti Mission, 1993 reprint), p. 79.

prominent revivals of the nineteenth century characterized by the charismatic gifts of the Holy Spirit occurred in India.”²⁹ Pentecostalism in South Asia, then, is significantly indigenous in origin. “The Pentecostal movement that created ripples in South India began as an indigenous movement. It was not until later that revival movements in the West impacted this indigenous movement.”³⁰ In 1860 in Tirunelveli, under Church Mission Society (CMS) catechist John Christian Aroolappen, a revival took place with Pentecostal signs including prophecy, tongues, interpretation of tongues, dreams, visions, and intense conviction of sin.³¹ A decade later, a similar revival was brought to Kerala (Travancore) by Aroolappen.³² These and other antecedents prepared the ground for the twentieth-century Pentecostal movement in India.

3.3 North East India (NEI)

Pentecostalism in NEI is rooted in the Evangelical Christianity introduced by missionaries from Wales. Several waves of the Welsh Revival influenced the developing leadership of the NEI churches. A 1904 revival in Wales appears to have been carried to NEI in 1905 where the revival movement in the Presbyterian Church had “several elements of Pentecostal expression,” including “praying at the top of their voices, singing, dancing, trembling and being slain in the Spirit.”³³ Other precedents are found in the indigenous Christian movements of the region including the formation of the indigenous Church of God in 1902, which at a later point experienced speaking in tongues (and a subsequent division).³⁴

Full expressions of Pentecostal Christianity in NEI came with the formation of new Pentecostal fellowships and denominations. In

²⁹ Gary B. McGee, “India: Pentecostal and Pentecostal-like Movements (1860-1910)” (an unpublished article, c.1999), cited in A. C. George, “Pentecostal Beginnings in Travancore, South India,” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 4:2 (2001), pp. 215-37 (220).

³⁰ George, “Pentecostal Beginnings in Travancore, South India,” p. 220.

³¹ George, “Pentecostal Beginnings in Travancore, South India,” p. 222.

³² George, “Pentecostal Beginnings in Travancore, South India,” p. 223.

³³ O. L. Snaitang, “The Indigenous Pentecostal Movement in Northeast India,” *Dharma Deepika*, July-Dec, 2002, p. 7.

³⁴ Snaitang, “The Indigenous Pentecostal Movement,” p. 6.

Meghalaya in 1932, the indigenous Church of Jesus Christ—Full Gospel came into existence, followed by other Pentecostal groups from outside the region.³⁵ In Mizoram, revival produced a number of independent churches of Pentecostal character in 1913, 1932, 1942, 1947, 1965 and 1971.³⁶ In Manipur, a 1917 revival associated with Watkin R. Roberts prepared the ground for Pentecostal growth, including the United Pentecostal Church, the Revival Church of God, the Christian Revival Church and others.³⁷ Revival in Nagaland in the 1940s and 1950s led to the formation of the Nagaland Christian Revival Church in 1962, followed by the introduction of the Ceylon Pentecostal Mission, the Assemblies of God and other missions from outside the region.³⁸

Most of the Pentecostal churches of NEI have roots in the revivals in the Presbyterian and other churches of NEI.

3.4 Assemblies of God and Church of God

Among early Pentecostal missionaries in India were several from the 1908 Azusa Street Mission revival. These included George Berg and Robert F. Cook, pioneer missionaries whose evangelistic work laid the foundations for the beginnings of the Assemblies of God and the Church of God in Southern India. Cook, who began as an independent missionary, for a while joined the Assemblies of God, then separated and affiliated to the Church of God (Cleveland), attracted a group of committed local preachers who were to become significant Pentecostal leaders.

Missionaries and local workers of the Assemblies of God and the Church of God were to lay the foundation, not only for these two denominations, but also for the subsequent emergence of numerous new indigenous Pentecostal fellowships and movements in India and beyond. The principles and procedures followed were conducive to the formation and growth of new Christian movements, as we shall see.

³⁵ Snaitang, "The Indigenous Pentecostal Movement," p. 7.

³⁶ Snaitang, "The Indigenous Pentecostal Movement," p. 8.

³⁷ Snaitang, "The Indigenous Pentecostal Movement," p. 9.

³⁸ Snaitang, "The Indigenous Pentecostal Movement," p. 10.

4. Indigenous Pentecostals:

The Indian Pentecostal Church and the Ceylon Pentecostal Mission

4.1 The Indian Pentecostal Church of God (IPC)

One of the local preachers who served with Robert Cook was K. E. Abraham who became founder of the Indian Pentecostal Church of God, a major indigenous Pentecostal denomination from which have sprung numbers of other independent movements. IPC is the largest indigenous Pentecostal movement in India and continues to grow at the rate of one new church per week. In 1997, there were more than 3000 local churches in India including 1700 in Kerala, 700 in Andhra, 210 in Tamil Nadu, 70 in Karnataka, and smaller numbers in other states in North India and the North East.³⁹

The IPC is an important expression of Christian nationalism in India prior to India's Independence. K. E. Abraham believed that ministry could progress better without foreign missionary domination, viz., self-supporting churches should be led by self-sacrificing national ministers; leadership should be in the hands of local Christians; local churches should manage their own affairs and hold their own property as independent Christian churches in an independent India. The IPC thus challenged the Assemblies of God and the Church of God, which were of missionary origins in India.

From these origins have emerged numerous Pentecostal movements. One example is the Sharon Fellowship Church (SFC) and its institutions based at Thiruvalla, begun by P. J. Thomas after he separated from the

³⁹ Information is from the son of the founder and present head of the IPC, Pastor T. S. Abraham, interviewed at Hebron, Kumbanad, on December 18, 1997. Also see Sara Abraham, "A Critical Evaluation of the Indian Pentecostal Church of God: Its Origin and Development in Kerala" (M.Th. thesis, Serampore University, 1990); IPC, "A Handbook of the Indian Pentecostal Church of God" (Kumbanad, Kerala: IPC General Secretary, Hebronpuram, 1994); Samuel Mathew, "Biblical Leadership: A Theology of Servanthood for the Church in India" (M.Th. in Missiology thesis, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1989); Abraham Thottumkal Pothen, "The Indian Pentecostal Church of God and Its Contribution to Church Growth" (M.A. Missiology thesis, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1988); Saju, *Kerala Penthecosthu Charithram* (Kottayam: Good News Publications, 1994); P. J. Titus, "IPC Movement in Andhra Pradesh" (unpublished paper, 1997); Habel G. Verghese, *K.E. Abraham: An Apostle from Modern India* (Kadambanad, Kerala: Christian Literature Service of India, 1974).

IPC in 1953. Today SFC has more than 90,000 members and 450 congregations in Kerala and 350 outside Kerala.⁴⁰

In Central India, the Pentecostal Church at Itarsi sponsors the Central India Bible College, founded in 1962 by Kurien Thomas, directed today by Matthew Thomas. The related Fellowship of the Pentecostal Churches of God in India, established in 1966, reports more than 500 workers in 13 fields of service throughout North and South India. This Fellowship is an example of one of the many ministries to have emerged from the IPC.⁴¹

These are but a few of the many Pentecostal denominations in India. The first major scholarly study of South Indian Pentecostalism⁴² touches the history of all known Pentecostal bodies in South India including those of indigenous origins as well as those of international (foreign missionary) extraction. Bergunder lists a total of 71 Pentecostal bodies in the four southern states.

4.2 The Ceylon Pentecostal Mission (CPM)

The origins of Pentecostalism in Sri Lanka are closely related to developments in India. The earliest Pentecostal missionaries were not related to any denomination but served as independent Christian workers. The most prominent among them was a woman, Anna Lewini, from Denmark who first arrived in Colombo in 1919, returned to Denmark in 1920, then came again to Sri Lanka where she remained for more than three decades. In 1922, she rented a hall a Borella which became the first assembly of Pentecostal Christians in Sri Lanka known as Glad Tidings Hall. In 1927, the name was changed to Colombo Gospel Tabernacle.⁴³

⁴⁰ Information is from T. P. Abraham, "Sharon Fellowship Church" (an unpublished paper, n.d).

⁴¹ A letter of Matthew K. Thomas to Roger E. Hedlund (March 9, 1998). Also see *The Trumpet*, IPC Platinum Jubilee Edition, January-February 1999.

⁴² This is a definitive work by a German scholar at Halle University, Michael Bergunder, *Die Südindische Pfingstbewegung im 20. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt, Peter Lang, 1999), not yet available in English.

⁴³ G. P. V. Somaratna, *Origins of the Pentecostal Mission in Sri Lanka* (Nugegoda: Margaya Fellowship, 1996), pp. 12, 16, 18.

“Anna Lewini was the real founder of Pentecostalism in Sri Lanka.”⁴⁴ Another figure, however, was to be more prominent, because Anna Lewini deliberately chose a secondary position. “She labored and founded the mission. Then she prayed for a man to arrive to take over the leadership. When the person arrived she willingly handed over the ministry to that person.”⁴⁵ Walter H. Clifford was that person who arrived from India to serve from 1924 to 1948 as an Assemblies of God missionary in Sri Lanka.⁴⁶ Clifford’s ministry and influence were extensive. He not only laid solid foundations for the Assemblies of God, but also influenced other denominations.

According to historian Somaratna, “The Ceylon Pentecostal Mission owes its origin to the ministry of Walter Clifford.”⁴⁷ The CPM began as a breakaway group in 1923 led by Alwin R. de Alwis and Pastor Paul. The CPM espoused an ascetic approach to spirituality. Ministers were not to marry and they should wear white. They disdained the use of medicine and gave central importance to the doctrine of the second coming of Christ. Somaratna observes that testimonies of miraculous healing attracted Buddhists and Hindus, and the wearing of white was appropriate culturally in Sri Lanka, where Buddhist devotees wore white to visit the temples. The CPM also instituted indigenous forms of worship.⁴⁸

The CPM, despite its name, did not remain confined to Sri Lanka but spread to other countries including South India, the birth place of Pastor Paul. He was originally known as Ramankutty, born in 1881 to Hindu parents in the village of Engadiyur in Trichur District, Kerala.⁴⁹ Ramankutty’s first contact with Christianity was at Colombo where he had a vision of the Lord Jesus Christ, which caused him to begin secretly

⁴⁴ G. P. V. Somaratna, *Walter H. Clifford: Apostle of Pentecostalism in Sri Lanka* (Nugegoda: Margaya Fellowship, 1997), p. 23.

⁴⁵ Somaratna, *Walter H. Clifford*, p. 23.

⁴⁶ Somaratna, *Walter H. Clifford*, p. 25.

⁴⁷ Somaratna, *Walter H. Clifford*, p. 25.

⁴⁸ Somaratna, *Origins of the Pentecostal Mission in Sri Lanka*, pp. 34-35, 40-41.

⁴⁹ This information is provided by Paul C. Martin, “A Brief History of the Ceylon Pentecostal Mission” (a paper presented at the Hyderabad Conference on Indigenous Christian Movements in India, October 27-31, 1998).

to pray and meditate on Jesus.⁵⁰ In 1902 Ramankutty openly confessed Jesus as Lord, was baptized and given the Christian name "Paul."

His ministry developed gradually. It was reported that a leper, over whom Paul prayed, was cured, and a person declared dead was brought to life. People were attracted to his new fellowship called the Ceylon Pentecostal Mission. Among those who joined was a college lecturer, Alwin R. de Alwis. Under the leadership of Pastor Paul and Bro. Alwin, the CPM ministry spread beyond Colombo to Tamil Nadu and Kerala, then to other countries.⁵¹

The CPM laid the foundation for other Pentecostal ministries, not only in Sri Lanka and India but beyond. Today, says Paul C. Martin, the CPM under various names, is one of the largest Pentecostal movements in the world with branches in several countries. While exact membership figures are not yet available, here are 848 branches worldwide (including 708 in India) and about 3984 full-time ministers presided over by chief pastor C. K. Lazarus.⁵² In addition, there are numbers of independent assemblies and movements which have severed connections with the CPM. Some of these are prominent, such as the Apostolic Christian Assembly in Tamil Nadu, founded by G. Sundram, led today by Sam Sundaram. And many more.

5. Ecclesiastical Freedom: Strength or Weakness?

How, then, to evaluate the Pentecostal missions thrust? Many facets intersect, yet two major streams of influence can be detected. One is the influence of Scandinavian Pentecostalism; the other is the indigenous church growth principles of Melvin Hodges. Pentecostal contribution to the contemporary indigenous missionary movement is a further development derived from this background.

5.1 The Scandinavian Model

From Scandinavia, the Pentecostal missionary movement gained a principle of ecclesiastical freedom, which maximizes the role of the local laity. A movement of the Spirit should not be controlled by ecclesiastical structures or hierarchy. Scandinavian Pentecostalism is marked by a

⁵⁰ Martin, "A Brief History of the Ceylon Pentecostal Mission."

⁵¹ Martin, "A Brief History of the Ceylon Pentecostal Mission," p. 8.

⁵² Martin, "A Brief History of the Ceylon Pentecostal Mission," pp. 5, 12.

strong congregational ecclesiology.⁵³ Missionary societies from the Scandinavian Free Pentecostal churches served to facilitate the sending of missionaries from local churches, but maintained minimal control over the missionaries.

From Oslo, former Methodist missionary Thomas Ball Barratt, now a leader of the Pentecostal movement, was influenced by the self-supporting “Pauline missions” theory of dissident Methodist missionary bishop, William Taylor. Taylor had planted Methodist churches in India, Latin America and Africa.

5.2 The Pauline Method

From his reading of the Book of the Acts of the Apostles, Taylor derived what he considered a divinely inspired methodology for mission work.

The “Pauline method” was to evangelize, to establish churches, and to form an effective pastorate from among the converts. Any supervision by missionaries was to be as short as possible. The converts themselves will “support and extend” the church, which is to be self-governing from the beginning. These churches are to be the equal of any churches anywhere in the world.⁵⁴ This was the method Taylor had followed to begin Methodist churches in the cities of India.

5.3 The Contribution of Taylor and Barratt

Barratt implemented Taylor’s mission theory in Norway, and from the Central Filadelfia Church in Oslo spread the innovative tradition far beyond.

Outside Norway, Barratt, more than any other figure in the early period of Pentecostalism, was responsible for the beginnings of new movements throughout Europe, India and Latin America. His radical insistence on the “three self” theory of Taylor allowed Pentecostalism to be flexible, entrepreneurial and ready to accept the leadership of the new converts as equal to that of the founders. He, unlike the American Pentecostal and Wesleyan/Holiness denominations, adopted a thorough

⁵³ T. P. Varghese, “The Influence of Swedish Pentecostalism in India” (Paper presented for the 9th EPCRA Conference, Missions Academy, University of Hamburg, July 13-17, 1999), p. 3.

⁵⁴ David Bundy, “Unintended Consequences: The Methodist Episcopal Missionary Society and the Beginnings of Pentecostalism in Norway and Chile,” *Missiology* 27:2 (April 1999), pp. 211-29 (214).

congregationalism, which cooperated for mission, evangelism and publication, but refused to establish a bureaucracy or to allow intervention in the congregations. This has become the ecclesiology and missiology of most of global Pentecostalism.⁵⁵

The global Pentecostal advance was characterized by innovation. Missionaries were essentially new church initiators but not superintendents of churches. Newly begun Pentecostal churches were neither appendages of a foreign mission nor under the patronage of missionaries—at least in principle, but not without exception! Human failure notwithstanding, the Scandinavian model was good for producing a sense of local autonomy and maturity with reciprocal responsibility for mission. A two-way flow of missionary personnel and resources (from South and East to North and West) seems to reflect this ideal. The emergence of Methodist Pentecostalism in Chile is directly related to the experience and work of Wilis Hoover, influenced by William Taylor, and buttressed, no doubt, by Barratt and the example of Norway.

The commonalities between the Norwegian and the Chilean experiences are striking. Both Barratt and Hoover had experience in the Wesleyan/Holiness branch of Methodism and had accepted William Taylor's mission theory as the paradigm for ministry. In both Norway and Chile, the Pentecostal churches grew quickly. In both cases, they became centers of mission in the tradition of Taylor.⁵⁶

In India, a similar strand is found in the case of Minnie Abrams, Methodist missionary turned "independent," who had ties with the Hoovers in Chile and whose treatise on *The Baptism of the Holy Ghost and Fire* provided impetus to the debate over mission policy.⁵⁷ The Scandinavian practice of mission, then, has had a bearing as well in Asia which is reflected in numerous Asian-initiated Pentecostal and Independent churches.

5.4 Melvin Hodges' Indigenous Policy

The impact of the well-known Pentecostal missiologist, Melvin Hodges, is particularly evident in the missionary policies of the Assemblies of God. The goal, said Hodges, is a national church which

⁵⁵ Bundy, "Unintended Consequences," p. 219.

⁵⁶ Bundy, "Unintended Consequences," p. 223.

⁵⁷ Bundy, "Unintended Consequences," p. 222.

will have roots of its own and not be dependent upon foreign resources.⁵⁸ Such a church will be self-propagating, self-supporting and self-governing. Church government is to include an adequate national fellowship, which will facilitate unity and cooperation and provide correction as needed for the local congregations.⁵⁹

At the heart of Hodges' missiology was a strong ecclesiology. "A weak theology of the Church will produce a weak sense of mission."⁶⁰ Hodges might have been influenced by Roland Allen whose writings are mentioned along with others in Hodges' bibliography,⁶¹ but his principles are derived from his missionary experience in Latin America and from his study of the New Testament. The gifts of the Spirit are for carrying out the ministry of the church, yet the fruit of the Spirit takes precedence over spiritual gifts, because God desires to develop our Christian character which is essential for Christian witness.⁶² The mission of the church is to persuade people "to turn from darkness to light and from empty forms of religion to the vital power of God's salvation."⁶³ Anything which hinders this objective or impedes the development of the church must be sacrificed.⁶⁴ Hodges mandated the redistribution of missionaries in order to encourage development of national workers. To fulfill the mission objective the chief missionary activity must be church planting, which is to be carried out by missionaries, pastors, evangelists and laypersons.⁶⁵ The church, wherever it is located, by prayer and other means, is to create a climate for church growth. This begins by being the kind of persons "through

⁵⁸ Melvin L. Hodges, *Build My Church* (Springfield: Assemblies of God, 1957), p. 13.

⁵⁹ Hodges, *Build My Church*, p. 47.

⁶⁰ Melvin L. Hodges, *A Theology of the Church and Its Mission: A Pentecostal Perspective* (Springfield: Gospel Publishing House, 1977), p. 10.

⁶¹ Hodges, *A Theology of the Church and Its Mission*, p. 181.

⁶² Hodges, *A Theology of the Church and Its Mission*, pp. 46-47.

⁶³ Hodges, *A Theology of the Church and Its Mission*, p. 97.

⁶⁴ Melvin L. Hodges, *On the Mission Field: The Indigenous Church* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1953), p. 106.

⁶⁵ Melvin L. Hodges, *A Guide to Church Planting* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1973), p. 28.

whom the Holy Spirit can create the life and climate of the New Testament Church.⁶⁶

The biblical theology of mission and the missionary principles of Melvin Hodges resulted in associations of churches under local leadership with a keen sense of mission. The Pentecostal movement worldwide has been characterized by love for the Bible and zeal for evangelism.

Despite some problems of missionary paternalism and dependency, the three-self “indigenous principles” policy of the Assemblies of God seems to have facilitated the development of indigenous Pentecostal leadership. Creation of regional Bible schools was an important aspect of Pentecostal strategy. Bethel Bible Institute at Punalur is the oldest existing Bible school of the Assemblies of God outside of North America.⁶⁷ Without a doubt, these Bible colleges have been a catalyst in training leaders many of whom in turn have fostered indigenous Pentecostal movements in Kerala. The role of the Bible school, combined with the implementation of the indigenous policy, produced a formula for Pentecostal expansion in and beyond Kerala.

6. Indian Models of Leadership

The example of the strict congregationalism of Scandinavian Pentecostalism encouraged the development of local leaders in the Indian churches. Later, this was buttressed by the three-self indigenous principles of Melvin Hodges and the Assemblies of God.

6.1 Local Leadership

Indigenous leadership emerged early in the Indian Pentecostal movement. By the second decade of the twentieth century, a second line of local leaders was beginning to challenge missionary leadership monopoly. By 1930, “native leadership with a considerable following had been developed in Kerala. These leaders took the Pentecostal faith to

⁶⁶ Melvin L. Hodges, “Creating a Climate for Church Growth,” in *Church Growth and Christian Mission*, ed. Donald Anderson McGavran (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), p. 32.

⁶⁷ Gary B. McGee, *This Gospel Shall Be Preached: A History and Theology of Assemblies of God Foreign Missions to 1959* (Springfield: Gospel Publishing House, 1986), p. 158.

the rest of South India and were the founding fathers of the Pentecostal Faith in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, and parts of Karnataka.”⁶⁸

These leaders propounded a strong “faith” component resulting in a Pentecostal movement, which was largely self-supporting from the beginning as well as self-governing and self-propagating.⁶⁹

6.2 Theological Leadership

Pentecostals in Kerala and elsewhere have begun their own Bible colleges and seminaries. The earliest in Kerala were Mount Zion Bible College in Mulakkuzha, and Mizpeh Bible College in Thrissur, both founded in 1922. Bethel Bible College in Punalur, founded in 1927, is the oldest existing Bible school of the Assemblies of God outside North America.⁷⁰ Hebron Bible College of the IPC at Kumbanad dates to 1930. A recent list of Pentecostal Bible colleges in Kerala⁷¹ contains 60 institutions, two of which, Faith Theological Seminary at Manakkala and Gospel for Asia Biblical Seminary at Kuttapuzha, are affiliated to Serampore University. Five others are accredited by the Asia Theological Association (ATA) in Bangalore,⁷² and ten are members of the Association of Pentecostal Theological Institutes.⁷³ Four offer either the B.D. or M.Div. degree,⁷⁴ and 18 offer an undergraduate B.Th. degree.⁷⁵

⁶⁸ Paulson Pulikottil, “Emergence of Indian Pentecostalism,” *Dharma Deepika* (July-Dec. 2002), p. 53.

⁶⁹ Pulikottil, “Emergence of Indian Pentecostalism,” p. 52.

⁷⁰ McGee, *This Gospel Shall Be Preached*, p. 158.

⁷¹ Information provided by Alexander Philip, January 19, 1999.

⁷² Bethel Bible College (Punalur), New India Bible College (Paippad), Sharon Bible College (Thiruvalla), Peniel Bible Seminary and Missioary Training Centre (Keezhillam), and Ebenezer Institute and College (Kaduthuruthy).

⁷³ Zarephath Bible College (Thrissur), WME Bible College, Kariamplave, Bethlehem Christian Educational Centre, Karuvatta, Bersheba Christian Bible School (Kottarakkara), India Christian Fellowship Foundation Bible School (Renny), Everyone Crusade Misionary Bible Institute (Ezhamkulam), Malabar Bersheba Bible College (Kozhikode), Bersheba Bible College (Mavelikkara), and Bethany Bible College (Kottayam).

⁷⁴ Faith Theological Seminary (Manakkala), New India Bible College (Paippad), Peniel Bible Seminary and Missionary Training Centre (Keexhillam), and Gospel For Asia Biblical Seminary (Kuttapuzha).

An assortment of certificates are offered by others. While enrolments, quality and levels of training vary, it is obvious that these 60 training institutions produce a large number of Christian workers for ministries in and beyond Kerala.

Theological educators in the past were prone to shun Pentecostals. Pentecostal beliefs and practices were ridiculed in some ecumenical and evangelical classrooms, and students subjected to discrimination. This has begun to change.

Indian Pentecostal theologians have been trained in some of the world's finest universities. In Kerala, the Faith Theological Seminary for many years has been affiliated to Serampore University. Numerous other such institutions exist in Kerala, many with well-qualified faculty, providing basic theological training for hundreds of teachers, preachers, pastors, evangelists, missionaries and other workers for the Pentecostal movement.

At long last, this dynamic growth has caught the attention of theological educators in India. Pentecostals today are included among the theologians of India! Rejection has changed to acceptance. Pentecostal institutions are accepted for Serampore affiliation and for ATA membership. Pentecostal success has occasioned academic recognition. Will it also bring theological renewal?

6.3 Has Pentecostalism Developed Any Contextual Theology?

Pentecostal and Charismatic churches comprise the fastest growing segment of Christianity in South India.⁷⁶ Kerala is the home of numbers

⁷⁵ Bethel Bible College (Punalur), Faith Theological Seminary (Manakkala), New India Bible College (Paippad), Sharon Bible College (Thiruvalla), Peniel Bible Seminary and Missionary Training Centre (Keexhillam), Mount Zion Bible College (Mulakkuzha), Bethel Seminary and Missionary Centre (Chengannur), Bethlehem Christian Educational Centre, Calvary Bible College (Pathanapuram), Ebenezer Institute and College (Kaduthuruthy), Zion Bible College (Mallappally), Malabar Bersheba Bible College (Kozhikode), Hebron Bible College (Kumbanad), Calicut Theological College (Calicut), Light for India Bible College (Trivandrum), Bethel Bible College (Kumbanad), Gospel for Asia Biblical Seminary (Kuttapuzha), and Trinity Bible College (Calicut).

⁷⁶ This statement is based upon observation and compilations carried out in South India. See the author's chapter, "Church Planting in Selected Indian Cities," in *Evangelization and Church Growth: Issues from the Asian Context*, ed. Roger E. Hedlund (Madras: C.G.R.C., McGavran Institute, 1992), pp. 187-212.

of Pentecostal denominations, many of whom have spread beyond the borders of Kerala into various regions of India, South Asia and overseas. It is important, therefore, to ponder the implications.

Some theologians discern in Pentecostalism a potential corrective function. "Pentecostalism represents a restoration of the experiential dimension of the Christian faith in the wake of its scholastic reduction."⁷⁷ Non-western Christianity has great capacity for removing unwanted accretions and correcting western distortions. Pomerville mentions indigenous Pentecostals as an emerging "third force" in world Christianity whose theology and witness respond to issues outside the scope of traditional western considerations.⁷⁸

Today's Pentecostals participate in ecumenical dialogue and teach in some of the renowned theological faculties of Asia and the West. A number of distinguished biblical scholars, historians and theologians are Pentecostals.⁷⁹

In India, emerging young Pentecostal theologians from Kerala have the prospect of pointing indigenous theology in new directions. Consultation and collaboration between Pentecostals and non-Pentecostals is one indication. Evangelicals and Charismatics need each other, states David Shibley.⁸⁰ In India, younger Evangelical and Pentecostal leaders realize the same. Pentecostals at the close of the twentieth century are found in leadership roles in a number of Indian evangelical institutions and organizations.

Given the strong indigenous principles received from Melvin Hodges, combined with the pneumatological ecclesiology inherent in Thomas Ball Barratt's congregationalism, it is not surprising that Pentecostalism has proven courageously flexible and innovative, resulting in numerous Pentecostal independent movements in many parts of the world. The Pentecostal mission has proven itself capable of

⁷⁷ Paul A. Pomerville, *The Third Force in Missions* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1985), p. 63.

⁷⁸ Pomerville, *The Third Force in Missions*, pp. 29, 33, 38.

⁷⁹ One thinks of Gordon Fee at Regent College in Canada, Russell Spittler, Cecil M. Robeck and Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen at Fuller, Miroslav Volf of Yugoslavia and now Yale University, Peter Kuzmić at Gordon-Conwell, Simon Chan at Trinity College in Singapore, and others.

⁸⁰ David Shibley, *A Force in the Earth: The Charismatic Renewal and World Evangelism* (Altamonte Springs, FL: Creation, 1989), p. 27.

enormous adaptability and adjustments. Weaknesses also arise from these very strengths.

7. Cautions and Areas for Attention

7.1 Splits!

The Pentecostal movement in some quarters is marked by division. Kerala, for example, has a number of denominations bearing the Church of God label, each existing in separate isolation. One at least, the Church of God (Division), is the result of separation on caste lines. Other bifurcations are over leaders and personality clashes. The SFC is an outcome of a leadership exodus from the IPC. Institutions such as Bible colleges have emerged around personalities, creating factions within existing bodies as well as spinning off to form new denominations.

These multiplied and growing groups exhibit something of the vitality of Pentecostalism. Nevertheless, this fissiparous tendency also is counter-productive for Christian witness in a complex society seeking unity in the midst of diversity. A tendency for divisive exclusiveness on the part of some Pentecostal groups is an impediment to united witness. This was painfully illustrated in the division created by John C. Douglas and the World Missionary Evangelism mission in Andhra Pradesh.

Almost all of the Indian Pentecostal Church leaders joined the service of Mr. Douglas. That was the beginning of the World Missionary Evangelism mission in India. What happened to missionary, ministerial, and pastoral ethics? Many IPC pastors changed their signboards from IPC to the WME mission. But they remained still on IPC property, lands and buildings, which were purchased and registered by and in the name of the Indian Pentecostal Church. These are now occupied by the WME mission pastors.⁸¹

A penchant for divisiveness is not peculiar to Pentecostals by any means, but it is an area which bears watching. Development of an indigenous ecclesiology is needed, which might correct a tendency toward irresponsible independency.

⁸¹ P. J. Titus, "Pentecostal Indigenous Movements in Andhra," in *Christianity Is Indian: The Emergence of an Indigenous Community*, ed. Roger E. Hedlund (Delhi: ISPCK, 2000), pp. 269-93 (386).

7.2 Ecumenism

Relationships between different Pentecostal bodies need attention. How Pentecostals relate to Christians of other denominations is also a neglected issue. Rightly or wrongly, Pentecostals are perceived as exclusivist and separatist. Ecumenical structures, therefore, tend to bypass Pentecostals, whereas the Pentecostal voice needs to be heard. The ongoing Pentecostal dialogue with the Vatican is an indication of what can be done.⁸²

7.3 Leadership

Leadership in breakaway churches often exhibits “power-mongering inclinations”⁸³ which require attention. The history of Pentecostalism is filled with colorful personalities who can be studied for lessons and models of leadership. Pastoral theology should include a solid biblical theology of leadership. Pastoral training, which tends to be action oriented, could also include study of Pentecostal theology of mission.

A century of mission experience is a rich field to be exploited. What are the particular Pentecostal mission distinctives? Is it the role of the Holy Spirit in mission? But that is found also in Reformed theology, e.g., H. Boer’s *Pentecost and Mission*. Is it spontaneity? But that emphasis was already given in the writings of Roland Allan. Perhaps the prominence of the laity is a key, but that is also characteristic of the Brethren movement. Nevertheless, the early Pentecostal movement was essentially a movement of the laity, and the Pentecostal model of participatory training was highly effective in recruiting and equipping leaders, as Bishop Newbigin pointed out.⁸⁴ Further investigation may be fruitful.

⁸² Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, “Evangelization, Proselytism, and Common Witness: Roman Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue on Mission,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 25:1 (January 2001), pp. 16-22.

⁸³ Agrippa G. Khathide, “Mission in Pentecostalism,” *Missionalia* 30 (November 2002), p. 356.

⁸⁴ Lesslie Newbigin, “Theological Education in a World Perspective,” in *Missions and Theological Education in World Perspective*, eds. Harvie M. Conn and Samuel F. Rowen (Farmington, MI: Associates of Urbanus, 1984), pp. 3-18 (11, 17).

7.4 Inculturation and the Trap of Syncretism

Lack of adequate training in biblical exegesis, theological methodology and hermeneutics leaves sections of the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement vulnerable to aberrations. Pentecostalism on the American scene has been blemished by “the shattered empires of the deliverance evangelists in the 1950s and the television preachers in the 1980s.”⁸⁵ The cloning of these flawed American patterns by Pentecostal-Charismatic preachers in the developing world is not healthy. More disturbing is a tendency to develop peculiar teachings derived from extra-biblical sources. Asian theologian Hwa Yung warns against the danger of Pentecostal and charismatic movements becoming more experience-centered than word-centered. “The problem with an experience-centered Christianity is that historically it has always tended towards extremism and heresy. The only way to avoid this is to hold Spirit and God’s Word together in proper harmony.”⁸⁶

Hwa Yung also warns against the heresy of the American prosperity gospel, which is “a sub-Christian version of the ‘American Dream’ of the affluent and comfortable middle-class lifestyle,” and the related emphasis on the super-star pastor, which “has less to do with New Testament images of shepherds of God’s flock than with the American idolization of the super-hero.”⁸⁷ However, Donald Miller’s recent research found Neo-Pentecostal leaders, who are highly critical of the prosperity gospel, while affirming that prosperity may be a byproduct of Christian conversion, which is accompanied by a radical change of lifestyle.⁸⁸

Pentecostalism’s ability to inculturate makes it vulnerable to local aberrations. An example is the reported Shamanization of the gospel in Korea. Shamanism is deeply rooted in Korea, and Korean Christianity is said to have been shamanized. Is this an unfortunate syncretism? Or the secret of an indigenous Korean religiosity? All denominations of the Korean church are said to have been influenced by Pentecostalism.⁸⁹ It will be helpful if Korean Pentecostal theologians will respond to the

⁸⁵ Wacker, *Heaven Below*, p. 216.

⁸⁶ Yung Hwa, *Beyond AD 2000: A Call to Evangelical Faithfulness* (Kuala Lumpur, Kairos Research Centre, 1999), p. 24.

⁸⁷ Hwa, *Beyond AD 2000*, p. 26.

⁸⁸ Timothy Sato, “Outrageous Vision: A Conversation with Donald Miller about Global Pentecostalism,” *Books & Culture* 8:6 (Nov-Dec 2002), p. 31.

⁸⁹ Anderson & Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism after a Century*.

issues raised. In India, it is commonly believed that evil spirits are the results of premature or violent death. This pre-Christian belief is propagated as Christian doctrine by certain well-known healing evangelists. Biblical teaching is required as a corrective.

Miller's research affirms that "Pentecostalism connects strongly with animistic cultures" in terms of supernatural healings and other interventions.⁹⁰ Witchcraft, healing, dreams, possession, signs and wonders are uppermost issues in much of the developing world. This is not a weakness, unless it becomes overbalanced. The Pentecostal worldview does not dichotomize mind and body, and may be at the forefront of an emerging postmodern worldview.⁹¹

7.5 Anti-Intellectualism?

Pentecostalism is highly pragmatic with a tendency to endorse whatever works without careful reflection and evaluation. Contradictory practices and statements sometimes result which later have to be corrected or rescinded. The early Pentecostal movement was weak in terms of serious biblical and theological reflection. The Bible was accepted literally, the issue was obedience rather than interpretation. Pentecostal leaders were activists. Today, however, Pentecostals contribute an increasing number of world-class scholars. Development of centers for Pentecostal studies at various locations around the world is an encouraging development.⁹²

P. J. Titus, a seasoned participant from India, points out some weaknesses in the Pentecostal movement in Andhra Pradesh, where emphasis on non-essentials, such as prohibition of jewelry, has alienated the educated middle class communities. A borrowed theology, elitism, a rural mentality, contextual failure, materialism and division prevented the Pentecostal mission from developing a contextual Pentecostal theology.⁹³ The movement in Andhra became rural and afflicted with a poverty mentality, which was not able to resist the temptation to materialistic greed.

⁹⁰ Sato, "Outrageous Vision."

⁹¹ Sato, "Outrageous Vision."

⁹² For example, the Cawston Learning Resource Centre for Pentecostal Studies being developed at the Southern Asia Bible College, Bangalore. See Johnson Srigiri, "A New Centre for Pentecostal Studies," *Dharma Deepika* (January-June 2003), pp. 81-83.

⁹³ Titus, "Pentecostal Indigenous Movements in Andhra," pp. 384-85.

This lack of serious theological reflection hindered the development of indigenous ecclesiology and hampered outreach to Hindu intellectuals. "Pentecostalism needs to appreciate the intellect as a product of the Spirit," states Agrippa Khathide.⁹⁴

7.6 Weak Social Concern?

Lack of serious theological reflection as well as a weak social theology has been noted by critics from South America.⁹⁵ Pentecostals have been accused of lacking social awareness. The church's mission not infrequently is perceived solely as evangelistic preaching and church planting. Members are not encouraged to engage in social or political action. This may have been partly true, but is changing. Pentecostals today are moving into the political arena, but sometimes to support political parties that might grant favors and without critical analysis of structures of injustice.⁹⁶

These proclivities notwithstanding, Pentecostalism has demonstrated its power "to touch the lives of the poorest and most excluded, to help them reorganize their lives, and to give them a new sense of identity and hope."⁹⁷ In Pentecostal churches in India, people from widely differing social and economic backgrounds can be found worshipping God side by side in unity.⁹⁸

Hollenweger mentions the social implications of an oral liturgy.⁹⁹ Pentecostal oral liturgy has enormous appeal in the oral cultures of India. Is Pentecostal Christianity socially relevant?¹⁰⁰ Kerala may be the test.

⁹⁴ Khathide, "Mission in Pentecostalism," p. 339.

⁹⁵ Richard Shaull and Waldo Cesar, *Pentecostalism and the Future of the Christian Churches* (Grand Rapids and Cambridge, Eerdmans, 2000), pp. 146, 211.

⁹⁶ Shaull & Cesar, *Pentecostalism and the Future of the Christian Churches*, p. 212.

⁹⁷ Shaull & Cesar, *Pentecostalism and the Future of the Christian Churches*, p. 212.

⁹⁸ Reuben Louis Gabriel, "Reflections on Indian Pentecostalism: Trends and Issues," *Dharma Deepika*, July-Dec, 2002, p. 68.

⁹⁹ Walter J. Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments Worldwide* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997), p. 273.

¹⁰⁰ See Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, "Are Pentecostals Oblivious to Social Justice?" *Missiology* 29:4 (October 2001), pp. 417-31.

Not infrequently, Dalit and tribal converts in Kerala are found in Pentecostal churches: “a church of the poor!” Pentecostal theology emphasizes the immediate presence of the Holy Spirit giving power for witness and service: “a church with spiritual power!” The indigenous Pentecostals of Kerala are a church in mission among the socially deprived and neglected, as the record shows.¹⁰¹

Certain shortcomings seem inherent in the Pentecostal system as derived from its Holiness roots, e.g., a revivalistic formulation of individual salvation, which seemed to neglect social components. Shaull, however, finds a growing Pentecostal social commitment which is related to belief in the transforming power of the Spirit.¹⁰² Its ability to adapt and make mid-stream corrections is a strength of the Pentecostal movement. Imperfections notwithstanding, the Pentecostal mission of the twentieth century is both remarkable and formative for the Christianity of the new century.¹⁰³

7.7 Warfare Language

Spiritual warfare terminology and practices need to be carefully reconsidered in light of today’s realities especially in Asia. Crusades and campaigns, though spiritually conceived, are perceived as threats by non-Christian populations and governments. Opponents of the gospel are quick to seize upon military-sounding language as evidence of religious imperialism and neo-colonialism. In summary it may be helpful to highlight a few specific points for further attention. Pentecostals need to:

- 1) Distinguish between the demonic and psychological disorders, when dealing with demonized or depressed persons. Shamanistic practices should be avoided.

¹⁰¹ This statement is substantiated by the kinds of activities carried out by Pentecostal churches and agencies.

¹⁰² Shaull & Cesar, *Pentecostalism and the Future of the Christian Churches*, pp. 215, 217.

¹⁰³ The point is reiterated by Shaull & Cesar, *Pentecostalism and the Future of the Christian Churches* that Pentecostalism offers great hope for the spiritual and theological renewal of the mainline churches.

- 2) Avoid overemphasis on deionization. Do not assume that expelling demons will solve all the person's other problems.¹⁰⁴
- 3) Recognize that occult practices such as the horoscope, palmistry, divination, necromancy, mediumship, possession, charms and amulets may be part of the background of converts.
- 4) Recognize practices of *mantra* among converts from New Age mysticism and Eastern religions and provide suitable theological replacement.
- 5) Avoid spiritual dualism. God and the devil are not equals! Satan is a defeated foe.
- 6) Be aware of controversies over the territorial spirits issue. The Bible gives "no hints that believers are to concern themselves with such spirits.... There is no evidence in the New Testament that a concern about territorial spirits ever figured into the missionary strategy of the early Christians."¹⁰⁵
- 7) Historically it appears that exorcism could be practiced by any Christian calling on the name of Jesus. Christians were exorcists! No religious specialists were required. Exorcism takes place "primarily on the church's border with paganism."¹⁰⁶
- 8) Resist the publicity syndrome! Billboard promotion of healing and evangelistic events is detrimental to Christian witness in many contexts today. "Our present persecution in India has been sparked by exaggerated, distorted reports and statistics published widely in newspapers and journals and on the Internet."¹⁰⁷
- 9) Plan follow up for evangelization events. Success stories should be scrutinized, facts documented. Inquirers and seekers require

¹⁰⁴ Charles H. Kraft, "Contemporary Trends in Spiritual Warfare," in *Deliver Us from Evil: An Uneasy Frontier in Christian Mission*, eds. A. Scott Moreau, et al. (Monrovia, MARC, 2002), pp. 177-202 (187).

¹⁰⁵ John Christopher Thomas, "Spiritual Conflict in Illness and Affliction," in *Deliver Us from Evil*, pp. 37-60 (59).

¹⁰⁶ Oskar Skarsaune and Tomod Engelsviken, "Possession and Exorcism in the History of the Church," in *Deliver Us from Evil*, pp. 65-87 (85).

¹⁰⁷ Juliet Thomas, "Issues from the Indian Perspective," in *Deliver Us from Evil*, pp. 146-51 (147).

careful nurturing to become true disciples. “Lack of follow up results in many returning to their old faith.”¹⁰⁸

- 10) Deal with problems carried over from the pre-Christian belief system, such as the fear of ghosts and harmful spirits thought to have originated from an untimely death. Inculcate a Christian worldview including biblical portrayals of the after-life.
- 11) Beware of warfare language which is easily misunderstood and potentially inflammatory in today’s world.
- 12) Do not stifle emotion, but avoid emotional extremes.

8. In Conclusion

The examples studied indicate that the worldwide Pentecostal movement was less a product of mission agencies but more the result of local initiatives by enthusiastic indigenous believers. This thesis could be supported by further evidence from the numerous non-western Christian movements in Africa (e.g., African Instituted Churches), Latin America and other regions, but that is beyond the scope of this study.

From his research carried out in five Latin American countries, six in Africa and six in Asia, Donald Miller describes the Pentecostal churches studied as possessing an outrageous vision.

It’s outrageous to the point that people set goals for themselves that are utterly unattainable by normal human standards; but the fact is, they oftentimes attain these goals. They are very much people with a vision who gain their commitment and power to carry out that commitment from a source other than themselves. Many of these churches are extremely large; their worship is often extremely dynamic. Almost all of the large churches have coped with their growth by having cell groups or the equivalent, which then become the primary means of evangelism. They also function as the primary outlet for social ministries in many instances. And they provide the opportunity for people to learn leadership skills. The pastors function as trainers, as opposed to simply ministers, and they train people to do the work of ministry.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Thomas, “Issues from the Indian Perspective,” p. 149.

¹⁰⁹ Sato, “Outrageous Vision.”

And therein lies the key to the future. Pentecostal mission is not tied to traditions of the past. If there is a mythical golden age, it was the Apostolic age of the New Testament. Neither hierarchy nor clergy nor cathedrals are required; ecclesiastic embellishments are peripheral and not of the essence of the church. Christian witness in the postmodern age and evangelization of the unchurched are major challenges of the twenty-first century. And the Pentecostals and related new Christian movements, which are themselves the products of the Pentecostal missionary movement, are well-equipped to respond to the challenge.¹¹⁰ The Pentecostals are among the primary bearers of the Christian mission during the new century.

From the Pentecostal example we derive lessons for other churches.

- 1) Mission is possible! Whether in a postmodern culture or a hostile environment.
- 2) Churches need not be tied to the patterns of the past.
- 3) Christian ministry is for all the members.
- 4) Training for ministry takes place in the local church.
- 5) Leaders are born in the local church.
- 6) Pastors should be trainers of people for the work of ministry.
- 7) Christian mission is a movement of the laity.
- 8) Urbanization offers tremendous scope for Christian mission.
- 9) Cell groups are a primary means of mission in the urban world.
- 10) The gospel has power to transform lives and society.
- 11) "A church of the poor" can be "a church with power" for witness and service.
- 12) A witnessing church can have a powerful impact in society.
- 13) Theology should respond to local cultural beliefs and fears.
- 14) Theologians are needed who will exegete both Scripture and culture.

¹¹⁰ For example, the Yoido Full Gospel Church is planning to evangelize North Korea. See Cheryl Johnson Barton, "World's Largest Church Strategizes on North Korea, World Evangelism," *World Pulse* 37 (December 30, 2002), pp. 1, 3.