

**THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE PENTECOSTAL
CHURCHES AMONG THE DALITS IN KERALA. A CRITICAL
EVALUATION OF THE MISSIONARY METHODS OF
ROBERT F. COOK (1913-1950).**

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**Submitted in fulfillment of the degree of Master in Theology
School of Religion and Theology, University of KwaZulu -Natal
Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, February 2005**

DECLARATION

I declare that this whole dissertation, unless specially indicated to the contrary in the text is my original work.



Simon Karingottazhikathu John

DEDICATION

This Dissertation is dedicated to my Director, Teachers, Staffs and Friends in Gurukul
Lutheran Theological College, Chennai, India.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation could have not come to its completion without the support and encouragements of the following.

The Gurukul Lutheran Theological College, Chennai and INATE co-ordinators Mrs. Beulah Jacobson, Ms. Sarojini Nadar, Rev. Dr. Mani Chacko and Rev. Abraham Leita.

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) for granting me financial support.

Rev. Fr. Mervyn Abrahams for his valuable help, patience, direction and encouragement during the writing of this dissertation.

Finally, my special thanks to my family: my dear wife Seny and our son Gladson for their special prayer, support, patience and encouragement.

ABSTRACT

The following work is a humble probe into the background and history of the Dalit Pentecostal churches and critically evaluates the mission methods of Robert F. Cook. The word Dalit means the oppressed or broken victims and refers to people who are deprived and dehumanized. In India the so-called outcastes or untouchables have recently taken the name Dalit. The modern usage of Dalit began in nineteenth century with Mahatma Jyotirao Phule (1825-1890), a Marathi social reformer who worked for the upliftment of oppressed class. The Harijans, Backward classes, Scheduled castes, Outcastes, Untouchables, Panchamas and Chandalas were known by the common name Dalit.

Since the inception of the Pentecostal movement, the Dalits have formed an integral part of the Pentecostal churches. From the very beginning the Pentecostal church in Kerala attracted members from the Dalit communities. This was from the time of Robert F. Cook (1914). Through Robert F. Cook's ministry the Dalits accepted Pentecostalism and gained liberation from their oppression.

This is the first attempt to trace the history of Dalit Pentecostals in Kerala. However the readers will find a description of the beginnings and the characteristics of Pentecostalism that attracted the marginalized to Pentecostalism, and provided them with a liberative force. An evaluation of the origin and development of the Dalit Pentecostal churches is essential for the self-understanding of the community of believers and for the articulation of its mission in the world. I hope that the reading of this thesis will open the present day Pentecostals to restore the early characteristics of the movement so that it will challenge social evils that Pentecostalism once did so ably.

ABBREVIATIONS

| | | |
|----------------|---|---|
| BMS | - | Baptist Missionary society |
| CMS | - | Church Missionary Society |
| IPC | - | Indian Pentecostal Church of God |
| LMS | - | London Missionary Society |
| Malabar | - | Northern Part of Kerala |
| Mal. | - | Malayalam |
| NSS | - | Nayar Service Society |
| PRDS | - | Prakthiaksha Raksha Deiva Sabha |
| SNDP | - | Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalanayogam |
| USA | - | United States of America |

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Aim of the Study

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, Pentecostalism has come to represent one of the most significant forces for renewal and evangelisation in the history of Christianity. The Pentecostal movement at first appeared in India at the "Mukti Mission" in Maharashtra (South India) (Saju 1994:23). In the State of Kerala, in the south of India, Pentecostalism first came in the first decade of the twentieth century and began to spread all over the State. The first Pentecostal preacher to Kerala was an American missionary, Mr. George Berg, who came to preach in the Brethren Convention at Kottarakara in 1909. During his ministry many had experienced Baptism in the Holy Spirit and they turned to Pentecostalism (Abraham 1995: 6).

Robert F. Cook, the subject of this thesis, first arrived in India in 1913 and he set out to evangelise the Dalit people, the first Pentecostal missionary to do so. In the Indian context, people are divided on the basis of castes. The Dalits, also known as Untouchables, are the lowest group in the caste system. The majority of the Dalit Christians are incorporated into the Pentecostal Churches because of his mission work. It is my contention that it was through his missionary efforts that the Dalit Pentecostal Christians found acceptance, freedom for emotional and ecstatic expression in worship, and participation in evangelistic activities.

The aim of this study is to analyse the mission methods of Robert F. Cook and the history of Dalit Pentecostals in Kerala. The researcher would like to raise some questions regarding his mission methods. How did the Kerala Dalit people respond to Robert F. Cook's works? Why did most of the Dalits accept Pentecostal Christianity? How did he introduce his mission methods? What were the mission approaches he adopted, especially regarding inculturation, dialogue and preaching? What impact did these missionary methods have on the lives of these Dalit people

in Kerala who converted to Pentecostalism? What are the successes and failures of Robert F. Cook's works among the Dalits?

This study is concentrated in the field of Church History and is an attempt to investigate the origin and development of the Pentecostal Churches among the Dalits in Kerala.

1.2. Motivation

Several factors have motivated me to work on this topic:

Although studies have been made on the Pentecostal Churches in Kerala, none has concentrated on Robert F. Cook and his mission methods. This study is a new step in this field. I hope that this study will help those who are studying Church History in India and those interested to know of the early history of Dalit Pentecostal movement in Kerala.

Through this research I would like to explore the reasons why Dalits were attracted to Pentecostalism. I suggest that the Dalit Pentecostals wanted to escape from the caste discrimination and were looking for opportunities for self-expression and fuller participation in the Church.

I was born and brought up in a Pentecostal family. My father being a Pentecostal pastor I spend much time with the Dalit People. He is working in Dalit congregations. It helped me to know and study the circumstances among the Dalit people. From that experience I got inspiration for this thesis.

1.3. Methodology

From the available literary resources, I intend to critically evaluate the mission methods of Robert F. Cook and the history of the Dalit Pentecostal Churches in Kerala. This study is a historical, critical study drawing upon the main works of Robert F. Cook.

In my initial reading, my attention was drawn to the mission methods of Robert F. Cook. This is because in his time those mission methods were relevant for evangelisation in Kerala. I would like to follow the historical approach in bringing out the history of Dalit Pentecostals in Kerala, to what made them accept Pentecostalism.

This study examines the interplay between the social, political, religious and cultural aspects of the Dalits in Kerala. Through this study I would like to analyse the history of Dalit Pentecostals, in order to clarify our past and offer insights for the future of Pentecostalism in Kerala.

This study is to relate history and indigenous people in Kerala. Robert F. Cook was a missionary from the West, who adopted different methods in his ministry particularly among the Dalits in Kerala.

The collection of material is also important for this thesis, because it fully concentrates on the Indian situation. I collected most of the materials from India. I have four years of magazines (1927-30), edited by Robert F. Cook, from Kerala; but I did not get the remaining magazines. Another primary source is Cook's own book published in 1955. For this thesis I collected reports, letters, magazines, articles and books as primary sources. The rest of the material is found from the University Library and the Internet.

1.4. Outline

The first chapter discusses the aim of the study, motivation and methodology.

The second chapter deals with a historical perspective of the origin and development of the Pentecostal churches in the USA and the revivalist atmosphere in India in the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century and the beginning of Pentecostalism in Kerala.

The third chapter is a socio-analytical study of the Dalits in the Indian caste system in order to set out how this system operates in India and Kerala.

The fourth chapter discusses the biography and theological views of Robert F. Cook. His theology will be used as the basis to explore his mission strategy.

The fifth chapter deals with Cook's mission methods especially that Convention, Dialogue and Inculturation.

In the sixth chapter I discuss the origin and development of the Pentecostal churches among the Dalits. Why did they accept Christianity? Why are the Pentecostal churches so effective among the Dalit community?

The seventh chapter presents a critical evaluation of the mission methods of Robert F. Cook. How did the Kerala Dalits people react to Cook's work? What are the successes and failures of Cook's work among the Dalits?

CHAPTER TWO

THE MODERN PENTECOSTAL MOVEMENT

2.1. Introduction

This thesis is a study on Dalit Pentecostalism in the context of Kerala, South India. As a starting point of this study, it is necessary to trace the roots of the modern Pentecostal movement and situate the influence of Robert F. Cook in the origin and growth of Pentecostalism in Kerala. Pentecostalism as a movement arose simultaneously in various parts of the world in the beginning of the twentieth century. This chapter gives a historical perspective on the modern Pentecostal movement. Its origin and development in the USA and other parts of the world are described in their contexts. The revival movements in India, by the end of nineteenth century and at the beginning of twentieth century, which paved the way for Pentecostalism in Kerala and other parts of India, is also described in this chapter.

2.2. The Context of the Modern Pentecostal Movement in the West

The twentieth century Pentecostal Movement sprang up in Topeka, Kansas, USA in January 1901. Before entering the details of the origin of this movement, it appears to be important to look into its context. It may be observed that the context of this movement is to be found in the Wesleyan revival of the eighteenth century. Dayton supports this when he says that Pentecostalism has a conversationalist-oriented revivalist tradition. Popular American Revivalism and the Holiness movement along with the Wesleyan doctrine of 'entire sanctification' provided the immediate context for the rise of Pentecostalism (Dayton 1987:173). The Wesleyan doctrine of Christian perfection was also taken up into Pentecostalism as its doctrine of sanctification. According to Bundy:

“ ... Wesleyan perfectionist elements of the Holiness movements of the Holiness movement provided theological

paradigms and leadership to the ... American Pentecostal Movement" (Bundy 1988:280).

The Evangelical awakening in America and European countries in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century was a successor of the pietistic movement. These awakenings made people to think of their personal faith in emotional terms and it gave acceptance to lay-led religious movements, which in turn served as catalyst for the Pentecostal movement.

Hoell observes that the primitive emotional type of Christianity got a strong hold on the average American Methodism, Pietism, Moravianism and American Revivalism prepared the way for Pentecostalism (Hoell 1964: 7). According to Burgess and Mc Gee, Pietism has been influential in the development of Pentecostalism both in Europe and the United States of America. The most significant impact of pietistic concerns on Pentecostalism was developed through Wesleyan Methodism. John Fletcher, a Wesleyan theologian was the first one to use the terms "baptism in the Holy Spirit" to describe the process of sanctification (Burgess and Mc Gee 1988: 279-80).

According to Hoell, 'the Pentecostal movement had its roots in the Holiness movement, which was a puritan reaction to institutionalism and secularism in the established Churches. It also was a radical opponent of modernism' (Hoell 1964:12). According to Gromacki, 'the Holiness movement was a reaction to the spiritual, economic and moral breakdown in the USA' (Saju 1994:11). The Holiness movement originated in America and the first National Holiness movement general camp meeting was held in 1867 at Vineland, New Jersey (Burgess and Mc Gee 1988:280). The Holiness movement, from the very beginning emphasized the Methodist teaching of 'entire sanctification' or 'Christian Perfection' advocated by John Wesley. Healing movements led by A. G. Gordon, A. B. Simpson and others were also part of the Holiness movement. Between the years 1893-1900 twenty-three new denominations arose out of the Holiness movement, which were called by the variations of the name 'Church of God' (Burgess and Mc Gee 1988:282).

Hollenweger observes that since leaders like Asa Mahan and Charles G. Finny were involved in the struggle of the Negroes, for women's university education and for workers, the Holiness movement gained adherents among the common people in the USA (Hollenweger 1972:21). Although Finney, Morley and R. A. Torrey and others laid the foundation for the Holiness movement, they were not identified with the movement, since a spirit of separatism was evident in the different Holiness groups. However, Finney's teaching on spirit Baptism as a particular experience was developed and carried on by Torrey (Hoell 1964:15). By the end of the nineteenth century, a powerful new evangelical movement was forming out of the remnants of the separatist Holiness movement that had left Methodism in 1894. This group later turned to be the immediate forerunner of the Pentecostal movement.

Hoell in his detailed study on the Pentecostal movement provides the social context for the rise and growth of Pentecostalism in the USA. According to him the nineteenth century was characterized by optimism. It was a century of great discoveries, inventions social awakenings and of long periods of peace. This positively influenced religion and ethics, which also paved the way for Pentecostalism. By the end of the nineteenth century much of the population of the USA was spiritually and socially rootless. Mass immigration, industrialization and the consequent growth of the cities, created a spiritual chaos. Between the years 1861-1900, fourteen million immigrants entered the country. Existing churches could not minister to their needs satisfactorily (Hoell 1964:9).

Another theological development, which contributed to the emergence of the Pentecostal movement at the end of the nineteenth century, was the doctrine of pre-millennialism originating from the Plymouth Brethren and widely taught by John Nelson and Darby (Burgess and Mc Gee 1988:2). As a whole, the social context coupled with the revivalist movement provided certain theological notions and a positive climate for the birth and growth of the Pentecostal movement in the early decades of the twentieth century.

2.2.1. Origin in the United States of America

The advancement of the worldwide Pentecostalism was started by a charismatic revival of January 1st, 1901; in Topeka, Kansas of the USA. Charles Fox Parham, who was a significant instrument in this Topeka revival, is considered as the “Father of the Pentecostal movement” (Gromacki 1972:25). He was a minister in the Methodist church and had frequently clashes with the officials, due to speaking in tongues. In 1898 he founded the Bethel Healing Home in Topeka, for lodging and faith training for individuals seeking a divine cure. In October 1900, he opened an informal Bible School for Christian workers, where about thirty students were given admission. It was an interdenominational school with no other textbooks to learn from except the Bible. The thirty students, both men and women, were studying the book of Acts to find the answer to the question “What is the Biblical evidence for the Baptism in the Holy Spirit?” Along with the study, fervent prayer was also going on in the prayer tower of the school (Hoell 1964: 22). As Cox pointed out, Pentecostalism rose among a group of people who were waiting for it (Cox 1994: 71). Miss Agnes Ozman was the first one in this group to experience baptism of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues as mentioned in the book of Acts in the New Testament. This was on first of January 1901. In the words of Agnes Ozman:

“ On watch night we had a blessed service, praying that God’s blessing might rest upon us as the New Year came in. During the first day of 1901 the presence of the Lord was with us in a marked way, stilling our hearts to wait upon Him for greater things. A spirit of prayer was upon us in the evening. It was nearly eleven o’clock on the 1st of January that it came into my heart to ask that hands be laid upon me that I might receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. As hands were laid upon my head the Holy Spirit fell upon me, and I began to speak in tongues, glorifying God. I talked several languages. It was as though rivers of living water were proceeding from my inner most being.” (Hoell 1964: 23).

Parham and other students also had the same experience of speaking in tongues as Ozman. This can be said as the beginning of the Modern Pentecostal Movement.

Though the movement had begun in Parham's school, it became a worldwide movement only with the revival that took place in a black residential area in Azusa Street in Los Angeles, California. It was from this place that the missionaries went to preach the Pentecostal experience even before the formation of any missionary organization or Pentecostal denomination. Missionaries who came to India to spread Pentecostalism were associated with and experienced Pentecostalism in the Azusa Street revival.

2.2.2. Azusa Street Revival and the Spread of Pentecostalism

Pentecostalism crossed the barriers of race, color and country with the Azusa street revival in 1906. William Joseph Seymour, a Black preacher was God's instrument in this revival. Hoell observes that the climate in Los Angeles was favorable for the Pentecostal movement, with the half of the population comprised of immigrants having comparatively poor Christian education and inadequate pastoral care (Hoell 1964: 30). This context helped the emergence of Pentecostalism in Los Angeles. The revival explains the nature, characteristic and the socio-economic background of Pentecostals not only in the USA but also in several other countries where Pentecostalism made deep roots.

There is a tendency among white Pentecostal historians and leaders either to ignore or to reduce the importance of Seymour in the growth of Pentecostalism. He was responsible for the spread of Pentecostalism all over the world. The White dominated Pentecostalism tried to ignore the Black roots of the worldwide movement. Black Pentecostalism has emerged from the context of brokenness of the Black experience. Harvey Cox acknowledging the root of Seymour says, "But it is impossible to understand Pentecostalism's origin without reference to the story of a particular man, William Joseph Seymour a black preacher born in 1870" (Hoell 1964: 56). Seymour was a student at Parham's school. Longing for Spirit

Baptism, he continued in the school and witnessed the first experience of speaking in tongues. After that he conducted meetings in the houses of Black friends and sympathizers. In a meeting, on 9th April 1906, an eight-year-old black boy began to speak in tongues and soon crowds were attracted to the house. Then Azusa Street became the house for the world Pentecostal movement (Hollenweger 1972: 22). The difference between Azusa Street and Parham's school was that the Azusa street experience was away from discrimination. From Azusa Street, Pentecostalism spread to the other parts of the world by members who experienced the Pentecostal revival and formed Pentecostal Churches (Hollenweger 1972:184).

2.2.3. W. H. Durham: Chicago

He was a respected and successful evangelist in Los Angeles and Chicago, who had received the baptism of the Spirit in 1907 in Los Angeles. At that time the Pentecostal movement in America taught the doctrine of a three-stage way of salvation. These are conversion, sanctification and Baptism of the Spirit with speaking in tongues. Parham and Seymour were adherents of these three stages of salvation. But W. H. Durham reduced this three-stage to a pattern of a two-stage. Under the influence of the Baptists he regarded conversion and sanctification as simultaneous and sanctification as a 'self -abandonment' to God's promise (Hollenweger 1972: 24).

Seymour expelled Durham from the Apostolic Faith Church even though he had earlier prophesied about Durham, "wherever this man preaches, the Holy Spirit will come down on the people" (Hollenweger 1972:24). Although there was much opposition to Durham in his time, he has emerged as the original theologian of the American Pentecostal movement.

2.3. Christianity in India

According to Malabar (Northern part of Kerala) tradition, the Apostle Thomas brought Christianity to India in AD 52 (Neill 1984: 30-33). By the year 200 AD the Orthodox tradition is considered to have been established in the South. A Bishop is

known to have been sent from Jerusalem to India in AD 345 and a traveler in the year 530 mentions Christian communities in the Southwest and in Ceylon. In 1498 Vasco da Gama claimed India for the Portuguese monarchy. Francis Xavier arrived in India in 1542, and in subsequent years the Jesuits worked for the conversion to Catholicism of both non-Christians and the Orthodox (Barret 2001: 363).

During the first half of the seventeenth century, the Jesuit, Robert de Nobili developed the missionary method of 'adaptation to Indian life' as a way of winning high caste Brahmins to Catholicism. From 1612 onwards, Anglican clergy served in India as chaplains under the East India Company. Although occasional conversions were made in the early days, the policy of the company was opposed to missionary activities (Cross 1997: 828).

Protestant missions began in 1706 with the arrival of the Danish-Halle Lutheran missionaries. In 1793 the Baptist Missionary Society missionary William Carey arrived at Serampore and the modern era of Protestant missions began. Many other missionaries soon followed the Serampore Missionaries.

2.4. Pentecostalism in India

2.4.1. Background of Pentecostalism in India

The emergence of Pentecostalism in India should be studied in the light of the evangelical awakening in India. As the Holiness movement and Revivalism paved the way for Pentecostalism in the West, the Protestant missionary movements connected with the evangelical awakening caused a religious awakening and subsequent revival in India.

The evangelical awakening of the early nineteenth century inspired the evangelical societies of different denominations to send missionaries to the non-Christian world (Orr 1975: 7-9). In 1813 the government in India, in accordance with the Charter of the East India Company, allowed missionaries to work freely throughout India. In the first half of the nineteenth century seventeen missionary societies were active in India. The second half of the nineteenth century can be counted as the

most vigorous period of Protestant mission in India, which generally followed the colonial flag (Saju 1994: 20).

In North India, the American missionaries started their work in Ludhiana. They initiated a Christian revival and managed to make some converts among the aboriginal sandals of Bengal and Bihar, Oraons, Mundas, Kharias and Koles of Chota Nagapur. This would become the foundation of Protestant Christianity in the north of India.

In South India, the American Baptist Telugu mission started in 1835 and they made thousands of converts in Andhra (Chacko 1986: 25). In Karnataka various Christian missions were operating by the end of the nineteenth century. In Tamilnadu, the missionary John Christian Arulappan made some converts and in 1860 a great revival started in his congregations. In these meetings people spoke in tongues, visions and prophesied and rebuked the people while others beat their breasts, and some fell down, wept bitterly and confessed their sins. This revival continued for the next six years (Solomonraj 1989: 36). These small Christian groups are considered to be the beginnings of Pentecostalism in South India.

2.4.2. The Pentecostal Movement in India

The exact date of the original Pentecostal manifestation in India has not been well established. The major reason for the absence of precision is owed to its association with the revivals. In other words, early Pentecostalism could not be separated from the simultaneous revivals going on in different parts of the country. Emotional outburstings, conviction of sins, weeping, speaking in tongues and other manifestation of the Spirit were reported from the revivals and the early Pentecostals.

The earliest Pentecostal outpouring identified in India was at 'Mukti Mission', Pune in 1905. Pandita Ramabai, a well-educated daughter of a Brahmin scholar had converted herself to Christianity in 1881, and had been instrumental in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. As a young widow, she established a home for

widows, who were forbidden to remarry by Hindu custom, and orphans. This home came to be known as the Mukti Mission (Saju 1994: 23). As a result of the influence of the Keswick convention in England in 1898, the Australian revival in 1903, and the Welsh revival in 1904, she formed special prayer circles, in the beginning of 1905 for a revival in India. Many attended these prayer sessions. Minnie F. Abrahams, as associate of Ramabai from America, writes that seventy girls out of the hundred at Mukti volunteered to join the prayer band and the band grew to five hundred (Saju 1994: 22). Minnie F. Abrahams describes the experience of this out pouring:

“ The young woman sleeping next to her awoke when this occurred and seeing the fire enveloping her, she ran across the dormitory, brought a pail of water, and was about to dash it upon her, when she discovered that the girl was not on fire. In less than an hour nearly all the young women in the compound gathered around, weeping praying and confessing their sins to God ”(Saju 1994: 22).

A revival arose at Mukti. Many girls were stricken by conviction of sin and gathered for prayer meetings, morning and evening. Mukti became an inquiry room for the penitents. After hearing the news of these experiences in Mukti, a group of boys from Albert Norton’s orphanage at Dhond attended a meeting at Mukti and received the Spirit baptism and spoke in tongues.

The revival soon spread in the orphanage at Dhond, and in a short while sixty-five were baptized in the Spirit and many revived and exercised the gifts of healing and interpretation. This outpouring of the Spirit in Mukti is the first Pentecostal experience in India.

The next occurrence of the Pentecostal outpouring was reported from Calcutta in the ministry of A. J. Garr, a student of Charles Parham’s Bethel Bible School, Topeka. Garr was invited to preach at a missionary conference at Carey Baptist Church, Calcutta in 1907. At this meeting many received the Baptism in the Holy

Spirit (Saju 1994: 24). Garr's meetings at Allahabad in 1910 and at Faisabad in 1911 also added Pentecostal interest (Saju 1994: 24). In 1907 Christian Schumacher, came to the Boys School in Dhaka, India, as a missionary. In 1908 he experienced the Pentecostal baptism and became a Pentecostal preacher (Saju 1994: 24).

During the summer of 1908, missionaries from different parts of India came to Coonnor, Nilgiris, for their holidays. Barrette of Norway, Mrs. & Mr. Garr, Schumacher and family and several others who were interested in this phenomenon i.e. Spirit baptism, started praying for the outpouring of the spirit. Continuous meeting were held in Coonoor. Many missionaries and Indians were baptized in the spirit during these meetings.

In the same year, George Berg, a German from America started the Pentecostal work in Bangalore. In 1909 and 1910 he visited Kerala and preached in the Brethren's convention at Kottarakara. He was the first Pentecostal preacher to Kerala. It is also noteworthy that before any Pentecostal preacher came to India; many nationals and missionaries have been baptized in the spirit of the Lord with the initial physical evidence, speaking in tongues. It so happened that many non-Pentecostal missionaries had received Spirit baptism and became Pentecostal ministers.

2.5. Background of the Pentecostal Movement in Kerala

2.5.1. Political Background

Before the advent of the British, Kerala was divided into eighteen principalities in which Venad, Kolathnad, Eranad and Valluvanad were the leading ones (Abraham 1986: 3). Under the British rule these principalities were united into three district regions, Travancore, Cochin and Malabar (Gopalakrishnan 1987: 348). Pentecostalism first reached Travancore and grew considerably as it spread to other parts of the state. So the political changes of Travancore are more important than the other two in understanding Pentecostalism that has come in the very first decade of the twentieth century.

The dawn of the twentieth century witnessed the steady growth of political consciousness in the state of Travancore. The emergence and progress of the Indian National Congress had influenced people to have an anti-colonial attitude. Many other factors such as nationalism, democracy, social freedom and equality have moved people to ask for an equal share in the administration. Western liberal thinking and education has positively contributed to the aspiration of the people toward national rule. In the three states from the first decade of the twentieth century, the political conscience of the people began to change in favor of national rule and for democracy. Kerala was on par with other parts of India regarding growing nationalism and in the struggle for self-government. So the political scene was in a state of unrest and hoping for a radical change. It was in this political context that Pentecostals emerged first through the missionaries and then through the natives.

2.5.2. Social Background

Numerous changes were taking place in the society during this period, particularly in the nineteenth century when missionaries turned their attention to the depressed classes. Missionaries' involvement in the anti-slavery movement resulted in the abolition of slavery in Travancore. The education provided by the missionaries both to the Dalits and women, without doubt, altered the social history and influenced others to take up the task of reforming the society.

Sree Narayana Guru initiated the most important socio-religious reform among the lower classes of the Izhava community in the last decades of the nineteenth and in the beginning of twentieth centuries. The consecration of Shiva for the Izhavas by Guru challenged the Brahminical supremacy and paved the way for the social mobility of the Izhavas. With the advice of Dr. Palpu and Kumaran Asan, a noted Malayalam poet, Narayana Guru turned the "Vavoot Yogam" into Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (SNDP) in 1903, a social and religious organization for the Izhavas. Since then the Izhavas made considerable progress both in the social and religious spheres. Narayana Guru's socio-religious reform questioned the caste

system and he strove for a casteless society. His famous slogan was 'one caste, one God, one religion for man'. The ongoing struggle of the Izhavas continued until the temple entry proclamation of 1936, which allowed the Izhavas to enter all the temples (Gladstone 1984: 234-37).

During this period the Nairs also had tried to reform the society under the leadership of Chattampi Swamikal (1854-1920) and through the efforts of the Nair Service Society (NSS), which was formed in 1914. The Muslim community was also touched with the reforming spirit at the beginning of the twentieth century. The Muslims of Travancore and Cochin had started their own reform movements. Modern education challenged the Muslim community which shown forth a readiness for social changes which was later followed by the Muslims of Malabar too (Ahammad Kutty 1978: 441). The Christian community was also in the forefront of social progress through the educational activities of missionaries who were the pioneers. It was in this context that Pentecostalism entered in to the scene.

2.5.3. Ecclesiastical Background

The ecclesiastical context for the rise of Pentecostalism was closely connected with the missionary movements in Kerala. It was the missionary movements in the nineteenth century that began to stir up the socially backward communities to find an identity of their own. The London Missionary Society started work in South Travancore from 1806. Their social involvement in the areas of abolition of slavery motivated the depressed castes, like Nadar, Pariahs, Pulayas, and Kuravas to accept the religion of the missionaries in masses. By 1900 the LMS had 63,000 converts from the lower class communities. The mass movement began to occur only after the anti-slavery edict and upper cloth edict (Gladstone 1984: 59). This is the result of the education and medical work of the missionaries. It seems that along with the social and economical aspirations, religious aspirations also provided them a sense of freedom and dignity that in turn brought them to Christianity.

In Travancore, the ecclesiastical reforms were possible through the joint efforts of the colonial power and the Church Missionary Society, which started its work in

1816. At first this society aimed at helping the churches but later it started involving itself in the internal matters of churches and tried for a renewal in the evangelical pattern. The existing Syrian Church did not welcome the involvement of the missionaries in the internal and external affairs of the Church and their reform measures. This caused the Church to put an end to the relationship with the missionaries in 1836. However the missionaries' work kindled an evangelistic spirit among a group of Syrians who later broke away from the Orthodox Syrian Community under the leadership of Abraham Malpan and formed a separate Church, later known as the Malankara Marthoma Syrian Church. CMS missionaries organized an effort to evangelize the "outcastes" in 1850. Through their manifold activities like evangelism, education, and political involvement they gained converts from the slave castes and depressed communities like the Izhavas (Joseph 1938: 75). The revivals within the Marthoma and the Anglican Churches were the immediate forerunner of the Pentecostal movement. Hence it is appropriate to have a glimpse at the revivals that paved the way for Pentecostalism.

2.6. The Pentecostal Movement in Kerala

The arrival of Pentecostal missionaries' from abroad to the revived Christians in Malankara encouraged the growth of the Pentecostal movement in central Kerala. The first Pentecostal preacher to Kerala was George Berg. In Berg's meetings many came to the Pentecostal experience at Punthala, Kidanganoor, Venmony, Elanthoor, Adoor and Thuvayoor but not in an organized form and they gathered in believers' house.

It seems that Pentecostals at the beginning did not have a clear vision of an organized Church. In the earlier meetings of Berg a few notable persons like Oommen Mammen, son of Anglican Archdeacon Oommen, and A.C. Mathai a prominent evangelist of the Marthoma Church received the Pentecostal experience. It is also important to note that the first members were from the Syrian community (Abraham 1983: 61) and from wealthy families. Abraham notes that in 1913 Berg came along with another missionary Robert F. Cook. But Cook in his writing said

that he came not with Berg but with another Anglo Indian missionary Cummins, in 1914 (Cook 1955: 29).

It was Cook who established Pentecostalism into an organized body and the progress was very much dependent on his personal charismatic gifts. Another important and notable shift that took place through the ministry of Cook was that Pentecostalism attracted many Dalits; it became a mission to the Dalits.

2.7. Summary

In summing up, the twentieth century Pentecostal movement emerged out of revivals in the nineteenth century. Pentecostalism was the culmination and inevitable result of evangelism, which promoted volunteerism and biblical fundamentalists Christianity. As has been mentioned earlier, it was also the outcome of a theological development from the Wesleyan teaching on sanctification, through the "Holiness" expectation of a second blessing of the baptism in the Spirit, evidenced by "speaking in tongues." In India the Pentecostal movement had its roots in the revivals, which worked as the ground and the agent of this phenomenon. This fact has also been evidenced in the Pentecostal history of Kerala. In Kerala Pentecostalism came in the first decade of the twentieth century and began to spread all over the state. Following Berg another independent Pentecostal missionary, Robert F. Cook came to South India in 1913. He started his work at Dodaballapur near Bangalore. Later he extended his ministry to Kerala, where he had great success. Through Robert F. Cook's work Pentecostalism had found roots among the Dalits. The mission efforts of Robert F. Cook resulted in the fast growth of the Pentecostal churches among the Dalits. The next chapter deals with the socio- analytical study of the Dalits.

CHAPTER THREE

SOCIO - ANALYTIC STUDY OF THE DALITS IN INDIAN CASTE SYSTEM

3.1. Introduction

In India, religion is the controlling factor of the social structure. The hierarchy of caste emerged as a sustaining factor of the social structure in Kerala like other parts of India. This chapter deals with the origin and development of the caste system in India and Kerala and is an attempt. Our purpose is to situate the Dalits within the wider scope of Indian society in order to show the radical nature of Robert F. Cook's choice to implant Pentecostalism in the Dalit community. Through a thorough analysis of the caste system we will also explore why Pentecostalism takes on an anti-establishment colour in Kerala.

3.2. Caste in Indian History

Indian history can be traced back at least B.C 5000-2500, the era of remarkable civilization began to develop and flourish in the Indus valley, the north west part of the country. At that time India was populated by the bronze-skinned Dravidians and by the dark-skinned descendants of the Negroites and Austrians, the earliest settlers. Approximately 1500 BC the light-skinned bands of shepherd warriors who called themselves "Aryans" (a Sanskrit word meaning "nobleman" or lords of the land) began migrating into the Indus valley, probably from central Asia, and soon began to spread in several directions. It is generally believed that the Dravidians did not welcome them. (Neely 1995: 32).

From the time of the Dravidians until the arrival of the Portuguese in 1498 and the early 1500s, the Indian civilization, including religious traditions, assumed the basic character it reflects today. The triumph of Sanskrit as the language of the Indian nobility, the social structure built around a complex system of caste, and the religious philosophy and theology later developed as Hinduism.

3.2.1 Hindu Religious Traditions

It is believed that the Muslim invaders were the first to give the name "Hindu" (Neely 1995: 35) to the people who lived in the geographical area of present-day Pakistan and India. Hindu therefore designated not a religion but a geographical attribute of all non-Muslim peoples south and east of the Indus River i.e. in Hindustan (Neely 1995: 35). Etymologically, the word Hindu means "Indian". Foreigners, therefore, beginning with the Muslims, designated the Indo-Aryans as "Hindus". This was not the name Indians chose for themselves, nor did it necessarily have religious connotations until much later.

Hinduism has no known founder nor any prophets or creeds as such. Unlike Christianity, Hinduism lacks institutional structure. Hinduism has its sacred scriptures generally referred to as the four Vedas.

The caste system in Hinduism is another important thing. The term caste from the Latin *castus*, pure or chaste is not a Hindu word (Neely 1995: 36). Its origin apparently can be traced to the Portuguese for whom the word *casta* meant "race" or "lineage" and who designated the Indian societal arrangement as a system of castes. Some observers insist that the caste system in India is a social, not a religious institution (Neely 1995: 36). The concept of caste has been used in India to legitimise discrimination and oppression and rigidly enforced social and religious differentiations.

The Hindu word for caste is "Varna" literally "colour" though it can also mean group (Neely 1995: 37). Possibly, the basis of the caste system, which may have originated with the earliest Dravidians attempt to differentiate them from the darker Negrito and Australoid inhabitants of ancient India, was the colour of one's skin. There are five groupings in Hindu society namely, Brahmins (custodians of the sacred texts and rites), Kshatriyas (defenders or warriors), Vaisyas (early land owners and later merchants), Sudras (serfs or workers of the land, servants, and occasional artisans) and Untouchables (outsiders or non-caste people who today referred to as Dalits). No person chooses her or his caste, nor is it possible to

change caste. One is born into his or her caste according to the immutable law of "Karma" or actions.

3.3. Caste System in India

The Dalits suffers socially as the lowest group in the caste system. In India the Dalits constitute nineteen percent of the total population. There are nearly two hundred million Dalits in India who are classified as scheduled castes by the Government. They are called outcastes, depressed classes, scheduled castes, Harijans or untouchables (Nirmal 1989:19). More than 90% of Dalits live in villages. There are many who are too poor to build their houses on their own lands and in most of the villages suffering with out proper residential facilities. The majority of the Dalits live under the poverty line.

3.3.1. Origin of Caste and Untouchability

The origins of caste and of untouchability lie deep in India's ancient past and can be traced out from archaeological and literary sources. J. H. Hutton concluded his major work, *Caste in India*, by locating the origin of caste in the taboos and divisions of labor in the pre-Aryan tribes of India as well as in their efforts of self-preservation in the face of invasion (Webster 1993: 2). The dominant view traces the origins both of caste and of untouchability to the Aryans themselves and their ways of relating to the peoples of India with whom they came into contact. The Aryans, a series of related and highly self-conscious tribes sharing a common language and religion, started invading India from the northwest around 1500 B.C. these conflicts between Aryans and the natives lasted for centuries.

In the post Rig-Vedic literature there are more frequent references to the primitive forest-dwellers who were kept on the fringes of Aryan society in the conquered regions. Among these were the Chandalas. In the early literature like Pali and Prakrit deals about the untouchability (Webster 1993: 2).

In the Dharma sutras (old literature) and in Kautilya's Arthashastra the Chandala are treated as untouchable. However, it is in the Manusmriti that this theory, as well as the Varna theory and the classification of castes in a hierarchy based on occupation and degree of pollution, received its classic statement. Manu states that the four Varnas were divinely ordained from the very beginning. From the mouth of Purusha, the self-Existent One, came the Brahmins, from his arms came the Kshatriys, from his thighs came the Vaishyas, and from his feet came the Sudras. Other castes were the result of alliance between members of these four original Varnas (Webster 1993:3). The Chandala, whom Manu considered the offspring of a Brahmin woman and a Sudra man, the worst possible combination was to be "excluded from all considerations of dharma" (Webster 1993: 3). Four other groups were also relegated to the ranks of the untouchables.

Another theory of the origin of caste and untouchability suggests that the people whom the Aryans conquered were Dravidians, who subsequently moved southward and subjugated the indigenous peoples there. It was only later, when Aryan influences spread to the south, that the Varna system and untouchability came into being there. Some people argued that the Dalit people were among the original tribes of South India and because of geographic location and occupation became cut off from the advances of civilization and so were looked down upon by others (Webster 1993: 3). This theory locates the origin of caste and untouchability but does not really explain them.

3.3.2. The Dalits

The word 'Dalit' means the oppressed or broken victims and refers both to the people who are deprived and dehumanized. In India the so-called "Outcastes" or the untouchables have recently taken the name Dalit as self-designation, thus rejecting and protesting against these and other demeaning labels given them by the dominant Hindu Society during their long history (Azariah 2000: 11). The list included "*Avarna*" (casteless), "*Daas*" (slaves), "*Chandalas*" (cursed ones),

“Panchamas” (fifth people), *“Harijans”* (people of a junior Hindu God) and Scheduled castes etc.

Together with the equally oppressed masses of the hill tribes these Dalits form 250 million or one quarter of the total population of India. They belonged to various sub-groups scattered all over the country (there are 450 distinct cultural groups) (Azariah 2000:12). Yet they commonly shared and suffered the six fold-oppressions, namely economic deprivation, political minoritization, social marginalisation, religious ostracization, physical segregation and cultural mutilation. They had been made the “most powerless” people in India. They were so divided and sectionalized that they lack unity to struggle together and overcome their oppressive forces.

The Indian reality of the Dalit is the outcome of an age-old caste-class culture. Property, wealth, education, social status and political power have been the prerogative of upper castes. The social structure of India is stratified, with inbuilt-inequalities and injustices, based on the caste-system sanctified by Brahmanic Hinduism. The mass poverty, mass-illiteracy and mass-unemployment are distinctive characteristics of an under developed society.

Dalits have been the most degraded, downtrodden, exploited and the least educated in Indian society. They have been socially and culturally, economically and politically subjugated and marginalized through three thousand years (Nirmal 1990: 45). Dalits have been excluded from the caste system, hence outcastes, declared ritually unclean, hence untouchables, and pushed out for fear of pollution to live on the outskirts of villages, hence segregated.

The Dalits are the original people of India, and their history goes back to pre-Dravidian age. The early Dalit culture or religion was animistic-panteistic, interpolated by fertility cults and tantric forms of worship and later on Saivite (saivism is the most ancient living faith in the world) (Nirmal 1990: 45).

Untouchability and segregation resulted from the exclusion of the dark skinned aboriginals (Dravidians) who resisted Aryanisation. The economically poor class and those who opposed the Brahmin supremacy among the Dravidian races were made quite artificially as untouchables. The story of the Dalits has been one of continuous protest and struggle to escape from the prison of the Hindu caste system.

Most strangely and sadly, for over 2500 years since the day of Gauthama Buddha's revolt against Hinduism, nothing significant is known to have taken place, no written records are there to indicate their challenge or revolt against the majoritarian and dominant culture of oppression or Brahminical Hinduism (Azariah 2000:154).

John Webster's comment about Dalit Christians is that:

"Dalits were not a homogenous group in the nineteenth century. The case studies reveal considerable diversity among them, due to either difference in Jati traditions and occupations or through variations in original land holding and caste interaction. Moreover, interaction among Dalit 'Jati' was affected by these same considerations of hierarchy, which governed all Dalit relations with the higher castes. The Malas and Madigas both look down on each other yet, despite their lack of homogeneity or harmonious inter-relationships. Dalits of all Jati's did have several things in common which has not only led some contemporary observers to place them with the same category but also could later give them some sense of shared history and destiny"(Webster 1993: 28).

John Webster points out that the 1891 census was the first to adopt a standard classification of caste in India. It had sixty categories defined in terms of occupation assigned by tradition. Dalits as Panchamas did not constitute a distinct category, but instead fell primarily into four categories.

Then Webster goes on to describe six different common characteristics of the nineteenth century Dalits namely:

- Harsh fact of social stigma because Dalits were considered polluting and therefore, kept at a distance as untouchables having been forced to live in a segregated section of every village as an adjunct servant class.
- Dalits were occupationally engaged in agricultural labor of one sort or another almost always working for others under a variety of arrangements from slavery to share cropping rather than on their own land.
- Their characteristics were stark poverty since Dalits were very poorly compensated for their labor. So, forced to live on the brink of starvation, their homes were small, fragile and unhealthy, they were hopelessly in debt. Poverty and indebtedness meant bondage, living at the beck and call of the landlord rather than as independent self-respecting persons. The saying that the Indian agricultural labourer is born in debt live in debt inherits debt and dies in debt and bequeaths debt, aptly sums up the economic conditions of the Dalits.
- In the long course of history and custom, the Dalits were co-opted in to the jati system of the dominant Hindu society so that they not only lived and married within their own jati, but also had their own Jati councils, etc.
- In the complex matter of life-style, Dalit customs and ceremonies surrounding birth, death and marriage, etc, greatly resemble those of the caste Hindus, thus showing in the so-called common Indian culture. As the direct consequence of severe poverty they became victims of vices such as drunkenness, frequent quarrelling, domestic violence, contempt for one's own people and passive aggression vis-à-vis one's betters. In fact these were accepted among Dalits, almost as normal, as necessary mechanisms for coping with the cruel facts of enforced poverty and social degradation.

- By and large, most of the Dalits accepted the hierarchical ordering of society and those who did not accept their assigned place in social hierarchy directed their place within it.

Given the above six commonalities of the Dalits of India, needs no further explanation to confirm the life situation and condition of the oppressed and exploited Dalit untouchables during the first quarter of the twentieth century.

3.3.3. Origin and Meaning of the word Dalit

The term “Dalit” has roots in Sanskrit where the root ‘dal’ means to split, crack, open. The English form of dal or ‘tal’ means cut. The word ‘Dalit’ has come to mean things or persons who are cut, split, broken or torn asunder, scattered or crushed and destroyed. By coincidence, there is in Hebrew a root ‘dal’ meaning low, weak, poor. In the Bible, different forms of this term have been used to describe people who have been reduced to nothingness or helplessness (Sumithra 1998: 83).

The present usage of the term Dalits goes back to the nineteenth century, when a Marathi social reformer and revolutionary, Mahatma Jyotirao Phule (1826-1890), used it to describe the outcastes and untouchables as the oppressed and the broken victims of our caste ridden (Nirmal 1990: 42). Under the charismatic leadership of B. R. Ambedker (1891-1956), this term gained greater importance and popularity (Devasahayam 1992:31). During the 1970’s, the followers of the Dalit Panther Movement of Maharashtra gave currency to this term ‘Dalit’ as a constant reminder of their age-old oppression, denoting both their state of deprivation and the people who are oppressed (Nirmal 1991:41). This term for them is not a mere name or title: for them it has become an expression of hope, the hope of recovering their past self-identity.

The term has gained a new connotation with a more positive meaning. It must be remembered that Dalit does not mean low caste or poor; it refers to the deplorable

state or condition to which a large group of people has been reduced by social convention and in which they are now living.

3.3.4. Names of the Dalits

The Dalits are called by different names in different parts of the country. They include: *Dasa*, *Dasya*, *Raksasa*, *Asura*, *Avarna*, *Nisada*, *Panchama*, *Chandala*, *Harijan* and *Untouchable*. Each of these names has a history and background. Besides these names, there are a number of other titles or names, which have been given to them at the level of the regional language. For example *Chura* in Punjab (North West India), *Bhangi* or *Lal Beghi* in Hindi (North India), *Mahar* in Marathi (Central India), *Mala* or *Madiga* in Telugu, *Paraiya* in Tamil and *Pulayan* and *Kuravan* in Malayalam (South India).

These names carry with in them the low-term contrast of “we-the pure” and “you-the impure”. In response to these insulting labels, the untouchables have chosen to give themselves a name and this is *Dalit*, which refers to the hardship of their condition of life. This name is a constant reminder of the age-old oppression. The term is also an expression of their hope to recover this past self-identity.

3.4. Conditions of Dalits in India

3.4.1. Political Conditions

Regarding political status and political power, the Dalits continue to suffer as minorities and marginalized groups whether at national, state government or village panchayat levels. Thus they have no effective representation or role in decision-making process. They are specifically included under the category of citizens identified as scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. The consequences of identifying them as ‘Scheduled castes’ had led to political isolation and compartmentalization of Dalits.

The mandatory provisions of reservations and quotas for the advancement of the hitherto submerged and underdeveloped Dalit electoral participation were aimed at providing cultural economic and socio-political opportunities (Azariah 2000:15). But they had only used these oppressed communities as vote banks for the competing political parties. This had ensured the continuing situation of political powerlessness of the Dalits. They remain deeply divided and are struggling to unite themselves.

3.4.2. Economic Conditions

Economic conditions of the Dalits are very pathetic. The Dalits are landless labourers or bonded labourers. These original inhabitants of the Indian sub continent were deprived of their land and property. They were forced to live in segregated small hamlets that became the servant quarters of each of the upper castes in the villages throughout the country.

In India 40% of the people live below the poverty line and 80% of the Dalits belongs to this category. Most of them (90%) live in the villages and the rest in the slums of the Indian cities and towns (Azariah 2000: 12). Through their hard physical labour, the Dalits have contributed to build up the nation more than any other segment of the population.

They are the most vulnerable to all kinds of physical illness because of the lack of proper hygienic living conditions and medical attention. P. C. Joseph says that the very nature of the feudal context and the elitist ideology of development have made the rich to become richer and the poor to become poorer (Joseph 2000: 16).

3.4.3. Social Conditions

The social marginalisation of the Dalits had proved to be the root of all kind of discrimination that they suffer everyday of their lives. They are placed below the '*Chaturvarnya*' fourfold graded caste society of *Brahmins*, *Kshatriyas*, *Vaisyas* and *Sudras*. Thus Dalits are truly out castes.

They are subjected to several inhumane injunctions such as forbidden to draw water from the common village wells, to enter temples, to use the same glass cups in the village tea stalls, to wear and walk with sandals in the upper caste village streets etc (Azariah 2000: 15). Dalits are considered ritually unclean based on the Hindu religious principle of purity or pollution.

The present day structure is the same. The well-educated Hindu upper caste citizens do not find it necessary to reform the social system. It is the reality of the societal discrimination based on the caste-pride and prejudice that often lead to large-scale communal clashes and caste-violence against untouchables.

3.4.4. Religious Conditions

The religious foundations of the caste-system are the real source for the discrimination and denial of the basic human right to the Dalits. The ancient Brahminic Hindu scripture *Rigveda* says “we are surrounded on all sides by *Dasyas*. They do not perform sacrifice. They are non-believers. Their practices are all different. They are not men. Oh! Destroyer of forces, kill them or destroy the *Dasa* race” (Azariah quoted from the *Rig Veda*). Azariah explains from *Manu Smriti* (c.2200 B.C.), “A Brahmin is born of fulfill Dharma ... All mortals subsist through the benevolence of the Brahmin. And slavery is inborn among the *Sudras* and *Panchamas* and no one can free them from it”. It must be remembered that *Manu* the Hindu lawgiver is known to have codified the caste-system in the *Manu Smriti* (Azariah 2000: 15).

Other Sanskrit scriptures including the *Bhagavad-Gita* had insisted on the basic beliefs in the so-called laws of *Karma* and *Punerjenma* (reincarnation or cycle of rebirths). The belief in *Karma* has made outcaste Dalits to accept lowly social status without any protest.

3.4.5. Cultural Conditions

The cultural wilderness in which we find the Dalits of India is the most crucial reality that needs to be transformed. The Dalits have no written scriptures or recorded history of their own to boast of any 'ancient culture'. Their cultural conditions are based on their bondage and long slavery over a period of thirty centuries. They were told that they are born slaves and they have believed it so religiously. The cultural condition of the Dalits in India is a culture of silence.

3. 5. Dalits in Kerala

3. 5.1. Caste in Kerala

In Kerala, religion was the controlling factor of the social structure. The religion of Kerala from the beginning of the Christian era was predominantly Hinduism with its social stratification (Gladstone 1984: 48). The hierarchy of caste emerged as a sustaining factor of the social structure in Kerala like other parts of India.

Before the arrival of Brahmins Kerala society was a casteless society. The caste system found in that period was only functional and had no divine sanction. There was no superiority or inferiority feeling connected with the function based caste (Abraham 1986:5). Education and other privileges were not restricted to the elites or a few.

The arrival of Brahmins brought about a drastic change in the structure and stability of the society. There is no unanimous account of the exact period that the Aryans came to Kerala. The presence of the Aryan immigrants in Kerala may be traced back to third century A.D., or perhaps to the third century B.C. but it was agreed upon that the Aryanisation of the Kerala society reached its zenith between 8th and 11th centuries A.D. It was from this period that the rigid caste system began to operate with an oppressive force (Gladstone 1984:19). The caste system placed the *Brahmins* and the other dominant groups at the top of the social strata and placed all others at the bottom making the social mobility impossible. A *Sudra*

can never rise to a higher position, in which s/he was born (Gladstone 1984:17). The clever *Brahmins* placed next to them the Dravidian ruling class as *Kshatriyas*. As a result, the caste system introduced by *Brahmins* divided the Hindu society into various groups who were mutually hating and cooperating only to degrade the others (Yesudas 1980: 7).

Nevertheless, the Brahmins branded the major section of the people as mere slaves to them and to the ruling class. With the sanskritization that followed the Aryan arrival in Kerala, Hindu society was divided as *Savarnas* and *Avarnas*. The *Savarnas* included Brahmins and Nairs. The *Avarnas* were the *Nadars*, *Izhavas*, *Pulayas*, *Kuravas*, *Parayas* and the *Hill Aryans*, who were the all-polluting castes and below them were the Dalits the most out castes. It was these people who were badly affected by the caste system. They were given the name 'untouchables and also low castes' (Oommen 1981:10). This inhuman system pushed the natives into a perpetually polluted state as untouchables and unapproachable, which also contributed to their social, economical and religious disabilities for centuries.

3.5.2. Savarnas

Savarnas are the high caste peoples in the caste system. The *savarnas* included *Brahmins* and *Nairs*. They are priestly class and business peoples.

3.5.2.1. Brahmins

According to legends a mythological hero '*Parasurama*' brought the Brahmins into the land of Kerala, who created a land out of the sea and gave it to Brahmins as atonement for his sins (Abraham 1964: 3). Abraham commented that this mythological origin of the land of Kerala was invented and put into circulation by the Brahmins and their allies, most often the landlords, with the intention of subjugating the castes below them (Abraham 1964: 3). But Gladstone sees the Parasuraman story not as a legend but as historical fact and identifies Parasuraman had dethroned the ruler and enthroned Udayavarman, who in turn became the protector of Brahmins.

Parasuraman and the Brahmins together put their efforts to annihilate the existing religion of Buddhism and Jainism from Kerala. In the course of time the Brahmins became the gods of the earth-*Bhasuras* (Gladstone 1984:21-22).

The Brahmins in Kerala came to be known as *Nambudiris*, who controlled the society from the c.10 A. D. onwards. About their supremacy Kunjan Pillai writes:

“The *Nambudiris* were the real rulers of Kerala from the eleventh Century to the sixteenth Century. The kings were mere servants of the Nambudiris. The *Nambudiris* in Kerala were masters in the arts and science of war as well as learning and scholarship....” (Gladstone 1984: 21).

By the extraordinary control of the Brahmins over the kings, they influenced even the policies of the state (Gladstone 1984: 21). It came to be accepted that the kings would become legal only if the Brahmins performed all the ceremonies connected with the enthronement.

Full liberty of education was limited to them alone while education was taboo for lower castes. According to their sacred laws to kill a Brahmin was the most heinous crime that a king could even think of. Therefore Brahmins were totally exempted from capital punishment.

Kunjan Pillai points out that in the Kerala society all the property and people were considered as the possession of the Brahmins (Samuelkutty 2000: 11). The Brahmanical supremacy controlled the economy. The Nairs, as the representatives of Brahmins controlled the land and property acknowledging full ownership of their masters. Thus the whole economic power was controlled by these two castes, which eventually became responsible for the poverty, ignorance and systematic exploitation of the *Nadars*, *Izhavas* and Dalits (Samuelkutty 2000:11).

The whole civil policy had been organized as far as possible in accordance with the principles of religion, the great law-giver of the Aryan society according to which exclusive privileges were given to the Brahmins (Gladstone 1984:23). They were the guardians of the Hinduism in its orthodoxy, the interpreters of scripture and the authors of philosophy, the learned men and the priests of the temples of their tradition of Hinduism.

‘The kings of Travancore regarded that their sacred duty is to please the Brahmins and to rule the country in accordance with the advice of the Brahmin scholars’ (Gladstone 1984: 23). The kings spent large sums for the support and comfort of the Brahmins whereby they received free food and entertainment at the expense of the state.

The right and privileges enjoyed by the Brahmins constituted a barrier for the general progress of the country. The result of this Brahmin domination for centuries was a complete stagnation of economy, culture and intellectual life. By the social changes, which had been taking place during the nineteenth century, the Brahmins naturally became the losers, though their community also underwent considerable changes. The next caste in the social scale was the *Nairs*.

3.5.2.2. The Nairs

The Nairs were placed below the Brahmins in the caste hierarchy in Kerala. The Kerala historian Kunjan Pillai argues that the emergence of Nairs caste was through the social recognition after the sanskritization, and the Nairs in turn became their protectors in all aspects (Gladstone 1984:25). Though the Nairs were subordinate to the Brahmins, they dominated over the castes. Their position during the nineteenth century was that of founded aristocracy inflicting much hardship on the lower castes, though the entire land of Kerala was under the control of the Brahmins, in practice, the Nairs were the owners (Saju 1994: 50).

Nairs are the strong caste organizations in Kerala. They provided the army for the king during the pre-British period, and even afterwards it became the Nairs

Brigade. During the pre-British period caste assemblies of the Nairs exercised much power and acted as a powerful check upon the rulers.

The Nairs did not like the work of the Christian missionaries, mainly because very often it meant a challenging of the established customs and social norms. This resulted in questioning of their dominance over the lower-castes. They opposed all the mission works of the missionaries, which challenged the established social practice.

3.5.3. The Avarnas or Dalits

3.5.3.1. The Nadars

The next major caste was the Nadars; who were known as Shanars. This caste is seen in the state of Tamilnadu and in the southern part of Kerala. There are different opinions about the place of origin of the Nadar caste. There are suggestions about different places in South India such as the Cauvery region, Madurai, South Travancore etc...(Abraham 1962: 2). The Nadars claim that they had a glorious past.

In nineteenth century Nadar caste was one of the agricultural castes. The hereditary occupation of the Nadars was their cultivating and climbing the Palmyra palm. During the nineteenth century many people of this caste were turning to different employment other than the traditional one (Gladstone 1984: 28).

The Nadars occupied a social limbo some where between the Sudras and the outcaste untouchables. Gladstone mentioned in his work from Caldwell (Gladstone 1984:28).

“They many in general be described as belonging to the highest division of the lower classes, or the lowest of the middle classes; poor, but not paupers; rude and unlettered, but by many degrees removed from a savage state.”

The worship among the Nadars was mainly taking place in their own houses. On the southwestern corner of many houses a separate small building had been constructed for the worship of the deceased parents where the senior male member of the family alone was permitted to enter. They also had village temples in a few places where deities such as *Sastavu*, *Amman*, and *Bhadrakali* etc... were worshipped and they had priests from their own castes. The popular religion of the Nadars was the worship of deities.

Their worship included devil dancing and devil sacrifice (Philip 1997: 91). They never attributed to these spirits feelings of gentleness and compassion. They hardly prayed for blessings and gifts. They had no access to the Hindu temples of the Brahminical type, and on festival days, they were not even permitted to walk on the roads leading to the temples. Thus they were subjected to a certain amount of religious restrictions. More serious issue was their social bondage. The Government and the caste Hindus oppressed the Nadars. The Government imposed oppressive taxes and the most oppressive was a capitation tax which they collected even for the deceased members of the family, gifts also expected from them by their high caste 'over lords' at the festivals of *Onam*, *Dipavali*, harvest the end of the year and at various anniversaries, and on occasions of royal marriages birthdays etc (Gladstone 1984:30).

Till the middle of the nineteenth century, there was no possibility for them to make progress, because the social structure did not give them any freedom, even to build decent houses or in the case of women, to cover the upper part of the body. Thus the Nadars as a caste groaned under the social system, which existed in Travancore. The work of the Christian missionaries attracted the Nadars to a great extent. It was among these people that mass conversions took place in South Travancore.

3.5.3.2. The Izhavas

The position of Izhavas was below the Nairs and a little above the slave castes. They were also considered as polluting caste. It is possible to think that before the

Aryanization period they were Buddhists. Brahmins prohibited them from entering into the temples. But still they were attached to Hinduism nominally. Economically they were a dependent class who lived on the mercy of the landlords and socially they were a depressed class (Gladstone 1984: 31).

Their forms of worship were different from those of Brahminical Hinduism. On the whole they venerated the spirits of the deceased ancestors. Their deities included a female deity by the name of *Bhadrakali* and male deities such as *Sastavu*, *Verabhadran* etc... The Izhavas offered toddy and arrack and made animal or bird sacrifices to please these gods so that they would not harm them. Corporate worship was limited to the worship on special occasions and on festivals. The religious organization was not very strong among them.

The Izhavas obliged to keep minimum distance of thirty-six feet from a Brahmin. They were compelled either to leave the road if they find a Brahmin or to announce their own presence by the special cry 'Hai Hai' (Gladstone 1984: 32). A good number of them converted to Christianity to escape from their social and religious oppressions. Missionaries were also engaged in fighting for the civil rights and for the education of these castes. From the beginning of the twentieth century the status of the Izhavas were tremendously changing toward progress as a result of both the governmental reforms and by the socio-religious reforms under the able leadership of Sree Narayana Guru (Gladstone 1984: 33).

3.5.3.3. The Pulayas and Kuravas

In Kerala from the period of Aryanization, the Pulayas and Kuravas and other original inhabitants became untouchables and they were known by different names. According to the government record they are scheduled castes. Though there are many more castes who come under this group the above mentioned two castes are numerically majority. In the beginning of the twentieth century a vast number of these peoples accepted Pentecostalism.

The Pulayas who once belonged to the ruling class was brought into slavery by the Aryan race (Gladstone 1984:33). Kuravas also a slave caste mainly inhabited the southern parts of Kerala. They were subjected to all inhuman treatments like any other slave caste until the early part of the twentieth century.

The houses of the Pulayas and Kuravas were huts formed of sticks cut out of the woods, with walls of reed or mud and thatched with grass or coconut-leaves. These houses situated by the side of the rice swamps, or on mounds, to be out of the way of polluting 'respectable' people.

These two castes were not permitted to wear gold or silver ornaments. The work of the Pulayas and Kuravas were almost exclusively in the rice fields-pumping them dry, heading, digging, plugging, weeding, transplanting and reaping; yet the grain was not considered as polluted.

Concerning the religion of the Pulayas, Gladstone thinks, "the Pulayas are animists, but are gradually coming on to the higher forms of worship. Their gods are *Parakutty*, *Karinkutty*, *Chathan*, and spirits of their ancestors (Gladstone 1984: 36). For their worship, images were not used in the south. Their priests came from among their own ranks. At New Year they used to offer fowls and fruits and toddy to their goddess. There were no temples built by or belonging to them. Trees planted in a square, one at each corner, formed temporary places of worship.

It is obvious that the social system made the Pulayas and Kuravas suppressed in the society. Freedom was beyond the imagination of most of them and a new awakening appeared in this community during the second half of the nineteenth century.

According to the contemporary understanding the above-mentioned communities are termed Dalits. Today this term is used frequently and has become popular among the Dalit people of various protest movements in India. Besides its common use of the term Dalit is specially used for those who have been considered as out caste.

3.5.3.4. The Parayas

Another caste to which some of the slaves belonged in Kerala was the Paraya. As the Parayas used to eat flesh of dead animal, they were detested both by the higher and lower castes. Most of the Parayas were slaves in Kerala during the eighteenth and early part of the nineteenth centuries. Most of them, like the Pulayas, were employed mainly in the fields as laborers and among them were many expert craftsmen (Gladstone 1984: 38). Education was totally banned for them.

As far as religion was concerned the Parayas had their own forms of worship. The Parayas were “zealous devil worshippers, their chief demons being *Madan*, (the cow one), *Mallan*, *Karumkali* (Black Kalai), *Chavus*, *Bhutham* etc...” (Joseph 2000: 42). Their gods were represented by rude stone images. The so-called “devil-dancing formed part of their religion. Nairs and Nadars frequently used to employ the Paraya devil dancers and sorcerers to exorcize demons. These people were slightly acquainted with a few medicines, professed to cure snakebite and could repeat some tales of the Hindu gods. They also professed to discover thieves through their magic” (Abraham 1964: 106).

3.5.3.5. The Hill Aryans

Another group of people who appears in this category is the Hill Aryans. They were at home mainly in the mountains on the eastern part of Kerala. The eastern boundary of Kerala is composed of a succession of high chains of ghauts with bluff ridges and conical peaks. The Travancore census report of 1901 gives a full description of them. It says that they are “a class of hill tribes who were little more civilized than the Mannans.... And have fixed abodes on the slopes of high mountain ranges... They were superior in appearance to most other hill tribes, but are generally short in stature” (Gladstone 1984: 40).

The Hill Aryans are also worshipping the spirits of ancestors or certain local demons supposed to reside in rocks of peaks, and having influence only over

particular village or families. These peoples also suffered from exploitation as well as from the lack of proper leadership. But the Christian missionaries work among these peoples and many of the Hill Aryans converted into Christianity.

3.6. Background of the Dalits in Kerala

3.6.1. Political Background

The Dalits had a glorious past. James Massey establishes this fact that the present Dalits of our country were the original inhabitants and their present problems began around 1500 B.C. with the Aryan invasion and settlement in the country. He also argues that it was the religion and the religious writings, which placed the original people to the bottom of the social strata (Nirmal 1990: 146). In the South Indian context, Balasundaram remarks that:

“The position of Dalit communities got changed for the worse due to Aryanization of the south and caste system was firmly established. After the Aryanization the Dalits become somewhat assimilated into the graded Hindu society as the Panchamas. They were made to believe that their being outside the pale of Hindu culture and the concomitant misery were solely due to the ‘fate’ and ‘karma’ and thus they were forced to reconcile to the statuesque” (Balasundaram.1997: 42).

In the case of Dalits in Kerala it was observed that it was only around the fourth or the fifth centuries that the Aryan race entered and subjugated the Dalit rulers. By the tenth or the eleventh century the Brahmin power reached the zenith that the whole of Kerala came under their dominance. In the following centuries the conditions of the Dalits deteriorated (Balasundaram 1997: 44). Throughout the nineteenth century the Dalits who, then called as ‘untouchables’, were slaves because of an exploitative political situation by the Brahmins and Nairs. But the political situation of the Dalits began to change gradually with the coming of the Anglican missionaries, who were also closely associated to the ruling class, the

British. The missionaries had worked among them primarily with the intention of converting them to Christianity. The Anglican missionaries were the first ones to raise their voice against the slavery involving themselves in the anti-slavery movement, which later resulted in the banning of slavery.

Conversion to Christianity could be seen as a political change by which the Dalits expressed their apathy and opposition to casteism, slavery and other disabilities imposed by Hinduism. The conversion continued to the early decades of the twentieth century, from the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Hindu religious leaders were aware of the threat by Christianity in weakening the Hindu religion, since the large numbers of the Dalits were embracing the new religion. This moved religious leaders to consider banning many of the inhuman practices and allowing freedom to lower castes. Moreover this period, from the end of the nineteenth century to the early decade of the twentieth century, leaders like Narayana Guru's and the noted leaders of the Pulayas, Ayyankali's works created self-awareness among the Dalit communities.

3.6.2. Social Background

The conspicuous aspect of the social life of the Dalits in the nineteenth century was that they were slaves. According to Azariah, because of the caste system, the original inhabitants had become victims as outcastes and were pushed to the bottom of the society as slaves (Nirmal (ed.) 1991:42). In the *Manudharma Sasthra*, the outcastes were declared as the untouchables and slaves. But the religious writings of the Brahmins from the Vedic period introduced and perpetuated the idea that the original inhabitants were untouchables. The marked disability of the Dalits all over India was the untouchability. In Kerala these peoples were not even permitted to walk through the roads. This depicts the exact social state of the Dalits. They were untouchables, unapproachable and a group who should not be seen on the road.

It was not unlawful to kill a Dalit if s/he has not quickly moved away from the way when members of the upper castes were on the way. They resided on the banks of

the fields to watch over the fields and do the necessary work immediately as the situation demanded (Gladstone 1984: 35). It seems that this people were not recognized as human beings, but were completely at the disposal of the owners. The true wording of the slave deed states, "you may sell or kill him or her shows that how they were treated like animals"(Joseph 2000: 36). Missionary sources often reported the involvement of the missionaries who were compelled on several occasions to stand up for the civil rights of the converts. Their efforts had been a success (Joseph 2000: 36).

From the second part of the nineteenth century there were marked challenges by the Christian missionaries to the age-old inhuman and cruel social disabilities the Dalits suffered. It was a period of mass conversion of the Dalits to Christianity, which could be interpreted as the mobility and opposition of Dalits from their social-bondage.

The noted outcome of the Christian missionaries involvement in the social upliftment of the Dalits was the order issued by the government prohibiting slavery in Malabar in 1843, Cochin in 1854, and in Travancore 1855 (Joseph 2000: 43). The following years were the period of agitation against the Brahminic dominance in Kerala, but most of the agitations organized with in the frame work of caste which gave each group an awareness of their gained rights (Gladstone 1984:308). Ayyankali fought against the social disabilities of his people. He had organized the *Sadhu Paripalana Sangham* for the welfare of the Dalits. His efforts resulted in the permission granted by the government of Travancore in favour of Dalit Children to attend the school run by the government (Joseph 2000:38).

3.6.3. Religious Background

Religiously the Dalits are animists. From the period of Aryan invasion Dalit religion was brought under the control of Brahmins. Dalits were also denied to enter in the temples of the upper castes. This religious segregation and dominance of the caste people kept the Dalits in perpetual ignorance, as education was under the supervision of the religious leaders i.e. the Brahmins. The writings of the

Aryans, especially the doctrine of *Karma Samsara* forced the Dalits to reconcile and be content with their miserable status (Stephen.1999: 43).

As the Brahmins brought the Dalits under their control, they propagated that the deities of the Dalits were inferior. In nineteenth century Dalits worshipped gods like *Parukutty*, *Karinkutty*, *Chathan*, *Madan*, *Karumkali*, *Bhutham*, and *Bhagavathi* (Gladstone 1984: 36,38) who were considered as inferior gods compared to the Brahminical gods. But the Dalits had little time to practice their religion since most of their time was spent in the masters' fields. The Dalits were so uncomfortable since they were denied any access to the temples; consequently they looked forward for emancipation and liberation. It was the oppressive nature of the dominant caste's religion, which forced the Dalits to embrace a religion other than Hinduism. Dalits embracing Christianity or other religions is understood as protest against their stigma of untouchability and for an upward social mobility. It was against this context only that one might be able to understand the coming of Dalits to various Protestant churches.

3.6.4. Economical Background

The economic conditions of the Dalits were related to their social status. Since they were landless labourers they were poor. Moreover the slaves were not permitted to own anything of their own. Commenting about the previous centuries economic condition of the Dalits, Joseph remarked, "They worked hard and suffered much from sickness and want of food. In times of scarcity the Pulayas hunted crabs, tiny fish, snails, eggs and red ants, the winged white ants (Joseph 2000: 41). This is not an exaggeration but true in the case of Dalits.

Being the manual labourers the Dalits were paid at the lowest wages and mostly in kind. Dalits who lived at the mercy of the landlords had to starve if they had not worked one day. Missionaries in their writings sympathetically describe the real state of the slaves vividly as follow:

“To these people employed in the most laborious and unhealthy services.... Their clothing miserably scanty their dwelling affording but little shelter from moisture and cold surrounding them, and that generally no provision is made for their port when the labour is not required, or disease or age render them unable to labour...”(Oommen 1993: 72).

Though slavery was abolished in 1850's, the Dalits were not so free because they had no place to go and no land to cultivate of their own. This forced them to continue under the same landlords as bonded servants (Oommen 1993: 73).

3.7. Summary

In Indian context people are divided on the basis of caste. Caste system in this country is called Varna system. In Varna system there is five categories. But the Dalits are the outsiders from the Varna system. Therefore they are known as Untouchables or non-caste people. In Kerala also, religion was the controlling factor of the social structure. Caste system placed the Brahmins and other dominant groups at the top of the social strata and placed all others at the bottom making the social mobility impossible.

Conversion to Christianity could be seen as a political change, by which the Dalits expressed their antipathy and opposition to casteism, slavery and other disabilities imposed by Hinduism. The conversion continued to the early decades of the twentieth century, from the last quarter of the nineteenth century. In 1913 onwards, the pioneer missionary, Robert F. Cook started his work among the Dalit community in Kerala. The next chapter deals about his missionary methods and works among the Dalits in Kerala.

CHAPTER FOUR

BIOGRAPHY AND THEOLOGICAL VIEWS OF ROBERT F. COOK

4.1. Introduction

From the very beginning the Pentecostal churches in Kerala attracted Dalit communities through Robert F. Cook's ministry. First, his biography will be presented for it will help to see his background and mission attitudes. Only thereafter I will focus on his theological views. Focusing on his theological views will show its influences on his mission theology. His theological views are very concrete and fitting to the Pentecostal teachings. These theological views are the basis for his mission methods.

In South India, he laid a good foundation for the Pentecostal mission work. He spent thirty-seven years in South India. His theological views are interlinked with his life and mission methods. His biography and theological views are very different from other Pentecostal missionaries, because he leaves the comforts and advantages of American life and unconditionally dedicate himself to the cause of spreading the gospel to the non-Christians in India.

4.2. Robert F. Cook's Biography

Robert F. Cook was born on October 4, 1880 in Cleveland, USA, and died on January 12, 1958 in Tennessee, USA. Between these two dates there is a life of joy, idealism, suffering, dreams, dedication, mistakes and hopes. He was born into a devout Baptist family and his father was a lay preacher in a Baptist church. We can see in many ways that Cook was a man of exceptional courage and intelligence. We do not have much information about his qualification but we know that Robert F. Cook had enough discipline to study for himself. He was a man who loved to write. He wrote one book *Half a century of Divine Leading and 37 years of Apostolic Achievements in South India*. In his book he gives us an

insight into his mission works in South India and he edited a magazine. In these magazines he wrote many articles about his life and ministry.

At the age of seven, he accepted Jesus Christ as his personal savior and at the age of twelve he received water baptism and he united with the Baptist church. At the age of fourteen he got a divine call from God. At that time his father laid his hands upon his head and dedicated him to the Lord's ministry. From that time onwards the Lord's hand seemed to be continually upon him. Afterwards he served the Lord by taking active part in the church and Sunday school work.

At the age of twenty-eight he heard about the Pentecostal meeting held in Los Angeles, in 1908, organized by the Pentecostal Churches in the USA. He and his wife Anna went there. In that meeting he heard convincing testimonies and people speaking in tongues. From here onwards he prayed for baptism of the Holy Spirit. After some months of waiting for the Holy Spirit, one Saturday morning, his wife called for prayer and as he lay down and prayed for her, he was filled with the Holy Spirit and started to speak in tongues. The next Sunday morning he attended a worship service and the pastor spoke to him through the following verse:

“The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised” (Cook 1955: 14).

After receiving God's message he resigned his job and submitted his life for full time ministry among the poor people.

This Pentecostal meeting converted him to Pentecostalism. Pentecostal leaders like Charles F. Perham, William Joseph Seymour and W. H. Durham were already with the movement and Robert F. Cook decided to get involved. He worked with these leaders and he got inspiration for evangelisation.

In 1912 Robert F. Cook attended the worldwide Pentecostal camp meeting in Los Angeles, California. Here he met George Burg who came from India to give a talk on that land and its opportunities. George Burg was an American missionary who had spend some time preaching in South India. As a result from this camp Cook and his wife became convinced to go to India as missionaries. During the same night his wife received a vision that they were getting off from train and every thing seemed strange and foreign around. And she saw brown skinned people running towards her; then sitting down on the ground in cross-legged position, these brown-skinned people gathered around them (Cook 1955: 16). At that time they took a decision to go as missionaries amongst such a people. After that all the pastors prayed for them, and they collected money for their travel to India. In the process of seeing India through Cook's eyes, we can see his participation as a missionary. He had some idea of India, ideas he got from George Burg (Cook 1955: 16). Burg explained about the culture, customs and difficulties for the mission work.

In October 1913 Robert F. Cook and his family came to India along with George Burg. They stayed in Kottarakara, South India. Then they moved to Bangalore because of the First World War. Bangalore was a British colony and they encouraged missionary work in India. There they started the evangelistic works. In 1914 they started the Church among the English-speaking people. After starting this church they traveled to Kerala. After a long journey by train they reached Kottarakara. It was late in the evening and they would only reach their destination at dawn and they searched for Supper.

It so happened that Brother Cumine, the Anglo-Indian missionary and Cook's translator, met a friend, a Salvation Army officer, who invited them to his hut a few miles distant. His wife prepared supper for them of rice and curry. Since they had no plates, but usually they ate on leaves framed in conical shape, they were embarrassed, but after searching for some kind of dish, an old rusty enamel plate was found. And they had supper from that plate (Cook 1955: 28). After supper, they started their journey in a cart drawn by oxen. The cart was strewn with straw

so as to make a bed for them. Almost at the break of dawn the cart came to a halt at Thuvayur and the local people gave them a hearty welcome.

Through these experiences of South India he came to know India, its people, culture and language. As he got to know India his respect for its people and beliefs increased. He never condemned any one's religious beliefs, especially where in India we have different religious traditions and customs. His missionary vision for India was more than bringing the Gospel with words only. He wanted to put the Gospel into the lives of the people using their values and culture.

Therefore he worked among the low caste people. These people live in the village area and they don't have any settled houses. But through his ministry he changed the lives of these people. He started an orphanage for old people and he helped students to study in schools. Through his ministry many Dalit people became leaders in later time. To see India with different eyes implies having a different missionary attitude. Cook was deeply committed to his responsibilities as a missionary. He had a clear missionary strategy. His missionary strategy was to spread the gospel and established churches among the Dalit people. He had his strategy in mind, a strategy that was not closed in it but was flexible, to change according to the situation and to the realities that he would face.

In the beginning Cook faced many bitter experiences. On August 31, 1917 his wife died of Malaria and enteric fever. During her last hours on earth she often said "I am sheltered under the blood; I am hiding in Him" (Cook 1955: 14). After this bitter event he again married in 1918. In 1921 Cook and his family permanently settled in Kerala.

From 1921 onwards he started many churches in Kerala. Some of the churches were at Kottarakara, Adur, Thuvayur, Sooranadu, Punalur, Tiruvalla, Kumbanadu and Pandalam. All these churches were among the Dalit community. In his ministry he faced many problems and persecutions from the native Hindu leaders. But he continued his ministry. He adopted various mission methods to reach the

unreached areas. His theological views were influenced by the Pentecostal teachings.

4.3. Theological views of Robert F. Cook

This section deals with his theological understandings. They are related to Ecclesiology, Salvation, Baptism, and Baptism of the Holy Spirit, Speaking in Tongues, Eschatology, Heaven and Hell. His theological views were fully depended on Pentecostal teachings. Through his theological views we can understand his missionary methods. Therefore his theological views are explained in this section and his missionary methods in the next chapter.

4.3.1. Ecclesiological views

Robert F. Cook believed that the church is the congregation of believers; its faith and experience should conform to the teachings of the apostles in the New Testament (Cook 1929 Sept-Vol.III: 49). The Church is the body of Christ, the habitation of God through the spirit, with divine appointment for the fulfillment of the great commission.

Each believer, born of the Spirit, is an integral part of the church (Cook 1929 Sept-Vol.III: 50). Since God's purpose concerning man is to seek and to save that which is lost, to be worshipped by many and to build a body of believers in the image of Jesus Christ. Cook saw his mission to be an instrument of God for evangelizing the world, to be a channel of God's purpose to build a body of saints being perfected in the image of God's Son. His teaching expressly to give continuing emphasis for being in the New Testament apostolic pattern by teaching and encouraging believers to be baptized in the Holy Spirit (Cook 1930 April-Vol.III: 210). This experience enables them to evangelize in the power of the Spirit with accompanying supernatural signs and adds a necessary dimension to worshipful relationship with God. Moreover it enables them to respond to the full working of the Holy Spirit in the new expression of fruits and gifts and ministries as in New Testament times for the edification of the body of Christ.

The concept of Church ministry is not restricted to a specially ordained group within the Church. Robert F. Cook believes and practices the priesthood of all believers. The gap between clergy and laity, which exists in many mainline Churches, is much reduced. In a sense, it is true to say that clergy and laity are one in Pentecostal congregations especially his congregations. As a result, every member of the Church believes that as a Christian, his or her basic calling or vocation is to be an effective witness of the Lord (Cook 1929 Sept-Vol.III: 50).

His ecclesiological view is grounded in the Pentecostal understanding. For this reason he emphasized the priesthood of all believers. In his thought all believers are therefore considered part of God's mission.

4.3.2. Salvation

Robert F. Cook emphasized that the salvation of the soul is more significant than that of the body. The soul is primary; 'it is the essence of human'. The soul is the breath of God in us. To be with God is vital and this implies the salvation of one's soul (Cook 1929 Decem-Vol III, 135). Salvation is not related to the body but to the soul only.

Again he explains that, not the body but the soul will be judged; the soul will appear before God. Eternal life is received through the soul because it is the spiritual part of an individual. The body is made out of dust and earth.

The emphasis on the soul to the detriment of the body is also found in Hinduism. Spiritualizing human's existence is a Pentecostal characteristic and salvation is a continual process. The general belief in Hinduism is that the soul is 'life', 'self or spirit' and that it does not immediately return to a new corporal body. For a period of ten- sixteen days it remains near the home, and then it goes to the land of the dead (Oosthuizen 1975: 281). Thus we see a connection between the Pentecostal and Hindu beliefs.

Cook emphasized that salvation is only found through our Lord Jesus Christ; without accepting Jesus Christ as our personal savior we do not get salvation. Jesus Christ died for us on Calvary. Through his death He washed all our sins. Therefore Robert F. Cook firmly believed that salvation comes only through Jesus Christ. This concept of salvation is related to his mission methods and he emphasized the same idea. Salvation of the soul was more significant in his preaching. Salvation of the body is not important for him. Therefore he emphasized his work among the non-Christians especially among the Dalit community.

4.3.3. Baptism

Robert F. Cook's works mainly depended on baptism. He believed that adult baptism is the only correct Biblical approach. Infant baptism nevertheless remained a contentious issue. The consensus among Pentecostals was that a child could not make the act of faith required for baptism. (Cook 1929 Nov-Vol.III: 79). He gave Scriptural references such as Mark.16: 16; Acts. 2: 37, 38; 8:12; 10:37; Romans. 6: 1-6 to support his position. Most of his teachings emphasized that only mature people should be baptized and then they must know why they are being baptized (Cook 1930 July-Vol.III. 21). Children are consecrated and this ceremony takes place during a service in the Pentecostal churches, where parents promise to train the child in the principles of scripture. They are dedicated until they grow to accountability to be baptized. Cook stated that they are dedicated either to God, or to Jesus Christ. He was totally against infant baptism. In this sense he was a true Pentecostal follower.

Adult baptism means thus a final break with the past; evidence of the new stand taken; have the new life received after remission of sins. In his church most of the people agree that baptism directs a person's life to a spiritual goal; "strengthens against temptations; encourage to serve God better; encourage to avoid worldly pleasures (Cook 1930 Jan-Vol. II. 21). Adult baptism is a symbol of respect to God and to fellow human.

Here baptism gives new direction, strengthens against temptation, helps against poverty; it strengthens in prayer life. In his theological view adult baptism and healing are closely associated. He explained it as follows, "many of my believers were suffering with sickness and troubled by evils and when they were baptized in Jesus' name they were cured and Jesus accepted their forgiveness"(Philip 1997: 43-45).

He emphasized that baptism is considered to be a symbol of being buried and risen with Jesus from, 'the watery grave'. It signifies acceptance of Jesus Christ and sign of entrance into the Kingdom of God; a sign and seal of God, which assures that you, are His child; it is an outward sign of an inward work through Jesus Christ (Cook 1930 Jan Vol. II, 21).

In summing up Robert F. Cook's theological view is that baptism is generally only for converted believers. It is essentially considered to be an act of obedience; it is also an act of professing one's faith. Baptism in the name of Jesus is often posed as necessary to salvation with reference to Acts. 2: 38; 8:16:10:48; 19:5 however the Trinitarian formula is used.

4.3.4. Baptism in the Holy Spirit

In his missionary work, he emphasized baptism in the Holy Spirit. Most of his preaching was based on this subject. Baptism with the Holy Spirit is explained as follows; it is when the Spirit enters into the soul of a person and his whole life is filled with the Holy Spirit. It is the filling of God's spirit to such an extent that our will does not motivate our lives but rather the will of God; through it one finds fluency, power and liberty to witness, pray and work for God; God takes control of our life (Cook 1929 Decem-Vol. III, 119).

He explained that every Christian must be filled with the Holy Spirit. Through baptism by the Holy Spirit, all carnality is driven out and it sanctifies the heart. His teaching is that with out baptism by the Holy Spirit we cannot enter heaven (Romans 8: 9) (Cook. 1929 Decem-Vol. III, 119). The various signs that one is

filled with the Holy Spirit are enumerated as follows: speaking in tongues, I Corinthians 14: 2; the nine fruits of the spirit are signs, Galatians 5: 22, 23; rejection of the worldly life; casting out the evil spirits; The gift of healing; interpreting speaking in tongues; prophesying; a changed and Christ centered life (Cook. 1930 July Vol.-III, 315).

He gave the impression that baptism of the Spirit is necessary to enter heaven on the basis of John 3:5 and Romans 8:9. Cleansing of sin and overcoming of original sin is described in the context of baptism of the Holy Spirit as follows: when a human repent of sin, s/he is forgiven and turns away from sin but the sinful nature of Adam's depravity is still there. Like repentance it means coming to Christ the second time seeking a clean heart. The Holy Spirit comes to the individual, drives out all our sins and sanctifies our heart (Cook 1930 July-Vol. III, 28).

4.3.5. Speaking in Tongues

In his view speaking in tongues is a sign of baptism by the Holy Spirit. It could also mean to be freed from demon possession. Speaking in tongues are considered to be a return to the Pentecostal age. There are two functions of speaking in tongues, namely (a) as one of the gifts of the Spirit, and (b) as an initial sign of the baptism of the Spirit. There is also the public speaking in tongues which needs interpretation (I. Corinthians 14:27) and the personal speaking in tongues which is prayer and praise too deep for words in one's own tongue (Romans 8:26).

He described it as the reverent conversation between the Holy Spirit and the person. Without the 'nine' gifts of the Holy Spirit and God's indwelling a person is not able to speak in tongues (Cook. 1929, August Vol.III: 20). The person who speaks in tongues is speaking to God. It creates an atmosphere of true worship.

4.3.6. Eschatology

The eschatological element is dominant in his preaching which includes the last judgment, the resurrection, the Parousia and the millennium (Cook 1929 Oct.,

Vol.III: 42). He gives the eschatological signs especially with regard to the second coming which is always referred to as 'near' (I Thessalonians 4:16-18). He is rejecting the doctrine of Universalism. In his understanding Universalism means salvation of all people. But he firmly believed that the sanctified people only enter into heaven. The resurrection more often includes in his preaching the Parousia, which to him is imminent. He often preached the rapture of the bride. The 'great tribulation' will come and the 'dead in Christ' shall rise first and will meet the living saints in the air and be carried to the 'Marriage Supper'. Then Christ's Millennial Reign (1000 years) will start on earth together with the saints. After this will follow the final judgment and the new heaven and new earth will be established.

It is this optimistic view of the Christian's destiny that leads to conversion and mission work. Much is made of today's world conditions, socially and politically, as 'signs of the times'. He continuously states that the Anti-Christ is already at work. "Therefore we must preach the gospel and convert people into Christianity" (Cook. 1929 Oct., Vol. III: 43).

4.3.7. Heaven

Heaven is also described as a place where "the blood washed born again children of God go; those who have received salvation through Jesus Christ; those who serve the Lord go to heaven; the faithful ones who believe in the true living God, whose names are written in the Book; sinners saved by grace" (Cook. 1929, July-Vol. II: 211). In his view the only Christians go to heaven, those who are saved by the blood of Jesus Christ they are the Christians. Therefore in his view Christian only goes to heaven. He explains that "the persons washed by the blood of the lamb; and the ones born again, those dead in Christ, also people who accept Jesus' death on the cross for them, those cleansed in the blood of Jesus, i.e. good people" all go to heaven (Samuelkuty 2000: 69).

He explains that heaven is a place for rest. After his wife's death he wrote a song about heaven and death:

“At last, at last, all her struggles are past;
Her ship that was tossed by storms and the tempest
Has reached the fair heaven at last.
Her battles are over; her warfare’s ended;
She has conquered through Jesus at last.
At last, on at last all toiling is past,
Sweet rest has come; the strife is over;
She is beholding His glory at last.
Some day, yes, and some day we’ll be taken away;
The trumpet shall sound; the last foe conquered
And a glorious crown will our labor repay” (Cook. 1955: 46).

Through his song we can understand his idea and teachings about heaven. Heaven is a place for rest, those who are saved by the blood of Jesus Christ.

4.3.8. Hell

Robert F. Cook’s opinion about hell is that it is a place of suffering of torment, a lake of fire; a place prepared for the devil and his angels, a place of everlasting punishment where a sinner is chastised, where the devil will eventually land. It is a place of utter darkness. This view he interpreted from the New Testament.

He says that those who are sinners, un-believers, the wicked people who rejected God, those who have not received salvation for their souls through Jesus Christ; they will go to hell. For this he had taken one example from the Bible Luke 16:19-21. Through these verses he explains that it is clear that hell is a definite place, not simply a state or condition but the fire and brimstone are literal. There is no second chance for those whose names are not written in the Book of Life. They are cast into the lake of fire that God prepared for the devil and his followers.

4.4. Summary

Robert F. Cook’s theological views are very much related to the Pentecostal teachings. Therefore he was a main stream Pentecostal follower. Through his theological view he imposed the Pentecostal teachings to his followers. His

salvation concept was that there is no salvation outside the church. This teaching is very complicated especially in the Indian context. India is a secular democratic country. His theological views lead him to establish many churches among the Dalit people. His theological views reflected in his ministry. The following section explains about his mission methods.

CHAPTER FIVE

MISSION METHODS OF ROBERT F. COOK

5.1. Introduction

The mission methods of Robert F. Cook were the source of inspiration for the growth of Dalit Pentecostal Churches among the Dalits. He adopted different kinds of mission methods among the Dalits. Some of his methods were adopted from the other churches and others were new methods in his ministry such as Conventions, Preaching, Healing, Dialogue, and Inculturation. Through these methods he propagated the gospel of Christ. These methods resulted in the conversion of Dalit people. In his time these methods were very helpful for his ministry because through them he propagated the Christian message in a new way. His long-term goal was to establish an indigenous Church. Therefore he adopted Indian culture in his ministry. He appointed local people as the pastors of these indigenous churches.

Robert F. Cook's mission methods mainly focused on church planting. Robert F. Cook's deepest interest was the biblical priority that he describes as 'the center' of his mission works. The center was the proclamation of the gospel, the gathering of converts into Pentecostal churches, the multiplying of new congregations in short, the extension of the Christian movement by all available means. In his theological view about church and mission in constant and dynamic interaction.

His main mission method was conventions. In conventions he included Preaching and Healing. Other two mission methods were not developed in his time. Dialogue and Inculturation models developed in latter time. But he used these two methods also. Conventions mean open-air meetings. He conducted these meetings in the evenings because in day the time most of the people were working in fields. Through these conventions he attracted many people. These were new experience for these people. This chapter explains his mission methodologies.

5.2. Conventions

Robert F. Cook used conventions as the best method for the propagation of the gospel. Therefore he conducted many conventions, in different parts of the Kerala. He used revival conventions as one of the most effective means of evangelisation. These conventions attracted Christians from other denominations and people from all walks of life, especially Dalits in Kerala.

The very first revival convention meeting was held in 1914 at Adur (Saju 1994: 34). In this convention many Dalits came and heard his preaching. His messages have played a vital role in these conventions. He preached in English and it was translated into Malayalam (local language). Thereafter he learned the local language and preached in the local language, attracting many people. His preaching mainly concentrated on salvation and the Kingdom of God. In his first convention, there were about 200 adherents attended and 31 converts were given immersion baptism (Cook 1955: 41). Most of these people came from the lower strata of the society. Followed by this he conducted many conventions in different parts of South Kerala.

Music and singing, being a lively expression of these conventions, also played an important role in this method of evangelization. There were no musical instruments but the congregation clapped their hands and enjoyed the worship. The actual music ranged from the steady hymns of the translation of the English songs and other devotional Christian Malayalam Songs (Cook 1955: 38). There was great enthusiasm in the congregational singing and the numerous choir renditions were the evidence of the joy and ecstasy of these revival services. These songs attracted many people to the revival conventions.

In Indian culture these revival conventions were unknown. There were some other kinds of religious conventions such as Hindu religious conventions. In these conventions one *Guru* (Teacher/Preacher) will give *Bhakti* (Devotional) message (Gopalakrishnan 2002, Feb 11). Likewise Robert F. Cook also conducted revival meetings. But his revival gatherings were very different from Hindu religious

convention. He introduced revival Christian songs, preaching, healing, and miracle ministry.

His main aim in these meeting was to convert people into Christianity and establish Churches. (Cook.1926 Nov, Vol. III: 77). The preaching of Robert F. Cook attracted mainly Dalit people. Through his conventions he made many converts from the Dalit community. They were attracted by this method of Conventions. Some of these converts became Dalit Pentecostal leaders in course of time.

His conventions were mainly conducted in village areas because most of the low-caste people live in rural areas. In different parts of villages he conducted his campaigns, ultimately they brought many more participants. The revival convention was very new to the local people and was an adaptation from the Hindu conventions. Through these conventions he gave the salvation message to the local people. But he never preached against social evils among this community.

Through this method he established many churches among the Dalit community. He adopted revival conventions as the new method to approach non-Christians especially among the Dalit community. To some extend he succeeded through his method.

5.2.1. Preaching

Robert F. Cook's genuine love for preaching was very remarkable in his ministry. He was always ready to preach whenever possible. He preached in revival conventions, in Church congregation and in open-air meetings. His preaching was very impressive, and large number of people gathered whenever it was known that he was to preach.

We may get a picture of the preacher if we analyse the features of his preaching. His subject matter was thoroughly Biblical. An Evangelical of the Evangelicals, he kept close to the central doctrines and the great roots of the Christian Faith. So far as we can learn he was not one of those who won faith out of doubt. His study of

the Bible and his spiritual experience gave him a full assurance of the truth of Christianity.

His preaching was simple, direct and very plain. He never preached about controversial issues. He was most powerful and original in the Pentecostal belief. The texts were short and very practical, and he was free from mannerisms and a pulpit tone. He had his own method. He never bothered about hermeneutics. The power of his sermons was largely in his unique personality. The audience will remember his sermons in any time. Neither was the effect of his preaching confined to any particular class of people. He reached all classes, all conditions, for he preached the pure Gospel of our Lord. And thus to the unlettered natives his message was as acceptable and as helpful to all kinds of people, especially the lower caste people.

Most of the preaching was contextualized and invariably he made wide use of illustrative proverbs, local stories and others quotations, which were well known to the audience. A persuasive and often humorous sermon by Robert F. Cook never failed to attract a large crowd (Philip 1992: 35). In his sermons he preached about satanic power and Christian freedom. He gave much importance for Christian freedom, because most of his audience came from Dalit communities.

Robert F. Cook was a man who loved preaching. Through his preaching he proclaimed the Pentecostal teachings. Therefore he adopted the emotional messages. He especially stressed conversion of the people from other religions. He selected some passages from the Bible for his emotional messages such as Acts.1: 8.

5.2.2. Healing and Miracles

In his ministry he used healing and miracles to reach the people. He gave much importance to these ministries. Most of his converts believed that ill health is due to a sinful deed and thus self-inflicted. The wrath of the deities is called down upon such a sinful through illness (Philip 1992: 124). Robert F. Cook also gave

importance to "*Karma Marga*" (way of deeds). He related sickness and sin. He proclaimed sin as the cause of sickness. He therefore emphasized, salvation from sin for healing. When the healing process takes place in a congregation one often hears "you have sinned; sin no more". Getting free from sin is a precondition for healing (Cook 1955: 50).

Healing attracts many Dalit people to the Pentecostalism. Robert F. Cook's greatest task was the destruction of sin and to demonstrate the power of the Gospel message to heal both in body and soul. He concentrated on healing as the evidence of the presence of the Person and work of the Holy Spirit. His doctrine and practice of healing and miracles must be seen in the relationship to the Pentecostal understanding of Scripture. The Pentecostal understanding of healing is based on James: 5:14-16. He emphasized the words spoken by Jesus in Mark 16:17 "And these signs shall follow them that believe in my name shall they cast out devils" (Cook 1955: 50). Healing is practiced in the Pentecostal Churches with much emphasis than in the established Churches. In his ministry healing was prominent and he regularly had campaigns for conversions and healing.

A large percentage of Dalit peoples performed "*Kavady*" (Hindu way of worshipping) ceremony for their healing but failed to receive any relief from their sickness. But these people came for healing in Cook's healing ministry; through his prayer they got relief from their sickness. Such healing influenced whole families to accept membership of the Pentecostal Churches. We can therefore say that through healing ministry Robert F. Cook opened new doors for evangelisation (Cook 1955: 50).

Diseases of body and spirit are healed simultaneously i.e. faith healing includes physical and psychological healing. Psychic problems are usually described as demon-possession. Robert F. Cook prayed for these kinds of diseases. His Church members were taught to see God's hand in every little thing happening to their lives. The healing service keeps the spiritual thermometer of the congregation on the level of expectation and assurance so that his Church meets their physical and spiritual needs.

He used different kind of methods in his healing service. The sick persons were anointed with oil, a drop on the head, and hands are laid upon the sick persons according to James 5:16 (Philip 1992: 134). He used fasting prayers for fasting plays an important role in the life of the healer. Sometimes a mass prayer is said for all the sick in the Church. He specialized in the casting out of demons. Most of the clan leaders were priests in their temple. If a clan leader accepted Christianity, then all his followers accepted Christianity (Philip 1992: 33). He conducted healing and miracle ministry among these people.

Through the healing and miracle ministries he started many Churches among the Dalit community. Demon possession affected the whole being of a person and was one of the most deeply feared phenomena among the Dalits. Relief from demon-possession was one of the main reasons for being attracted to Robert F. Cook's ministry. Therefore his healing ministry attracted many of the Dalits.

In his ministry he worked among the clan leaders. Through that he converted a large group of people. But this was not personal conversion. Because in group conversion many of the people following their clan leaders. Some times they don't have real confession for their sins. Through healing and miracles he converted many people and established churches among them.

5.3. Dialogue

Robert F. Cook took dialogue as a part of the Church's evangelising mission. Understood as a method and means of mutual knowledge and enrichment, dialogue was not in opposition to the mission '*ad gentes*'. In his ministry dialogue was addressed to those who did not know Christ and his Gospel, and who belonged to the other religions (Philip 1992: 35). In Christ, God calls all peoples to himself and he wished to share with them the fullness of his revelation and love. In his dialogue there was no conflict between proclaiming Christ and engaging in inter religious dialogue (Philip 1992: 80).

His dialogue does not originate from tactical concerns, but is an activity with its own guiding principles, requirements and dignity. He never condemned other religious beliefs. But he acknowledged that salvation comes only through Christ and the working of the Spirit. His dialogues led to inner purification and conversion to Christianity, especially in the Pentecostal Churches. In his view dialogue was the way of bearing sincere witness to Christ and offering generous service to others. Through dialogue, he seeks to uncover the seeds of the word, a ray of that truth which enlightens all human beings (Cook 1930 April, Vol. III: 210).

Through this method he got some converts from other religion, especially among the Dalit community. They are Panikan Polus, Paulos, A. K. Varghese, and K. C. Oommen (Saju 1994:45). These engaged in dialogue with willingness to understand those of the other party without pretence or closed mindness. Therefore these people accepted Christianity. In Robert F. Cook view dialogue is the best way to communicate Gospel with educated people (Saju 1994: 45). He believes that dialogue will leads to inner purification and conversion that, if pursued with docility to the Holy Spirit, will be spiritually fruitful.

He used dialogue as the way of presenting the gospel to other religions. He invited religious gurus (teachers) for dialogue. After that dialogue most of the people converted to Christianity because his main aim was conversion of these people. In the present Indian context this kind of dialogue is not applicable. Because the Hindu religious people opposing the conversion of the people to Christianity.

5.4. Inculturation

Robert F. Cook adopted inculturation as the best method for evangelisation among the non-Christian people. In India, they have different cultures and customs. Most of the Indians respect their own culture. Before beginning his work he studied the Dalit culture. For that he stayed among the Dalits in Kerala. Through his studies he came to understand that without respecting these culture he couldn't do the missionary work among the Dalit people.

He carried mission work among the Dalits as encounters between different cultures and became involved in the process of Inculturation. The need for such involvement has marked through his mission work. The process of the Church's insertion into people's culture is a lengthy one. The inculturation is not a matter of purely external adaptation, for inculturation, "means the intimate transformation of authentic cultural values through their integration in Christianity and the insertion of Christianity in the various human cultures" (Burrows 1993: 32). The process is thus a profound and all-embracing one, which involves the Christian message also the Church's reflection and practice.

Through the inculturation model Robert F. Cook makes the Gospel incarnate in different cultures and at the same time introduces peoples, together with their cultures. He tried to transmit the Christian-message into their culture. He used inculturation as more effective instrument of mission. He learns the local language and he was very familiar with the most important expressions of the local culture. He never tried to impose his own culture among these people, but he tried to understand and appreciate the local culture and adopted local culture in his ministry. Therefore he was able to express the Christian message in an original way and forms that were consonant with their own cultural traditions.

In his view inculturation means the honest and serious attempt to make Christ and his message of salvation evermore understood by people in their culture, locality and time. It means the reformulation of Christian life and doctrine into the very thought-patterns of each people. Therefore he adopted many practices from the local people. For his ministry firstly he learns the local language with the help of local educated people (Philip 1992: 65). He knew that Inculturation must be based on a deep understanding of Christianity and the local cultures.

Through the inculturation approach Robert F. Cook's main motivation was to establish Pentecostal Churches among the local Dalit peoples. Firstly he adopted Hindu worship model in his worship service. In Hindu worship they start with body language of worship, the most common postures are standing and, more frequently,

sitting cross-legged on the floor, kneeling is not typical of Hindu worship and, chairs are not generally used. (Jackson 1988: 106). Robert F. Cook adopted the same method for his churches. He and his believers sat only on the floor and in the cross-legged position. He never used chairs for worship services. Therefore most of the low cast peoples also attracted his worship services.

In Hindu worship they included the hymns of praise. The Vedic hymns contain praise and prayer addressed to some specific god or gods and inspired by the devotion of the god-seeker and god-lover (Dhavamony 1982: 190). These hymns are divine praises and included spiritual teachings to three 'margas' (ways) of salvation (mukti). Robert F. Cook adopted the same tune for Christian songs. In his worship services he gave importance to praise and worship (Philip 1992: 59). Through these worship services many Hindu peoples attracted to his ministry. He gave freedom for the emotional and ecstatic worship.

He used inculturation as another way of presenting gospel into their culture. Therefore he adopted many culture from the local people. In his time this terminology is not developed in the theological field. Through inculturation he changed the Christian way of worship especially in Pentecostal Churches. In this time also they are using the same method.

5.5. Summary

Robert F. Cook was the man who loved the evangelistic work. From 1913 onwards the pioneering missionary Robert F. Cook started his work in Kerala. His main concentration was the Dalit Christians and it was they who responded to Pentecostalism. Dalits accepted Pentecostalism because of his missionary works. For reaching the non-Christians he adopted many mission methods. These methods were very helpful for him. His theological views and mission methods were the two sides of the same coin. But his theological views and mission methods limited within the Pentecostal understanding. He never compromises with other Christian traditions.

Through his mission methods he propagated the gospel of Christ to non-Christians. His mission methods helped him to establish Pentecostal Churches among the Dalits. He was the first missionary to work among the Dalits. Therefore he got good respect from these peoples. The origin and development of the Pentecostal churches started through him only. The following chapter deals about the origin and development of the Pentecostal churches among the Dalits.

CHAPTER SIX

THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE PENTECOSTAL CHURCHES AMONG THE DALITS IN KERALA

6.1. Introduction

The Modern Dalit movement began with what Christian Missionaries called the “mass movements”. These were local and grass root level, conversion movements, initiated and led by Dalits. While in some parts of India there were Dalits who chose to become Muslims or Sikhs, a vast majority of Dalits converted to Christianity through out the country (Webster 1993:33). In southern Kerala the mass movement occurred among the Dalits because of foreign missionaries. Different missionary societies, like London Missionary Society and Church Missionary Society, worked among the Dalits.

From the very beginning the Pentecostal Church in central Kerala attracted members from the Dalit communities. It was from the time of Robert F. Cook (1914), that Pentecostalism attracted Dalits (Samuelkutty 2000: 61). In this chapter I will explain the origin and development of the Pentecostal Churches among the Dalits in Kerala.

6.2. Mission Work among the Dalits

In 1914 Robert F. Cook started mission work among the Dalits. Through the ministry of the Brethren missionaries in Kumbanad and other parts of central Kerala many Dalits were attracted to the Brethren Church. It was in this context that Pentecostal missionaries began to work in central Kerala from Cook’s time (Samuelkutty 2000: 61). From 1914 to 1922 Robert F. Cook was not residing permanently in Travancore but paying occasional visits from Bangalore, yet his first converts were from Dalit communities and Churches, which included, Thuvayur, Adoor, Chaliakkara, Sooranadu. Cook himself confirmed that from 1914 onwards his work was among the Dalits (Cook 1955: 56). It was in 1921 that he began to stay and work permanently in the Central Kerala.

Cook's ministry in central Kerala began by the invitation of a young Dalit, who came to visit A. K. Varghese, the translator of Cook. This opened the door for the continuous ministry and establishing Churches. At Kumbanand, where he started first, the ministry was successful because he had the co-operation of a Dalit leader Vellikara Mathai, who later took the name Chothi. It was through his efforts that Cook was able to preach to hundreds of Dalits and get them converted to his Church. Thus Pentecostalism took root among the Dalits and spread to many places like Ezhumattoor, Perumpatti, Rannni and many other Dalit pockets in central Kerala. Thus in central Travancore Pentecostalism appeared as the "*Margam*" (way) of the Dalits because in central Travancore only Dalits got enrolled in Pentecostalism in the beginning (Saju 1994: 48-49).

Missionaries who worked in central Kerala were encouraged by the response of the lower caste gave to their new form of Christianity. Thus Brethren and Pentecostal missionaries started to work among the Dalits and other disadvantaged class communities. Though in the initial stage the Brethren fellowships welcomed Pentecostal missionaries to preach among them, soon found that their emphasis on the Baptism of the Holy Spirit is different from the Brethren understanding and turned to be antagonistic toward the Pentecostal missionaries (Samuelkutty 2000: 62).

Missionaries like Cook were ready to suffer any hardship for the spread of Pentecostalism since they knew the far-reaching results. About the meeting at Vellikara in 1922, he says, "I was busy dealing with inquirers, answering all kinds of questions which lasted from morning till evening so that I had not even time to eat or rest" (Cook 1955: 103). Chacko, a Dalit pastor of that generation looks back to Pentecostal history and says it was Cook who first took the initiative and struggled to proclaim the message of Pentecostalism to the Dalits which liberated them from the lethargy of nominal Christianity (Samuelkutty 2000: 63).

From 1923 onwards leaders like K. E. Abraham and A. C. Mathai also spread the message of Pentecostalism among the Dalits. Abraham had worked among the

Dalits of his native village at Mulakuzha, which resulted in winning many members from the Dalit communities (Abraham 1983: 74). For the Dalits this was an occasion to come up and rank with the Syrian Christians, and thus protest against the other denominations where the Syrian Christians dominated and the Dalits were discriminated on the basis of caste. K. E. Abraham and his followers worked in place like Chethakkal, Kanakappalam, Erumeli, and Valiyakavu to establish churches among the Dalits in the mid-twenties. But these churches established by Abraham later stood with Cook, because of caste discrimination from the high class Christians.

The Dalits decided to stick to the missionaries rather than with upper caste native Christians. By 1930 onwards most of the Dalit Churches had come into the fold of Cook. Abraham in his autobiography mentioned few Dalit leaders who worked with Cook from the earlier period to spread Pentecostal message. These Pentecostal leaders had greatly contributed in establishing Dalit Churches and led many prominent members like K. J. John and P. N. Zakariah who in turn became leaders of the Church.

It seems that the Pentecostal historians deliberately ignored Dalit pioneers with the intention to give an upper caste colour to Pentecostalism. Another difficulty to find out the role of the Dalits leaders is that in many descriptions their names are mentioned without any reference to their background makes it very difficult to distinguish them from the upper caste. This may be a deliberate device by the upper castes to avoid thinking of Pentecostalism in connection with the Dalits. When upper caste Christians began to flow into the Pentecostal Churches the Syrian Christian leaders wanted to avoid close affinity with the Dalits particularly in Abraham's Church.

Abraham's words illustrate this when he says "there were many Churches of Cook in many parts of Central Travancore but they were mainly among the backward classes" (Abraham 1983: 143). These words of Abraham give the impressions that he did not like Pentecostalism to be identified as a Dalit movement.

The Dalits flow into the Pentecostal Church from 1930 was mainly in Cook's Church since Abraham and others primarily concentrated among the upper caste. A prominent evangelist of the upper caste lamented that when Abraham deserted Cook; his Church became a Dalit Church (Abraham 1996: 70). But Cook did not deviate from his earlier plan to work among the Dalits. One of the Pentecostal pastors commented that Cook's main intention was not to evangelise the Syrians but the depressed class people. This was the reason why the majority of his church members were from the Dalit communities. When Cook joined the Church of God in 1936, around forty-three of his Churches were Dalit Churches. This explains the intention of Cook to work among the Dalits even after he had received many Syrian Christians with him (Samuelkutty 2000: 65). This continued till Cook retired and returned to the United States in 1950. It was in 1949 that Cook registered his organisation. Abraham affirmed that the Dalits got representation in church council that included M. M. John and P. C. Samuel (Samuelkutty 2000: 65). This shows that until that time they had an adequate treatment and representation. The reason could be that Cook posed himself as the supreme leader of his denomination in central Kerala and nobody was allowed or dared to challenge the decisions taken by Cook.

The available sources reveal that the flow of Dalits as it was to Cook's Church was not evident in the other Pentecostal Churches. The reason could be that the leaders were not identified and mingled with the Dalits. However they did not completely stop working among the Dalits. The Dalit pastors, who stood with Pastor Abraham or those, came afterwards through the ministry of both the Dalits and the Syrians (Syrians are the high-class Christian communities in Kerala), worked among the Dalits and a number of Dalit Churches were added to Abraham's Church.

In the early years there was no set qualification for a person to become an evangelist or Pastor in the Pentecostal Churches. This gave enough opportunity for the Dalits to engage in active evangelistic works along with the upper caste Pentecostals. The experience of equality, sharing of power and authority in the new Church along with Syrian Pentecostals in the earlier period attracted them in large numbers to Pentecostalism. In the early years Dalits experienced a very warm

welcome by Syrian Pentecostals. The reason may be that in the earlier days their Churches and family members considered Pentecostals as outcastes and aliens. This segregation motivated them to find friendship and fellowship with the Dalit Pentecostals.

Their main intention in that period was to spread Pentecostalism and they did not consider caste discrimination a serious problem. However towards the end of the first phase it was observed that, the flow of Syrian Christians, and their caste superiority forced them to keep a distance in dealing with the Dalits.

6.3. Major Reasons Behind Dalit's Embrace of Pentecostalism

6.3.1. Socio-Cultural Reasons

The social status of the Dalits in the Pentecostal Churches were the same as their counter parts in the mainline Churches and almost the same as the non-Christian Dalits except in the privilege of education. This was made possible by the efforts of Christian missionaries. General observation of this period reveals that the Dalits in the mainline denominations were not satisfied with their progress. An Anglican missionary observed the common social unrest of the depressed class community as:

“ Whole depressed class community is in a state of ferment being stirred by a new self-consciousness, after centuries of silently borne oppression they are smarting under a sense of social injustice and are crying out for land and liberty. Even the Christians are easily susceptible to new movements under popular leaders who outline plausible schemes for rapid progress... Ignorance and social discontent abroad feed restless independence a spirit of murmuring (CMS reports and Lists 1923: 51).”

The Anglican missionary reports lead us to think that this growing sensitiveness or unrest was because of their deprived condition as untouchables, which was not

dramatically changed since their entrance into Christianity (CMS reports and Lists 1923: 51).

The missionary reports often failed to express the Dalit perspective like the upper caste that failed to understand the Dalit causes of dissatisfaction toward them. Whatever may be the portrait of Pentecostals the conspicuous idea was that there was unrest and dissatisfaction among the Dalits in central Kerala. Dalits embracing of Pentecostalism should be understood only against this context.

According to M. M. Thomas, Dalits accepted Christianity as a search to find their true humanity and Christianity promised them the humanisation inherent in the Gospel of salvation, which the exodus of the oppressed to the Church (Thomas 1980: 180). The quest of the oppressed for an identity was continuing and when they were discriminated they expressed their unrest and protest by changing from one denomination to another. The migration to other forms of Christianity was reflecting in their continuing desire for social equality and dignity, which the gospel promised them.

The period in which the Dalits accepted Pentecostalism was also a period of social awakening outside the Church. In making the people aware of their social rights Ayyankali (Dalit leader) played an important role. His work among the Dalits in the early years of the twentieth century created an aspiration among his people to think of their dignity and progress to an upward mobility. Ayyankali's work was within the structure of the Hindu religion and to check the flow to Christianity, but it produced a social context for the Dalits to look for better opportunities for their progress in all the dimensions of life (Saju 1994: 50). The Dalits came to Christianity hoping that Christianity will be a means to remove their social disabilities and gain equality and dignity among other Christians (Oommen 1993: 178).

After a few decades of experience in Christianity the Dalits realised that they were not equal but inferior and the attitude towards them were discriminative. As Oommen observes the Dalits discontent with the dominant oppressive system in

the Syrian Church encouraged the Dalits to join other Churches. It can also be applicable to the Pentecostal Churches that gained a large number of members from the Anglican Church. Missionaries viewed these actions as Dalits disaffection, rebellion against authority, insubordination and disobedience to authority. Dalits in the Anglican Church understood that caste feeling within the Church was not declining but increasing (Oommen 1993: 224).

This discriminative social context forced them to look for another option. As we look further at the ecclesiastical context, it will be very clear that the Dalits left their former Churches in realisation that their search of a full humanity offered by the gospel did not materialise in the older Churches.

6.3.2. Ecclesiastical Reasons

The mainline Churches such as the Anglican, the Marthoma and the Orthodox Churches in central Kerala kept caste restrictions and separation since the nineteenth century. The caste consciousness of the Syrians, affected their relationship with the Dalits and untouchability was practised in many places. This is evident in the formation of separate congregations for the Dalits (Oommen 1993:187). The missionaries who worked in central Travancore were frustrated by such attitude of the Christians. Oommen quotes J. M. Speechly, "Our missionaries have had to contend with caste... should any slaves embrace Christianity around us, I might experience difficulties in admitting them to public worship" (Oommen 1993:190). These words express the frustration and failure in curbing caste system within the Church. Even Christian Dalits were addressed as Chacko Pulayan and Martha Pulayi or by any other caste name (Koshy 1985: 39).

While this was true in the existing Christian communities in Kerala, the Dalits in the Pentecostal Churches were addressed as "Brother" or "Sister" affixed to their name. It was in this context that Pentecostalism has come to the people as a people's Church or as a people's movement for the liberation of the Dalits from the caste system and the hierarchy, which was also fully controlled by the caste people.

Another area of discrimination the Dalit Christians faced was in the occasions of social meals. The social gathering and eating together in such occasions were very important and had deep social meaning in binding the people together in oneness and solidarity with each other. The alienation of Dalits was also very much evident in the social intercourse especially in social meals. The upper caste Christians and even the teachers and preachers abstained from meals with converts from the Dalit communities (Oommen 1993: 197). It is then observed that the hopes of Dalit Christians for integration as equals were foiled and they were disappointed being in the Christian Church.

Though the mass movements brought the Dalits into Christian Churches in response to their uncompromising opposition to caste and other social disabilities, they soon realised that being in the mainline Churches they would not be considered equals. The 'other Churches' also included the Pentecostals, though he has not mentioned it.

How did the dominant Pentecostals act towards the Dalit Christians? How did the missionary's leaders and Pastors act toward these social evils? These are important and valid questions, which need elaborate explanation. However, it is appropriate to conclude that Pentecostals in the early decades admitted any one from any caste, colour, and creed, and from any kind of socio-economic backgrounds. As Koshy states, "the Pentecostal-Syrians and other have no problem to inter-dine with their Dalit brethren" (Koshy 1985: 40), since they found oneness in Christ. Dalits who were despised by the hegemony of casteism felt more accepted in Pentecostal churches and desired to move into Pentecostal Churches.

6.4. Characteristics and structure of the early Pentecostal Church in Kerala

6.4.1. Characteristics

The Pentecostal movement served as a source and means to solve deep personal and social problems. Pentecostalism served as a new religious movement for the Dalits to reorient and reconstitute their life against the current tendencies of the society.

6.4.1.1. Spirit Baptism

The marked difference of the Pentecostal movement from the established Churches was the experience and emphasis on the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, Spirit baptism had given acceptance to Dalits who were discriminated and stamped ceremonially unclean due to his/her caste. Dalits were discriminated because of their socio-economic background, had now felt a divine acceptance and shared the same experience like Syrians. This experience gave them a claim that they were one step ahead in the spiritual horizon than the 'nominal Christians'; a name Pentecostals gave the non-Pentecostals.

The initial evidence of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues or glossolalia, functions to create a sense of superiority and divine acceptance of their life before God (Samuelkutty, 200: 88). Dalits, who were unable to express freely in the worship service in the traditional mainline Churches, have felt liberated through the baptism in the Spirit and by exercising glossolalia. This public speaking of glossolalia in the usual worship services enabled them to articulate however illiterate and unlearned they were. In the small house churches the glossolalia provided the Dalits an opportunity to express freely and thus this experience served as a liberating force (Samuelkutty 2000: 88).

The people who were neglected and subjected to socio-economic degradation and backwardness in caste began to be heard by the new claim of baptism in the Holy Spirit and the subsequent gifts they received. Abraham also points out that Syrians invited Dalit Pentecostals who had the gift of healing to pray for their sick (Abraham 1983:145). This shows that after the Pentecostal experience of Spirit baptism the Dalits began to be heard and accepted not only among themselves but among the Syrians too. It seems right to conclude that such welcome and opportunities to express their spiritual authority lured the Dalits to the Pentecostal Church.

“To a rational, scientific mind the experience of Dalit Pentecostals, speaking in tongues incidents in answer to prayer could appear to be remnants of primitive religion. But for a person seeking religious answers to his/her psycho-social, economic and religious problems, this would turn to be an authenticating experience assuring him/her of the acceptance as person who was so far discarded by the society and religious bodies” (Isaac 1999: 103).

The experience of Spirit-baptism of Pentecostals had enabled the Dalits to experience God as a reality in their life situations. Christianity had now become meaningful and Pentecostalism became a most experienced branch of Christianity to the Dalits who were once on the periphery of Christianity. Pentecostalism had brought them to be people of authenticity and power who were heard and accepted.

6.4.1.2. Spirit filled Worship

Another characteristic of the Pentecostal Movement was its emphasis on free and spontaneous worship. The Spirit baptism brought tremendous changes in the worship and they claimed to have restored the worship in truth and Spirit experienced by the early Christians. The change that has been brought into the Pentecostal Churches by the experience of Baptism in the Holy Spirit was not encouraged or experienced in the former Churches where the Dalits were once members. Isaac narrates the nature of Pentecostal worship as:

“The worship service in the early Pentecostal Churches were distinct, that the worship service were filled with rhythmic singing, clapping, body movements, and shouts of praises, hallelujahs, singing in tongues, spontaneous prayer, prayer for the divine healing, exhortation from scriptures, intercession for the needs of every individual members of the congregation and powerful preaching from the Bible” (Isaac 1999: 103).

The worship service may seem disorderly but for Pentecostals it was in a mood of festivity and celebration that every member participated in the service and anticipated for the next meeting. This worship service gave the Dalits liberty to express freely since the order and structure was simple that it did not exclude anybody in the congregation. While discussing, about the participation of Dalits in the mainline Churches in Kerala, Koshy observed that the Dalits in the Pentecostal Churches had greater opportunity for self-expression than in the established Churches (Koshy, 1985: 25). This kind of spirituality was lacking in the mainline Churches. What is lost in the traditional Churches is gained in the Pentecostal Churches. This worship had brought practical difference in the lives of the Dalits that kept a distance as far as the religious and social relationships are concerned.

6.4.1.3. Close Knit Fellowship

The Church provided a close-knit fellowship that attracted Dalits to the Pentecostal Churches. In fact the close fellowship among the Pentecostals is not a new thing in itself but it could be perceived as a development after the revival among the Christians in central Kerala especially by the emergence of the Separatists and Brethren. They had developed a close relationship and expressed a warm brotherly love and affection among their members.

Pentecostals through their aggressive evangelism among the Syrians and the Dalits popularised this gospel of social sharing, and concern for their members. The Spirit baptism and speaking in tongues created a sense of group belonging. Pentecostalism provided a group identity and solidarity with each other. Dalits who became members of Pentecostal Church were woven into the fellowship and became one community with their Syrian Christian counterparts in each congregation.

Pentecostal Churches in the earlier decades served as an extended family. This was not the same in the established Churches of which M. M. Thomas observed rightly that, "while the Syrians have brought education and the gospel to scheduled castes in the last hundred years and have converted many of them to Church but they have

not been able to make adjustments in family and social structure to integrate the converted backward people in their society” (Thomas 1960: 37).

It was in this context of segregation that Dalits found Pentecostalism as an option to try for their religious and social integration with upper caste Christians and as a means to uplift them. The warm and sincere fellowships they received in Pentecostal Church kept them there, though it did not have any organised institutional structure.

6.4.1.4. Pastoral Care

In the Pentecostal tradition, every individual is important. Every individual person is understood as the object of God’s love and salvation. Pentecostal pastors tried to give individual pastoral care in the beginning as part of providing intimate fellowship in Pentecostalism. Pastoral care is provided not only by the pastor, but the whole congregation functions as an extended family to its members.

Mathew portrays the familiar function of the Pentecostal Church in relation to the concern they had toward individual. He says, the Pentecostals acted as an extended family, when a member of a congregation fell sick most of its members functioned as a supportive community extending all different means of care like frequent visits, prayers, financial support (Samuel 1999: 105).

These were the features of the Pentecostal Churches that attracted the Dalits and also to remain in Pentecostalism. This reveals the fact that in Pentecostal Churches every individual was important and considered as God’s object of love.

6.5. The Dissident Dalit Leaders and their Contribution

6.5.1. Vellikara Chothi and his influence

The contribution provided by dissident Dalit leaders like Poikayil Yohannan and Vellikara Chothi are important since they stirred up the Dalits in accepting another form of Christianity different from the mainline denominations. As it was

mentioned earlier that it was Robert F. Cook who first brought Pentecostalism to the Dalits in central Kerala. The opening among the Dalits was made possible by the efforts of Vellikara Mathai who belonged to the Anglican Church. When Cook met him in 1922 he was not interested in Christianity but was working for the amelioration of his own people. Cook writes about Mathai as a backslider and that he changed his name to Choti, in order to secure a seat in the *Srimulam* popular assembly (Cook 1955: 99-100).

He questioned the sincerity of the missionaries and the natives who were not true friends of the Dalits. However when Chothi met Cook while he was on his way to Trivandrum for treatment, he requested Cook's prayer. Returned from the hospital Chothi again visited the missionary and explained that he was not healed. This time Cook prayed for him. We have no other sources of information available to us about the result of the prayer other than Cook's writings. Cook in his own writing narrates the incident as:

"A few days later he returned, telling me that he had been examined by the doctor and advised to undergo an operation. He came away because he feared the knife. I here had a good opportunity to point him to Jesus the Great Physician, and I advised him to return to the Lord as a prodigal son. He very soon confessed his sins, calling upon the name of the Lord. I then anointed him with oil and prayed. Praise the Lord; he was instantaneously healed" (Cook 1955: 100).

After this incident Cook had an invitation to preach to the followers of Chothi at Kumbanad. Cook accepted the invitation as he says, "with much joy, and my longing desire was at last realised, i.e., to preach among the untouchables" (Cook 1955: 100). Cook had good result and these meetings at Vellikara and Kumbanad gave the opportunity to spread Pentecostalism at Kumbanad and other parts of central Kerala. It is important to note that Chothi who enthusiastically invited Cook to preach to his people did not turn to be a Pentecostal.

Sources are lacking to arrive at any conclusion on the reason why Chothi did not become a Pentecostal. It can be assumed that Chothi who became a socio-political leader might have seen the danger of losing his reputation had he become a member of the Pentecostal Church. However Cook mentions him as 'marvellously' used by God in building contact with the Dalits and giving freedom to his followers to embrace Pentecostalism, which then appeared as a *Margam* (way) of Dalits (Cook 1955: 98).

There is a possibility to infer that Chothi who had an earlier acquaintance with the missionaries observed a different approach in Cook's work and in his identification with the Dalits. The charismatic gift of healing which Chothi himself experienced in Cook's ministry could have persuaded to allow his followers to try for another option for their spiritual and social improvement.

6.5.2. The Influence of Poikayil Yohannan and Prakthiaksha Raksha Deiva Sabha Movement

Pentecostalism in central Kerala gained access among the Dalits through the inspiration of another Dalit leader Poikayil Yohannan. Cook made inroads into Dalit pockets through the efforts of Yohannan who welcomed him to preach to his people, which resulted in the conversion of a number of Dalits to the Pentecostal Church.

Poikayil Yohannan who was from a slave family of the *Paraya* caste, belonged to the Marthoma Church. He was baptised at the age of five and named as Yohannan where as we read from his biographies that his parents named him earlier as Kumaran (Vijayan 1978: 8). Attracted through the preaching of the missionaries he joined the CMS church and became an evangelist. But he did not stay long with the CMS. The caste prejudice and observance made him uncomfortable and he joined the Brethren Church, which attracted many from the Dalit communities for their radical approach to caste practice, and hierarchical Church structure. Their doctrinal emphasis was mainly on 'new birth' and 'water baptism' by immersion. These attracted many of the revived members from the mainline Churches. Cook

writes about them, “they had quite a success mainly... among the Hindus of the Pulaya and Paraya castes” (Cook 1955: 98). The Dalits who joined the church fully accepted the doctrinal, practical and ethical standards set by the leaders of the Brethren Church.

Yohannan became a chief proponent of this movement. The CMS missionary reports have the early 1910’s and district reports from pastors referred to the charismatic and emotional nature of his preaching and also about the leadership quality of Yohannan (Oommen 1993: 228).

Yohannan’s preaching was mainly centred on the salvation in Jesus Christ, which was the core message of the Brethrens. But Yohannan’s relationship with the Brethren was only short lived and he left the Brethren fellowship. Cook’s words indicate the reason for breaking the relationship with the Brethren. He says, “later there was a split in the Brethren mission; one party from the depressed classes being that led by Pulaya John who made his quarters in Kumbanad, the party grew until there were thousands of adherents” (Cook 1955: 98). This vouches that his separation was due to the caste discrimination.

It is reasonable to admit that in central Travancore there were two groups among the Brethren’s. The names of those parties suggest that there were caste feelings among them.

From these developments it is possible to assume that Yohannan’s severing the Brethren were due to the caste practices, which the Syrians were not able to give up. His experiences in three denominations made him to realise that it was meaningless to remain within the Church that practices caste. Directly challenging the Syrian Christian domination within the main stream Churches in Travancore, Yohannan stated, “it may be for the high castes but is not for you” (Oommen 1993: 243). This explains why Yohannan was led from his own organization or separate Church for the Dalits, which was named later as “*Prathyaksha Raksha Daivasabha* (PRDS – God’s Church of Visible Salvation) (Oommen 1992: 232). He began to

preach the message of the Bible but with a different emphasis, which suit the aspirations of the Dalits.

The impact of this movement in relation to the Pentecostal movement is to be seen from the followers of Yohannan who have accepted Pentecostalism when it was preached to them by Cook and others. It was in 1922 that Cook met Poikayil Yohannan at Kumbanad and he was invited to visit his head quarter at Eraviperoor. Cook comment about, as “Yohannan was an influential man amongst the low castes or untouchables the same was an earnest Christian had 5000 followers in the whole of Travancore. He had been used by God in bringing thousands of people out of heathen darkness to Jesus Christ” (Cook 1955: 120-121).

Here Cook gives a positive comment about Yohannan. One can deduce from the context that both Yohannan and Cook were facing opposition from the mainline Churches, both from Syrian Christians and missionaries, for their new teachings and were branded as sectarians, which could have brought them together. In this context it must be seen that both movements were a revolt against the caste observation and hierarchy in the mainline Churches. It is also possible to think that Cook has not observed Yohannan’s movement as anti-Christian in the early years unlike the Anglican missionaries.

Moreover it seems appropriate to think that Cook who was looking for an opportunity to penetrate into Dalit pockets saw the influence of Yohannan inevitable. This was evident from Cook’s words, referring to the invitation granted to him he wrote that; “I longed for a chance to preach to his people who would gather by the thousands from time to time in Kumbanad” (Cook 1955: 121). From Cook’s words it appears that this was the largest gathering he had among the Dalits. He says, “my heart was overwhelmed when I saw the great mass of people. More than 2000 were present from all over Travancore. A great hush prevailed for three hours as I gave the message from 1 Corinthians 1:18-29; Matthew 11:25” (Cook 1955: 123-24). This speaks of why he had positive opinion of Yohannan that Cook was looking for an opportunity among the Dalits and interested mainly in gaining converts to Pentecostalism.

From Yohannan's part he now knew the kind of ministry and sacrifice Cook made to reach the Dalits and also well aware of the identification Cook had with Dalits. Yohannan could notice that Cook's Pentecostalism was not a threat to his movement, which was making inroads among the Dalits. He perceived that Pentecostalism was making the Dalits powerful enough to articulate the equality in Christ and dignity of individuals by leaving the established Churches.

Yohannan added to Cook's preaching, "...what the Sahib says, we must go back to Pentecost and receive the Holy Spirit" (Cook 1955: 124). Here we could observe a cultural continuity between Pentecostalism and Yohannan's movement, which revived the elements in the traditional Dalit religion.

The meeting at Yohannan's place gave him wider publicity and invitation for his ministry among the Dalits in different parts of central Kerala. This helped to establish many Churches all among the Dalits (Cook 1955: 124). Thus it could be possible to identify that the coming of Dalits in huge number and Cook's association with them made Pentecostalism in general a "Dalit Movement". Since Yohannan's movement created a stir among the Dalits, it helped to move in large numbers to the Pentecostal camp.

6.6. Dalits Contribution within the Pentecostal Churches

6.6.1. Contribution of the Dalits in the Pioneering Ministry

Though the Dalits role within Pentecostalism in Kerala is very significant, they are not given adequate representation in the histories written by the dominant groups. The Pentecostal history often views Pentecostalism in central Kerala as merely an extension of the revivals that took place in the mainline Churches. Although we cannot ignore the importance of the revivals, when we look at the history of Pentecostalism from a Dalit perspective; it arose from their search for dignity, equality and for more freedom both in social and in spiritual aspects, which they strive for after having spent many years in the mainline Churches. This aspect of

the Dalit Christian experience is lacking in the writings of the Syrian Christian Pentecostals.

The Dalits themselves did not write their experience of Pentecostalism. This may be due to their lack of education and less encouragement from the leaders, both missionaries and natives. In order to solve this problem we have to look at the oral traditions of their experiences, which the Dalits have gone through.

From the second decade of the twentieth century, Dalits began to take an active part in the Pentecostal movement in central Kerala. From 1922 onwards Dalits co-operated with Cook who began his ministry among the Dalits. The Dalits were given an opportunity to get involved in the pioneering attempts of Pentecostalism with Cook since the majorities were the Dalits. Pentecostalism spread to many places of the central and northern regions. M. M. John, P. D. Chacko, N. C. Pathrose, K. J. Markose, P. P. Phillipose and many others that were among the Dalit community and they worked in Pentecostal Churches (Samuelkutty 2000: 142).

Samuelkutty describe, Dalit pioneering pastors in Pentecostal Churches like this; Pastor K. S. David who was instrumental in establishing many Churches in the Central Travancore. An important preacher in one of the Pentecostal Churches recalled that K. S. David was a powerful preacher who had deep knowledge in the scriptures and had established many Churches. These churches were predominantly Dalit Churches but the influence of his works crossed the boundaries of his own people and attracted many Syrian and upper caste people to Pentecostalism (Samuelkutty 2000: 142).

Abraham the founder and president of the Indian Pentecostal Church (IPC) till 1974, also admitted that before his separation with Cook in 1930 Dalit leaders like M. M. John and P. D. Chacko were used by God in establishing Pentecostal Churches through their preaching and other efforts (Abraham 1984: 148). In many parts of central Kerala such as Vaikom, Idukki and in and around Kottayam they established Pentecostal Churches. In all these places it was the Dalit Pastors and

evangelists who had the privilege to introduce Pentecostalism before the upper caste pastors came there. Thus the fruits of the work of the Dalit's were not only confined to the Dalit Churches or to one particular denomination but also to many Churches.

In these pioneering Churches the Dalits felt an urgency that they were living in the last days which motivated them to be very active in their work. John mentions that the Dalits established Churches even in their situation of poverty and other hardships. But their early pioneers were faithful to their cause and stood loyal to Pentecostalism (John 1972: 9).

Dalit Pastors affirmed that in pioneering Churches the most effective means was personal evangelism in which they went from house to house and shared the Pentecostal experience and prayed for the sick. They said that though Dalit pastors were not so educated to present the Pentecostal faith in a scholarly manner it was their healing ministry, which attracted many to Pentecostalism. The gifted pastors from the Dalit communities were welcomed in Syrian Christian houses since they knew that their prayer would heal the sick and invited Dalits to come and pray for them.

In addition to this Dalit Pastors conducted prayer meetings in the house of both Syrian and Dalit Pentecostals where many gathered and heard of the Pentecostal faith. In their meetings many people experienced baptism in the Holy Spirit. Very often these meetings were fasting prayers, which the Dalit Pastors used as a method for the growth of Pentecostalism. These contributions of the Dalit Pastors were very sacrificial since they were mainly agricultural labourers who depended on their daily wages. But the Dalit Pentecostals without thinking about their own comforts enthusiastically suffered all the losses for the growth of their Church.

In sustaining the vibrant worships of the Pentecostal Churches Dalits had an outstanding part. Dalits who had a very good talent in singing were used in the public evangelistic meetings like open-air meetings, which were a widely practised means of evangelisation among Pentecostals. The Dalits conducted open-air

meetings and also co-operated with the Syrian Pentecostal Pastors. For Dalit Pentecostals all these events were opportunities to proclaim Pentecostalism and also the occasion for expressing their discontent and oppression they had in their older Churches. They articulated their anger through the preaching and also used it as an opportunity to claim their power and dignity, which they experienced in the new Church. There were few Dalit Pastors like M. M. John, P. D. Chacko and K. S. David who were speakers in big conventions and attracted a good number to Pentecostalism.

Another area of Dalits contribution was their sacrificial giving for the progress of the local assemblies and Church as a whole. A Dalit layman disclosed that in the earlier days with their low income they provided lodging and boarding for many Pastors who came for preaching in their area. Dalits who had given land to the Church might have perceived the new Churches in their own sights could stand as a symbol of their dignity and identity. This was also a means of protest and opposition against the oppressive structures, which denied them participation and involvement in the daily affairs of their earlier Churches and against the discrimination and opposition from the high-caste Pentecostals.

When Pentecostalism was a movement of a minority, Dalits participation was helpful to sustain the new movement. In the earlier days Dalits had to walk long distances to reach the Church and other prayer meetings. This was because they lived in remote places without proper road, and in the early thirties to fifties of the twentieth century in many places where Dalits lived did not have public transport facilities. Moreover they were too poor to pay for the bus or any other mode of transportation.

The contribution of the Dalits in the pioneering and establishing of the Pentecostal Churches were far greater than the Syrians when we compare the socio-economic situation of the Dalits. The Dalits were committed and sincere that they thought Pentecostalism would serve as a true means of uplifting in the spiritual, social and economical aspects.

6.6.2. Dalit Literary Contributions

Because of their lack of education and social status in the church the Dalit's contributions to literature is less. They were less privileged to have the opportunity to write since they were involved in evangelistic and pastoral ministries. They did not get any encouragement from missionaries to contribute to the literature. Missionaries themselves have contributed very little compared to the writings of the nationals.

The important theme the Dalit Pentecostals expressed through their writings was the 'equality of the children of God'. Another emphasis of the Dalit Pentecostals was on the theme 'the cross of Christ and redemption', which they portrayed through articles and poems. In Zion trumpet magazines, they published these poems. The Dalit preachers and writers in almost all their evangelistic sermons and writings referred to the suffering of Christ. They identified their suffering with the suffering of Christ and encouraged their people to be steadfast in their poverty and sufferings. Otherworldliness is evident in their articles and poems.

Another aspect of the Dalit interest was on the theme of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. For Dalits baptism in the Holy Spirit, the gifts of the Holy Spirit and emotional extravagance in worship in relation with the Spirit baptism were very precious.

However when we take into consideration the socio-economic status of the Dalits, their contribution in pioneer ministry, leadership and in literature was very significant and the Pentecostal Churches cannot ignore them.

6.7. Summary

Robert F. Cook started the Pentecostal Churches among the Dalits in Kerala. Through his ministry he gained large numbers of Dalit converts into the Pentecostal Churches. Missionaries who worked in Kerala were encouraged by the result they gained among the lower castes – responding to their new form of

Christianity. In the mainline Churches such as the Anglican, Marthoma and Orthodox Churches treated them as untouchables. Therefore, they left these Churches and they joined in the Pentecostal Churches. Pentecostalism admitted anyone from any caste, colour and creed, and any kind of socio-economic backgrounds.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CRITICAL EVALUATION

As we have seen earlier in this thesis Robert F. Cook was instrumental in the formation of Dalit Pentecostal churches in Kerala. As part of his missionary outreach he adopted various missionary practices. On one level his methods were very helpful but on the other we can see disadvantages also. Here I would like to analyze the Robert F. Cook's missionary practices.

7.1 Evaluation of the Positive Contribution made by Cook.

Robert F. Cook's mission methods mainly focused on church planting. His prime interest was the Biblical priority that he describes as 'the center' of his mission works. The center was the proclamation of the Gospel; the gathering of converts into Pentecostal churches, the multiplying of new congregation – in short, the extension of the Christian movement by all available means. In his missiological and theological view about church and mission, it was constant and dynamic interaction. Especially in his church, the members do not maintain any caste prejudice but accept each other and enjoy the table fellowship together without any discrimination. This new pattern of life-attracted adherents from among the members of other churches in addition to the fresh converts they themselves made from the backward classes.

In India, conversion is closely linked with social aspirations of groups that suffer from discrimination and oppression. In several places, separate congregations, separate places for worship and separate cemeteries exist for different sections belonging to the same denomination. But in Cook's church he stopped all these kinds of separations and he strongly emphasized the oneness in Christ. Therefore the Dalits enjoyed this kind of freedom.

In his ministry, Dalits had the privilege of providing leadership to the church as Pastors and evangelists since they had no restriction to become ministers with

whatever qualification they had. Thus the Dalits enjoyed in their evangelistic works. Thus when Cook left the country the Dalit leaders were able to continue in their evangelistic activities.

The Spiritual revival in Cook's church paved the way for a new dimension in the life of its members. Through his pneumatic mission, he provides a spiritual liberation for the people from the lower caste religion. Consequently this became a movement of the people. A good number of Dalit people made use of the opportunity and joined the Pentecostal church.

Healing and miracles are also used in his ministry. Through this practice Robert F. Cook's greatest task was to help people to repent from sin and to demonstrate the power of the Gospel message to heal both body and soul. Healing is portrayed as an evidence of the presence of the Person and work of the Holy Spirit. His healing practices become more prominent and hold regular campaigns for conventions. Therefore his ministry became more effective among the Dalits.

The committed ministry and the lifestyle of Robert F. Cook are an example of the Christian churches in India. Through his ministry he showed the care, love and concern to the lower caste people in India. Higher caste people treated them as under privileged but through his ministry he changed the face of these people.

One of the significant features of the growth of Pentecostalism through Robert F. Cook was the co-existence of Christians belonging to the different caste groups particularly the Dalits and Syrians (in Kerala higher caste Christians are known as Syrians), the two major communities within Pentecostalism. His mission methods like conventions and dialogue helped him to do that. His conventions attracted many people into Pentecostalism. Music and singing, being a lively expression of these conventions, also played an important role in this method of evangelization.

Robert F. Cook also introduced dialogue as another method. In all of his methods we can see that his interest was to convert people into the Pentecostal Churches. In

this method there is no conflict between proclaiming Christ and engaging in dialogue.

The early years of the twentieth century most of the Syrian Pentecostal leaders like K. E. Abraham did not like to work among the Dalits. But Robert F. Cook came to Kerala and took any hardships for the spiritual liberation of the Dalits. He faced many problems in his ministry but he fulfilled his vision. This is very remarkable in his ministry.

7.2. Evaluation of the Disadvantages of Cook's Mission methods

Robert F. Cook's mission methods were remarkable in Pentecostal history, but at the same time, we can see the negative effects also. This section deals with the negative effects of his methods.

Robert F. Cook's mission methods have not come out with strong liberative aspects of mission. He adopted many methods only for the conversion of the people. His converts got only the spiritual liberation but these people were not socially, economically and politically liberated. But this experience should not cease men and women to withdraw from the world in which they live. Rather they have to be the instruments of God's intervention in this world. There must be two elements indispensable to the Pentecostal community. Firstly, the spiritual renewal and secondly, service to the society. If one limits him to spiritual renewal alone he reduces the gospel to an otherworldly state of glory. The good news will be of no effect if people's lives are not changed in all dimensions by the salvation given in Jesus Christ. Therefore the Pentecostal churches must have increased participation in the cares and concerns of humanity and the members must be trained to interpret the gospel terms of the actual reality that confronts man today.

The Dalit Pentecostals was not allowed to participate in political affairs. His overemphasis of the other worldly spirituality in Pentecostal churches from the beginning seemed to be the reason for the lack of Dalit Pentecostal participation in politics, which blinded them from seeing their socio- economic problems here in

this world. Since politics is the main source of power today to transform the society. Cook's church should not regard politics as outside their concern. The church must encourage its members to become the members of Parliament. By actively participating in the political life of the nation, the Christian insights will definitely influence the body politic. The Christian insights must be able to bear upon political decisions and they must be able to give responsible counsel on major political issues. The prophetic mission of the church should raise its voice against injustice. But in his ministry we can't see these things. His major purpose was only to elaborate his mission field.

In the context of plurality of religious and denominational context of Kerala the church should be more inclusive in its approach. But Robert F. Cook's ministry was very exclusive. In his ministry he adopted different kinds of mission methods but all these methods he used were meant only for the conversion of the people. In the present situation, his missionary methods are very difficult to adopt in Indian context, because religious fundamentalism or religious ideology is a modern phenomenon in India.

Therefore we must have a deeper understanding with the other churches for common witness must be sought out. There must be a change of outlook in regard to the relationship with other Christian churches and other religious communities in India. Unfortunately Cook does not have this kind of mission and vision. Therefore attempts must be made to bring all the churches under one banner for an effective witness in India.

Hinduism at one time was more a way of life than a religion with clear-cut doctrines and built in mechanisms to protect it from heresies or other doctrinal impurities that might sweep into the religion. But today Hinduism to some extent is a reactionary movement toward the presence of Muslim and Christian existence in India. Therefore old types of mission methods are outdated in Indian context.

Robert F. Cook adopted dialogue and inculturation in his ministry. But at that time these methods were not developed. Therefore he used exclusive methods. He

understood as dialogue as a part of the Church's evangelizing mission. But this is very dangerous to the present context of India.

Robert F. Cook's main emphasis was otherworldly aspects. But we should re-think about its emphasis of the otherworldly aspects and act more in the socio-economic and religious context of India. Modern India characterized by widespread poverty, landlessness, illiteracy, unemployment, and caste oppression, gender oppression, violence, and marginalization of Dalits, women and tribal communities' corruption, and abuse of power. In this context churches' mission is not only like the Cook's methods. We should re-think about our mission. It is significant and important to realize that our mission is not only to convert people into Christianity but we should react against all these corruptions.

CONCLUSION

In the turn of the twentieth century the revivals in the Christian community of Kerala paved the way for the emergence of the Pentecostal movement. The spread of the movement was connected with the Azusa street revival and the spread of Pentecostalism in the other countries also. The pioneering missionaries of this movement in India were related with the revival and worked among the down trodden of the society. It was almost the same way that Pentecostalism appeared in central Kerala especially with the work of the pioneering missionary Robert F. Cook.

The Pentecostal movement made its way among the Dalits through Dalit leaders like Vellikara Chothi and Poikayil Yohannan, from the Dalit community. These leaders welcomed Cook to preach Pentecostalism to their people. The Dalits embracing of Pentecostalism, through the initiative of the Dalit leaders, could be viewed as part of the Dalit's search for a fuller life, which they expected in Christianity. Thus it could be identified as part of a larger Dalit movement in Kerala and their struggle for social dignity, equality with other members in the Church, more ecclesiastical participation in the life and ministry of the church and emotional satisfaction. Further Pentecostals' distinctive characteristics of spirit baptism and speaking in tongues were more close to their traditional ecstatic form of religion.

The Pentecostal emphasis on the oneness in Christ and brotherhood of all believers enabled the Dalits to embrace Pentecostalism. Cook's involvement in establishing Dalit churches enhanced this process. By the end of 1950 their membership reached equal or a little above the membership of Syrians and other upper caste Pentecostals. The Dalits took all the positive elements of Pentecostalism to strengthen their search for equality, dignity and freedom that they themselves brought more members establishing more Dalit churches and actively involved in the life of the church. The emotional nature and overemphasis of the otherworldliness of Pentecostalism has almost blinded them to forget their earthly

problems and they were satisfied with in Pentecostal churches until the end of the first half of the century,

Cook established Pentecostalism into an organized body and the progress was very much dependent on his personal charismatic gifts. Through his mission efforts Pentecostalism attracted many Dalits and it became a mission to the Dalits and get them converted to his church. Thus Pentecostalism took root among the Dalits and spread to all the parts of the Dalit pocket in central Kerala. It seems that more than the initiative of Cook it was the initiative of the people, who heard his preaching, invited him to their places to preach. Thus in central Travancore Pentecostalism appeared to be the *Margam* (way) of the Dalits because in central Travancore only Dalits got enrolled in Pentecostalism in the beginning.

Pentecostal history is written from the dominant groups and leaders' perspective and not from the Dalits' viewpoint. The Dalit's role in sustaining the Pentecostal movement in central Kerala was ignored by missionaries whom also either wrote the reports or experiences in central Kerala. The Syrians and other upper caste leaders who were privileged by their educational qualifications had their superior attitude toward the Dalits. The result was that the Dalit Christians were mentioned in the reports as merely participants or beneficiaries of Pentecostalism and never as the major group who welcomed Pentecostalism and as its earlier advocates. This methodological problem can be overcome, as we have done in this research, by looking at the history from the Dalit experiences and whatever they have written in any form.

The result of such an approach to history will reveal that Dalit's acceptance of Pentecostalism could be seen as part of their struggle for their better future. Dalit Pentecostals' struggle for equality and human dignity and freedom are integrally linked to Dalit movement among all Dalit Christians in Kerala. Those who like to further study about Dalit Pentecostals and Robert F. Cook, this research will help them to understand backgrounds and roots of Dalit's in Pentecostal churches.

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