

**CHARISMATA AND COMPASSION: DHINAKARAN,
CHARISMATIC HEALING AND PASTORAL
PENTECOSTALISM IN SOUTH INDIA - A PRACTICAL,
THEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT**

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the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own and that the appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the works of others. This copy has been supplied on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement

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Dedication

To:

DOROTHY, God's *gift* to me, who had *compassion* on me

and to our daughters **ALETHEA** and **CHARIS**.

You accompanied me and shared in my stress during this research and
discovered with me more of God's *truth* and *grace*

Abstract

This dissertation is a theological assessment of the *Jesus Calls* divine healing movement as it developed in South India. It analyses the thought of the founder D.G.S. Dhinakaran, India's pre-eminent healing evangelist and explores its potential and adequacy as a pastoral theology. It draws out Dhinakaran's healing theology and model for ministry that has significantly contributed to Indian mission and attained international recognition. Until now, this movement has received no critical analysis. The author, a native of South India, as an observer-participant, takes up this task.

The emergence and impact of the modern Pentecostal movement and the 'full gospel' with healing as its flagship is discussed. The study highlights lesser-known precursors and theological roots that give Indian Pentecostalism its distinct identity from the 1906 Azusa Street Revival, USA. It reveals how Charismatic Christianity flourishes due to its *bhakti* spirituality, *guru* leadership, apostolic charismata and practical compassion. The thesis maintains that the dialectic of Pentecostal power and pastoral care is an effective mission strategy and proceeds to demonstrate this in Dhinakaran's ministry.

The research method progressed from a description of Dhinakaran's healing praxis via theological analysis to a critical assessment. It shows some major influences and the appeal of his prayer movement and argues that the key to its success lies in its highly pragmatic, culturally adaptive and syncretic nature. Three doctrinal concepts that are embodied in Dhinakaran's model are presented: compassion, the wounded healer and healing evangelism, which correlate within a theological apparatus to make interpretative sense of his praxis resulting in what is termed 'Pastoral Pentecostalism'.

The hybridity in Dhinakaran's 'miracle healing' is explored within two wider contextual interfaces: the traditional Hindu culture with the shamanic *manthiravadi* and an imported but adapted version of American faith healing. Here, an eastern-western synthesis is shown to contribute at once to a viable indigenous ministry and to global trends in Charismatic Christianity, allowing each to inform and shape the other. Dhinakaran's distinct prosperity message is located within the Guru movement and assessed against the American health-wealth gospel for pastoral integrity. The thesis advocates a Pastoral Pentecostalism that holds charismata and compassion in creative tension and re-presents Dhinakaran as a significant charismatic healing evangelist.

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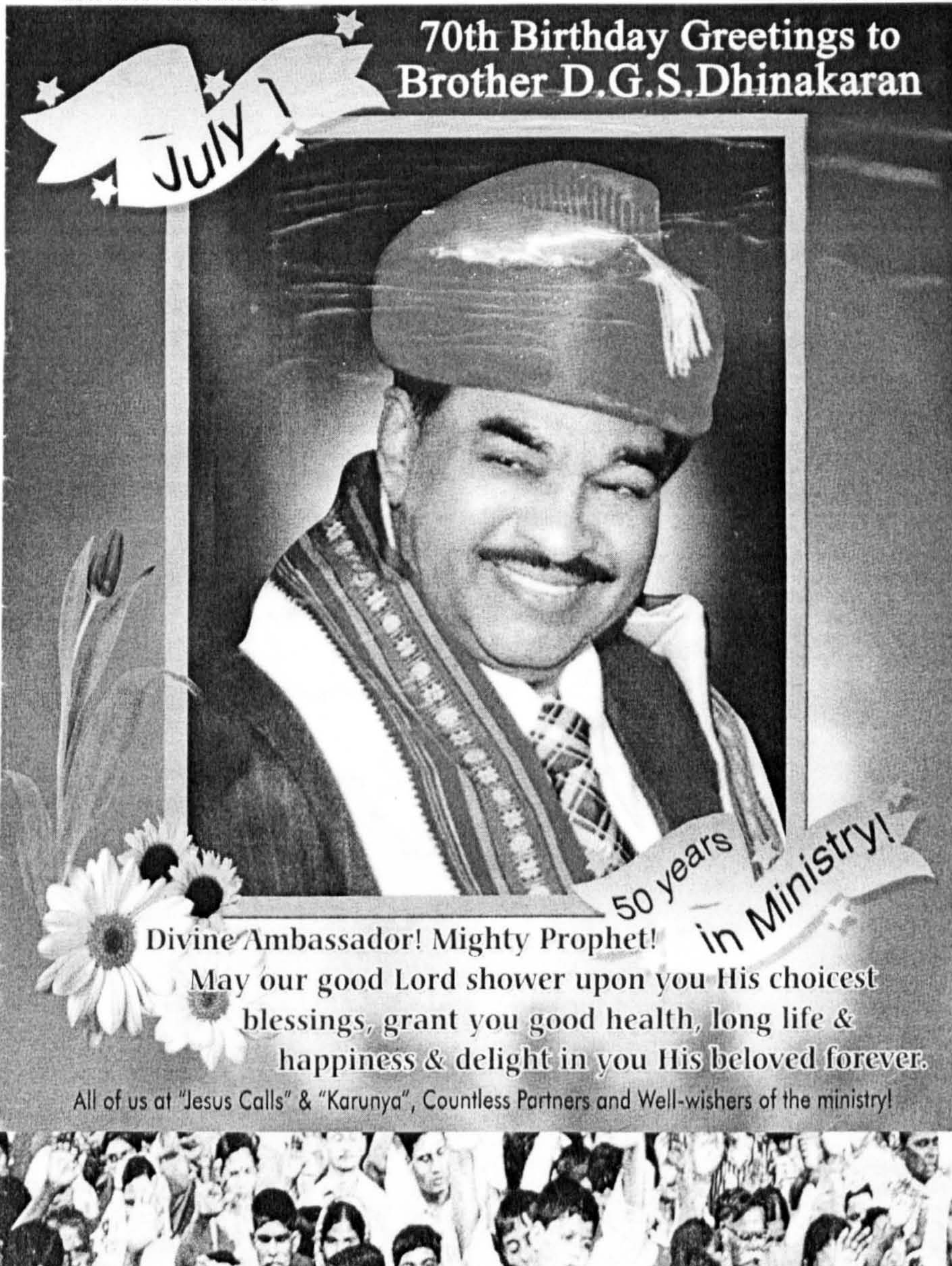
Abbreviations

<i>ABE</i>	-Asian Biblical Expositor
<i>ACA</i>	-The Apostolic Christian Assembly, Madras
<i>(SI)AG</i>	-(South India) Assemblies of God
<i>AJPS</i>	-Asia Journal of Pentecostal Studies
<i>AJT</i>	-Asia Journal of Theology
<i>BibSac</i>	-Bibliotheca Sacra
<i>CG(I)</i>	-Church of God in India
<i>CMS</i>	-Church Missionary Society / Church Mission Society (since 1995)
<i>CPM</i>	-(The) Ceylon Pentecostal Mission (TPM since 1984)
<i>CSI</i>	-The Church of South India
<i>CT</i>	-Christianity Today
<i>DAC</i>	-A Dictionary of Asian Christianity
<i>DD</i>	-Dharma Deepika: A Journal of South Indian Missiological Research
<i>DPCM</i>	-Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements
<i>EMQ</i>	-Evangelical Missions Quarterly
<i>ERT</i>	-Evangelical Review of Theology
<i>EQ</i>	-Evangelical Quarterly
<i>FTR</i>	-Faith Theological Review
<i>IBMR</i>	-International Bulletin of Missionary Research
<i>ICGQ</i>	-Indian Church Growth Quarterly
<i>IMA</i>	-India Mission Association
<i>IMR</i>	-Indian Missiological Review (Mission Today)
<i>IPC</i>	-Indian Pentecostal Church (of God)
<i>IRM</i>	-International Review of Missions
<i>JAM</i>	-Journal of Asian Missions
<i>JCR</i>	-Journal of Contemporary Religion
<i>JEPTA</i>	-Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association
<i>JES</i>	-Journal of Ecumenical Studies
<i>JETS</i>	-Journal of Evangelical Theological Society
<i>JHCC</i>	-Journal of Health Care and Chaplaincy
<i>JPT</i>	-Journal of Pentecostal Theology
<i>JRT</i>	-Journal of Religious Thought
<i>LMS</i>	-London Missionary Society
<i>MT</i>	-Mission Today
<i>NIDPCM</i>	-New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements
<i>Pneuma</i>	- <i>Pneuma</i> : The Journal of the Society of Pentecostal Studies
<i>SAIACS</i>	-South Asia Institute for Advanced Christian Studies
<i>SC</i>	-The Spirit and Church
<i>Soc. Sci. Med.</i>	-Social Science and Medicine
<i>SWJT</i>	-South Western Journal of Theology
<i>TrinJ</i>	-Trinity Journal
<i>US(A)</i>	-United States (of America)
<i>WCC</i>	-World Council of Churches

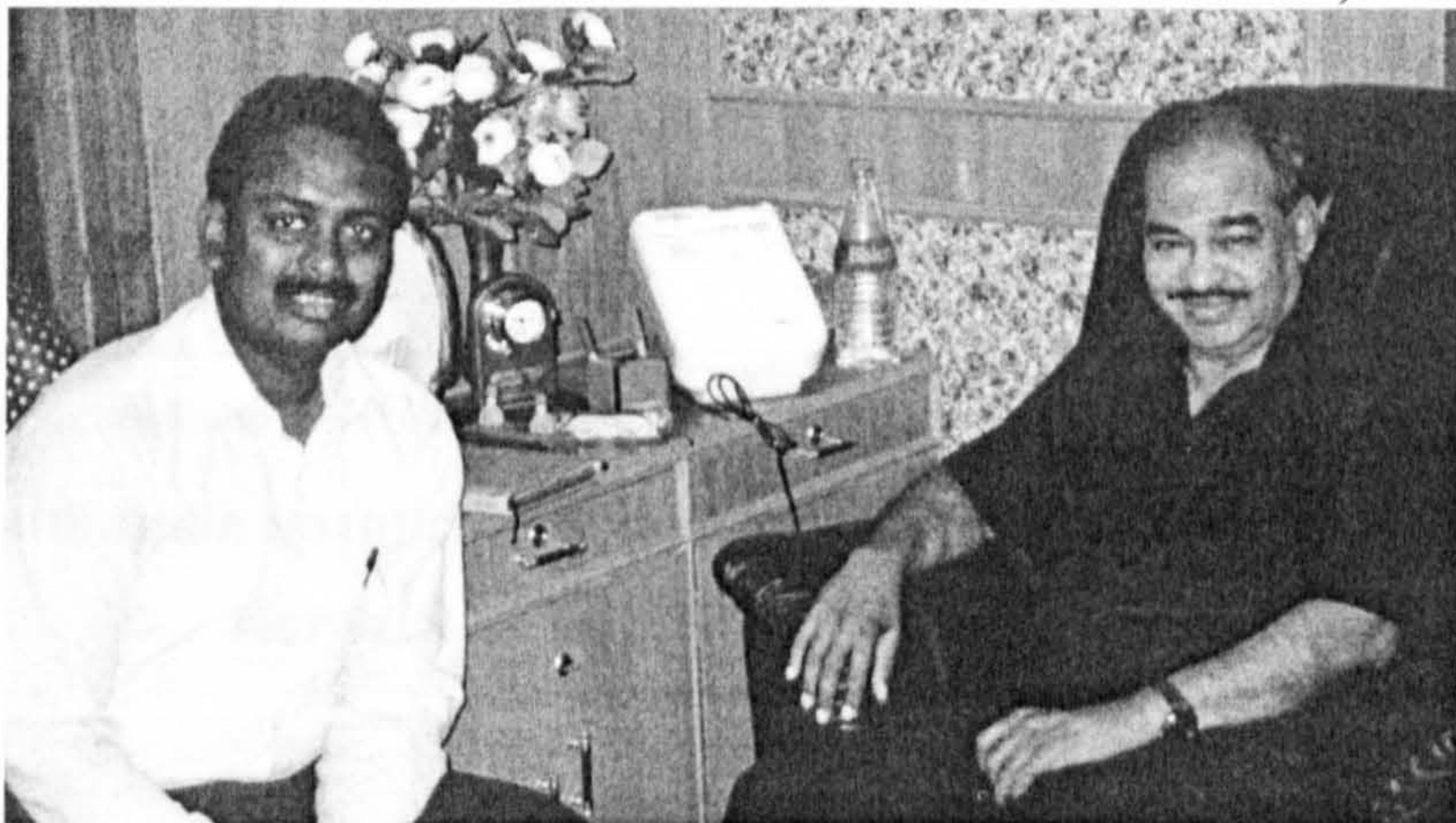
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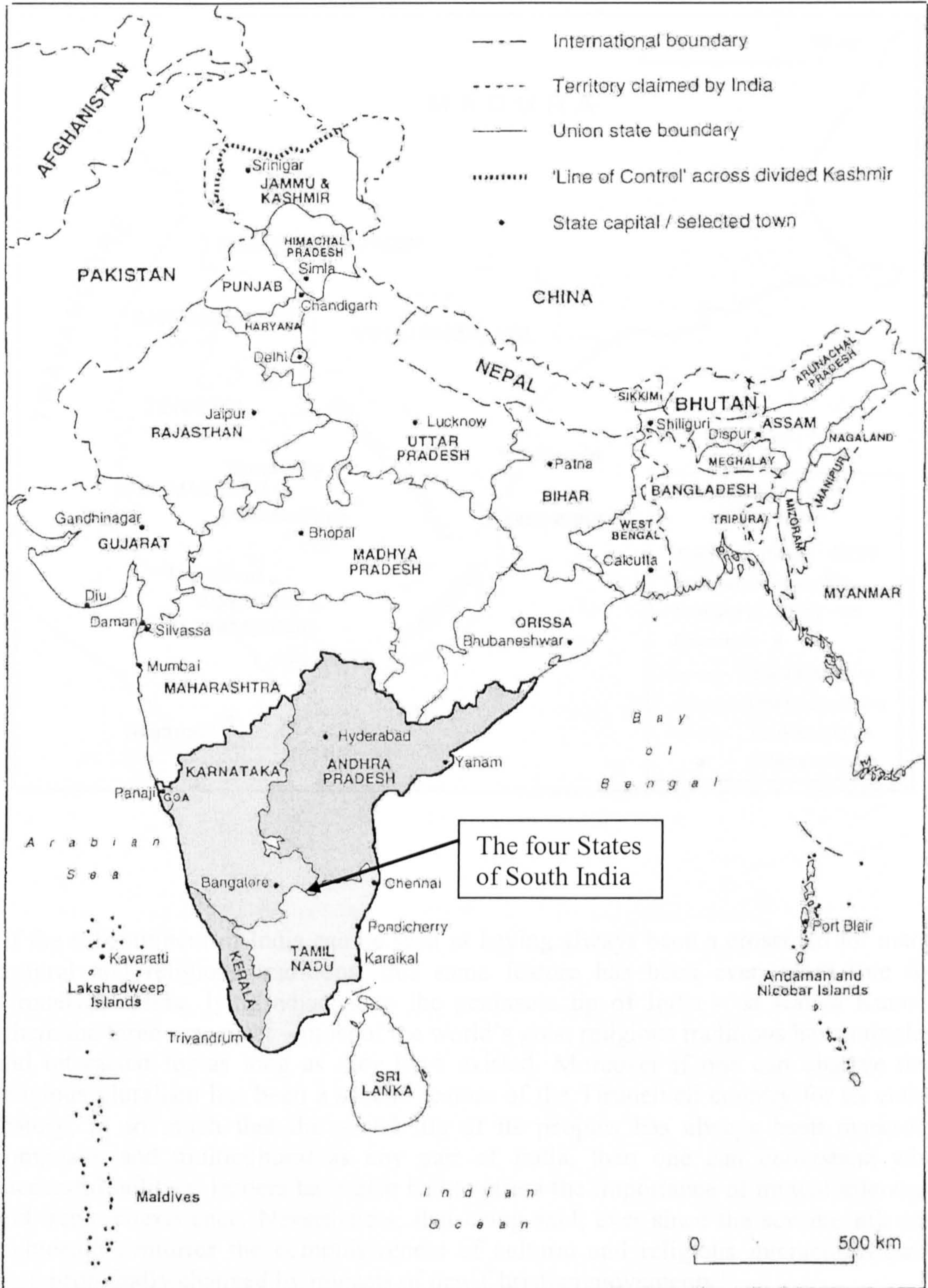


P1: Dhinakaran's 70th **Birthday** hybrid: Indian turban & shawl with western suit & tie
P2. Interviews with Dhinakaran at Jesus Calls Head Office, Madras



Map 1

India with its Four Southern States

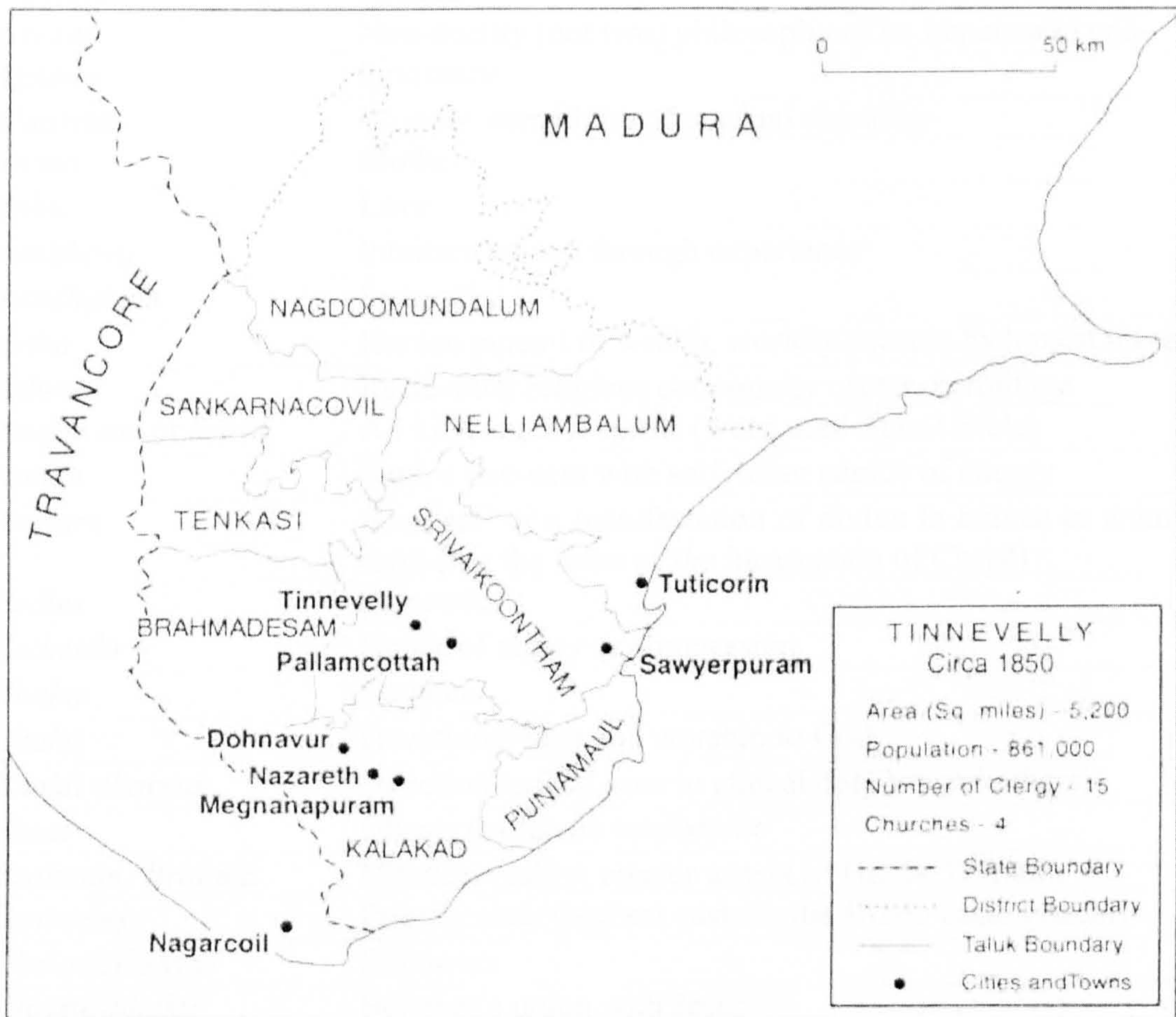


From Pamela Shurmer-Smith, *India Globalization and Change*.

NB: South India essentially comprises of four major States: Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh.

Map 2

The District of Tirunelveli in Tamilnadu:



‘If the subcontinent of India can be seen as having always been a crossroad for many cultural and religions traditions, this same feature has been even more true for Tirunelveli. Here, lying adjacent to the peninsula tip of India – at Kanya Kumari where the three seas meet – most of the world’s great religious traditions have mingled and interacted for as long as they have existed. Moreover if one can observe that religious pluralism has been a special feature of the Tirunelveli country for its entire history, in so much that the social life of its peoples has always been markedly composite and multicultural as any part of India, then one can understand why successful political leaders have also had to stress the importance of mutual tolerance and irenic coexistence. Nevertheless, that being said, ever since the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the compulsiveness of cultural and religious interactions have been profoundly changed by impacts of new Christian movements.’

- R. Frykenburg, *Tirunelveli’s Evangelical Christians*, SAIACS Press, 2003, p. xiv.

A Glossary of Terms

<i>Adbhuta</i>	Wonder
<i>Advaita</i>	Non-duality (not two) philosophy of an impersonal god
<i>Agnana</i>	Ignorance
<i>Alaukika</i>	Wonder, something of unusual character
<i>Amma</i>	Mother
<i>Anbu</i>	Love
<i>Anubhava</i>	Intuition gained through experience
<i>Anudhabam</i>	Sympathy
<i>Artha</i>	Human pursuit of wealth, worldly success by honest means
<i>Ashram</i>	Residential religious community center, hermitage
<i>Asutha avi or ketavi</i>	All kinds of evil spirits (word used Tamil Bible)
<i>Atman</i>	Soul, a one-ness with self, inner source of energy
<i>Avatara</i>	'Descent' or a manifestation of divine in human or animal form (not the same as <i>the</i> incarnation of Christ)
<i>Bedies</i>	Cigarettes
<i>Bethesda</i>	House of mercy or compassion
<i>Bhakta</i>	Devotee
<i>Bhakti</i>	Devotional love and worship to God
<i>Bhakti dharma</i>	Devotion to God seen in ethical duty toward others
<i>Bhuts</i>	Ghosts that cause misfortune
<i>Brahman; Brahma</i>	Ultimate reality; creator aspect of Hindu Trimuthi
<i>Brahmins</i>	Priestly class (highest caste in the Hindu caste system)
<i>Chelas/shishyas</i>	Followers
<i>Christu-bhakti</i>	Believer's union with Jesus
<i>Dakshina</i>	A sum of money paid at the end of a priestly ceremony
<i>Deivas</i>	Non-human agencies
<i>Devadasis</i>	Temple prostitutes
<i>Dharma</i>	Religion, righteousness, divine order/ethical social duty
<i>Diksha</i>	Initiation of a devotee or sanyasi by a guru
<i>Dristi</i>	Vision
<i>Guru</i>	Spiritual teacher, master, leader and guide for life
<i>Guru-shisya; guru-seva</i>	(relationship) mentor with disciple; service of the master
<i>Harijans</i>	Untouchables (casteless Hindu; literally, child of God)
<i>Hindutva</i>	Hindu militant fundamentalism
<i>Irrakum, karunai</i>	Mercy
<i>Iyecu alaikkirar</i>	Jesus Calls (The registered name of Dhinakaran's ministry)
<i>Jamakaran</i>	Watchman
<i>Jantras</i>	Armlets worn to chase away evil spirits
<i>Jebamey jeyam</i>	Prayer brings Victory (Tamil title for Dhinakaran's book)
<i>Jnana</i>	Knowledge
<i>Kaattu picaacu</i>	An afflicting demon from forests/nature
<i>Kama</i>	Desire and enjoyment of the life of the senses
<i>Karma</i>	Action/deeds, moral law of cause and effect
<i>Karunya</i>	Active grace or mercy; compassion at work
<i>Kismat</i>	Fate

<i>Kriyas</i>	Body
<i>Kshatriyas</i>	Military chiefs; ranked second in the Hindu caste system
<i>Kunamakukum varum</i>	The gift of healing
<i>Mai</i>	Black paste (on face to prevent ill effects of the evil eye)
<i>Maidan</i>	Large field
<i>Manadhurukkam</i>	Tamil for <i>compassion</i> : literally, the melting of the heart
<i>Manathu</i>	Heart
<i>Manthiravadi</i>	Popular Hindu traditional wonderworker
<i>Mantras</i>	Incantations; sacred formulae in Sanskrit for meditation
<i>Marga</i>	A spiritual path
<i>Maya</i>	Illusion; illusionary nature of everyday reality
<i>Moksha</i>	Spiritual salvation, liberation
<i>Mudras</i>	Meditative stances
<i>Mukti</i>	A place of deliverance, literally – salvation
<i>Muni</i>	An angry spirit
<i>Nagar</i>	Town
<i>Pandita</i>	Scholar/ the learned (similar to the title, rabbi)
<i>Parithabam</i>	To pity
<i>Peeys</i>	Evil spirits
<i>Perinba peruvizha</i>	Festivals of joy
<i>Picaacu</i>	Devils
<i>Pongal</i>	Tamil new year/harvest (usually mid January)
<i>Prana</i>	Life-force
<i>Puja; Pujari; Prasad</i>	Formal worship; Priest; blessed offering (food) after ritual
<i>Purohits</i>	Patron gurus among priests
<i>Purusharthas</i>	The Goals or Objectives of life
<i>Samsara; punajanma</i>	Cycles of life; re-birth due to belief in reincarnation
<i>Sanyasa; sanyasi</i>	Withdrawal from worldly activity; renouncer of the world
<i>Saraswathi</i>	Hindu goddess of education
<i>Shakti</i>	Divine energy/power; female aspect of divinity
<i>Shaktipath</i>	A way or channel of power
<i>Shiksha</i>	Teaching
<i>Shishyas</i>	Learner-devotees
<i>Siddha</i>	Donations by kind, usually grain
<i>Sudras</i>	Servants (Hindu caste system)
<i>Suniakaran</i>	An agent who uses black magic to cause evil or orchestrate evil forces to control life events and bring harm to people.
<i>Swamy</i>	Holy man, spiritual guide respected in religious order
<i>Tarka</i>	Cognitive knowledge
<i>Thiruvizha</i>	Festivals
<i>Urrukam</i>	To melt
<i>Urugayo Nenjamey</i>	Love so Amazing
<i>Vaisyas</i>	Agriculturists and traders (third in social caste system)
<i>Vedas/agamas</i>	Holy Books / Scriptural source
<i>Vellalas</i>	Landowners within the caste system

Chapter One

Introduction

This study assesses the impact of the *Jesus Calls* (in Tamil, *Iyecu Alaikkirar*) divine healing movement,¹ a parachurch organisation that since 1970 developed as a ‘ministry of compassion’ in South India. It analyses the theological views of its founder Doraiswamy Geoffrey Samuel (DGS) Dhinakaran, India’s pre-eminent healing evangelist and explores reasons for its appeal. My thesis argues that in keeping with Indian Pentecostalism, Dhinakaran’s Charismatic theology is adaptive, pragmatic and syncretic. The ‘pastoral care movement’ as Emerson notes, ‘seeks to enable a person to cope with stress, move beyond shame and guilt, and experience freedom’.² I will show how an understanding of Dhinakaran’s contextual praxis makes an original and vital contribution to Charismatic studies and the field of pastoral theology.³

This introduction sets the backdrop and presents the topic and content of my thesis. In it I discuss the rationale, scope and method I adopt to assess Dhinakaran’s model and *praxis*, i.e. the purposeful acting out of truths about healing as against merely giving intellectual consent to them. I will highlight key issues related to Christian faith and charismatic healing that spring from it for mission in the Indian cultural context.

1. Rationale for Research: Dhinakaran’s *Jesus Calls* Healing Movement

The problem of suffering due to sickness is both philosophical and experiential. In traditional Christian thinking the latter is essentially the province of practical theology, which sadly in contemporary Indian context has received little significant attention.⁴ Theological issues regarding suffering, healing and prosperity are chiefly considered in terms of Dalit theology which is a liberative praxis with a political agenda for the poor, powerless and disadvantaged.⁵ Hardly any scholarly work examines the so-

¹ ‘Divine healing’ is used to indicate the alleged source of healing. It is preferred to ‘faith healing’ that at times is negatively linked with the glib ‘name it and claim it’ theology or the prosperity gospel. The former involves the exercise of faith in a God who heals and incorporates distinct means such as prayer with procedures associated with the neo-Pentecostal/Charismatic healing movement.

² James Emerson, *The Effective Parish in the Twenty-First Century*, Delhi: ISPCK, p. 122.

³ E. Graham, *Transforming Practice: Pastoral Theology in an Age of Uncertainty*, Mowbray, 1996. Stress on the ‘pastoral’ in practical theology denotes the experiential, lived situation in context (p. 130).

⁴ Hollenweger was unaware of any critical work in this area: Interview, Fircroft College Birmingham, 21.09.01. M. Percy, (ed.) *Modern Believing*, confirms: ‘so far no analysis has been done from an Indian perspective on faith, healing and prosperity’, Interview, Lincoln Institute, Sheffield, 30.11.02.

⁵ The dalit’s plight is the starting point and the Bible re-read from an activist’s point of view. Singaram, ‘Dalit Theology and Method’, *Moving Forms of Theology*, Selvanayagam (ed.), ISPCK, 2002, p. 131.

called 'miracle healings' that take place through prayers of faith and the *charismata* (1Cor. 12: 8-9; 28-30),⁶ which hereafter, I will refer to as 'charismatic healing'.

In India, theologies of success promising bodily healing and material blessing tend to be treated lightly. P.A. Augustine, for instance, while recognising the revivalist character of Spirit-oriented movements, questions whether 'the praxis of the Charismatics reflects the concerns of Jesus' and wonders if it 'can contribute to creative expressions of Christian faith?'⁷ This is rather surprising, since in India the predominant Hindu worldview is open to supernatural experiences and embraces spiritualities that seek out the sacred for total wellbeing.⁸ However, the perceptions of academic theologians from the historic or mainline churches about Pentecostalism are changing along with crucial theological shifts within the Charismatic movement itself resulting in a coming together and greater willingness to engage in some key issues.

Healing the sick has been an integral part of the church's pastoral calling. Yet, since its inception, Indian Pentecostalism has made divine healing a cardinal doctrine in its five-fold or 'full gospel' where Jesus is offered as Saviour, Healer, Baptiser, Sanctifier and soon-coming King.⁹ Indian Pentecostalism can be shown to be a by-product of both western missions and native Indian initiatives. Indian Pentecostal churches like the Assemblies of God (AG) and Church of God (CG) have links to their western counterparts and adopt western administrative methods. Therefore, they appear less indigenous and nationalistic than The Ceylon Pentecostal Mission (T/CPM). However, a recent nationwide commission for evangelism adjudged both groups to 'share the same [pentecostal] theological basis that distinguishes them from traditional Christianity'. Theologians from the historical churches admit that this 'once regarded a sect or a cult is a significant movement today... growing at a tremendous pace'.¹⁰

⁶ Marius Nel, 'The Way to Healing: Faith and Prayer', *SC*, 2/2, 2000, p. 247-264; Vansantharaj Albert (ed.), 'Spiritual Gifts and Church Growth', *ICGQ*, 9/3, October-December, 2002.

⁷ P.A. Augustine, *Jesus and Christianity in India*, Bangalore: Claretian, 1999, p. 127.

⁸ Sudhir Kakar, *Shamans, Mystic, Doctors*, Delhi: OUP, 1982; Hiebert on 'The Flaw of the Excluded Middle' p. 189 ff. in *Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues*, Baker Books, 1994.

⁹ At the turn of the 19th century, prominent Pentecostals like McPherson and Jefferys adopted in their preaching and writings the term 'Four Square Gospel', to explain Christ as Saviour, Healer, Baptiser and Coming King (A.J Pollock, *Modern Pentecostalism, Four Square Gospel, Healings and Tongues*, London: CBT, n.d. p. 17). Later, as Land notes, the 'Full Gospel' included Jesus as Sanctifier before Healer, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom*, Sheffield Academic Press, 1997, p. 61.

¹⁰ This initiative by the late M.M. Thomas comprised bodies such as the National Council of Churches and South Asia Theological Research Institute, Jesudas Athyal (ed.), *Relevant Patterns of Christian Witness in India: People as Agents of Mission*, Thiruvalla: Christhava Sahithya Samithi, 2000, p. 86.

Hence a guiding question for my research is: What is intrinsic and ‘indigenous’ to the nature of Pentecostalism in South India that has made it a major evangelistic force? Then, locating Dhinakaran’s Jesus Calls ministry within the movement, I examine his healing praxis in order to assess how it enhances pastoral care and mission in India.

Since the early 20th century, a weakness of Pentecostalism in India, as elsewhere, was its experiential faith viewed as emotionalism without a developed theology. Several factors sidelined critical studies of its healing movement. First, Indian Pentecostals were open adversaries to the traditional Syrian churches and CSI who were sceptical of their new tongues, strange healings and warned against their syncretic tendency with the surrounding ‘pagan’ religions. Second, the holiness preachers who pioneered Indian Pentecostalism were popular in mainline churches. But, zealous to ‘administer’ Spirit baptisms and healings, typical to the oral tradition, they narrated real life incidents but did not make time to reflect on their faith in relation to their healing practice.¹¹ Third, Pentecostal ministries emulated Jesus’ healing model that seemed to mirror the apostolic church, and so they presumed that they could not be far from orthodoxy. Although well educated, they feared that pure academics could hinder their Pentecostal passion for souls. Thus, without much theological analysis, in a pragmatic way, ‘like Jesus, they simply preached and went about doing good to people with their healing gifts’.¹² However, in the 1960s, the neo Pentecostal or Charismatic movement developed *out of* some of the mainline churches and has been effective *within* them to bring down walls of ‘antagonism’.¹³ My study of Dhinakaran’s charismatic praxis discovers an ecumenicity that could bridge gaps and promote partnerships, particularly for the common mission of healing and reconciliation in India.

2. The Development of a Gospel of ‘Charismatic’ Healing

In 1913, Robert Cook, a missionary from the famous Azusa Street Revival, USA,¹⁴ came to Bangalore and reported back: ‘Devils were cast out, sick were healed. Many came out of darkness, forsaking their idols to worship the living God.’¹⁵ A.C. George, tracing Pentecostal beginnings in South India observes how, ‘healing often opened the

¹¹ Solomon Raj, *The New Wine Skins*, Delhi: ISPCK, 2003, p. 50-51, notes: ‘The first two Indigenous Missions’- Devadas’ Bible Mission and P.M. Samuel’s Indian Pentecostal Church (IPC), both emphasised the need to experience the Spirit’s powerful presence and exercised the gifts of healings.

¹² Interview, Henry Joseph, the founder of the Maranatha Full Gospel Churches, reflected on ‘early Pentecostal healings in India’, Chennai, 08.01.2004.

¹³ Athyal (ed.), *Relevant Patterns*, p. 86.

¹⁴ Edith Blumhofer, ‘Revisiting Azusa Street: A Centennial Retrospect’, *IBMR*, 30/2, 2006, p. 59-65

¹⁵ ‘Robert Cook and Wife, South India,’ *Christian Evangel*, 12 Dec., 1914, p. 4.

door widely to establish churches'.¹⁶ Satyavrata is convinced that a major factor for the growth of Pentecostalism in South Asia was 'the emergence of independent healing evangelists and Pentecostal parachurch agencies'.¹⁷ Martin recorded how due to emphasis on healing prayer, exorcism and the gifts, Pentecostalism is the 'single most sweeping movement for conversion in India'.¹⁸ What Indians typically call 'miracle healings' have local religious value and served as a 'passport' for Pentecostal missions from the west. Within India, it prepared the soil for a revivalist movement and apostolic ministry that has caused the growth of Charismatic Christianity.

Chappell has outlined the significant role 'healing movements' played in the Pentecostal-Charismatic tradition.¹⁹ Similarly, Indian Pentecostalism with its missionary 'Spirit of expansion' took root in the fertile culture to recover and normalise the neglected healing *charismata*. Further, the movement received impetus from gifted leaders who created expectations for miracles through prayers of faith. Itinerant healing evangelists such as T.L. Osborn and nationals like P.S. Samuel advocated healings as a sign of the kingdom and tool to witness to God's love and power.²⁰ This resulted in new 'pentecostal' communities causing an explosive growth of Charismatics in the established churches. The movement awakened the evangelical church to Christ's healing apostolate and the Spirit's *charismata*, but simultaneously precipitated some awkward issues. Dhinakaran's ministry is a product of this legacy and a useful case with which to raise relevant and critical concerns as a way forward.

South Indian Christianity is experiencing unprecedented growth in keeping with a non-western, Spirit-oriented yet distinctly 'Charismatic' movement that advocates what Martin describes as, 'Third Person Christianity in the Third World':

Over the past thirty years, the religious map of the world has changed dramatically... and a protean indigenous Christianity has emerged indifferent to the agenda of the western theological intelligentsia... more often than not, this shift is toward a Pentecostal faith in the gifts of the Holy Spirit – healing, speaking in tongues, exorcism, prophecy, holiness.²¹

¹⁶ A.C. George, 'Pentecostal Beginnings in Travancore, South India', *AJPS*, 4/2, 2001, p. 235.

¹⁷ Ivan Satyavrata 'Contextual Perspectives', *Globalisation of Pentecostalism*, Regnum, 1999, p. 206.

¹⁸ David Martin, *Pentecostalism: The World Their Parish*, Blackwell, 2002, p. 189; Susan Bayly, 'Christianity and Competing Fundamentalism in Indian Society', Marty & Appleby (eds.), *Accounting for Fundamentalisms*, Chicago U.P, 1994, p. 726f.

¹⁹ P.G. Chappell, 'Healing Movements', *DPCM*, (eds.) Burgess & McGee, Zondervan, 1988 p. 353-374.

²⁰ Harrell, 'Healers and Televangelists after World War II', Synan (ed.) *Century of the Holy Spirit*, Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001, p. 325f. Stephen Parson, 'Itinerant Charismatic Healers', *The Challenge of Christian Healing*, London: SPCK, 1986, p. 90-112.

²¹ (The title of Chapter Two) David Martin, *Forbidden Revolutions*, London: SPCK, 1996, p. 26.

By the end of the 20th century, a striking shift took place in the base of the Christian movement from north to south or to the Third World. A *second shift* accompanying the first was the force of missions that moved from hierarchical institutions to flourish within base communities. South Indian scholars are now dealing with *The Third Shift*, which they identified to be ‘toward a Charismatic Community’ and ‘the evolving of charismatic renewal in the life experience of people both in and outside the church’.²² Dhinakaran’s healing ministry is a vehicle for and a catalyst that boosts this third shift.

Charismatic healers, when ‘Spirit-filled’ were believed to be ‘anointed’ agents who demonstrated the Spirit’s power over sickness-afflicting spirits. In the early 1900s, this phenomenon was characteristic of classical Indian Pentecostalism, and after 1960 it was a marked feature of charismatic churches. Western missionary scholars like McGavran and Hiebert when serving in India observed how miracle healings and exorcisms were native, effective means for Christian mission in the so-called ‘Third World’.²³ In the 1980s, Wagner and Wimber taught an experimental course (MC. 510) on ‘power evangelism’ at Fuller’s School of World Mission.²⁴ Many of these teachers often illustrated their theology with stories of ‘power encounters’ from India or South America which formed the essence of a ‘Third Wave theology’.²⁵ What Wimber popularised in the west, Caplan and Bergunder found in some form operational in South India and Dhinakaran’s ministry displays a version of a Third Wave theology.²⁶

My thesis considers Dhinakaran a key player who for forty years has impacted the healing ministry and determined the nature of charismatic faith. It maps out the contours of his *Jesus Calls* movement showing ways in which it challenges Indian mission. He views miracles and exorcisms as ‘signs’ of Jesus’ power over afflicting spirits and inspires faith for salvation. But beyond *charismata*, and under-girding its healing power, he believes, there must be Christlike *compassion*. It is this conviction that drives Dhinakaran’s *Jesus Calls* organisation that passionately commits:

²² G. Dyvasirvadam, General Secretary of the CSI, in the preface to Milton Jeganathan (ed.) *The Third Shift: Toward a Charismatic Community*, Delhi: ISPCK, 2000, p. xiii.

²³ Interviews: Hiebert, 31.01.04; Vasantharaj (mentored by McGavran), *ICGQ*, Chennai, 07.01.04.

²⁴ Course material, Wagner (ed.), *Signs & Wonders Today*, Creation House, 1987, McGavran’s opening healing stories of deaf, blind and lame from his experience in India, p. 72f.

²⁵ David Barratt, ‘Three Waves of Renewal’, *IBMR*, July 1988, p. 119-129. James Wright, ‘Profiles of Divine Healing: Third Wave Theology Compared with Classical Pentecostal Theology’, *AJPS*, 5/2 2003, p. 271-287.

²⁶ Michael Bergunder, ‘Miracle Healing and Exorcism’, *IRM*, XC, 356/357, p. 103-118.

- i) To mobilise the Christian community to assemble together as many people as possible to hear the message that Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth and the Life, and to give an opportunity for personal public commitment.
- ii) To enable the broken-hearted to experience the compassion of the Lord Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit in their spirit, mind and body.²⁷

The inculturation of Dhinakaran's movement into local contexts meets daily realities and proposes a 'forward gain' for the Indian church's healing mission. Inbaraj concurs and lists as auxiliary factors: passion for evangelism, decentralised authority to lay leadership and participation of women.²⁸ However, there are serious questions whether these healing theologies are based on kingdom values that Jesus taught, or on the model of the charismatic spirituality in the New Testament. For instance, V.M. Spurgeon, lecturer at Madras Christian College, expresses serious concern and succinctly describes the problem faced by the wider Indian church:

They are fascinated toward false doctrines like the prosperity gospel, wrong notions of speaking in tongues, and healing power even though these doctrines are opposite to the biblical teachings they attract people. In times of trouble and fear people try to find comfort in the gospel of prosperity.²⁹

Dhinakaran's ministry not only claims to be one of 'compassion and comfort', it espouses what he calls an 'all round prosperity' that makes it problematic.³⁰ As long as preaching is held as the primary and proper means to present the gospel and catering to bodily ailments and material needs made secondary, conflicts are unavoidable. To be fair, Dhinakaran's message of healing and prosperity must be heard in its context before it is criticised as 'unorthodox'. My thesis takes up this neglected task, since his propositions have sufficient substance to sympathise with as well as disagree with.

3. Significance of the Subject: Discovering Dhinakaran

Hindus, Muslims and Christians are familiar with Dhinakaran as an evangelist. In 1998, Edmunds submitted that a Pentecostal sub-culture has developed particularly due to his influence and affirms that 'he has to a great extent, energized the mainline churches, through nearly 21 facets of the *Jesus Calls Ministry*'. Dhinakaran's

²⁷ Dhinakaran, *Jesus Calls, Campaign Manual*, Madras, n.d. p. 6, (Acts 10:38; Isa. 61:1).

²⁸ Lamech Inbaraj, 'Charismata and Revival', *The Third Shift*, p. 266.

²⁹ V.M Spurgeon, 'Charismatic Spirituality and the Indian Church', These are typical charges that are levied against theologies for prosperity by most Indian thinkers, *Third Shift*, p. 133, 137.

³⁰ Dhinakaran, *Love so Amazing*, 1978, p. 81.

activities have earned him the sobriquet of ‘Prophet of Asia’.³¹ Rajendran, the General Secretary of India Missions Association, attests: ‘Dhinakaran is undoubtedly the foremost communicator of the gospel to non-Christians’.³² In 2000, Bergunder’s account of his work concluded: ‘Probably no figure in India at the present time has a more far reaching influence for the development of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity than Bro. Dhinakaran’.³³ These reasonable claims warrant investigation.

Dhinakaran is referred to as a ‘pentecostal wonderworker’ and ‘Guru healer’. Yet, none who criticise his message of ‘faith healing’ and prosperity have commented on his theology of suffering or his unique pastoral role as a ‘wounded healer’ that I will examine. With the caption: ‘Bleeding to be a Blessing’, Dhinakaran is described as a ‘man of sorrows... subjected by the Lord to many trials and tribulations so that he can visualise the sufferings of others and pray for them with divine compassion’.³⁴ This thesis will further assess the implication of his theology of compassion and the idea of the wounded healer for power evangelism and Indian Charismatic theology.

Both ‘pentecostal power’ for the task of evangelism and a profound ‘pastoral praxis’ for the care of souls lie at the heart of his charismatic healing ministry,³⁵ resulting in a phenomenon that may be called: ‘Pastoral Pentecostalism’. This term, I presented at the WCC consultation in Accra, and advocate in this thesis, underlines the essential need to develop a balanced practical theology for healing within a broad spectrum of Pentecostal spiritualities that are open to the Spirit’s powerful charismata yet critically informed by the disciplines of pastoral care.³⁶ The concept *Pastoral Pentecostalism* may be broadly defined as: *Demonstrating the power of Jesus’ compassion by exercising the Spirit’s healing gifts with the intention of building God’s kingdom.*

Dhinakaran is a national figure with socio-political influence whose ministry is woven into the fabric of Indian Pentecostalism at a defining moment in its history. On 10th

³¹ Thomas Edmunds’ ‘Jesus’ Miracles in Jesus Calls Ministry of Dhinakarans: A Case in the Theological and Historical Perspectives’, p. 1, 21. *Paper*, Hyderabad Conference, October 1998.

³² Interview, K. Rajendran, (author: *Which Way Forward Indian Missions?*) IMA, Madras, 22.08.01.

³³ Bergunder, ‘Ministry of Compassion’, *Christianity is Indian*, Delhi: ISCPK, 2000, p. 174.

³⁴ Dhinakaran, *Jesus Call Campaign Manual*, p. 4.

³⁵ See, Wynand de Kock, ‘Pentecostal Power for a Pentecostal Task: Empowerment through Engagement in South African Context’, *JPT*, 16, 2000, p. 102-116.

³⁶ Dietrich Werner in the Reflector’s Report wrote: ‘Nothing is more needed than to deepen and to foster such a pastoral Pentecostalism or pastoral theology of healing for both Pentecostal and certainly, the historic churches’. ‘Mission, Health and Healing’, *IRM*, 370/371, 2004, p. 387.

April 2003, he met with the Indian President Abdul Kalam, a nuclear scientist, who vouched that *Jesus Calls* is a 'ministry that renews faith in the hearts of people is absolutely necessary for the nation'.³⁷ Dhinakaran then prayed for wisdom and health for the President. Dhinakaran is highly respected as an ecumenist for healing among the mainline Protestants, Roman Catholics and Pentecostals and has attained international recognition.³⁸ In spite of its national impact and global appeal, his Jesus Calls movement has not been adequately critiqued. Hence the title of my thesis:

Charismata and Compassion: Dhinakaran, Charismatic Healing and Pastoral Pentecostalism in South India – a Practical Theological Assessment.

A brief note on my background and interest in Dhinakaran's ministry is not out of place. My father, a member of the CSI, hails from Tamilnadu. I grew up in Bangalore, Karnataka and have always been intrigued by the 'superstitious' yet sincere faith of my non-Christian friends in miracle healing. I was fortunate to be educated in a Protestant mission school that taught the Bible and where I became a follower of Christ. My lower middle class family struggled with sickness and was in constant debt. After high school, I got a job as an electrician in a factory that for four years exposed me to the daily struggles and aspirations of the Indian working class. I was invited to be the youth pastor of a Baptist church and struggled to effectively relate my faith to the surrounding Hindu culture. Then a breakthrough came.

My local church sent me to America for theological studies and after five years I returned to India. In 1989, I was ordained and commissioned for church planting and pastoral work, during which I realised the need for a contextual healing ministry. As an Indian pastor, I began to ask awkward questions about my western training. Then as a lecturer on evangelism and pastoralia at the South Asia Institute for Advanced Christian Studies (SAIACS), teaching at the Bangalore Baptist hospital chaplaincy and working with the Christian Medical Association of India (CMAI) increasingly stirred my interest in faith healing.³⁹ My problem as an evangelical was that I was afraid to deny the miraculous and ashamed to simply dismiss God's will for healing as either mystery or magical. Then, I discovered Dhinakaran.

³⁷ www.jesuscalls.org. Photos and report in *Jesus Calls*, May 2003 (inside cover). Dhinakaran's meeting with the President of India is particularly significant in the light of the rise of Hindu Fundamentalism.

³⁸ *Jesus Calls* has 'Prayer Healing Centres' on all continents except South America and popular via over 50 TV broadcasts in 11 languages worldwide, *Jesus Calls*, Oct, 2002, p. 30.

³⁹ Edmunds and Scorer in their classic study *Some Thoughts on Faith-Healing*, (London: Tyndale, 1966) challenge the notion that faith automatically gives an entitlement for bodily healing.

My parents occasionally sent donations to Dhinakaran's mass healing and gospel campaigns. With his many projects to aid the poor and needy, I sensed Dhinakaran was indeed a phenomenon, i.e. a remarkable person, extraordinarily gifted with compassion as that 'distinct feature that has endeared him to millions'. The man was the medium and his message. I attended several *Jesus Calls* open-air festivals where people flocked 'to receive amidst striking miracles their much needed health and peace of mind'.⁴⁰ By 1995, I began a critical enquiry into Dhinakaran's *Jesus Calls* ministry by avidly studying his books and observing his healing praxis. I read his magazines, watched his TV programs, listened to scores of his audio-video tapes, visited and interviewed staff at his headquarters, Karunya rural hospital, College of Technology, Bethesda healing pool-site and worked with his ministry team at the Prayer Dome.

I have had discussions with Dhinakaran including two four-hour taped interviews. It was a privilege to be invited as an observer-participant to his 10-day *Institute of Power Ministry* (IPM) training, which helped me clarify some major themes and construct his theology. I regularly browse through his website and have been in dialogue with him, his admirers and his critics.⁴¹ I have kept abreast with the topic and issues as a consultant with the World Council of Churches (WCC) faith and healing commission (2000-05). For me, Dhinakaran is a phenomenon and a puzzle concerning the power of compassion that heals, and now he has become the subject of my PhD thesis.

4. A Brief Review of Literature

Hoerschelmann's groundbreaking work *Christian Gurus: A Study on the Life and Work of Christian Charismatic Leaders in South India* published in 1977, does not include Dhinakaran among the twenty leaders he examined. But, in 2000, Bergunder's findings in *Christianity is Indian* placed him as 'the foremost and most influential Charismatic leader in India'.⁴² Much has happened since Dhinakaran's debut in 1970 that has shaped Charismatic Christianity in India, which needs an appraisal.

In the field of sociology, British anthropologist Caplan's seminal work *Class and Culture in Urban India* (1987) examined the religious change in the wider

⁴⁰ Quotes from the introduction to Dhinakaran found normally at the back of his publications.

⁴¹ Website: www.prayertoweronline.org. There are 24-hour prayer lines.

⁴² Bergunder, 'Ministry of Compassion', *Christianity is Indian*, p. 158-74.

ecclesiastical context of South India where charismatic prophets operated with healing miracles.⁴³ This distinct feature of the Spirit's work gave Fundamentalism a new edge in Tamilnadu's protestant evangelical communities. In *Religion and Power* (1989), Caplan dealt with popular Christianity in this region, naming Dhinakaran as 'the most widely followed charismatic prophet' and describing gatherings where, 'the drama of the occasion seldom fails to produce cures and converts, demonstrating again and again the power of the Holy Spirit and of course of the prophet'.⁴⁴

J.S. Augustine's work demonstrated how charismatic faith became a counter-culture where prophets served as divine agents for healing. For him, this 'evangelical upsurge' revealed the widespread institution of healing, which had 'tapped a crucial vein in the corpus of popular beliefs about the causes of misfortune and the efficacy of ritual procedures for dealing with such misfortunes'.⁴⁵ The above works are useful to study the socio-religious background and syncretic nature of Indian Pentecostal healings. However, they do not examine the specific teachings of prophet-healers like Dhinakaran nor attempt to critique their healing theologies as such. My interest, which is primarily pastoral and theological, will assess this in the present Indian context.

From a missiological point of view, with Hoerschelmann and Bergunder, American historian Edmunds' paper examined Dhinakaran's 'miraculous' ministry. He noted that in the post independence cultural milieu it enables 'indigenous independent church movements' and represented 'a vigorous and rapidly expanding section of Christianity in India'.⁴⁶ But Edmunds does not explain nor assess Dhinakaran's contextual theology. Raj, referring to indigenous missions merely notes: 'Pastor Dhinakaran and his son Paul do not have a congregation or a church. They are revival preachers... who have learnt from great preachers who live in the USA'.⁴⁷ Hedlund in *Quest for Identity* suspects Dhinakaran's views have 'sub-biblical distortions' and 'questionable substitutes' for Christian faith,⁴⁸ but he does not establish this critique.

⁴³ Lionel Caplan, *Class and Culture in Urban India*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1987, p. 213-257.

⁴⁴ Caplan, *Religion and Power: On the Christian Community*, Madras: CLS, 1989, p. 86, 104.

⁴⁵ J.S. Augustine, *Religious Fundamentalism: Asian Perspective*, Bangalore: SATRI, 1993, p. 123.

⁴⁶ Thomas Edmunds, 'Jesus' Miracles in Jesus Calls Ministry', 1998, p. 21, intends with David Harrell of Auburn University to write a comprehensive history of the Jesus Calls movement.

⁴⁷ Solomon Raj, *New Wine Skins*, 2003, p. 41.

⁴⁸ Hedlund, *Quest for Identity: India's Churches of Indigenous Origin*, Delhi: ISPCK, 2000, p. 245.

Pentecostal scholars leave a lacuna when constructing Charismatic Christianity and the healing movement in India. Hollenweger's *Pentecostalism: Origins and Development Worldwide* does not in any detail discuss the movement in the Indian subcontinent, which until 2002, Pentecostal Dictionaries had not incorporated.⁴⁹ Indian Pentecostal scholars such as A.C. George, Satyavrata and Pulikottil have usefully examined Pentecostalism's general character in the Indian cultural context.⁵⁰ Isaac Matthew and T.S. Kutty have noted the formation of Pentecostal churches with respect to Dalit theology.⁵¹ These are important studies that observe the key issues and draw out implications for indigenous spirituality. But, none concern themselves with the significance of miracle healings nor critique the explosive theology of health and prosperity within the Indian culture, to which chapter ten of my thesis is dedicated.

I have read with keen interest several academic works on charismatic healers and prosperity preachers. For instance, Hagin, Roberts and Wimber from the USA, Milingo and Modise from Africa, and Yonggi Cho from East Asia have been researched in their contexts.⁵² India, after the USA, is the world's largest missionary-sending country in spite (perhaps because) of restrictions on foreign missionaries.⁵³ A vast dimension of evangelism takes place internally and cross-culturally from the south to north. Yet, to date, no fellow-Indian has submitted a thesis on Dhinakaran's phenomenal healing praxis and unique prosperity message. This study seeks to make this original contribution from the Indian sub-continent to global Pentecostal missions.

5. The Scope and Limitations of this Thesis

As an exercise in pastoral theology this thesis reflects on the theories and practice of healing specific to charismatic Christians in the Indian cultural context. It seeks to bring the Bible and Christian tradition into meaningful dialogue with human experiences of illness and healing. Associated beliefs and praxis do not take place in a vacuum. Hall aptly argues that 'theology is inescapably contextual' and contends that though it may be refined in academia, to have any value, it has to include the struggles

⁴⁹ Burgess & Maas (eds.) *IDPCM*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002.

⁵⁰ A.C. George, 'Pentecostal Beginnings in Travancore', *AJPS*, 4/2, 2001, p. 215-37; Ivan Satyavrata, 'Contextual Perspectives', Dempster et. al., *Globalisation of Pentecostalism*, Paternoster, 1999, p. 203-221; Pulikottil, *The Pentecostal Mission: A Case Study, Paper*, Birmingham, September 2001.

⁵¹ T.S. Samuel Kutty, *The Place and Contribution of Dalits in Select Pentecostal Churches in Central Kerala from 1922-1972*, Delhi: ISCPK, 2000. Isaac Matthew, *Pentecostal Witness*, p. 39-57

⁵² See works of Warrington, Harrell, Percy, Milingo, A. Anderson, Ma and Jeong in bibliography.

⁵³ According to Johnston & Mandryk, there are 41,064 national missionaries from India, next in Asia is South Korea with 12,279 (the US has 64,084), *Operation World*, Carlisle: Paternoster, 2001, p. 6.

being fought daily for meaning as in the cases of sickness and poverty.⁵⁴ Thus, my enquiry is situated between ideal concepts and concrete realities, which in Indian society unavoidably entail a variety of cultural notions of illness and contextual needs for wellbeing: spiritual, emotional, physical and material. Browning is correct in insisting: 'Pastoral theology must attempt to discern and articulate the relevance to care of both the religious dimensions of common experience as well as the explicit faith themes of the historic Judeo-Christian tradition'. This, I intend to do.⁵⁵

Hollenweger's epoch-making work *The Pentecostals* (1972) highlighted the rapid expansion and success of the Pentecostal movement in the Third World. Here, he insisted that, 'the continuous spread of the Pentecostal movement in many countries must be interpreted as the discovery of new means of communication in the specific social fields, which can be clearly defined for each Pentecostal group,'⁵⁶ which I will take up for South India. Cox predicted that the rise of Pentecostal spirituality would reshape religion in the twenty-first century. He based this insight not only on the emergence of primal spirituality but importantly on Pentecostalism's unique ability 'to root itself in almost any culture'.⁵⁷ I will demonstrate how Indian Pentecostalism and Dhinakaran's healing ministry in particular, unmistakably evidence certain adaptive and syncretic aspects due to their pragmatic nature. It is worth underlining that while Dhinakaran operates 'within a framework that is absolutely Christian',⁵⁸ there is both a useful and a harmful syncretism in his overall presentation of the gospel of Christ.

Biblical teachings on healing, as modelled by Jesus and developed within traditional Christian thought will guide and inform my critiques. A question central to my thesis is: What aspects of God's nature revealed in congruent or enriching ways in Dhinakaran's healing theology contribute to the pastoral care and the reformation of Christian mission in India? I also want to point out my thesis' limitations. This thesis does not intend to critique the healing experience of people, which is always mediated and so never a pure phenomenon. Critical assessments of healing, in the Bible or in Dhinakaran's practice, that question authenticity or dismiss it as pre-scientific or

⁵⁴ Douglas Hall, *Thinking the Faith*, Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989.

⁵⁵ Don Browning, 'Pastoral Theology in a Pluralistic Age' Pattison & Woodward (eds.) *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2000, p. 94.

⁵⁶ Walter Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals*, London: SCM Press, 1972, xix.

⁵⁷ Harvey Cox, *Fire from Heaven*, Reading MA: Addison-Wesley Pub., 1994, p. 101.

⁵⁸ Bergunder, 'Ministry of Compassion', p. 171.

psychosomatic are not explored,⁵⁹ since it is not directly related to my subject. This is not a socio-scientific analysis of the Jesus Calls movement,⁶⁰ and the criteria are limited insofar as they pertain to the objective of my project - aimed not to critique Dhinakaran but his teaching on divine healing and theological praxis.

Thus, this thesis' primary concern is not to empirically judge the efficacy, credibility or success of the healing events *per se*.⁶¹ Reliable data of medical and socio-scientific value are difficult to find. Personal reports are subjective and highly sensitive in nature and I have pledged confidentiality to some. During investigation there were several who claimed substantial and permanent healings, and in many other unhealed cases, people felt emotionally manipulated and critics described some claims as bogus or fraudulent. The ratio between the two, degree of accuracy in testimonies, or the actual numbers from the mass campaigns held all over India, are impossible to establish. Hence, in reporting healings or personal testimonies, qualifying phrases such as: 'it was claimed', 'apparently', 'allegedly', 'supposedly', etc., are dropped in keeping with the subjective nature of people's experiences and to make the text less cumbersome.

6. Method of Research: Toward a Contextual Healing Theology

My primary task was to provide a systematic ordering of the complex and contrary material on Dhinakaran and come to some intelligible discernment about their shape and scope.⁶² The goal was to offer critical reflection on relevant issues and theories and discover fresh and challenging insights. During the initial stages of my research, I paid close attention to 'the Dhinakaran phenomenon': listening with an open and keen mind to both the zealous advocates and severe critics of his healing movement. Next, respectful non-directive questions were raised to Dhinakaran's self-understanding of miracle healing within Protestant theology that many Indian evangelicals found controversial to their traditional views. I sought permission to interview Dhinakaran and was granted access to discuss with him his healing theology at length.

⁵⁹ Davies, *Jesus the Healer*, SCM, 1995; Sanford, *Healing Body and Soul*, Gracewing, 1992.

⁶⁰ John Elliott, *What is Social Science Criticism*, 1993, in Steven Muir, *Healing, Initiation and Community in Luke-Acts: A Comparative Analysis*, Ph.D. University of Ottawa, 1998.

⁶¹ Bergunder found this to be the case and confesses: 'Little reliable information is available about this exceptional charismatic person and his organisation 'Jesus Calls,' as a lot of details are shrouded by hagiographical stories of his life and ministry, *Christianity is Indian*, p. 158

⁶² Martyn Percy, 'Researching Religion: A Brief Guide' Paper presented, Sheffield, March, 2003, p. 1.

Preliminary research was conducted to be aware of the perceived and expressed notions of illness and crucial areas for healing in the Indian culture.⁶³ The purpose was to better understand Dhinakaran's target audience and to reconfirm the central issues. This called for engagement, attentiveness to special events, much travel and diplomacy in obtaining relevant data. For this background material, the fieldwork comprised of:

- i) A pilot study conducted with open-ended questions to draw out the possible views of the causative factors and remedies for illnesses (Appendix 1)
- ii) A questionnaire with closed-ended questions to gain focus on Dhinakaran and to theologically analyse the four major themes that had emerged (Appendix 2)

I recognise that a good deal of psychodynamic, anthropological and sociological reflections could result from the above findings. But, this requires a *socio-scientific* approach larger than the scope of this dissertation and the rich findings are difficult to integrate into the thesis itself. My thesis is chiefly a *theological* assessment. However, feedback from selected Indian Christian leaders is interspersed (see: List of Interviews, p. 273-275). From time to time, insights from the findings are utilised and referenced (e.g. Tables 6 and 7), but without detailed analysis of this ancillary material. I intend to take up the specific analysis of the four themes as a separate project. Moreover, due to the highly sensitive, volatile and divisive issues within this investigation, confidentiality was pledged and the names of some informants had to be withheld.⁶⁴ Consequently, my research method is more textual than empirical, i.e. it examines Dhinakaran's explicit writings, academic articles on his life's work and portions of the transcript from my observation-participation (see Personal Interviews, p. 283).

Dhinakaran's thoughts are embedded in his devotional books that are largely narrative and anecdotal. His charismatic praxis is a dynamic, experiential form of an 'enacted theology'. His theology was extrapolated carefully from four essential literary sources:

1. The twelve books published by Dhinakaran since 1972 that are listed in the bibliography and briefly reviewed in the chronology of his works (p. 98-101).
2. Dhinakaran's monthly articles in *Jesus Calls* magazine (2000-2005) including a careful study of his new projects and the programmes advertised.
3. Notes from my participant-observation in three public presentations: *Jesus Calls* campaigns, the Festival of Joy, and the 2002 *Institute of Power Ministry* (IPM) with over one thousand charismatic evangelists and lay professionals.

⁶³ Ross Michell, 'An Orthodox View of Healing', *JHCC*, October, 1996, p. 12.

⁶⁴ Dhinakaran is a celebrity and a political figure hence some Indian ministers, after interview, asked not to be quoted lest some misunderstanding divide their church members or threaten their ministry.

4. The analysis of the number of articles, e.g. Caplan and Bergunder, which evaluate Dhinakaran's thought,⁶⁵ and quotes from my interviews with him.

The theological issues coming to the fore from Dhinakaran's ministry are given attention. As a practitioner and prophet-healer, he does not systematize his worldview or methods. Yet, in such cases, as Theron postulates, his basic doctrines and approach to divine healing are clearly linked to and based on certain biblical concepts, texts and notions, e.g. healing in the atonement (Isa. 53, Matt. 8:17).⁶⁶ Hence, his healings are more than a source for critical reflection; they also provide a norm for theological formulation toward a viable contextual theology. This process that grows out of praxis helps better understand God, the Bible and a practical ministry of healing in context.

The principles used to test Dhinakaran's healing theology suit the thesis purpose. They seek to be reliable and appropriate to the values shared by Dhinakaran and the Indian evangelical-charismatics who see the Bible as authoritative and are open to the Spirit's gifts and guidance. The following fourfold critique will be employed in assessment:⁶⁷

- i) Human experience is important in a contextual healing theology where notions of illness as an element for theological reflection receive particular emphasis without abandoning a commitment to our common humanity.
- ii) The Scriptures are interpreted to allow interaction with cultural experiences, which helps the examiner to read the Bible with fresh or non-traditional eyes, as well as contributing to the critique of local beliefs and practices.
- iii) The Church's tradition or teachings on the Spirit's ongoing work of healing is considered. Christianity as a historical and apostolic faith learns from and by critiquing older traditions, yet draws from local self understandings, i.e. unique experiences to contribute to the already rich tapestry of global Christianity.
- iv) Human reason is crucial to achieve a fair and self-critical articulation of beliefs. This thesis engages in a variety of styles of thinking familiar within its own context but seeks to make sense to the outsider. The writings of scholars are appropriately used who have critically engaged with the topic. The truth about healing may be mysterious but need not be unreasonable.

Dhinakaran's miracle healings are impressive yet equally a lived out experience and at the deepest level are contextual, cultural and communal. Hence the study method makes sense of the healing before examining its significance. Subjective and objective

⁶⁵ Over 20 audio-video messages by Dhinakaran on related themes are not analysed since generally they reiterate what has been asserted in the sources listed above.

⁶⁶ Jacques Theron, 'Towards a Practical Theological Theory for the Healing Ministry in Pentecostal Churches', *JPT*, 14, 1999. p. 49-64; H. Knight III, 'God's Faithfulness and God's Freedom: A Comparison of Contemporary Theologies of Healing', *JPT*, 2, 1993, p. 65-89.

⁶⁷ This Wesleyan-type four-fold criteria for analysis takes experience (healing) seriously in relation to reason, Christian tradition and the Scriptures (Biblical revelation). See: Scott Ellington, 'Pentecostalism and the Authority of Scripture', *JPT*, No. 9, 1996, p. 16-38.

dimensions are taken into account recognising that different manifestations are rooted in identifiable contexts in the culture of the faith community, where culture is ‘the total way of life of a particular group of people’, not static but dynamic.⁶⁸

Doing theology contextually is the appropriate method as it develops a more adequate way to make sense of Dhinakaran’s thought before evaluating it.⁶⁹ All theology is inherited and adapted, in a word – contextual. The doctrine of the Incarnation, Jesus chose to relate to humanity and his healing miracles communicated a message that was applicable and effective in meeting the Jewish socio-cultural needs. There is a ‘locality’ to Christian tradition in different periods of time, geography and cultures, which inevitably interacts with the diverse, distinct yet nuanced understandings of the sacred. One cannot ‘cut and paste’ a New Testament healing theology without it becoming irrelevant, meaningless, culturally insensitive or at worst, oppressive.

Of the major elements for reflection in a healing theology: tradition, scripture, reason and experience, the last receives attention in order to draw out indigenous thought. Though *commonality* of experience exists, there is *differentiation*, often radical or substantial. This is true with respect to culture, caste and gender conditions (e.g. feminist and liberation theologies). In this thesis, the *particularity* is the South Indian interpretations of illness and wellness. The gospel must not be allowed a flight from the world. Darragh rightly warns: ‘Any theology that claims to be based on a universal human experience needs to be quite careful that it is not simply colonial or imperial in some dominating sense that either eliminates human diversity or is blind to it’.⁷⁰

Thus, Dhinakaran’s thought and Indian-style ministry is best assessed as a contextual theology in its own right. Among other features, it takes human experience seriously and allows biblical thought in reasonable ways to evaluate, celebrate, judge as well as be judged by local beliefs and practices that may appear non-traditional. Truth stands the test of experience and there is ample reason why it should be grounded in what we experientially know. What is described as ‘healing’ is known through a process of

⁶⁸ David Burnett, *God’s Mission: The Healing of the Nations*, Kent: MARC, 1989, p.14.

⁶⁹ Bevans, ‘Why Theology must be Contextual?’ *Models of Contextual Theology*, Orbis, 1992, p. 5.

⁷⁰ Neil Darragh, ‘Contextual Method in Theology’, *Pacifica*, # 16, February 2003, p. 50.

mediation and reported in a particular frame of reference. The fullness of phenomena is never fully available to us and all that we observe is mediated.⁷¹

The focus of my thesis is essentially *theological* with an inter-disciplinary approach. Within Indian Christian culture and the 'charismatic community' in particular, certain truths are observed, understood, interpreted and communicated in distinct ways. For example, people of weak faith are believed to fall sick due to the attack of afflicting spirits called *peeys*, so copper plates are tied to arms to ward off capricious spirits. This belief is established by empirical enquiry, from works describing the community beliefs or from previous research. I have the advantage of being a native, a long-standing minister with the Indian evangelical church (CSI, Baptist and Pentecostal) and had the opportunity of being an observer-participant at Dhinakaran's ministry.

My research method is reflective, empathetic and critical. It is *situationally* related and seeks to be transformational activity. From a historical-missional description of Dhinakaran's ministry, it progresses via an interpretation-analysis of his thought and model to a critique-reassessment of his theology.⁷² My approach is similar to Kinast's 'inculturation style of doing practical theological reflection'.⁷³ Attentive to cultural notions of sickness-healing, I inquire how Dhinakaran's movement is representative of as well as a challenge to the pragmatic, syncretic and adaptive nature of modern Indian Pentecostalism. I argue his contextual theology is a valid expression of ministry within the faith community and seek to clarify the distinctively 'Christian' elements of healing juxtaposed with magical practices. Both the positive and negative aspects of his healing and prosperity message are investigated and assessed for pastoral integrity.⁷⁴ The value of 'models of healing' as interpretative tools is worth noting.

7. Function of Models for Understanding Charismatic Healings

A 'model' is a replica of the real thing, which in socio-religious science is a conceptual way to represent aspects of reality. Models have their limitations, yet for

⁷¹ Stuart Bate, *Inculturation and Healing*, Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Pub., 1995, p. 64.

⁷² See Farley, 'Interpreting Situations: An Inquiry into the Nature of Practical Theology' (Ch.7) and Larney, 'Practical Theology as a Theological Form' (Ch. 8), both in Pattison and Woodward (eds.) *A Reader in Practical Theology*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2000.

⁷³ Robert Kinast, *What Are They Saying About Theological Reflection?* NY: Paulist, 2000, p. 40-63. The task at hand, as Elaine Graham puts it, concerns 'studying a living and acting faith-community in order to excavate and examine the norms which inhabit pastoral praxis', *Transforming Practice*, p. 140.

⁷⁴ David Lyall, 'Pastoral Action and Theological Reflection', E. Larney, 'Practical Theology as a Theological Form', *Spiritual Dimensions of Pastoral Care*, London: Jessica Kingsley, 2000.

the task of describing Dhinakaran's healing praxis these 'ideal types', as Weber puts it, can give it shape or form for a useful examination. H.R. Niebuhr in his noted study *Christ and Culture* used such 'typologies' to delineate ways Christians relate to their societies.⁷⁵ The application of models to Christian faith and culture is illustrated in Bevans' *Models of Contextual Theology*. Kydd's investigation of 'miracles' in *Healing through the Centuries* is aptly subtitled 'models for understanding'.⁷⁶ Warrington, for one, uses the paradigmatic model of Jesus the healer, to analyse the teaching and praxis of the Pentecostal healing evangelists Wimber and Hagin.⁷⁷

The accounts of miracle healing in Dhinakaran's Jesus Calls ministry, individual or mass are held firmly against the background of Jesus' total ministry. It seeks to be based on the 'foundational' miracles of Christianity and advocates a christological model. It also serves as a 'complementary model' within Indian culture and like most other Pentecostal ministries, claims to extend and emulate Jesus' ministry in its time and for its own people. Latourelle is right that a sound method that studies a healing theology must begin with Jesus the 'explainer,' not that which is to be 'explained'.⁷⁸ Faupel points out at least three essential functions of models as they usefully provide:

- i) The framework to reconstruct the early message.
- ii) Insights into the subsequent developments which have occurred.
- iii) The basis for the ongoing task of theological reflection.⁷⁹

Targ notes how 'most healing efforts in the community occur within a cultural context either of interaction between the healer and the patient or expectation by the patient that healing is being performed on his or her behalf'.⁸⁰ As ministry models met religio-cultural needs Charismatic healing theologies were spawned and in a pragmatic way were franchised globally. A phenomenological approach is valuable as it allows experiences of the sacred as the cause or at least an element in the healing encounter.⁸¹ It is also useful for comparative studies of a variety of healing forms and to develop a hermeneutic or cultural model (as against a purely scientific or biomedical model).

⁷⁵ H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, New York: Harper and Row, 1951.

⁷⁶ Ron Kydd, *Healing through the Centuries: Models for Understanding*, Peabody: Hendrickson, 1998.

⁷⁷ Keith Warrington, 'The Teaching and Praxis Concerning Supernatural Healing of the British Pentecostals, of John Wimber and of Kenneth Hagin', Ph.D. Thesis, King's College, London, 1999.

⁷⁸ Rene Latourelle, *Miracles of Jesus and A Theology of Miracles*, NY: Paulist Press, 1988, p. 7.

⁷⁹ W. Faupel, 'The Function of Models in Interpretation of Pentecostal Thought', *Pneuma*, 1980, p. 51.

⁸⁰ Elisabeth Targ, 'Research Methodology for Studies of Prayer and Distant Healing' *Complementary Studies in Nursing*, No. 8, 2002, p. 31.

⁸¹ Thomas Csordas, *The Sacred Self: Cultural Phenomenology of Charismatic Healing*, UCLA, 1998, p.5; *Body/Meaning/Healing*, Macmillan, 2002, adopts this approach and builds on Geertz's assertion that religion as a system of symbols is articulated in cultural systems of social relationships.

This, as Pilch notes, is fundamental since all illness realities are in a real sense, semantic and all healing is an interpretive activity.⁸² In short, this thesis theologically engages with the *meaning* of 'healing' for those who may or may not experience it, and my critique arises out of pastoral concern for those who have to live with the implications or consequences of Dhinakaran's teachings.

There are a few lesser-known charismatic healers and some prosperity preachers in South India. Leading representatives from the four southern states are K.R Paul in Andhra Pradesh, Arthur Paul in Karnataka, C.K Lazarus and P.G. Vargis in Kerala, and Sam Chelladurai in Tamil Nadu. I have chosen a typical and widely accepted individual, considered as a mentor or guru within the movement. Dhinakaran, as attested and noted by Hedlund, Rajendran, Edmunds and others, is indeed that person. This method is obviously advantageous for any in-depth and contextual study. It is further useful in two distinct ways: First, as Percy has pointed out, 'selecting one individual does help to avoid some selective analysis that at times, seem to focus on extremes and aberrations within the movement. [Second] in choosing one case study, there are significant implications for the study of others'.⁸³

Finally, while engaging with such 'models of pastoral care', Oliver notes that understandings or misunderstandings occur as a result of interplay between theological and popular notions. Creative tensions will arise therefore, he rightly insists that:

Christian pastoral care is a continuation of the ministry of Jesus, which longs, seeks, and works for the Kingdom, but such a basic assertion has to be kept before us if a retreat into uncritical formulations is to be avoided... Put briefly, we need to be aware that the contextual nature of models is not just socio-historical but also theological.⁸⁴

My desire is that this thesis will theologically inform and help to evaluate the nature of Christian faith in relation to a viable healing praxis and message of prosperity, and invite fruitful comparison with parallel phenomena in other parts of my country and the world. In particular, I seek to do pastoral service to the Indian evangelical church and through this research be equipped to develop courses in Charismatic studies and train pastor-teachers and missionaries at SAIACS, Bangalore where I return to teach.

⁸² John Pilch explains the difference and preference for the cultural model in studying healing activity that are carried out according to specific interpretative strategies adopted by the healer. 'Understanding Biblical Healing: Selecting the Appropriate Model', *Biblical Theology Bulletin*, 18/2, 1988, p. 60-66.

⁸³ M. Percy, *Words, Wonders and Power*. London: SPCK, 1996, p. 13.

⁸⁴ Gordon Oliver, 'Model and Myth in Pastoral Care' *Anvil*, 6/3, 1989, p. 213.

8. A Chapter Outline of the Thesis

Table 1: The research method proceeds from a rich description of Dhinakaran's praxis and healing model via a pastoral-theological interpretation to a critical assessment.

Ch1: Dhinakaran espouses a contextual theology for charismatic healing and blessing. Hence the introduction, after the thesis rationale, scope and literature review, noted the development of Pentecostal healings within South India, which forms the immediate cultural context within which the Jesus Calls healing ministry is to be examined.

Ch2 discusses the rise of the Indian Pentecostal movement with healing as its flagship. It highlights three less well known but important precursors with the *Bhakti-Guru* spirituality as its theological roots that give it a distinct identity and argues that its success lies in its highly pragmatic, culturally adaptive and existential nature. It then demonstrates how a dialectical approach that combines 'pentecostal' power carefully with compassion (*manadhurukkam*) has proven to be an effective mission strategy.

Ch3 examines the significance of the 1906 revival that spread from Azusa Street, USA and marks India's vital contribution to global Charismatic theology. It shows the rise of the Indian Charismatic movement in which evangelists were carriers of a culture for healing. The key tenets in the practical healing theologies of major Indian Pentecostal groups that have influenced Dhinakaran's teachings and ministry are discussed.

Ch4 narrates Dhinakaran's journey with healing highlighting the major influences and theological concepts that became central to his prayer movement. Dhinakaran builds on the Christian guru-healer tradition and selectively adapts aspects of American faith healing for a viable mission that contributes at once to an indigenous ministry and global trends in Charismatic Christianity, allowing each to inform and shape the other.

Ch5 examines the '20 facets' of *Jesus Calls* ministry within a fourfold preach-teach-heal and consolidate framework that demonstrates it to be a wholistic and intentionally pastoral approach to charismatic healing. His social outreach is portrayed through power evangelism, *Karunya* educational and medical institutes and *SEESHA*, a community relief project for the destitute. In all this, there is a Pastoral Pentecostalism that reveals the power of charismata experienced in projects that depict compassion.

Ch6 presents three essential concepts entailed in Dhinakaran's model: compassion, the wounded healer and healing evangelism. It argues that each correlates to each other within a theological apparatus to make interpretative sense of his praxis resulting in 'Pastoral Pentecostalism' and points out four themes central to charismatic healing: fervency (prayer), expectancy (faith), potency (power) and agency (wounded healers).

Ch7 is an assessment of the Dhinakaran phenomenon as it has set new direction of ministry in keeping with Indian socio-cultural trends and has become a global player in the spread of charismatic healing. It also evaluates the theological worldview and issues that arise from his 'Pastoral Pentecostalism' where charismata fulfil Jesus' healing apostolate as a powerful sign of divine compassion and the coming kingdom.

The next three chapters critically assess Dhinakaran's faith and ministry and healing theology in relation to three problematic topics: miracles, exorcism and prosperity.

Ch8 explores Dhinakaran's understanding of miracles as 'signs and wonders' and their significance for evangelism. It examines the role of the modern Christian guru as a miracle worker and offers a critique of the Jesus Calls miraculous ministry.

Ch9 is a comparative study of Dhinakaran as a Pentecostal exorcist and the traditional shamanic manthiravadi as agents of power healing. It explores the Indian worldview, aetiology of affliction and the value of the archetype of the wounded warrior-healer in the process of taking on another's affliction that result in deliverance. It shows ways in which the nature of Christian miracle power radically differs from the religio-magical.

Ch10 evaluates Dhinakaran blessing theology, message of prosperity and fund raising strategies against the practice of *dakshina* (donations) in *guruism*. They are critiqued further in relation to the American health-wealth or prosperity gospel and his teachings on faith and *Jesus Calls* ministry are assessed for their ethical and pastoral integrity.

Ch11: In conclusion, the thesis advocates a Pastoral Pentecostalism that holds in creative tension charismata with compassion and re-presents Dhinakaran's teachings placing him as a significant evangelist and practitioner of Christian healing from India.

Chapter Two

The Emergence of the Pentecostal-Charismatic Movement in South India

India is the birthplace of several world religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism. Tradition has it that in 52 A.D. the apostle Thomas brought the Christian faith to India as he preached the gospel around the southwestern coast to Jewish communities in what is now Kerala.¹ His mission proceeded to countries like China but returned to Mylapore in Tamilnadu. While ministering to hostile Brahmins on the outskirts of Madras (also called Chennai today), there was a riot in which the apostle was speared to death. This account reveals how the blood of a martyr was the potent seed for the Indian Church. A memorial at Mount Thomas near Madras commemorates this 'true witness' and points to the origins of Christianity in India.²

Hinduism remains the dominant religious culture (79.83 %) in India and with the rise of Hindu fundamentalism, functions in many ways like a state religion. In spite of Christianity's early arrival and powerful witness, national statistics rate Christians as 2-3 % under 'minority groups'.³ However, religious contours have rapidly changed since the inception of Pentecostalism, which is the largest, most influential and fastest growing Christian movement in India today. Compared to 2000 years of Mar Thoma or Syrian tradition, its history is recent, yet its strong presence and missionary zeal are remarkable. With India's population of over a billion this Spirit-oriented, experiential form of faith has unlimited scope and incredible expansion.

1. A 'Marvellous' Movement of Pentecostals in India

People movements occur because people are motivated and mobilised by some means to change for what is better for them or for their group's wellbeing.⁴ New religious movements provide the needed convictions and new directions with organisational networks to achieve common goals.⁵ I will explore factors that contributed to the rise of the Indian Pentecostal movement to show ways in which it radically re-formed the nature of South Indian Christianity, which will never be the same.

¹ C.B. Firth, *An Introduction to the Church in India*, Delhi: ISPCK, 2000, p. 3.

² M.K. Kuriakose, *History of Christianity in India: Source Material*, Delhi: ISPCK, 1999; D. Arthur Jeyakumar, *History of Christianity in India: Selected Themes*, Delhi: ISPCK, 2004.

³ Website of Census of India www.censusindia.net

⁴ Desrochers, Wielenga and Patel, *Social Movements*, Bangalore: Centre for Social Change, 1991; Eileen Barker, *New Religious Movements*, London: HMSO, 1995.

⁵ John Saliba, *Understanding New Religious Movements*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995.

In Asia, evangelical churches are experiencing exponential growth. Of 199 million professing Christians, Barrett records two thirds i.e. over 135 million are Pentecostals-Charismatics.⁶ In India 'in the 1990s the Pentecostal/Charismatic Renewal as a whole continued to spread rapidly across most older churches and numbered over 33,530,000 adherents'.⁷ In 2000, half of all Indian Christians were Charismatics making it remarkably the fifth largest concentration worldwide.⁸ The four southern states: Tamilnadu, Karnataka, Kerala and Andhra (map on p. xiii) house two thirds of all the Christians. Here, Bergunder estimates conservatively that over 20% of all Protestants are Pentecostal-Charismatic, which 'is relatively high with a growing trend'.⁹ Pentecostals have refashioned the character of Indian evangelicals and revolutionised its mission in significant ways that warrant study, but first a few definitions of terms.

In academic circles, three categories of Indian Pentecostals are recognised:¹⁰ (1) *Classical* Pentecostals who came out of the Syrian orthodox and Brethren churches, partly impacted by Azusa and stressing Spirit baptism and tongues, (2) after 1950, the *Neo-Pentecostals* or *Charismatics* who stayed in the Protestant churches and those from the *Catholic Renewal* who also did not sever from the 'mother church', both promoting the gifts and (3) the *Third Wavers* and *indigenous* groups that restored the apostolic offices and the ministry of 'signs and wonders'. At the popular level, the Pentecostal-Charismatic continuum in India is assumed and due to the belief in the Spirit's direct conferring of gifts, Pentecostal churches reflect great diversity. Yet, the common denominator is the conviction that 'the Acts 2:4 experience is available to all Christians today and the gifts of the Spirit are operative in believers today'.¹¹

At the turn of the 20th century, a distinct Pentecostal piety was evident on Indian soil, chiefly a product of 'evangelical awakenings' that brought renewal in the traditional Syrian and Protestant missionary churches.¹² Yet, a revival advanced in extraordinary

⁶ D. Barrett, 'The Worldwide Holy Spirit Renewal' in Synan, *The Century of the Holy Spirit*, Nelson, 2001, Among Asian Neo-Charismatics, 16.6 million are Indian indigenous Pentecostals, p. 381-414.

⁷ Barrett, Kurian & Johnson (eds.), 'India', *World Christian Encyclopaedia*, OUP, 2001, p. 365.

⁸ S. Burgess ranks Indian Pentecostals fifth, behind Brazil, USA, China and Nigeria, 'Pentecostalism in India: An Overview', *AJPS*, 2001, p. 85. Barrett, 'Statistics Global', *NIDPCM*, Zondervan, 2001.

⁹ Michael Bergunder, 'Miracle Healing and Exorcism', *ICGQ*, 8/2, 2001, p. 151.

¹⁰ Gary McGee, 'Pentecostalism', *DAC*, p. 646.

¹¹ A.C. George, 'Pentecostal Witness in the Third Millennium', *Faith Theological Review (FTR)*, V/1, March 2001, p. 8-9. Other contributors: T.C. George, John Thannickal, Isaac Matthew and M. Stephen.

¹² Edwin Orr, *Evangelical Awakenings in India*, Delhi: 1970 (1860-1904; Welsh revival), p. 29-49.

ways due to Spirit-outpourings as Indian Christians encountered the Spirit's presence and exercised the gifts/*charismata*.¹³ The Pentecostal movement proved to be experientially and categorically different. Unlike the evangelicals, its adherents claimed a post-conversion experience of being 'baptised' or immersed *in (by or with)* the Spirit, usually as a consequence of seeking after God in expectant prayer during crises. All Christians are 'charismatic' insofar as each possess some spiritual gift to build the Church (1Cor. 12:7; 1Pet. 4:10). Kosala, as most Indian Christians would, finds it 'regrettable and biblically incorrect' to limit the term 'charismatic' to the experience of 'glossolalia'.¹⁴ Therefore, unless specified otherwise, I will use the noun 'Charismatic' in the broader sense to include the Classical, Neo-Pentecostals, Third Wavers, indigenous and independent churches and other faith ministries.¹⁵

For many Indian Pentecostals, but by no means all, Spirit baptism occurred in connection with the ability to speak or often pray in tongues, hence the name, 'tongues movement'. Pentecostals regard Spirit baptism as a key initiatory event into a *deeper* or *fuller* Christian life with the Spirit as Sanctifier, Enabler and Guide.¹⁶ Pentecostals in India generally agree that tongues may serve as an evidence of Spirit baptism, perhaps as its initial evidence, but not its absolute or indisputable evidence. The main significance of Spirit baptism as a human-divine encounter is that believers enter into experiencing 'Pentecostal power' in a new dimension of reality; the *charismata* are democratised and engaged in God's mission in the social world, which becomes the community's primary 'Pentecostal task'.¹⁷ Thus Spirit-oriented and empowered forms of faith gain revolutionary relevance and missional value as a counterculture and are an important background for my study of Dhinakaran's charismatic ministry.

Indian Pentecostals avoid defining Pentecostalism or the Spirit's work. For Thangiah, pastor of the largest Full Gospel AG Church, Bangalore, 'Pentecostalism is better caught than taught'. *A Dictionary of Asian Christianity* usefully describes it as:

An evangelical restorationist movement [to primeval, Acts 2 Christianity] that emphasizes the baptism and gifts of the Spirit for the life and mission of the church and indigenous forms of worship and church structure.¹⁸

¹³ Milton Jeganathan (ed.) *The Third Shift: Toward a Charismatic Community*, 2002, p. 140-183.

¹⁴ Kishore Kosala, 'Spiritual Gifts and Church Growth', *ICGQ*, 9/3, 2002, p. 226.

¹⁵ Synan, 'Pentecostalism: Varieties and Contributions', *Pneuma*, 1986, p. 31-49; Allan Anderson, 'Stretching the Definitions?' *JPT*, 10/1, 2001, p. 98-119.

¹⁶ Gary McGee, 'Pentecostalism', *DAC*, Sunquist (ed.) 2004, p. 646-249.

¹⁷ Wynand de Kock, 'Pentecostal Power for a Pentecostal Task', *JPT*, 16, 2000, p. 102-166.

¹⁸ McGee, *DAC*, 2004, p. 646.

Indian Pentecostalism is far from homogenous and varies in kind as in the number of groups. No single or uniform definition will suffice or please this expanding segment of Christians who stress a personal experiential faith. My research across several Pentecostal churches in South India has led me to believe, simply, that Pentecostals are evangelicals who are enabled to minister with special spiritual *gifts* particularly the nine named in 1Cor. 12: 8-11, and Dhinakaran would fall in this category. I agree with Noll's differentiation between: 'Pentecostals who are organised in churches with a distinct emphasis on the Spirit's 'sign' gifts chiefly that of *miracles, prophecy* and *healings*, and Charismatics who practice those gifts within churches that do not formally endorse their understanding of the Spirit's [baptism] work'.¹⁹ Subsequent to his salvation, Dhinakaran has had a 'tongues experience' yet remains a CSI member. Without calling himself 'Pentecostal', this itinerant evangelist advocates the 'gifts movement'. Unlike the Classical Pentecostals, he does 'not insist on tongues as an absolute requirement' nor 'consider it as a substitute for formal language training'.²⁰

Though it began as an indigenous revival movement, Pentecostalism became the new missionary force emanating from the historic churches and many separate Pentecostal denominations and local churches were soon established. In 1920, the North India AG District Council was constituted but it was not until 1929 that AG churches were officially organised in South India.²¹ These were shared initiatives with western missions that coincided with the Azusa Street Revival, described by some as 'the birth of the global Pentecostal movement'.²² In India, the term 'Charismatics' came into use after 1950 as some (neo) Pentecostals rejected the tongues doctrine as the 'sure sign' of Spirit baptism. The first Catholic 'charismatic prayer groups' started in Bombay in February 1972, yet in general, Indian Charismatics have come to be regarded as non-parochial extensions, adaptations or even mutations of Pentecostal piety and perceived as expressions of the Pentecostal ideology within the established churches.²³

¹⁹ Mark Noll, *Decisive Moments in the History of Christianity*, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997, p. 299.

²⁰ *DAC*, p. 648; Dhinakaran believes the Spirit 'may offer' tongues in private ecstatic worship but they should 'not become a stumbling block to those who are strangers to Christ', *Gifts*, p. 67, 78.

²¹ Ivan Satyavrata notes 1918 as 'the earliest Pentecostal group in India to take on the nature of an organised movement', *Globalisation of Pentecostalism*, p. 205; A.C. George, mentions 1929 when Pentecostalism 'came into existence with some organisational structure', *AJPS*, 4/2, 2001, p. 224.

²² Donald Gee, *The Pentecostal Movement* (1941), updated as *Wind and Flame* Croydon: AG Pub., 1967. Cecil Robeck, *The Azusa Street Mission & Revival*, 2006, p. 187. For Roman Catholic perspective, see O'Connor, *The Pentecostal Movement*, Notre Dame: Ave Maria, 1971.

²³ Fio Mascarenhas, 'Historical Note', in D.S. Amalorpavadass (ed.), *Charismatic Renewal in India*, Bangalore: NBCLC, 1984. p. 26; Athyal (ed), *Relevant Patterns of Christian Witness in India*, p. 85.

Internal disagreements still abound on the 'real' significance and exact timing of Spirit baptism with the issue of tongues as an accompanying gift.²⁴ This is not the subject of my thesis. My interest is in Dhinakaran's charismatic ministry and there is a consensus on what Dhinakaran calls, 'the Gifts of the revelation of [Jesus'] power: faith, healings and miracles' in Christian ministries, and for evangelising India',²⁵ where healing is central to the Church's mission with 'signs and wonders'.²⁶ While the early Indian Pentecostals insisted on the need to be 'Spirit baptised', today Indian Charismatics use the phrase 'Spirit filled' for both sanctification and empowerment for witness.

The sheer magnitude and magnetism of Charismatics as the fastest growing segment of Indian Christianity, call for a pastoral-theological enquiry. Transformational aspects within the movement, such as Dhinakaran's Institute of Power Ministry, are causing 'the charismatisation of mainstream evangelicals' and deserves careful study.²⁷ While one must be careful with statistics, this increasingly diverse Spirit-driven movement is indeed a cause for 'marvel'. In a pragmatic way, it proliferates at amazing rates presenting a missiological challenge of the highest order. Faith for miracle healing and a message of total wellbeing including prosperity is its main feature which has raised theological concerns for Indian evangelicals. But first, we need to explore how this effervescence of Pentecostals came about and what makes it appealing in India.

2. Precursors to Modern Pentecostalism in India

Strong evidence from the late 19th and early 20th centuries reveal Pentecost-like Spirit outpourings in India, similar yet prior to the Topeka or Azusa revivals (1901-1906). Taking these into account, Asian scholars prefer a separate and simultaneous rather than a succession theory for global Pentecostalism.²⁸ 'Wind and fire' experiences and manifestations of gifts like those in Acts 2, can be shown to have occurred in India

²⁴ John Thannickal, *The Holy Spirit: An Appeal for Maturity*, Bangalore: Nava Jeeva, 1999.

²⁵ Dhinakaran, *Gifts of the Spirit*, 1987, p. 48.

²⁶ Rajamani Stanley, 'Signs and Wonders', *ICGQ*, 13/1, 1991, p. 133-137; T.P. Abraham, 'Church Growth and Healing Ministry', *ICGQ*, 8/2, 2001, p. 144-155.

²⁷ Dave Tomlinson, *The Post Evangelical*, London: SPCK, 1995, p. 14-30.

²⁸ Gary McGee, *DAC*, 2001, p. 647; Stanley Burgess, 'Pentecostalism in India: An Overview', *AJPS*, 4/1, 2001, p. 85-98; A.C. George, 'Pentecostal Beginnings in India', *DD*, July-Dec, 2002, p. 41-45; Paulson Pulikottil, 'Emergence of Indian Pentecostalism', *DD*, July-Dec, 2002, p. 47-58; Michael Bergunder, 'Construction of Indian Pentecostalism', p.130-151 in Anderson and Tang (eds.) *Asian and Pentecostal: The Charismatic face of Christianity in Asia*, Oxford: Regnum, 2003.

before missionaries from Azusa arrived in 1907 and without the direct influence of western missions. Thus, this study challenges a purely Americo-centric historiography.

The Indian Pentecostal movement started when local Christians received and then spread what came to be called 'the Pentecostal experience'.²⁹ Visitations of the Spirit were refreshing and empowering experiences and fed the recipients into a movement that gained momentum as a part of the 1905 'evangelical awakenings in India'.³⁰ Indian believers understood their encounters with the Spirit as divine providence. God was favourably responding to their prayers and crisis situation. As a result, the sovereign Spirit was received as a gracious gift and the movement considered 'indigenous' in its origin. Jayaraj notes that the concept 'indigenisation', although first used as an adjective, in missiology points to the fact that 'a particular Church [movement] originates, grows and lives in a particular context without the influence of foreign agency or an alien influence'.³¹ I want to show how Indian Christians became the targets of these outpourings of God's Spirit. When in expectant prayer the Spirit is received with humility, he comes with enabling charismata - a life transforming experience Pentecostals realised mediates a power that enables forgiveness, healing, reconciliation and mission. I will briefly discuss three famous samples of pre-Azusa revivals to draw out salient charismatic elements for wholistic mission.

2.1 Tongues at Tirunelveli and Indigenous Apostolic Leadership

Church historians and missiologists acknowledge that, 'the most prominent revivals of the nineteenth century characterised by charismatic gifts of the Holy Spirit occurred in India'.³² On 4 March 1860, a Spirit outpouring occurred in Tirunelveli, from where Dhinakaran hails. J.C. Aroolappen, a native Anglican CMS catechist, mentored by Albert Groves and Karl Rhenius for a pietistic and apostolic mission, directed the revival that broke out. Aroolappen with his congregation had been praying for a deeper experience of God and a life of Christian purity, when the Spirit descended upon them. The CMS missionary Dibbs was an eyewitness and reported:

There was a baptism of the Spirit that filled the members of this church with a holy enthusiasm; and caused them to go everywhere preaching the gospel, in demonstration of Spirit and of power... It does seem to have the merit of being the *first entirely indigenous effort of the native church at self-extension*. It is

²⁹ Donald Gelpi, Chapter V, *Pentecostalism: A Theological Viewpoint*, New York: Paulist, 1971.

³⁰ Edwin Orr, *Evangelical Awakenings*, Delhi: CLS, 1970.

³¹ Daniel Jayaraj, (in editorial) 'Indigenous Christianity', *DD*, 6/2, 2002, p. 2.

³² Hedlund, 'Indigenous Pentecostalism in India', *Asian and Pentecostal*, 2003, p.157, quotes McGee.

indeed a new era in the Indian missions that of lay converts going out without purse or script to preach the gospel to their fellow-countrymen, and that with a zeal and life we had hardly thought them capable of.³³

Experiences of the Holy Spirit intensified the believer's desire to know Christ in the Bible, denounce all known sin, mobilise prayer and to evangelise the lost. Yet, the remarkable features of the revival were the ecstatic and physical phenomena such as shaking, falling and spectacular manifestations: tongues, interpretation, prophecy and healing. From the *experienced* presence and power of the divine Spirit, spiritual authority of the (human) offices of prophet and apostle were affirmed and reinstated. Along with 'charismatic speech' there were prophetic revelations and healing prayer.³⁴

A notorious example was that of Thomman who in tongues predicted Christ's return within six years. This was interpreted by Widwan Kutti, a Hindu convert later called Justus Joseph and recorded in the 1874 *Travancore Manual*. Hoerschelmann in his study of Charismatic Gurus considers this prophetic vision and interpretation, a 'clear evidence of tongues'.³⁵ Though the prophecy failed bringing ill repute and criticism from the Anglican clergy, the 'Pentecostal experience' and Pentecost-like charismata were recorded as authentic and their impact was remarkable. *Ad hoc* groups of 'Pentecostal' evangelists, women and men in prayer-bands, travelled 'in faith', i.e. without regular financial support and from 1873-1881 propagated the 'full gospel'.

Revival preachers, in Aroolappen's footsteps, travelled across Travancore influencing CMS and Syrian congregations up to the Malabar Coast.³⁶ In this way a 'Pentecostal' experience was already a familiar reality and power yearned after by Indians, 30 years before the Azusa Revival. Importantly, 'prayer for the sick' and 'concern for the poor' marked these charismatic ministries and despite extremes, McGee, Yung and other scholars view Aroolappen's prophetic ministry as the first record of 'Pentecost in India'.³⁷ If is true, then, its significance for global Pentecostalism is plain: 'The appearance of the gifts of the Spirit in the ministry of Aroolappen clearly indicated an open-ended expectation of the miraculous, based on expectancy of the outpouring of

³³ Ashton Dibbs, Report in *Indian Witness*, Feb., 1961; *Church Missionary Record*, Aug. 1860.

³⁴ See Gary McGee's section on, Miracles after the Apostles, 'Power from on High', Ma & Menzies (eds.) *Pentecostalism in Context*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997, p. 317-336.

³⁵ Hoerschelmann, *Christian Gurus*, p. 34.

³⁶ Burgees and Maas (ed.), 'India', *IDPCM*, 2002, p. 119.

³⁷ G.H. Lang, *The History and Diaries of an Indian Christian: John Christian Aroolappen*, London: Robinson, 1939, p. 158f; McGee, 'Pentecostal Phenomena and Revivals in India', *IBMR*, 20/3, July 1996, p. 114; Hwa Yung, 'Pentecostalism and the Asian Church', Paper, Birmingham, Sept. 2001, p. 6.

the Holy Spirit as predicted for the end times'.³⁸ Here, no 'white missionary' was present nor foreign funds involved. Miracles were not sought after but 'followed those who believed'.³⁹ Therefore, the earliest expressions of Indian Pentecostalism were 'charismatic' and culturally attuned. The 'sign' gifts produced an apostolic or guru-like authority (divine sanction) and unction (ritual power) for evangelism and mission.

During the 'pentecostal' outpourings that ensued, God was also experienced by communities and in a cosmic way. Local believers saw the Spirit as life-giver and liberator from all forces of evil— spiritual, emotional, physical and socio-political. The first 'sure sign' of genuine renewal was that the caste-lines among those Spirit baptised were erased as there was neither Dalit nor Syrian Christian but 'pentecostals' immersed in one reconciling Spirit, a conviction that deeply affected their outlook and whole-life discipleship. Their worship directly involved natives and created national leaders who became chief architects, representative voices and authoritative agents for social change in the dawning era of missions, expedited with 'pentecostal' power. This gave Indian Pentecostals a new *identity* and a strong sense of belonging and ownership of the movement in 'God's own country'. It also produced across caste and social status a new sense of *responsibility* to 'do' evangelism with a new *authority*.

The Spirit-filled pioneers of Indian Pentecostalism functioned like the apostles in Acts. In the cultural context, their role practically paralleled and fulfilled that of the 'Christian gurus'. Raj recognises gurus were 'frail human beings' yet aptly maintains:

We should give credit to the way they tried to give witness to their faith in a culturally relevant form in the context, and in thought forms and in life situations... We should be thankful for their gift of prayer-healing which they revived after the protestant church had given less emphasis to, so that many poor and helpless people could find a holistic form of life.⁴⁰

Gurus remain influential practitioners of Tamil *bhakti* (devotion) in the genre of the charismatic leader. They offer a type of healing referred to as 'magico-religious medicine'.⁴¹ Egnor notes, 'Gurus are often approached for solutions of life problems, including illness. Solving such problems through mystical and rational means is their

³⁸ McGee and S. Burgees, 'India', *NIDPCM*, p. 118.

³⁹ A.C. George, *AJPS*, 4/2, 2001, p. 222, quotes Saju, *Kerala Pentekostu Charitham* [History of Kerala Pentecostals], Kottayam: Good News Publications, 1992, p.27.

⁴⁰ P. Solomon Raj, *The New Wine: The Story of Indigenous Missions*, Delhi: ISPCK, 2003, p. xix.

⁴¹ C. Leslie (ed.), 'The Ambiguities of Medical Revivalism in Modern India', *Asian Medical Systems*, Berkeley University, 1976, p. 356-367.

principal function. The sacred ash they distribute, their blessings, touch and above all their words are believed to have healing powers.⁴² A guru is a holy man (*swamy*), not necessarily a priest (*pujari*) but a spiritual guide.⁴³ Brent sees guruism as ‘the rock on which the whole of Indian spirituality has been based’.⁴⁴ For Hoerschelmann, the Indian Christian guru brings to mind ‘the true New Testament idea of a spiritual leader who, as a martyr, stands up with the Christian truths with all his being’.⁴⁵ Such a concept is a potent force in the community life and therefore cannot be dismissed.

Indian Pentecostals, guided by Christian gurus in apostolic roles, allowed their spiritual experiences within their socio-cultural community to shape their mission theology.⁴⁶ Christian gurus were indigenous leaders with large followings who in turn initiated apostolic ministries for which they were appropriately honoured and often implicitly obeyed.⁴⁷ Since they made Christ the Lord of their lives, people believed they had his Spirit and authority in some ‘greater’ measure. Christian gurus were prophets who taught God’s word but, having given the Spirit the full reign over their lives, they were expected to charismatically direct and equip their faith community.⁴⁸

This Spirit-empowered movement can be seen as ‘indigenous’ insofar as it was an autonomous Indian initiative.⁴⁹ The national co-workers did not utilise western ideas, methods or overseas funds, thus giving the revival its own identity and credibility. Its character mirrored local cultural expressions of worship that aimed to encourage lay participation of women and men. Prayers were spontaneous, loud, rhythmic, ecstatic and offered in the vernacular. Natives composed *bhakti*-like devotional lyrics sung repeatedly with hand clapping and drumming. Since it maintained traces of the surrounding Hindu culture, the movement was perceived as syncretic or sect-like. Thus while the participants felt ‘at home’ in these Spirit-led gatherings, they appeared different from the Syrian and Anglican churches and missionaries. Calling themselves the *Revival Church*, they were prominent till the end of 19th century.⁵⁰

⁴² M. Egnor, ‘Death and Nurturance in Indian Systems of Healing’, *Soc.Sci. & Med.*, 17, 1983, p. 935.

⁴³ Sis. Vandana, ‘The Guru-Shisya Relationship in the Indian Tradition’, *Millennium*, III/2, 2000, p. 61.

⁴⁴ Peter Brent, *Godmen of India*, London, 1972, p. 1.

⁴⁵ Hoerschelmann, *Christian Gurus*, p. xiv.

⁴⁶ Hiebert, ‘Spiritual Warfare and Worldview’, *Global Missiology for the 21st Century*, Baker, p. 164.

⁴⁷ Hoerschelmann, *Christian Gurus*, 1998, p. 32, 398.

⁴⁸ Solomon Raj, *New Wine Skins*, p. xix.

⁴⁹ The principles of self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating were used, which some of the Indian Pentecostals practiced. M. Hodges *The Indigenous Church*, Springfield: Gospel Pub., 1953.

⁵⁰ Edwin Orr, *Evangelical Awakenings*, p. 38.

2.2 'Fire' Falls at Mukti Mission: the Origin of Modern Pentecostalism?

In June 1905, the most outstanding Pentecostal phenomenon occurred at the Mukti Mission in Kedagaon near Pune, which Pentecostals generally concur as the origin of 20th century Pentecostalism in India, perhaps South Asia.⁵¹ Pandita Sarasvati Ramabai, a high caste and well-educated Brahman widow, was moved to care for the orphans and neglected widows during the 1877 famine that struck India. She was a follower of Jesus marked by a sacrificial spirit and passion for social justice. Ramabai started *Mukti*, a 'place of deliverance', literally salvation, as an institution to demonstrate compassion.⁵² Here, women received care, practical help and put their faith in Christ.

Ramabai attended the Keswick Convention in 1898, and the 1904 Welsh revival, where Bible expositions stressed themes such as holiness, the higher life and fullness of the Spirit for personal sanctification and missionary empowerment.⁵³ In 1905, the Welsh Presbyterian churches in Khasi Hills, northeast India experienced revivals which inspired Ramabai to begin 'prayer circles'. Several hundreds enlisted to plead with God for blessings and the evangelisation of India. On 29 June 1905, around 3:30 a.m., a volunteer had an extraordinary experience. Her roommates felt she was enveloped with fire as she was Spirit baptised. The next day, as Ramabai concluded her Bible lesson a fresh outpouring broke out. Frodsham describes the happenings:

The girls were stricken by conviction of sins and the school became a vast enquiry room for the penitents. Conviction was followed by confession. Noteworthy were all the emotional accompaniments, all the physical phenomena, the sensation of burning, simultaneous prayer, the speaking with tongues and (later on) women praying with loud crying.⁵⁴

From Mukti a revival of prayer spread to the surrounding villages, then nationwide. Although not under the 'Pentecostal' banner, news of Indians being Spirit baptised by fire, reached places as far as Chile and the USA.⁵⁵ Alfred Garr, the first white person to be baptised under Seymour's ministry at Azusa, visited Mukti in 1907. Ramabai's

⁵¹ D. Jeyaraj (ed.) 'Pentecostalism', *DD*, July-Dec. (2) 2002, Hedlund notes there were other Pentecostal occurrences in Travancore, p. 157. Satyavarta, *Globalisation of Pentecostalism*, 1999, p. 204.

⁵² R. Kumar, *The History of Doing: An Illustrated Account of Movements for Women's Rights and Feminism in India (1800-1990)*, 1993; S. Burgess, 'Ramabai, Saravati Mary', *NIDPCM*, p. 1016-17.

⁵³ 'Pandita Ramabai', *Toward an Indian Christian Theology: Life and Thought of some Pioneers*, MM and PT Thomas (eds.) Thiruvalla: CSS, 1998, p. 71-75; Ian Randall, *Evangelical Experiences*, Paternoster, 1999; Eifion Evans, *The Welsh Revival of 1904*, London: Evangelical Press, 1969; Brynmor Jones, *Voices of the Welsh Revival*, Bridgend: Evangelical Press of Wales, 1995.

⁵⁴ Stanley Frodsham, *With Signs Following*, Springfield: Gospel Pub., 1941, p. 106.

⁵⁵ I visited, with the WCC, W.C Hoover's Methodist-Pentecostal Church in Valpariso, Chile who heard of the Mukti revival. Reported in the *Chicago Daily News*, 14 January 1908, Paulson, *DD*, 2002, p. 50.

colleague Minnie Abrams, an American Methodist, saw the 'burning' experience as a baptism by Jesus' Spirit and a refining fire that satisfied the residents' plight in the aftermath of the 1896 famine and plague.⁵⁶ At Mukti there were spectacular signs - visions, dreams, prophecy, a few healings and clear testimonies of 'miracles' of divine providence in answer to simple prayers of faith. Dried up water wells were filled, food and rations were supplied from unknown sources, and their daily needs were met.

Although Ramabai herself did not speak in tongues, recent research reveals that Pentecostal churches were established as an outcome of the revival.⁵⁷ Yet, Ramabai shunned the slightest showmanship or publicity and separated her work from the 'increasingly denominational character' of the purely 'Pentecostal power' approach to ministry.⁵⁸ At the Mukti church's centenary celebrations, I enquired of Ramabai's response as an intellectual to the ecstasies. I learned that she knew that to stop the happenings would 'quench the Spirit' and realised the vital need to be 'led by the Spirit' as a daily experience.⁵⁹ This delicate balance of being open to yet carefully discerning the Spirit's work continues to characterise Charismatics like Dhinakaran.

Keith White's research establishes that the 'real miracles' at Mukti were lives that were changed. Experiences of the Spirit produced a greater discipline in prayer and Bible study, zeal for godly living and to share Christ.⁶⁰ 'Prayer bands' went spreading the revival fires and 'bodily healings were one among the many signs that followed ordinary believers who prayed for the sick and allowed God be God'.⁶¹ The Mukti mission produced a revival that touched the nominal Christianity in its time. Mukti 'sisters and brothers' seek to demonstrate a credible form of evangelical, charismatic faith that 'correlates expectant prayers with spiritual power that results in public service'.⁶² The lasting effect of Spirit baptisms was evident at the personal, community

⁵⁶ Minnie Abrams, *The Baptism of the Holy Spirit & Fire*, Kedagaon: Mukti Pub., 1906, reprint 1999.

⁵⁷ Allan Anderson, *Spreading Fires: The Missionary Nature of Early Pentecostalism*, London: SCM, 2007, forthcoming, chapter 4.

⁵⁸ Hoerschelmann, *Christian Gurus*, p. 34-35; Orr, *Evangelical Awakenings*, p. 88-94; Satyavrata, *Globalisation of Pentecostalism*, p. 203-216. Hollenweger and Orr connect the Mukti awakenings to the 1905 Welsh Revival, which Ramabai attended to create a continuum with the global movement.

⁵⁹ The author was privileged to be invited as the revival preacher for the centenary celebrations of the Mukti Church, 16-20 February 1999, and met with the staff, Church leaders and Mukti girls.

⁶⁰ Keith White, *Pandita Ramabai (1858-1922): A Re-evaluation of Her Life and Work*, PhD., University of Wales, April 2003, *Interview*, Spurgeon's College, London, 10.10.05; Paul Joshua, 'A Life Totally Committed to God: A Rereading of Pandita Ramabai's Life and Work', *DD*, 5/1, 2001, p. 49-65.

⁶¹ Interview, Mrs. Sheela Gupta, medical doctor, in-charge of library and archives at Mukti, 15.02.99.

⁶² Interview, Mr Gladson Anchan, Indian missionary and chair of Mukti board, at Mukti, 15.02.99.

and vocational levels. Mukti's superintendent, Venu Ingle put it well: 'We want to show we are devoted to God through our joyful service to others, in Jesus' name'.⁶³

Bhakti or devotion to Christ at the Mukti Mission served as *preparatio evangelica*. The notions of *bhakti* and *dharma* help Hindus understand religion as loving service. Bhakti expresses adoration and surrender. It is one of the three ways of salvation, the other two being *karma* (works) and *jnana* (knowledge). The Hindu's 'ultimate experience' of non-duality (*advaita*) is oneness of self (*atman*) with God (*brahma*).⁶⁴ The Hindu *bhakta* (devotee) constantly yearns to experience more of the sacred toward personal perfection, yet is aware of socio-ethical duty that validates one's religiosity.⁶⁵

Ramabai was a *bhakta* of Jesus Christ, who was the Object of her devotion and source of her passionate life and public service. She did not view confessing Christ in terms of the Anglican doctrines and felt denominations hindered communicating the gospel in an already caste-divided India. In a letter to Justice Renade's wife, she proposed that ministers 'decide the essential doctrines of Christianity and establish one united Christian Church – an indigenous National Church for then only they will be worthy to preach Christ to Indians'.⁶⁶ Appasamy, in studying Sadhu Sunder Singh known as India's greatest Christian *bhakta*, was convinced Christianity is the true *bhakti* religion and showed that Indian *bhaktas* long to realise the immanence of God as the indweller of the human heart. He noted three key *bhakti* values: prayer as communion, passionate love and rapturous joy in God's presence.⁶⁷ Land, in *Passion for the Kingdom* analyses Pentecostal spirituality with similar 'affections' at its core, viz.: gratitude (praise), compassion (love, longing) and courage (confidence, hope).⁶⁸

Ramabai herself had few 'Christian gurus' who inspired her devotion to Christ yet, her devotion *for* Christ was perceived, in Paul's words, as 'the love of Christ' (2Cor. 5: 14) or Christ's love that empowered her for social reform. Such Christian *bhakti* is desirable on two counts: it offers a *vertical* mystical encounter with God and extends *horizontally* in practical ways bringing liberation and wholeness to others. This thesis

⁶³ Interview, Mrs. Venu Ingle, Superintendent of Mukti Mission, Kedagoan, 21.02.99.

⁶⁴ Raymond Panikkar, 'Advaita and Bhakti: Love and Identity in the Hindu-Christian Dialogue', *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 7/1, 1970, p. 299-309.

⁶⁵ Hindu *dharma* requires fulfillment of one's moral duty with holy, selfless indifference. Burnett, *The Spirit of Hinduism*, Monarch, 1992, p. 82; K. Knott, *Hinduism in Leeds*, Leeds Univ., 1986, p. 300.

⁶⁶ M.M. Thomas, 'Pandita Ramabai', *Toward an Indian Christian Theology*, 1998, p. 74.

⁶⁷ A.J. Appasamy, *The Theology of Hindu Bhakti*, Madras: CLS, 1970.

⁶⁸ Steven Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom*, Sheffield: JPTS, 1997, p. 138.

is not a comparative study of Pentecostal piety and bhakti; that needs further research for there are differences. For instance, Hindu devotional mysticism draws its source of inspiration from the Vedas and does not reject karma and transmigration that the gospel contradicts. Yet, the yearning for divine grace and mission as *dharma* or service to the weak in humility must be appreciated from a Christian point of view.⁶⁹ I want to point out that the believer's union with Jesus '*Christu-bhakti* is essentially a fellowship and agape mysticism',⁷⁰ and that there are striking commonalties between the two which both Ramabai and Dhinakaran exhibit in their compassionate ministries that make their presentation of the gospel truly indigenous, receptive and effective.

Alphonse suggests three Christian attitudes to bhakti as God's general revelation of his grace to Hindus: apologetic, appreciative or evangelistic. Each of these can serve as a 'helpful bridge in conveying the gospel to the Hindu heart'.⁷¹ Pentecostals, in bhakti-style, showed the Indian character of the gospel as they contacted people and in a natural way invited them to follow Christ. A cycle of revival (renewal-evangelism-conversion) produced contrition over sin, conviction of the need for a saviour and repentance that led to salvation. Associated with Christian bhakti and identified as the Spirit's doing, the movement received impetus and spread nationwide.

2.3 The Dohnavur Fellowship: Spirit Manifestations as Love in Action

Another revival on account of expectant prayer occurred at Dohnavur in South India. In 1895, Amy Carmichael came to India supported by the Keswick committee. She remained single, totally dedicating herself to fight the ritual abuse of girls as temple prostitutes (*devadasis*). She learned Tamil from Thomas Walker of Tirunelveli and her girls at the fellowship fondly addressed her as *Amma* (mother). On 22 October 1905, a Spirit-outpouring created sounds like a rushing wind as on Pentecost (Acts 2). Phenomena similar to Mukti were sensed, except there were no tongues. Here, Christ's real presence was experienced, as one girl put it: 'Jesus visited Dohnavur'. Carmichael could not explain how the Tamils in the chapel normally 'so stolid and unemotional' were rapturous in praise and prostrate on the floor crying out to God that, 'the heathen rushed' and watched them in wonder through the windows.⁷²

⁶⁹ Herbert Hofer, 'Jesus, My Master: Jesu Bhata Hindu-Christian Theology', *DD*, 8/1, 2004, 5-19.

⁷⁰ T. Dayanand Francis, *Aspects of Christian and Hindu Bhakti*, Madras: CLS, 1987, p. 47.

⁷¹ Martin Alphonse, *The Gospel for Hindus*, Chennai: Mission Educational Trust, 2001, p. 119, 127.

⁷² Orr, *The Evangelical Awakening*, p. 92; Carmichael, *Gold Cord: The Story of a Fellowship*, London: SPCK, 1935; *Edges of His Ways*, SPCK, 1981, *Whispers of His Power*, SPCK, 1982.

To my knowledge, while the sick were prayed for and health significantly improved, no special miracle healings were recorded.⁷³ The language of ‘miracles’ was used even by Hindus who noticed that when cholera had struck the entire village in 1906, it never entered the compound since God had put ‘a hedge around the helpless children’.⁷⁴ Soon a ‘hurricane of prayer’ from Dohnavur joined the pattern for revival: forsaking sin and burdened to care for those suffering, who in turn, joined in and spread the revival. Carmichael’s active spirituality in the Indian culture illustrates a Pentecostal piety that, I believe, has become prototypical of Charismatics like Dhinakaran. Hers was a useful blend of Christian service with a mysticism, which Davies describes well:

Amy believed strongly in her visions; she could see a situation and feel that it was God who had shown it to her. She could hear a voice, usually a verse from the Bible and feel it was God speaking directly to her... She lived on a higher plane of spirituality.⁷⁵

Like Ramabai, Amy did not solicit funds yet experienced miraculous providence and was convinced ‘faith grows stronger by testing’. Numerous stories show people came to faith in Christ after evil spirits were cast out. Dohnavur was known as: ‘A place of healing! miracles!’ and Amy added, ‘for still the multitude love a spectacle’. She was given ‘new views of divine healing’ and prayed for the gift, but later she wrote:

Though we did see a putting forth of power, there was not anything compared to the healing of the first century. The charisma was not given... we know not what we should pray, but the counsels of the Holy One, be our guide to what may serve his glory best and spread his name.⁷⁶

Amy, known as ‘the Ramabai of the south’, adopted a holistic approach to care. She reckoned, ‘one cannot save souls alone as souls are more or less securely fastened to bodies’. In her dress, Tamil language, food habits and lifestyle, she was committed to indigenisation and her social action in India for child protection, education and the emancipation of women remain invaluable.⁷⁷ The above forerunners of Pentecostalism manifest a genuine renewal by the Spirit not because of their religious experience, certainly not for their ability to speak in tongues, for such things are all too easily counterfeited, but because of their devotion to Jesus as Lord and their practice of love.

⁷³ As a youth, I was discipled by Arul Anand, the first boy Amy adopted and member of Emmanuel Church, Bangalore, who with Tejus Anand, another of Amy’s boys, now is the Director of the *Scripture Gift Mission* in India. These provided the needed information on Dohnavur Fellowship.

⁷⁴ S.D. Ponraj, *Pioneers of the Gospel*, Bihar: Mission Education Books, p. 120.

⁷⁵ Gaius Davies, *Genius, Grief and Grace*, Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2003, p. 253.

⁷⁶ Amy Carmichael, *Gold Cord*, Fort Washington, PA: CLC, [1932] 1983, p. 237.

⁷⁷ Ponraj, *Pioneers*, p. 123-125.

Other indigenous, Pentecostal experiences occurred like the 1905 revival among the Khasi Hill tribes of Northeast India that spread to Mizoram.⁷⁸ Here also there were distinct phenomena such as being slain in the Spirit and Pentecostal churches were established where worship included tongues. Divine healing was taught and the ministry of exorcism practiced making the revival movement, as Snaitang describes it, 'a significant harbinger for the gradual rise and development of Pentecostalism'.⁷⁹

More could be discussed but it is sufficient to note that by the turn of the 20th century independent evangelists like K.V. Simon of the Kerala Brethren Assemblies (1903) became catalysts for revival in churches. On 27 February 1916, Simon baptised K.E. Abraham who founded the IPC, the largest Pentecostal denomination and indigenous church in India.⁸⁰ In the 1930s, P.M. Samuel, his wife and groups of Pentecostal preachers left the 'nominal' Syrian Church and travelled to Tamilnadu and Andhra, teaching about the gifts. 'There were healing campaigns also and many people were converted when they saw healing miracles... joined the ranks and became followers of P.M. Samuel and his fellow-gurus'. At this time, officially, Raj notes, 'there was no Pentecostal Church as yet in Andhra'.⁸¹ After 1905, Indian Pentecostalism spread as the preaching of gospel and the outworking of spiritual gifts produced social change.

3. Theological Roots and Reasons for the Success of the Movement

The Pentecostal movement was highly transformational in four radical ways. First, due to the missionary efforts of the German (Basel Mission), and the British (LMS), later eclipsed by American Methodists, the revival became a *folk* movement. Lower caste *Dalits* joined in with a new identity and dignity that contributed to their upward socio-economic mobility. Though illiterate, they were not indoctrinated by western rationalism, thus effective in power evangelism. Second, this *shepherding* movement was led by charismatic guru-like leaders who nurtured converts within the native culture through Bible exposition and sent them out in itinerant prayer bands. Third, it became an *evangelistic* movement characterized by 'power encounters' that expanded from Mukti to the south, featuring healing and exorcism as the standard Pentecostal praxis. Orr observes 'the effect was immediate and the answer to prayer so marvellous

⁷⁸ Lalsawma, *Revivals: The Mizo Way*, Aizawl: Mission Veng Thlang Pub., 1994; O.L. Snaitang, *Churches of Indigenous Origins in Northeast India*, Delhi: ISPCK, 2000.

⁷⁹ O.L. Snaitang, 'Indigenous Pentecostal Movements in Northeast India', *DD*, 6/2, 2002, p. 7.

⁸⁰ Roger Hedlund, *Quest for Identity: India's Churches of Indigenous Origin*, 2000, p. 448.

⁸¹ Solomon Raj, *The New Wine-Skins*, p. 48-49.

that the people called it a “miracle” and villages flocked in for instruction in the faith’.⁸² Fourth, it was a *compassionate* movement toward social reform as leaders incarnated the gospel by living with the sufferers and being agents for their liberation, showing ‘Pentecostal spirituality is both contemplative and liberative’.⁸³

At least three distinct features which characterised the Pentecostal reality are fundamentally ‘charismatic’ experiences of the Spirit’s presence and power at work:

- Sanctifying grace to enable holy devotion (*bhakti*) and obedient living.
- Empowering presence manifest in spiritual warfare for healing-deliverance.
- Enabling *charismata* for effective witness and *compassionate* service.

In the Indian Pentecostal view and language, Spirit ‘baptism’, ‘filling’, ‘anointing’ are synonyms regarded in terms of the ‘blessing’ of God’s saving grace bestowed at a secondary and subsequent stage/s to that of *regeneration*. Rarely is *sanctification* considered separately in the full order of salvation, so the western CG three-stage or AG two-stage controversy is irrelevant. Holiness is interpreted as a necessary part and pre-requisite to the Spirit’s *empowerment* for mission, which is the distinctive mark of Spirit baptism.⁸⁴ Thus, ‘the means and power for service come through the gifts [which] need to be differentiated from *the* gift of the Spirit... the very name Holy Spirit is connected with power. He came as the Gift and as the Power’.⁸⁵

As a religious experience in the Indian sociological context, Massey rightly observes Spirit baptism is ‘an initiatory rite that transforms a Christian into an active participant in the supernatural realm’.⁸⁶ With the analogy of a threshold or gateway he proposes four transitions that it signifies to Pentecostals, as they cross from:

- The natural to the *supernatural* with new experiences and manifestations.
- Impotence to *power* in the sphere of public witness and evangelism.
- Bondage to *freedom* in worship and stereotypical order to spontaneity.
- Immaturity to *maturity* in spiritual leadership and effective ministry.⁸⁷

This Pentecostal experience, in a variety of combination and degrees, enabled certain attitudes and activities that facilitated the movement’s growth. With the medium of

⁸² Orr, *Evangelical Awakenings*, p. 105-106.

⁸³ P. J. Titus, ‘Pentecostal Indigenous Movements’, *Christianity is Indian*, p. 375.

⁸⁴ Lamech Imbaraj, ‘Charismata and Revival’, *Third Shift*, 2002, p. 268-270; R. Stanley, *Higher Ways*, Vellore: Blessing Mission, 2000, p. 16; Dhinakaran, *Prayer Brings Victory*, p. 37.

⁸⁵ Menzies & Horton, *Bible Doctrines: A Pentecostal Perspective*, Springfield: Logion, 2001, p. 124.

⁸⁶ Richard Massey, ‘Pentecostal Spirit Baptism As An Initiatory Rite’, *DD*, 6/2, 2002, p. 59.

⁸⁷ Massey, ‘Pentecostal Spirit Baptism’, p. 60.

miracles as the message it became the largest and fastest growing segment of Indian Christianity. Several factors caused this explosive growth creating new situations and a fruitful mission that can be related to the highly adaptive, pragmatic and syncretic nature of Indian Pentecostalism. At least three pastoral-theological factors lie at the roots of the modern Indian Pentecostal movement that has made it successful.

3.1 The Power of Pastoral Adaptability and Community Care

The 19th century Protestant pietistic missions generated a practical spirituality that was thoroughly bible-based yet Spirit-empowered, Christ-centred and mission-oriented. It stressed holiness along with personal decision-making. Missionaries like A. Groves (Brethren), K. Rhenius and B. Schmid (CMS) encouraged indigenous leadership and local church autonomy. Bible teaching from Keswick assisted a theological shift from God's sovereignty to celebration of his grace.⁸⁸ God's nature was seen in his activities as much as in propositional truths. Individual spiritual experiences (filling) and prophetic revelations (guidance) contributed to Pentecostal community formation.⁸⁹

Indian Pentecostalism as an indigenous, non-white movement was a 'dynamic mood' and 'born again' lifestyle rather than a set of creeds or crystallised theology.⁹⁰ There was a paradigm shift where 'real' worship and daily witness moved from cathedrals to 'cottage meetings'. Every-member evangelism was profoundly pastoral and included regular house visitations, personal counselling and all-inclusive worship. Women and men sat on the floor but on opposite sides. Pentecostal pastors were enthusiastic preachers who offered special prayers for blessings, bodily healing and conducted exorcism regularly as a vital part of the service.⁹¹ Thus the basis of the community was the Spirit of the risen Christ and in the Indian situation where primacy is given to the spiritual guides, Christian gurus led the people of God.⁹² Manifestations of divine

⁸⁸ David Bosch, *Transforming Missions*, New York: Orbis, 1991, p. 215-216. Sebastian Kim, 'Understanding Religious Conversion', *Missiology for the 21st Century: South Asian Perspectives*, Hedlund & Bhakiaraj (eds.), Delhi: ISPCK, 2004, p. 544.

⁸⁹ Cheryl Bridges notes how 'the Pentecostal experience' becomes for believers a 'transforming moment' that is seen as bestowing power for service and the ability to live a holy life, *Pentecostal Formation: A Pedagogy Among the Oppressed*, Sheffield Academic Press, 1993, p. 63.

⁹⁰ Peter Wagner, *What Are We Missing?* Carol Stream, IL: Creation House, 1973, p. 39.

⁹¹ Victor Choudrie, former Director of CMC Ludhiana, presently heading up a growing charismatic House group, notes these still as valid and effective methods for ministry in India, 'Church Planting: Spiritual Warfare Model', *ICGQ*, 9/2, 2002, p. 216-222.

⁹² Gerwin and Leeuwen (eds.) *Searching for an Indian Ecclesiology*, Bangalore: ATA, p. 22.

power through charismatic agents became its distinguishing feature that encouraged member participation and proved effective in neighbourhood outreach.⁹³

Such 'power ministries' with a supernatural component is a distinctly 'Pentecostal' praxis that served countless high caste Syrian Christians as well as outcast(e) *Dalits*. Simultaneously, member care was a high-priority pastoral task since 'it provided the poor and neglected sections of society the comfort of prayer and healing and the opportunity to share their dreams, visions and myths'.⁹⁴ This combination of practical *care* with charismatic *power*, which is self-evident in the movement, I term as 'Pastoral Pentecostalism'- a feature I examine in, and allow to critique, Dhinakaran.

The strength of Pentecostalism, in contrast to the established churches, lay in its *adaptability* both in personal spirituality and ecclesiastical structures. Pentecostals, desirous to be 'led by the Spirit' and with a prior commitment to missions were open and eager for change. The informal, spontaneous elements of their faith experiences with practical wisdom were put to good use for church life. Orality and narrativity were employed to break free from bureaucratic structures and liturgical worship to create a community mentality and a 'family ethos'.⁹⁵ Their focus was on interpersonal relationships and their theology people-made of a grass-root type, which was 'not usually documented anyway even in the local languages, much less translated into English'.⁹⁶ These informal patterns were educational in creating conscientization that enhanced the socialisation process to build Pentecostal communities.⁹⁷ Here, lay women and men were proactive in ministerial and administrative leadership.⁹⁸

3.2 Pragmatic Supernaturalism: Existential Care, Mission Intentionality

Alongside genuine renewal in the Syrian churches, comprised mainly of high caste Brahmins, there were mass conversions among the Dalits in tribal and rural settings due to so-called 'supernatural experiences'. Together these sparked a new move of the Spirit from both ends of the social spectrum that affected all in between. Popular religiosities faced with day-to-day problems such as disease, drought and sudden

⁹³ K.E. Abraham, *An Autobiography [Yeshukristhuvinte Eliya Desan]*, Kumbanad: PYPA, 1965, p. 74.

⁹⁴ J. Solomon Raj, *New Wine-Skins*, p. 4.

⁹⁵ T. Francis & Selvanayagam (eds.), *Many Voices in Christian Mission*, Madras: CLS, p. 59-75.

⁹⁶ Solomon Raj, *The New Wine-Skins*, p. 4.

⁹⁷ Hollenweger, 'After Twenty Years Research', *Theology*, Nov. 1984, p. 410.

⁹⁸ T.S. Samuel Kutty, *The Place and Contribution of Dalits in Selected Pentecostal Churches in Central Kerala from 1922-1972*, Delhi: ISPCK, 2000.

death, 'seek meaning in this existence and want a good life on earth'.⁹⁹ Such existential questions and earthbound issues were addressed by Pentecostals in a way that made sense and gave value for a 'signs and wonders' ministry both to 'nominal believers' and the 'unconverted' in their social contexts. Thus it reconciled the 'elitists' with 'untouchables' breaking down walls of caste animosity and produced a new community with synergy for an egalitarian and truly Indian Church in mission.

Spirit manifestations were acceptable and 'orthodox' to the Syrian Christians who remained an integral part of the Eastern Church that did not subscribe to the cessation of the charismata.¹⁰⁰ In protesting against the doctrine that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son (*filioque*), the sovereign Spirit is seen within a field of tension: between the transcendent God and a historical revelation of himself in Christ. The Spirit is seen at work in the world, i.e. in (other) faiths, hence not confined or limited to the institutionalised Church or imprisoned by any one view of the Bible.¹⁰¹

Pentecostal leaders like K.E. Abraham claimed that in the years 1865, 1873 and 1905, there were regular revivals in Kerala evidenced by tongues.¹⁰² Pioneers of Indian Pentecostalism, unlike at Azusa, were highly educated, upper class, women and men like Ramabai and K.V. Simon.¹⁰³ Yet, 'power encounters' were encouraged in Indian-initiated Pentecostal churches. Such beliefs were coherent with their view of apostolic faith and literal Bible hermeneutics, which also resonated with the ministry of Jesus and that of the early Church. These leaders recognised how easily western forces of secularisation in rejecting spiritual powers can ultimately reject a spiritual God.¹⁰⁴

Dalit Christians from folk religions made up the bulk of Pentecostals and maintained a 'supernaturalistic' worldview with belief in demonic, ancestral and evil spirits.¹⁰⁵ It

⁹⁹ Paul & Eloise Hiebert, *Incarnational Ministry*, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995, p. 132

¹⁰⁰ Pulikottil, 'Emergence of Indian Pentecostalism', *DD*, 2002, p. 47. The author reaffirmed this heritage and commonality with Greek Orthodox Church in dialogue with their theologians on the role of the Holy Spirit in healing and reconciliation at the WCC conference in Athens, 9-16 May 2005.

¹⁰¹ Hollenweger, 'Eastern Pneumatologies', *Strange Gifts?* Blackwell, 1984, p. 43-44.

¹⁰² K.E. Abraham, *Early Years of IPC*, (Malayalam), Kumbanad, Kerala: K.E. Abraham Foundation, 1955, p.5-6, quoted by Pulikottil, 'Emergence of Indian Pentecostalism', *DD*, 2002, p. 448-49.

¹⁰³ George Oommen, 'Growth of Pentecostalism in Central Kerala from 1921-47: A Paradigm for Pentecostal Growth of Churches in North India', *Research Paper*, Dehra Dun, 18, January 2001.

¹⁰⁴ Today, the west is experiencing a re-enchantment with the world and engages in alternative spiritualities showing secularisation has not altogether eroded belief in the supernatural. Partridge, *Re-Enchantment of the West*, T&T Clark, 2004; Berger, *Desecularization of the World*, Eerdmans, 2000,

¹⁰⁵ Paul Hiebert, 'Flaw of the Excluded Middle', *Missiology*, X/1, Jan., 1982; D. Burnett, *Clash of Worlds*, Eastbourne, MARC, 1990; John Davis, *Poles Apart*, Bangalore: TBT, 1998, p. 162-165.

took time for them to give up astrological and ritualistic practices and the wearing of magical amulets to protect themselves from the ill effects of the evil eye, witchcraft, curses and sickness-afflicting spirits (in Tamil, *peeys*). Yet, their new found faith saw the Spirit at work confirming how Jesus was indeed alive with greater power than the forces of darkness, natural disasters, diseases and death. Pentecostal faith is most relevant and visible in ‘miracle healing and exorcism’. Indian Pentecostalism was experiential and charismatic which is precisely what made it *pragmatic*: it worked to produce desired results. The democratisation of gifts created the space and context to deal with felt needs resulting in wholeness, conversion and numerical growth.

3.3 Useful Syncretism: Culturally Engaged, Yet Theologically Distinct

From the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) to modern Christmas celebrations, syncretism, i.e. the mixing and fusion of cultural elements has been a theological conundrum yet inevitable if the global Church is to make the gospel meaningful and applicable.¹⁰⁶ The uniqueness of each culture reflects the glory of its creator and God’s grace builds on nature and preserves culture. Indian Pentecostalism, in encouraging experiences of *creator Spiritus* has shown some positive and desirable aspects of ‘syncretism’: an ambiguous term that is often judged wrongly as altogether negative or dangerous.¹⁰⁷ The notion that the Spirit works for ‘life in all its fullness’ within the individual and communities of faith has great value for an Indian existential spirituality and a Pentecostal presentation of *Christus medicus*. In 1976, Amalorpavadass addressing the *National Charismatic Convention* clarified the meaning and role of the Charismatic Renewal for the Church in India.¹⁰⁸ He rightly considered it ‘a deep level encounter’ between the heart of India and the Indian Church, between Hinduism and the gospel:

The Pentecostal movement comes to India, a land of the Spirit and to a Spirit-conscious people, at a time when the Church wants seriously to incarnate and integrate herself in the culture and religious heritage of the country by an all round and systematic promotion of inculturation in spirituality and prayer.¹⁰⁹

A major problem in some ecumenical studies is that so-called indigenous people are made the objects of mission concerns rather than subjects to express their theological viewpoints.¹¹⁰ If there is a clash of cultures due to a particular doctrinal emphasis, it is

¹⁰⁶ Peter Schineller, ‘Inculturation and Syncretism: What is the Real Issue?’, *IBMR*, 16/2 1992, p. 50-53.

¹⁰⁷ See Hollenweger’s argument on how Christianity itself is a syncretism par excellence, ‘A Plea for a Theologically Responsible Syncretism’, *Pentecostalism: Origins and Development*, p. 132.

¹⁰⁸ D.S. Amalorpavadass, *Charismatic Renewal in India*, Bangalore: NLCBC, 1984, p. 35-38.

¹⁰⁹ Amalorpavadass (ed.), *Charismatic Renewal in India*, p. 37.

¹¹⁰ C. Gnanakan, *Reflectors Report*, WCC Faith and Healing Consultations, Athens, Hamburg, 2005.

treated negatively as syncretism. While this can be harmful if uncritically applied in a way that dilutes or destroys the core values of the gospel, it certainly can be useful when it is faithful to the spirit of the Bible and with pastoral integrity allows truth to transform lives. Amalorpavadass and Dhinakaran correctly view India's quest for spirituality and the Pentecostal movement as complementary and convergent streams that offer a genuine experience of the Spirit. Subsequently, a charismatic mission through intercession, healing and community transformation is possible with the praxis of 'Pastoral Pentecostalism' where the healing Church is recognised as:

A community of the Spirit, a fellowship of love and service in the spirit of Christ, a milieu of genuine encounter, an instrument of transformation and unification to the core and an abode of joy and peace due to the manifestation of the power of the Lord.¹¹¹

Indian Pentecostal healings tend to adopt christological but also cultural methods that share a similar worldview as the Bible and the popular Hindu culture. To the naïve observer, several elements in the Pentecostal worship and healing praxis mirror the traditional beliefs, rituals and symbolic acts of the local culture. Here, mystery and miracle are central and vital for meaningful outcomes. Religious encounters are in a sense, cultural encounters. In the Indian culture or socially acceptable way of life, people respond to the gospel and discover Christianity as it relates to their situational needs in a wholistic way. The ambiguity and problem in determining the relevance of a truth in a particular cultural context, as Droogers rightly notes, is that 'the concept of syncretism has been coined to describe the mixing of elements from different sources, sometimes as descriptive term, sometimes as pejorative concept'.¹¹²

It is unfortunate that syncretism has become an established term for mingling religions without examining their individual faith values, or the truth claims that give meanings to their symbolic acts.¹¹³ Often a cultural 'syncretism' is perceivable that does not necessarily entail any religious adaptation.¹¹⁴ Pentecostal healings within the popular Hindu culture, exemplified in Dhinakaran's ministry, show a syncretism that is creatively used to present the gospel in India. On a mystical level, Pentecostal piety

¹¹¹ Amalorpavadass, *Charismatic Renewal in India*, p. 37.

¹¹² Andre Droogers, 'Changing Culture and the Missiological Mission', Daneel et.al. *Fullness of Life for All: Challenges for Mission in Early 21st Century*, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003, p.63.

¹¹³ Andre Mary, 'From One Syncretism to Another: Culture of Trance and the Charisma of Deliverance', *Social Compass*, 48/3, 2001, p. 315-331.

¹¹⁴ Stewart & Shaw (eds.), *Syncretism/Anti-syncretism: The Politics of Religious Synthesis*, London: Routledge, 1994. Book Reviews, *JCR*, 11/1, 1996, p. 114.

bears marks of *bhakti* and its authoritative leadership style reflects the Hindu *guru* movements.¹¹⁵ On the practical level where its focus lies, Pentecostal exorcism phenomena mirror rituals of the *manthiravadi* (popular Hindu wonderworker).¹¹⁶ Obviously there has been some theologically responsible syncretism or inculturation that has fuelled the growth of Indian Pentecostalism. Thus, besides being pastorally *adaptive* and existentially *pragmatic*, it is intrinsically and usefully *syncretic*. The need for and dangers in such syncretism is best addressed in the Pentecostal praxis of miracle healing, which I will take up with special reference to Dhinakaran's ministry.

4. Challenging Implications and Propositions

Sadly, Spirit-oriented movements from the African, Chinese or Indian contexts are readily discarded as dangerous new sects, or negatively as syncretic movements. Yet, it is within such cultures that 'Non-White indigenous' or Charismatic Christianity has proven relevant with caused exponential church growth.¹¹⁷ With expectant faith in a miracle-working God, Pentecostal piety relates Christ's saving life and the gospel's power in meaningful ways to people's heart-felt needs and daily struggles.

4.1 Global Pentecostalism's Indian Root: The Bhakti-Guru Spirituality

With reference to the emergence of western classical Pentecostalism, Hollenweger analyses five theological roots: the oral or (African) cultural, Catholic, Methodist, evangelical and ecumenical.¹¹⁸ In the light of the rise of Indian Pentecostalism and the massive Indian Christian *diaspora* worldwide, I would add another typically Indian root, viz.: the *bhakti-guru* spirituality, with which, in its own right, Indian Pentecostalism is sensitive to mystical elements yet strong on the miraculous and without much reservation subscribes to an apostolic-prophetic type charismatic leadership that has been an unmistakable feature of global Pentecostalism.¹¹⁹ While maintaining an evangelical-charismatic theology, the gospel is contextualised and often communicated within *ashram*-like residential communities.¹²⁰ Indian spirituality

¹¹⁵ Vishal Mangalwadi, *The World of Gurus*, Delhi: Vikas, 1977; Thomas Thangaraj, *The Crucified Guru: An Experiment in Cross-Cultural Christianity*, Nashville: Abingdon, 1994, Sr. Vandhana, 'The Guru-Shishya Relationship in Indian Tradition', *Third Millennium*, III/2, 2000, p. 60-68.

¹¹⁶ Bergunder, 'Miracle Healing and Exorcism', *IRM*, p. 103-112.

¹¹⁷ When this group is seen as a cohesive part of the movement (thanks to H.W. Turner) its volume is literally doubled. Hollenweger, 'After Twenty Years of Research', *Theology*, Nov. 1984, p. 411.

¹¹⁸ Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments*, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998, p. 2.

¹¹⁹ Chris Gnanakan, Review, Thomas Fox's *Pentecost in Asia: Pneuma*, 25/2, 2003, p. 314-316.

¹²⁰ K.V. Varughese, *A Vision for Wholeness: Ashram and Healing in India*, Delhi: ISPCK, 1999; See also Sr. Vandana, *Gurus, Ashrams and Christians*, London: D, L&T, 1978.

is celebrated which avoids romanticising British pietism, American holiness or other western movements, which are unnecessary and can be detrimental to the Indian Christian's national identity. While western forms of 'charismatic' faith (e.g. German pietism for Aroolappen, Keswick higher life for Ramabai or US Pentecostalism for Dhinakaran) impacted and continue to shape Indian Pentecostalism, this study has shown that such influences need not be made the main source or a primary cause for it.

Indian Pentecostalism as a national Christian movement incorporated *local* believers from a culture remarkably different from western forms of Christianity and calls for a redefinition of the nature of global Pentecostalism. Charismatic movements like Dhinakaran's *Jesus Calls* healing ministries, with its headquarters in South India, minister without political correctness or ecclesiastical labels. Yet they perceive themselves a vital part of the *global* Pentecostal-Charismatic revolution and at the trans-national level they are indeed the driving force for Christian mission and agents for change in word and in deed yet clearly through the power of the Holy Spirit.¹²¹

4.2 The Spirit of 'Pentecost': Forgiveness, Deliverance, Reconciliation

Dalit theologies tend to adopt Marxist political theologies that seek governmental reforms and change in socio-economic policies.¹²² The Indian Pentecostal movement advocates a wholistic theology that stresses personal conversion and the charismata. While the former focuses sharply on issues of injustice for the dalit poor, the latter with a sign and wonders theology stresses spiritual renewal that transforms all castes, although it relates to each in different ways and has increasingly a social concern.

Pentecostal pastors and evangelists are required to have a practical understanding of Indian demonology to be counted as 'servants of God'.¹²³ Salvation is not confined to the state of the soul. Physical healing is a sign of God's forgiveness and favour. Salvation is wholeness (*shalom*), not separately objectified but rather an inner peace made to relate to social harmony.¹²⁴ Evil spirits are believed to be actual beings that tremble when Jesus' name, blood or cross is mentioned. They afflict people with

¹²¹ I made this point in my paper at the International Conference of the African Christian Diaspora, in Hirschluch, Berlin 11-15 Sept. 2003. R. Gerloff has argued on these lines in her paper: *Churches of the Spirit: The pentecostal-charismatic movement and Africa's contribution to the renewal*.

¹²² R. Gomez (ed.), *Toward a Theology of Human Development*, Madras: Gurukul, 1998.

¹²³ In the same way as it gives credentials to the guru-healer as a miracleworker. Lawrence Babb, 'Satya Sai Baba's Miracles', T.N. Madan (ed.), *Religion in India*, OUP, 1991.

¹²⁴ Brockman, 'Possession and Medicine in South Central India', *Journal of Applied Psychoanalytical Studies*, 2/3, 2000, p. 299; Evans, *Redeeming Marketplace Medicine*, 1999, p. 169.

diseases and mental derangement, but can be cast out by ‘anointed’ healers who are filled with the Spirit’s gifts of power.¹²⁵ Purity of life, strong faith and spiritual gifts are signs of ‘Pentecostal power’ to overcome the ‘powers of darkness’. Forgiveness, healing and deliverance are treated as synonyms in bringing wholeness.¹²⁶ Christ by his Spirit is thus seen destroying the Devil’s works and inspiring faith for salvation.

Incipient Indian Pentecostalism demonstrated a levelling effect of grace through charismata. Jesus’ preaching about the kingdom and compassionate ministry touched rich Zacchaeus and the poor Bartimaeus, Levi and Samaritans, high priests and prostitutes, men and women, children and widows. Likewise, outpourings of the Spirit of Christ on Indian soil produced Pentecostal experiences that released gifts that proved inclusive and ecumenical from the start; something that is unheard of in an India fragmented almost irreversibly by caste, creed and poverty. The high caste Syrian Christians and outcast Dalits, pundits and illiterate orphans, young girls and old men, white missionaries and brown natives, were brought together in worship of and witness to Christ under a single powerful moving of the Spirit: Pentecostalism.

5. Charismata *with* Compassion: The Wind beneath the Sails

In the 20th century, Mukti and Dohnavur became famous for Indian Pentecostal piety partly because their women leaders were avid writers with connections in the west, who in turn, took keen interest in their charismatic-cum-compassionate ministries. Yet, in their modest contexts, they were primarily known for their pastoral care and social reforms. It is important to ask: How exactly did these powerful, charismatic personalities and those ministered to by their leadership actually experience God?

For pastor Aroolappen of Tirunelveli, ecstatic experiences translated into difficult missionary travel, preaching a message that was unpopular to the bureaucratic leadership. For Pandita Ramabai, evangelism meant being a gracious sister to the homeless and ‘mother of thousands’ of orphans. In the face of opposition and death of family members, she campaigned for women’s education and rights.¹²⁷ For *Amma* Carmichael, mission implied rescuing child prostitutes and sharing in the pain of the deprived. In spite of a fall that made her bedridden till death, she found grace to care

¹²⁵ N. Daniel, Enoch and Gupta (eds.), ‘A Survey of the Situation: India’, *Demon Experiences in Many Lands*, Chicago: Moody Press, 1960, p. 19.

¹²⁶ ‘Forgiveness Brings Healing’ *AIM*, Howell (ed.) Evangelical Fellowship of India Pub., Jan. 2004.

¹²⁷ Jessie Mair, *Bungalows in Heaven: Story of Pandita Ramabai*, Kadagaon: Mukti Mission, 1993.

for her suffering 'little folk'. Her life's motto was: 'love to live; live to love'.¹²⁸ The Bible does not differentiate gifts of power from gifts of grace neither did these forerunners of Pentecostalism. Their experiences demonstrate a singular focus on Pentecostal power is a simplistic and reductionistic approach to evangelism and the longings of the Hindu community.¹²⁹ Charismata and compassion were both needed.

These pioneers of Indian Pentecostalism had, or developed, *charismata* with which they placed themselves in situations of struggle. Importantly they allowed the suffering of others to open up for them experiences of God. Their service reflected a God who was not dispassionate but caring enough to reveal his presence and love in their acts of empathy and kindness. As McLaren notes, 'we can experience God *in us* as we show compassion and we can also experience God *in the person who receives our compassion*'.¹³⁰ These Charismatics knew as much, perhaps more, about suffering than about faith healing and thus their woundedness was an experience of God and source of healing at once, i.e. they were wounded healers.

Evans notes two aspects to compassion that bring healing.¹³¹ The first seems passive but is preventative and profoundly 'pastoral'. It is about 'being there' to offer hope to sufferers. The second, typically 'Pentecostal', desires and intervenes in spectacular ways seeking mercy for the sick and, at times, justice for the poor who are without life's basic needs. For Dhinakaran, Christlike compassion is the true source of all charismata, and this has been shown to be the case for Aroolappen, Ramabai and Carmichael, though not paraded about. Central to Pentecostal ministerial praxis and to their diaconal task is prayer for the sick and dealing with the demonic: a definitive way Indian Pentecostals-Charismatics are acknowledged as pastoral and indigenous.

Pentecostal power in and of itself can easily be destructive to genuine faith.¹³² But, the opposite is true when the Spirit's charismata (1Cor. 12:8) are accompanied by compassionate pastoral care that reflects the Spirit's fruit or graces (Gal. 5:23). Dhinakaran teaches how Jesus, 'mighty in deed and word before God and all the

¹²⁸ Frank Houghton, *Amy Carmichael of Dohnavur: The Story of a Lover and Her Beloved*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1953; Eliz Elliot, *Amy Carmichael: Her Life and Legacy*, London: Marc, 1988.

¹²⁹ H.L. Richards, 'Evangelical Approaches to Hindus', *Missiology*, XXIX/3, 2001, p. 309.

¹³⁰ Brian McLaren, *Finding Faith*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999, p. 184.

¹³¹ Abigail Evans, *Redeeming Marketplace Medicine*, Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 1999, p. 169.

¹³² Everett Wilson, *Strategy of the Spirit*, Carlisle: Paternoster, 1997, p.156-158.

people... was at the same time an embodiment of compassion'.¹³³ For him, the gifts and fruit are 'interlinked' as he makes the virtue of compassion or practical love 'the rudder' to direct the proper use and prevent the misuse and abuse of charismata:

With a lofty aim in view, God grants the mighty gifts of the Holy Spirit along with the fruit of the Spirit (Love) which alone like a rudder of a ship can control and direct the power-packed gifts towards the good of the people... In other words, those who experience and enjoy the gifts will exhibit the qualities of the fruit also. Ultimately, only the characteristics of the fruit, Love, help in the operation of the gifts [which] we can discern in the ministries of the servants of God abounding in the gifts.¹³⁴

Christian compassion possesses an intense empathy for others who suffer and uses the spiritual gifts to serve them. The above pioneers of Indian Pentecostalism exemplified such a vocation which is also seen in the 'Mercy Mission' of the Buntains in Calcutta (1953) and in Dhinakaran's 'Ministry of Compassion' (1970).¹³⁵ Often a more powerful remedy for defeating a vice, spiritual, social or otherwise, is to develop a virtue. A compassion that is rooted in God's agape and models Jesus' ministry is the overarching virtue in true 'charismatic' ministries, where super-human charismata stem out of the grace of compassion. Without the latter the former is pointless and powerless to create lasting transformation: dangerous wind for a ship that has no sail.

¹³³ Dhinakaran, *Gifts*, p. 14-15.

¹³⁴ Dhinakaran, *Gifts*, p. 15. He presents a table showing how the nine power gifts ought to match and function alongside the nine segments of the fruit of the Spirit.

¹³⁵ Burgees, 'India', *NIDPCM*, 2002, p. 124; Shamsundar Adhav, *Pandita Ramabai*, Madras: CLS, 1979; A.C. George, *Trailblazers for God: A History of the Assemblies of God in India*, Bangalore: SABC, p. 230, 228; Bergunder, 'Ministry of Compassion', *Christianity is Indian*, 2000, p. 158-174.

Chapter Three

Pentecostal Missions and Charismatic Healing Theologies: Azusa-India

In outlining the history of the Charismatic church, Allen compares it to a river with banks overflowing throughout the world,¹ an analogy that suggests there was one source for global Pentecostalism, like that of the river Ganges traced back to the Himalayas. The search for a sacred moment and holy ground for the genesis of a 20th century 'Pentecost' ended in the USA with a debate between two Spirit outpourings: at Topeka, Kansas and Azusa, Los Angeles, that was said to be the first of 'Three Waves' or Classical Pentecostalism.² While major Pentecostal bodies in the west (CG, AG) and Indian church leaders acknowledge this trajectory,³ such an Americo-centric historiography for the globalisation of Pentecostalism is not left uncontested.⁴ Barrett reckons these progressive waves can be viewed as 'one single, cohesive movement into which a vast proliferation of all kinds of individuals and communities has been drawn'.⁵ If Azusa was the 'American Jerusalem' from which the Pentecostal 'full gospel' spread to the end of the earth, then, in the light of the previous chapter, Anderson is right to say, 'the truth is distorted and smacks of cultural imperialism'.⁶ The Spirit is the source and global Pentecostalism, a river that unites many tributaries.

What is clear is at the start of the 20th century, Spirit-oriented forms of Christianity emerged worldwide that relied on a fuller, deeper and more profound experience of the Spirit. Experiential spiritualities of power set apart 'the Pentecostals' from the Protestants in a subculture where 'the strange' rapidly became 'the popular' with global relevance and missional value. In India, research shows that charismatic healings spearheaded evangelism. Yet, I found that Pentecostal doctrines on divine healing could not be fairly discussed without reference to the 1906 Azusa revival. Even in post-colonial India, mainline churches and evangelical scholarship consider Azusa missions as a major factor for the rise of charismatic faith and healing in India.⁷

¹ David Allen, *There is a River: A Charismatic Church History*, Milton Keynes: Authentic, 2004.

² Wagner, *The Third Wave of the Holy Spirit*, Ann Harbour: Vine, 1988

³ 'Pentecostal 'Witness in the Third Millennium', *FTR*, V/1, 2001; Jeganathan, *The Third Shift*, 2002.

⁴ Hwa Yung, 'Pentecostalism in the Asian Church', *Paper*, Birmingham, 18.09.2001, p. 10; Anderson, 'Pentecostalism in East Asia: Indigenous Oriental Christianity?' *Pneuma*, 22 / 1, 2000, p. 115-132.

⁵ Barrett, Burgess & McGee (eds.) *DPCM*, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1988, p. 818.

⁶ Allan Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, Cambridge: CUP, 2004, p. 171.

⁷ R. Carr, 'The Story of Revivals among God's People', p. 183f; Inbaraj, 'Charismata and Revival', p. 261f., Jeganathan (ed.) *The Third Shift*, 2002, This Azusa-India connection was further clarified by the author during discussion at the Asian Pentecostal Society conference, UTC, Bangalore, 20.8.02.

Azusa's lasting impact for the formation, organisation and nationalisation of Indian Pentecostalism is undeniable. While the reactions of the natives to western missions triggered indigenous leadership, there were teachings and patterns of healing that came out of Azusa that have shaped contextual healing theologies, such as Dhinakaran's, and feedback from India to Azusa on its tongues doctrine significantly affected global Pentecostalism. I will briefly evaluate these events and demonstrate the central role divine healing played in determining the nature of global Charismatic Christianity.

1. The 'New Pentecost' or a Sample of 'Charismatic Spirituality'?

The details of the Azusa Story are familiar and reveal common characteristics in the way most Pentecostal-Charismatic communities worldwide came into existence and flourish.⁸ The modern Pentecostal movement is linked with a revival led by Charles F. Parham, a healing evangelist influenced by the faith healer Alexander Dowie. On New Year's Day 1901, at his Bethel Healing Home and Bible School in Topeka, his student Agnes Ozman was Spirit baptised and spoke in tongues. Similar to events at Mukti, as a result of the prayerful yearnings of believers for God's deeper 'work of grace' the Spirit was experienced in fresh and powerful ways.⁹ At Azusa, the Spirit seemed to be doing something new and disconnected to the traditional past, and the phenomenon was believed to be: *The Apostolic Faith Restored*.¹⁰ Parham exhorted believers to be open to receive the Spirit with the gift of tongues as its 'initial evidence'. Since all this anticipated the 'latter rain' blessings of Pentecost (Joel 2) and passionately re-enacted the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2), the movement came to be called Pentecostalism.¹¹

The famous 'Azusa' Spirit-outpouring occurred on the 9th of April 1906 at 312 Azusa Street. Robeck insists that 'the story of the Azusa Mission' begin with the story of its black pastor William J. Seymour,¹² who gathered his little prayer group and moved into a rundown African Methodist church in order to seek an encounter with God's

⁸ Nigel Scotland, *Charismatics and the New Millennium*, Secunderabad: OM Books, 2000, p. 29-34; John Goldingay, 'Charismatic Spirituality', *Theology*, XCIX, 1996, p. 178-187.

⁹ Details by Parham, see: 'The Latter Rain', *Apostolic Faith*, Kay & Dyer (eds.), *Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies*, London: SCM, 2004, p. 10-13.

¹⁰ B.F. Lawrence, *The Apostolic Faith Restored*, St Louis: Gospel Pub., 1916. This title became the name given to the worldwide publication out of Azusa Street.

¹¹ Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom*, Sheffield: JPTS, 1997, p. 58-121.

¹² Cecil Robeck, 'William J. Seymour and the Beginnings of Pentecostalism', *The Azusa Street Mission and Revival: The Birth of the Global Pentecostal Movement*, Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2006, p. 17-52.

empowering presence.¹³ The Fire (Spirit) that fell was signalled by a variety of ecstatic and observably 'charismatic' manifestations. Flames from Azusa's 'new Pentecost' spread but during the next three years, instead of Parham's tongues, something broader in scope became distinctive of this burgeoning movement. Christenson records:

Happenings were not restricted to tongues. Healings, prophecies, and miracles were part of the charismatic panorama that broke upon the scene... Pentecostal Christianity appears to find its rise in the dramatic breakthrough of **supernatural power, a display of charismatic phenomena**. It is not the case of a teaching that gains a hearing, but events that attract a following.¹⁴

Pentecostalism has a foundational Charismatic theology. Divine immediacy served to reassure salvation and produced an exuberance linked inextricably to the *charismata*,¹⁵ particularly the dramatic ones associated with power: tongues, miracles and healings. It demonstrated the prophethood of all believers. Recipients considered themselves as unworthy yet privileged to be visited by the Spirit and made partakers of God's grace (*charis*) that brought a satisfying joy (*chara*) and a fullness of life in the Spirit.¹⁶

The Indian expressions of a 'Pentecostal' faith in their *guru-bhakti* cultural context can be shown to have distinct 'sparks' yet similar outcomes. If so, then arguably, Azusa, USA is a contemporary sample of charismatic spirituality rather than an entirely new ideology imported by India. Having said this, the pneumatological thrust of the essential message from Azusa Missions: the Spirit's (1) sovereign movements, (2) empowering presence to be experienced, bodily and existentially and (3) energies that enter human beings to transform earthly lives,¹⁷ has tremendous value in India. Many aspects of the Azusa experience coincide with features of Indian Pentecostalism that (from my work with the WCC, I can say) give it impetus and global relevance:

- i) The Azusa mission like the Mukti mission had a subculture that was pastorally engaging and pragmatic. It demonstrated that expectant *prayer* can produce a revival of spiritual *power* that transforms lives in spontaneous and wholistic ways, and often outside the institutionalised church structures.¹⁸

¹³ McClung (ed.), *Azusa Street and Beyond*, Plainfield, NJ: Bridge, 1986. R. Foster 'The Charismatic Tradition: the Spirit Empowered Life', *Stream of Living Water*, HarperCollins, 1998, p. 97f.

¹⁴ Larry Christenson, 'Pentecostalism's Forgotten Forerunner', Synan (ed.), *Aspects of Pentecostal-Charismatic Origins*, Plainfield, NJ: Logos, 1975, p. 27 (Emphasis mine).

¹⁵ Robert Menzies, 'Spirit-Baptism and Spiritual Gifts', *Pentecostalism in Context*, p. 48-59. Roman Catholics tend to use *charisms*, Protestant evangelicals prefer *charismata*.

¹⁶ R. Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited: Making of American Pentecostalism*, Hendrickson, 1979.

¹⁷ See Roswith Gerloff, 'The Theory and Practice of the Holy Spirit', *Das Schwere Lacheln Gottes*, Frankfurt: Verlag Otto Lembeck, 2005, p. 205.

¹⁸ M. Wenk, *Community-Forming Power: The Socio-Ethical Role of the Spirit*, Sheffield: JPTS, 2000.

- ii) Individualistic Spirit experiences (baptism) soon fed into the movement's corporate development giving it credibility and momentum toward the formation of passionate, empowered communities of 'the Spirit in mission'.¹⁹
- iii) 'Success' in Pentecostal terms, whether in the spiritual, physical, social, material or any other area, mattered for daily living and was consciously attributed as 'blessings' on account of the Spirit's gifts and guidance.²⁰
- iv) The experiences of divine presence that produce Pentecostal power were intertwined not only with passion for souls but purity of life.²¹ Yet, as George notes, the philanthropic or social aspects of its mission grew only gradually.²²
- v) Azusa, not Topeka, reflects those reconciling and ecumenical traits that for Indians champion the dignity, equality and freedom of 'the disinherited'.²³
- vi) From the start, this Spirit-oriented movement nurtured four essential elements that remain principal motifs within its experiential theology: (1) prayer, (2) faith (3) power and (4) charismata, each interrelated and together equipped its adherents for life in the Spirit, as I will demonstrate with its healing mission.
- vii) Tongues and healings were the two pillars of incipient Pentecostalism, both 'charismatic' experiences considered as 'the two ingredients of a Pentecostal hermeneutic', since they helped interpret its experiential faith.²⁴ But, it was Pentecostal healings, not tongues that better incarnated the gospel in cultures like India contributing to a wholistic theology and global missiology.

The Azusa Mission, as it extended its influence on Indian soil with the 'evangelical awaking' and a 'pentecostal' revivalism already in motion, offered a twofold 'Pentecost' experience: an encounter with divine presence, and participation in divine action within an *intimacy-involvement* dialectic. 'Spirit baptisms' as experiences of Christ's real presence, wherever realised in faith, potentially manifest gifts that empowered believers for supernatural service.²⁵ Indian Pentecostal scholars find it important to maintain the Azusa-India link and rightly so for at least four reasons:

¹⁹ D. Watson, 'Spirit in the Individual/Church' *One in the Spirit*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1973.

²⁰ I found this generally the case in affluent Indian Pentecostal mega-churches. Pastors narrate their small beginnings to illustrate the Spirit's power to 'bless' e.g. P. Thangiah, Full Gospel AG. Bangalore.

²¹ Kilian McDonnell, *Presence, Power and Praise*, (3 Vols.), Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1980.

²² A.C. George notes these four aspects as trademarks, *FTR*, 2001, p. 16-18.

²³ R. Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited*, 1979.

²⁴ Douglas Petersen, 'Pentecostals: Who Are They?' *Mission as Transformation*, Samuel & Sugden (eds.) Carlisle: Paternoster, 1999, p. 93-94.

²⁵ These two issues Hollenweger contends are significant and continuing debates, *Pentecostals after a Century: Global Perspectives*, Anderson & Hollenweger (eds.), Sheffield, 1999, p. 164-172.

First, it is fair that Pentecostal scholars acknowledge Azusa's role in the rise of Indian Charismatic Christianity and development of its healing theologies. The founders of Indian Pentecostalism broke away from their traditional churches only after being ignited by Azusa's wild fires. K.E. Abraham, T.G. Oommen and A.C Samuel had definite ties and tutelage from George Berg and Robert Cook, both who were Spirit baptised at Azusa. Other AG missionaries contributed to the movement, for instance, John Burgess started *Bethel Bible School* in Kerala, the first AG College in the world.²⁶ Mary Chapman published the *Pentecostal Trumpet* in Malayalam which had a wide circulation globally. The historian, Robert makes the bold claim that American women guided the movement as they 'acted as its first missionaries, linked healing to missionary commitment, and in Minnie Abrams [at Mukti] constructed its first cogent and enduring missiology'.²⁷ Beyond doubt, Azusa influenced the 'mothers and fathers' of Indian Pentecostalism and has regarded India a vital part of its global fellowship.²⁸

Second, scholars like Matthew, strategically prefer Seymour over Parham as founder, convinced that the heart of the Pentecostal faith is about healing as reconciliation. Hollenweger aptly considers Pentecostalism's true character to be more ecumenical than fundamentalist with an egalitarianism that transcends racial barriers.²⁹ In India, on the one hand, this calls for compassion and on the other, a social action that erases caste lines, challenges oppressive structures and dissolves ecclesiastical hierarchy.³⁰

Third, global Pentecostal identity needs to be anchored in something more than a 'crisis' or tongue-speaking experience that is common in many other Indian religions. Mission from Azusa signalled a dual transformation: christological and missional, which is best featured in its praxis of charismatic healing 'in Jesus' name'. Encounters with Jesus' promised Spirit showed faith in Christ as Lord. But beyond the experience itself, their lives were transformed to participate, almost immediately, in Christ's mission. Accepted and nurtured within an inclusive faith community there was a 'social lift' especially for those broken (dalit-like) poor or rich, but in some way

²⁶ Burgess, 'Pentecostalism in India: An Overview', *AJPS*, 4 / 1, 2001, p. 89-91.

²⁷ Dana Robert, *American Women in Mission*, Macon, GA: Mercer Univ. Press, 1996, p. 241.

²⁸ A.C. George, *FTR*, V/1, 2001, p. 8.

²⁹ Hollenweger, 'From Azusa Street to the Toronto Phenomenon', *Concilium*, No. 3, 1996, p. 9-10.

³⁰ Isaac Matthew, 'Neglected Elements of Christian Ministry in Pentecostal Churches and their Relevance for Witnessing in the Third Millennium', *FTR*, V/1, 2001, p. 39-50.

disadvantaged.³¹ During my fieldwork, oral testimonies to this reality showed it as the main reason for the movement's growth. Syrian domination was challenged precisely by these two criteria: *Equal standing* (identity/dignity) and *opportunity* 'in Christ'.³² Therefore, not for historical or geographical reasons but rather on theological, ethical and egalitarian grounds, the ethos of Azusa for global mission signified the deep Indian longings and contributed to Indian Charismatic theologies.

Fourth, contemporary Pentecostals-Charismatics have gained a global respectability under their new identity as 'Churches of the Spirit'.³³ Globalisation made 'the world their parish', with transnational links that have made charismatic faith a 'global culture'.³⁴ Due to this 'charismatic face', Asian Spirit-led believers are laying aside nationalistic pride to join global trends and are pleased to be 'Asian and Pentecostal' at once.³⁵ I believe this breakthrough came as Spirit-filled Christians realised as Campolo puts it starkly, that they can be 'Pentecostal without speaking in tongues'.³⁶

2. What had India to say to Azusa? ³⁷

Pentecostal theologies developed as experiences of the Spirit as *the* Gift and the Giver-of-gifts received critical reflection.³⁸ The movement's link with Parham's tongues lasted a few years, but the benefits of the Spirit as the reality of Christ's presence for reassurance, sanctification, renewal and empowerment has been a constant.³⁹ I want to show that an enduring value of this *experiential* theology was not merely the ability to speak in tongues but rather the exercise of charismata with compassion, especially in its healing apostolate. An important paradigm shift ensued, from the stress on *sanctification* to Pentecostal power for *service*. Here, India had a vital contribution to an understanding of Azusa's full gospel and on the divisive issue of tongues.⁴⁰

³¹ T.S. Kutty, *Place and Contribution of Dalits in Select Pentecostal Churches*, ISPCCK, 2000, p. 155.

³² Reuben Gabriel, 'Reflections on Indian Pentecostalism: Trends and Issues', *DD*, 2 / 2002, p. 68-69.

³³ This phrase is used in the *World Christian Encyclopedia*, (eds.) Barrett et. al. Oxford: OUP, 2001.

³⁴ D. Martin, *Pentecostalism: The World Their Parish*, Blackwell, 2002; K. Poewe (ed.), *Charismatic Christianity as a Global Culture*, Columbia: Univ. of South Carolina, 1994; Corten Marshall-Fratani (eds.) *Between Babel and Pentecost: Transnational Pentecostalism*, London: Hurst, 2001.

³⁵ Anderson and Tang (eds.) *Asian and Pentecostal: The Charismatic Face of Christianity*, Oxford: Regnum, 2003; Wonsuk Ma, 'Asian Pentecostalism: Theology in Context', *DD*, 6/2, 2002, p. 13.

³⁶ Tony Campolo, *How to Be Pentecostal Without Speaking in Tongues*, Milton Keynes: Word, 1991.

³⁷ A detailed draft of this section with the title was sent to David Roebuck, the secretary of *Pnuema* and in the light of Azusa's centenary it was forwarded to Frank Macchia for a forthcoming publication.

³⁸ Craig Keener, *Gift Giver: The Holy Spirit for Today*, Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001.

³⁹ Leon Joseph and Suenens, *A New Pentecost?* London: DL&T, 1975, Mark Stibbe, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, Kent: Sovereign World, 1995, Max Turner, *Power from on High*, Sheffield: JPTS, 2000.

⁴⁰ See issue entitled: Azusa after a Century, 'Beyond Babel: Pentecost and Mission', *IBMR*, 30/2, 2006:

Bartleman in his work *Azusa Street: The Roots of Modern-day Pentecost* reported the success of Azusa missions overseas and he made the following claim:

From here God has sent those living witnesses from him up to the coast for hundreds of miles across the continent; into China, India, Africa and Jerusalem- each able to speak in any language to whom God sends, using the language thus given of God with absolute perfection.⁴¹

Alfred Garr, Azusa's first missionary to India was convinced, as Parham taught, that he had received the capacity to speak the *Bengali* vernacular of India and was therewith equipped to communicate the gospel without going to language school. The Garrs came to Calcutta, a city disease-stricken and poor. At first, they reported:

God is spreading Pentecost here in Calcutta, and thirteen or fourteen missionaries and others have received it. We are among the Bible teachers and they have the word so stored away; but now the Spirit is putting life and power into it, which is wonderful to behold.⁴²

However, Garr's sincere experimentation with tongues proved a serious failure as he simply could not preach in Bengali, certainly not at will. Most Pentecostals with hindsight and pastoral sensitivity now accept the fact that the gift of 'other tongues' (*xenoglossolia*), to preach the gospel in an unlearned foreign language, was a painful misnomer. But, Garr's inability led to a fruitful analysis of charismatic experiences and valuable lessons were learnt. He challenged Parham's assumptions and biblical hermeneutics dislodging the Classical Pentecostal position that tongues was *the* necessary or 'sure sign' for Spirit baptism. Although disappointed, what is significant is that Garr treated the Bible as reliable and examined systematically the meaning and peculiarities of the different texts on tongues.⁴³ His pragmatic yet reasoned attempt to reconcile tongues as a valid experience within the Indian context led him to allow both the objective (written *Word*) and subjective (*Spirit* revealed) aspects of one's faith-experience to work together in the discovery of truth. His findings are applicable to global Pentecostalism and the notion *Pastoral Pentecostalism* presented in this thesis.

First, Garr's struggle must be seen as a bold exercise in pastoral integrity. He was the first Pentecostal to publish his stance on tongues and send it to Seymour at Azusa.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Frank Bartleman, *Azusa Street: Roots of Modern-day Pentecost*, Plainfield, NJ: Logos, p. 179-180.

⁴² Lillian Garr, 'In Calcutta, India', *The Apostolic Faith*, October 1906, p. 2, For the full story, 'When the Pentecostal Fire Fell in Calcutta', *Azusa and Beyond*, Ketcham & Warner (eds.), p. 28f.

⁴³ Garr's study was of the five passages in Acts where Spirit baptism and tongues are found together: 2:4, 8:17-18, 9:17-18, 10:44, 19:6. Over 23 verses mention tongues indicating it was not a rare topic.

⁴⁴ Garr, 'Tongues: Biblical Evidence', *Cloud of Witnesses to Pentecost in India*, Sept. 1907, p. 40-47.

McGee notes this resulted in a major reformulation of Parham's 'Bible Evidence',⁴⁵ and played a reconciling and pedagogical role for future Charismatic Christianity. Second, Garr's submission reveals a *compassion* for sincere Christians and the veteran missionaries in India who lacked the gift of tongues and therefore was regarded in some way as less spiritual. Garr's proposition is a benchmark for evangelical-charismatic Christianity,⁴⁶ since at this early stage he recognised what later was termed as the 'pneumatic' and 'experiential' dimension' in Pentecostal hermeneutics. Here spiritual relationship and lived-out response, not just 'emotive' factors, illumine contemporary meanings and applications of texts.⁴⁷ Such a view affirms new crops of Charismatics such as Dhinakaran, who are not ignorant of the *Scriptures* nor the *power* of God. Third, while Garr categorically rejected Parham's linguistic role for tongues as an evangelistic tool, he did not discard its relevance as a charismata today. For him, tongues evidenced a baptism, not of the Spirit in-coming, but the Spirit's in-filling that relates to his control, guidance and empowerment. In this way, the role of tongues was moved from a proof or preaching tool to the arena of worship and intercession.⁴⁸ The benefit of tongues in praise and for prayer was retained on pragmatic grounds. Pastoral Pentecostalism takes such practical concerns seriously in its Charismatic theology.

My interest lies in the healing charismata that Garr proposed as a more practical and unifying gift than tongues, which Indian missiologists still find effective for the spread of the gospel in the Indian culture. Garr helped re-formulate the tongues doctrine and importantly reinforced the value of the healing gifts for mission in India. He asserted:

As far as I can see, [God] will not use that means [tongues] by which to convert the heathen, but will employ the gifts – such as wonderful signs of healing and other powers.⁴⁹

Thus Garr advocated a signs and wonders ministry where healings served as manifestations of divine power accompanying the Spirit's fullness rather than proofs for the Spirit's presence. In effect, his apologia widened the blessings of the Spirit to a

⁴⁵ McGee, 'The Calcutta Revival of 1907 and the Reformulation of Charles Parham's Bible Evidence Doctrine', *AJPS*, 6/1, 2003, p. 123-143; McGee, 'Rites in the Spirit', *AJPS*, 5/2, 2002, p. 324.

⁴⁶ Pawson, *Word and Spirit Together: Uniting Charismatics and Evangelicals*, Hodder & Stoughton, 1993; Nathan and Wilson, *Empowered Evangelicals: Bringing Together the Best of the Evangelical and Charismatic Worlds*, Servant, 1995; Bannister, *The Word & Power Church*, Zondervan, 1999.

⁴⁷ T. Cargal, 'Beyond the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy', *Pneuma*, 15/2, 1993, p. 163-187, Arrington, *Pneuma*, 16/1, 1994, p. 101-107.

⁴⁸ A. Garr, 'Tongues: The Bible Evidence to the Baptism with the Holy Ghost', *Pentecostal Power*, Calcutta, 1907, p. 2-5. Stanley Burgees, 'Pentecostalism in India', *AJPS*, 4 / 1, 2001, p. 89.

⁴⁹ Garr, 'A Letter from Bro. Garr' *Confidence*, May 1908, p. 2, in McGee, 'Calcutta Revival', p. 138.

variety of subsequent charismatic experiences and helped dissolve the question whether the Spirit is received at conversion or later. His recommendation reveals that charismatic power although intensely personal was not meant to be a spectacle but to change lives. Pentecostal mission from Azusa advanced as it related to socio-cultural concerns.⁵⁰ Nationals and missionaries were surprised with joy to discover, first hand, how charismata enjoined with compassionate service enhanced evangelism.⁵¹

Indian Pentecostals affirm the fundamental nature and purpose of the healing gifts as 'signs' that authenticate both the gospel message and its messenger. Their mission theology correlates healing with evangelism since these therapeutic gifts objectively communicate divine truth and enable pastoral ministry based on the Bible, Christ's model and experiences of God's compassionate power. Tongues aside, Pentecostals are Charismatics who perceive healings as manifestations of the Spirit who empowers believers to fulfil Christ's mission in a hurting world. Indian Pentecostals did not need to be convinced of this duty yet it took time and collaboration with Azusa missions to responsibly adopt and carefully formulate their practical healing theologies.⁵²

3. Azusa's 'Full Gospel' for Global Healing Theologies

Hardesty observes that at Azusa, 'Pentecostalism began with a healing'. Edward Lee, a bank custodian was prayed for by Seymour and after his splitting headache left, Lee received the Spirit and spoke in tongues.⁵³ Azusa's healing movement arose out of the 19th century Wesleyan-Holiness tradition. Here, as Dayton notes: 'Even more characteristic of Pentecostalism than the baptism of the Spirit is its celebration of miracles of divine healing as part of God's salvation and as evidence of God's power in the church'.⁵⁴ Seymour, an evangelist from the holiness tradition, practiced divine healing based on Dowie's restorationism and Parham's apostolic authority. At Azusa, bodily healing was an experiential reality and tangible sign of God's love and power.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ McClung (ed.), *Azusa Street and Beyond*, NJ: Bridge, 1986; Synan, *Century of the Holy Spirit*, deals with the global expansion of Pentecostalism with the title 'from Azusa to the Regions Beyond' p. 69f.

⁵¹ McGee, 'Pentecostal Phenomena and the Revivals in India', *IBMR*, July 1996.

⁵² Henry Joseph, *Maranatha Mission* and Dr Phenny, *World Vision*. See Interview list.

⁵³ Nancy Hardesty, *Faith Cure: Divine Healing in the Holiness and Pentecostal Movements*, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003, p. 101-102.

⁵⁴ Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987, p. 115; Also see: Kim Alexander, 'Models of Pentecostal Healing and Practice in the Light of Early Twentieth Century Pentecostalism' Ph.D. Thesis, Open University, July 2002. (Part 2: Wesleyan-Pentecostal Stream).

⁵⁵ Jonathan R. Baer, 'Redeemed Bodies: The Function of Divine Healing in Incipient Pentecostalism', *Church History*, 70/4, December 2001, p. 739.

The notion 'healing in the atonement' was understood as: *The atonement for sin and sickness or full salvation for soul and body.*⁵⁶ Chappell, tracing the movement considers its 'faith healers [as] the first American pentecostals'.⁵⁷ Along with sanctification subsequent to salvation and Spirit-baptism as empowerment, there was an experiential theology of healing being promoted.⁵⁸ Therefore, the doctrine of divine healing as in the atonement was advocated before, during, and after the Azusa revival.

Pentecostal experiences at Azusa created a thirst for spiritual power. Christians, of all persuasions worldwide who were feeling impoverished or disinherited, heard a 'full gospel' articulated that sought to meet their everyday existential needs. Azusa, as a symbol for empowerment, promoted a universal Charismatic theology that at its core was *experiential, wholistic and missional*. In spite of persisting issues (with Spirit-baptism and supernatural gifts) these three components, then and now, offer a foundational 'Pentecostal' pastoral theology within a therapeutic subculture that allows a Pentecostal faith to inculturate itself trans-culturally in places like India.

The *experiential* faith of Pentecostals, as in the early church, was kingdom-oriented and eschatological. They believed they literally were living in 'the last days' hence an urgency to evangelise the world before Christ's *parousia*. With the 'fullness of time', their message was armed with the 'full gospel' to equip believers to win the world with two essentials: an apostolic *faith* and miracle-working *power*. Land enumerates the five theological motifs of the Pentecostal 'full gospel': (i) Justification by faith in Christ, (ii) Sanctification by faith in the second definite work of grace (iii) Healing of the body as provided for in the atonement (iv) The premillennial return of Christ and (v) The baptism in the Holy Spirit evidenced by speaking in tongues.⁵⁹

Each of the above five tenets signify some form of healing toward the ultimate wholeness that comes through Christ, whether now and in part, or perfectly at the *eschaton*. The *soteriological* thrust of the Pentecostal full gospel proclaimed Jesus as saviour from sins, the healer of all sicknesses and the deliverer from Satan and demons. Its *pneumatological, missiological and eschatological* dimensions were

⁵⁶ Kelso Carter's work, Boston: Willard Tract, 1884. In the early 19th century the teaching-evangelists Charles Cullis, A.J. Gordon and A.B. Simpson were ardent proponents of healing in the atonement.

⁵⁷ Paul Chappell, *Divine Healing Movement in America*, PhD Dissertation, Drew University, 1983. p. ii.

⁵⁸ J. Ayers, 'John Wesley's Therapeutic Understanding of Salvation', *Encounter*, 63/3, 2002 p. 263-297; P.G. Chappell, 'Healing Movement', Burgees and McGee (eds.), *DPCM*, Zondervan, p. 353-374.

⁵⁹ Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, p. 18.

derived from the distinct Pentecostal understanding of Spirit baptism as empowerment for mission in the last days, and it was this impulse that set 'the Pentecostals' apart from their predecessors in the holiness movement.⁶⁰

At Azusa, experiences of the Spirit produced an apocalyptic vision with passion and new potential to realise an eternal kingdom: both here-and-now and forever.⁶¹ Hence, Pentecostals globally vouch for a kingdom theology with a wholistic soteriology,⁶² which as Yong has shown, includes: 'spiritual life; bodily healing; communal koinonia; the transformation of material, social, political and historical circumstances; and responsible ecological living'.⁶³ Yet, the tangible effects of Jesus' inaugurated kingdom and the corporeality of Christian salvation are best attested in the third tenet of the full gospel, viz. divine healing. The reality of the kingdom had come, not only in Jesus' preaching and teaching but practically in his miracles: healing all manner of diseases, exorcising demons and feeding multitudes, demonstrated his compassion for the weak and ostracised in society.⁶⁴ Jesus' earthly ministry and vision for his church as a servant of the kingdom, compel his followers to engage in his *wholistic* mission.⁶⁵

Azusa was about *experiencing wholeness* at various levels; a prototypical Pentecostal community where one could expect healing; as reconciliation to a benevolent God and liberation from spiritual and social forces of evil. Such a worldview resonates well within India where spiritual warfare and social emancipation are taken seriously and an interventionist God is celebrated. The more powerful Holy Spirit is believed to overthrow sickness-afflicting spirits (*peeys*). Culturally, Pentecostal healings are most pronounced in the area of exorcisms or 'deliverance ministries'. The Spirit's role as comforter incorporated a *pastoral* theology that addressed people's fears and existential needs. Martini underlines the intrinsic value in paying attention to the desperate pleas of the sick in the light of Jesus' kingdom and the *eschaton*:

Sickness is not simply a medical problem: it is a call for help, for love, and for meaning... Sick persons who receive help become a powerful attraction, as they speak from their heart about the long-ignored, neglected feelings of courage, hope and endurance, and the refusal to give in. Suffering can be an

⁶⁰ Allan Anderson, 'Pentecostal Approaches to Faith and Healing', *IRM*, XCI/363, 2002, p. 524-525.

⁶¹ William Faupel, *The Everlasting Gospel*, Sheffield: JPTS, 1996.

⁶² John Wimber, *Power Evangelism: Sign and Wonders Today*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1985, Trevor Martin, *Kingdom Healing*, London: Marshalls, 1981.

⁶³ Amos Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out On All Flesh*, Grand Rapids, Baker, 2005, p. 79-80.

⁶⁴ Albert Nolan, 'Praxis', *Jesus Before Christianity*, New York: Orbis, 1998, p. 20-36.

⁶⁵ Andrew Lord, *Spirit-Shaped Mission*, Paternoster, 2005.

opportunity for conversion. Our eyes open to the horizon that gives meaning even to the existence filled with sickness and death, because our life is not a journey toward nothingness but towards the Lord who is coming to meet us.⁶⁶

Spirit baptism with tongues was a typical 'Pentecostal' additive and although a bone of contention, it also had *experiential* value for community formation. Using Jesus' promises to interpret their experience, the Spirit's fullness became a valid *source* of knowledge of what was once a transcendent reality.⁶⁷ Charismatic experiences were not just self-certifying, they helped confirm biblical truths through a participation that enabled members to actualise Christ's eschatological kingdom. World evangelisation was Azusa's specific goal for which they made the 'prophethood of all believers' their revolutionary base.⁶⁸ Pentecostals strongly believe that divine grace can be mediated via the exercise of gifts by congregational members. Thus the term 'Pentecostal' in effect was moved from its exclusively dispensational and denominational connotations to represent a recurring Spirit-empowered lifestyle. Correspondingly, the experience of church/community shifted from a sacramental to a charismatic model.

Pentecostals, 'endued with power from on high' excelled in body, mind and spirit and their mission for life was to spread the full gospel worldwide by means of this second blessing.⁶⁹ In 1908, J.R. Flower, wrote: 'The Pentecostal baptism fills our souls with the love of God for lost humanity and when the Spirit comes into our hearts, the *missionary spirit* comes with it; they are inseparable'.⁷⁰ From inception global forms of Pentecostalism are adjudged as 'a religion made to travel'.⁷¹ Azusa had a magnetic and 'take-home' effect on international visitors. Today the 'blessings' received at the Toronto Airport Fellowship and Dhinakaran's Bethesda Dome, have a similar effect.

Pentecostal mission theologies are transformational as they blend healing evangelism with social action.⁷² Azusa missionaries like Robert Cook fostered communities at the fringe of the institutionalised church.⁷³ Azusa's strength was that it advocated an

⁶⁶ C. Martini, *On the Body: A Contemporary Theology of Persons*, New York: Crossroad, 2001, p. 24.

⁶⁷ Peter Donovan, *Interpreting Religious Experience*, London: Sheldon Press, 1979, p. 3-20.

⁶⁸ Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, p. 18.

⁶⁹ Dempster et. al. (eds.) *Called and Empowered: Global Mission in Pentecostal Perspective*, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991, underlines this from a biblical, theological, social and missional basis.

⁷⁰ From *The Pentecost*, quoted in Dempster, et. al., *Called and Empowered*, p. 205-206.

⁷¹ Subtitle of Dempster et. al., *The Globalisation of Pentecostalism*, 1999.

⁷² Samuel & Sugden (eds.), *Mission as Transformational: A Theology of the Whole Gospel*, 2000; Ronald Sider, *One-sided Christianity? Uniting the Church to Heal*, Zondervan, 1993.

⁷³ Kutty, *Place and Contribution of Dalits*, 2000, p. 154.

experiential faith that pastorally built such communities. Its Charismatic theology sees God as imminent and omnipotent. Jesus is alive by his Spirit, endowing his followers with spiritual gifts and miraculous signs follow those who believe.⁷⁴ In a scientific age where human achievement is replacing dependence on God, the missional faith and charismatic power of Pentecostals perennially perpetuate an abundant life in the Spirit.

Azusa needs to remain a global benchmark for charismatic faith because from it, a movement of the *Spirit* emerged as a *Third Force* of missions bringing wholeness and creating communities of the Spirit worldwide.⁷⁵ In redressing the Trinitarian balance in the existing church's theology, Pentecostals have lived out Hudson Taylor's adage: 'God's work, done God's way, will not lack God's provision', which includes the grace of divine healing. With a Lukan pneumatology they clarified that 'God's way' is to empower and thrust out witnesses to Christ's gospel in the power of his Spirit.⁷⁶ The Spirit's *gracious yet powerful* gifts were thus designed to bring the blessings of the full gospel to others, beyond.⁷⁷ As this grassroots movement gained global acceptance and credibility it had to interpret and give form to its oral theology for which Pentecostals naturally espoused a contextual Charismatic missiology.

4. Fibrous Roots of the Indian Pentecostal Healing Theologies

Indian Pentecostal historian, A.C. George published: *A History of the Assemblies of God of India* (2004) where he bemoaned the lack of detailed records and handicap of reconstructing origins from oral testimonies.⁷⁸ Different strands of Pentecostalism(s) in India have little raw material on the theological roots of their healing movements *per se*, to develop theories of healing. Also, since critical reflection was discouraged and several claims over-exaggerated, Pentecostalism was dismissed by scholars as a 'tongues movement [that] valued emotional experience over reason'.⁷⁹ In this section, my aim is to locate Dhinakaran's praxis in its theological context, for which I will consider the message of healing in three major existing Pentecostal groups.

⁷⁴ See Chapter 1: 'Signs and Wonders are for Evangelicals, Too', Charles Kraft, *Christianity with Power: Your Worldview and Your Experience of the Supernatural*, Ann Harbour, MI: Servant, 1989.

⁷⁵ Paul Pomerville, *The Third Force in Mission*, Peabody: Hendrickson, 1985.

⁷⁶ Robert Menzies, *Empowered for Witness: The Spirit in Luke-Acts*, Sheffield: JPTS, 2001.

⁷⁷ J. Vines, *SpiritWorks: Contemporary Views on Gifts*, Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999, p. 52.

⁷⁸ George, 'Pentecostal Beginnings', *DD*, 2002, p. 41. *Trailblazers for God*, Bangalore: SABC, 2004.

⁷⁹ J. Belcher & Hall, 'Healing and Psychotherapy: The Pentecostal Tradition', *Pastoral Psychology*, 50/2, Nov. 2001, p. 64-65.

Taylor has observed that questions on healing come to the fore with experiences of the Spirit's power, and that 'historically and theologically there has been a close link between Pentecostalism and the belief in divine healing'.⁸⁰ Early Indian Pentecostals had implicit albeit unwritten theologies of healing. Their founders had the innate Indian desire to encounter the sacred through ecstatic experiences marked by visions of Christ and voices of the Spirit that guided their 'prophetic' healing ministries. This was typical of guru-leaders like Ramankutty Paul (CPM founder), K.E Abraham (IPC founder) and is true of Dhinakaran. Apostolic gifts and healing power were associated with sanctified lives that were augmented by prayer, fasting and a deep faith in God.⁸¹

During Aroolappan's ministry (1860s), indigenous, revivalist churches in Tamil Nadu and the major Kerala revivals (1873, 1895 and 1905) stressed fasting prayer and witnessed signs and wonders that led to church growth.⁸² Ramabai's prayer circles, started in 1905, rapidly disseminated to south India addressing the needs of the sick, poor and demon possessed.⁸³ In northeast India by the 1930s, Snaitang reports: 'divine healing and people's experiences of deliverance from various ailments and demon possession contributed to the phenomenal growth of the church and widespread geographical expansion'.⁸⁴ Hence, belief in divine healing became a steady movement that developed as part and parcel of the indigenous Pentecostal revivals.⁸⁵ Yet, as in the case of tongues, participants received Jesus' promises to heal in simple faith without analysing biblical theologies. Indian Pentecostal leaders did not critically assess nor systematise doctrines of healing since their experiences were pragmatic and rooted in their pastoral-missional practice, certainly not in pure or theoretical reason.

What is remarkable is how Indian Pentecostalism forged ahead under the leadership of women. As early as 1908, Miss Aldivinkle and Miss Bouncil were spirit baptised in revival meetings held by the healing evangelist Christian Schoonmaker in Coonor, a summer resort for missionaries. These women with Pandalam Mathai sowed seeds of Pentecostalism and spread their experience throughout the Tamil speaking south.⁸⁶ Others touched by the Pentecostal fires were the Christian Alliance missionary Sarah

⁸⁰ M. Taylor, 'A Historical Perspective on the Doctrine of Divine Healing', *EPTA*, XIV, 1995, p. 54.

⁸¹ Hedlund, *Quest for Identity*, p. 233-253.

⁸² George, 'Pentecostal Beginnings', *DD*, 2002, p. 43.

⁸³ Paulson, 'Emergence of Indian Pentecostalism', *DD*, 2002, p. 49.

⁸⁴ O.L. Snaitang, 'Indigenous Pentecostal Movement in Northeast India', *DD*, 6/2, 2002, p. 7.

⁸⁵ Hedlund, *Quest for Identity*, p. 73; Solomon Raj, *New Wine Skins*, 2003, p. 5; both, Delhi: ISPCK.

⁸⁶ George, 'Pentecostal Beginnings', p. 43.

Coxe in Gujarat and Miss Fannie Simpson, a Methodist missionary at an orphanage in Calcutta, home of the Gars. Ramabai, Carmichael, Mary Chapman and Spenser May were geniuses at accomplishing pastoral tasks and social reform with Pentecostal power.⁸⁷ American women in particular, like Mildred Guinn and Lydia Graner at Bethel Bible School (AG) and Dora Myers at the Mt. Zion Bible School (CG), moulded the minds of the future national leaders, A.C. Samuel and M. Benjamin.⁸⁸

The role of women in a Pentecostal healing theology is significant for many reasons. First, although unsung heroines in an inherited culture where leadership is perceived as male, they represent the countless single missionaries, Bible teachers, Bible women (home evangelists) and pastors' wives who were architects of Pentecostal thought and nurtured the undercurrents for healing and renewal. Second, they illustrate the less spectacular yet compassionate side to charismatic healing where educating the mind toward social transformation is as important as personal ecstatic experiences and bodily cures.⁸⁹ Third, these women reveal that the roots of the healing movement were fibrous: unnoticed but numerous and strong, that nurtured a Pentecostal piety at both domestic and institutional levels. Dhinakaran, when interviewed, acknowledged his indebtedness to 'the celestial singer' Sara Navaroji and an earlier prophet-healer Papa Sankar, both these women prepared the fertile ground for his public healing ministry.⁹⁰ Today, Stella and Evangeline Dhinakaran through hundreds of Esther Prayer Groups are pioneering new frontiers for healing prayer and reconciliation nationwide.

Indian Pentecostals celebrate *Jehovah-Ropha*, but also plead with him to take pity or show mercy and heal their sicknesses. Healing can be of two kinds: for 'born again' Christians, a privilege because of Christ's compassion and substitutionary death; and for all people needing deliverance from oppressive evil forces. The latter takes the form of miracles and exorcism and is 'indigenous' since it ritualises healing in a way that it mirrors the popular Hindu subculture. Pentecostal aetiology matches popular beliefs that include black magic, curses and the evil eye. In general, ill health is amalgamated with the many forms of misfortune within Indian demonologies.

⁸⁷ For Ramabai, see: S. Kumar, *Trailblazers 5*, p. 39-54; Carmichael, S.D. Ponraj, *Pioneers of the Gospel*, p.107-130; Stella's contribution is yet to be researched not as the backbone of the *Jesus Calls* ministry but in her own right as its co-founder, editor and pioneer of the national Esther Prayer Bands.

⁸⁸ Bergunder, 'Women in Leadership', *DD*, 2002, p. 28-29.

⁸⁹ Mother Teresa has become an icon for such compassionate service. See: J. Varickasseril, 'A Women who Resembles Jesus in her Public Ministry', *IMR*, 20/3, 1998, p. 53-61.

⁹⁰ Details in Hoershelmann, *Christian Gurus*, p. 118-134; 193-202.

I will now examine three Indian Pentecostal healing theologies, the first two have links with the USA: the *Assemblies of God* (AG, Springfield), and the *Church of God* (CG, Cleveland) and the third 'indigenous' group is represented by the *Ceylon Pentecostal Mission* (CPM) that in 1984 became *The Pentecostal Mission* (TPM). I recognise that a variety of non-American, though western, influences helped shape the 'complex network' now referred to as Indian Pentecostalism.⁹¹ But, I will limit myself to these three since they directly impacted Dhinakaran's thought, provide us a broad enough framework to access his teachings and generally cover other healing theories in Indian Charismatic churches. After noting their background and the key players, I will draw out the main tenets, comment on their biblical basis and make a comparative analysis.

During research I found certain 'official documents' which before Dhinakaran's debut postulated the theological stance on healing of the Indian AG, CG and TPM groups. These statements are not readily available nor studied by most Pentecostals. Yet, they are crucial in determining the 'inherited', 'emergent' and 'relevant' elements in contemporary healing theologies. Indian healing evangelists like Dhinakaran tend to mix-and-match elements as they function with all three denominations. Therefore, Bergunder rightly insists on considering both *diachronous* and *synchronous* networks in constructing Pentecostal historiographies.⁹² These documents discussed, reflect the Pentecostal groups' traditional praxis that I have also studied in consultation with their representative scholars and practitioners who currently affirm these beliefs.⁹³ There is considerable overlap but the leaders interviewed clarified that these documents still hold the doctrinal basis for prevalent healing ministries in their respective churches.

4.1 The South Indian Assemblies of God (SIAG)

The first AG missionary to South India was Mary Weems Chapman who had served in Africa. Chapman was an itinerant minister between Bombay-Pune in the north and Bangalore-Madras in the south.⁹⁴ In 1915, with Madras as her operational base she was instrumental in establishing a Pentecostal ministry. In 1922, Spencer May, a

⁹¹ E.g. T.B. Barrett of Norway and Karin and Ida Nilson of Sweden; Bergunder, 'Constructing Indian Pentecostalism Issues on Methodology and Representation', Paper, Birmingham, p. 138-139.

⁹² Bergunder, 'Constructing Indian Pentecostalism: p. 138-139.

⁹³ I have discussed my thesis with the leaders of these historic Pentecostal centres where many of our SAIACS graduates teach: Bethel Bible College (CG, Punalur), Sharon Bible College (Thiruvalla), Faith Theological Seminary (Manakkala) SABC (AG, Bangalore) and TPM headquarters (Madras).

⁹⁴ Pulikottil, 'Emergence' p. 50-52; George, 'Pentecostal Beginnings', p. 43, *DD*, 2002.

Welsh missionary joined her and published the first Indian Pentecostal Magazine, *Pentecostal Trumpet*.⁹⁵ Given the marginalisation of women and considering the impact of the printed page, the Chapman-May team must to be placed alongside Berg and Cook, and the entire foursome regarded as 'Pioneers of Indian Pentecostalism'.

Burgess commenting on the SIAG ministry writes: 'Early Pentecostal missionaries in South India focussed most of their attention on evangelistic work and on training of Indian national evangelists and pastors'.⁹⁶ Chapman and Cook's colleagues were Indian leaders like A.C Samuel, the superintendent of the AG and K.E. Abraham who later founded the Indian Pentecostal Church (IPC). With power healing as the mission strategy, Cook built a team of national co-workers with A.K. Varghese, K.E. Abraham, A.C. Samuel, A.J. John, T.M. Varghese, P.V. John, Panthelam Matthai, who 'became outstanding leaders of Pentecostal groups later'.⁹⁷ Yet, Cook found the need to be supported by a larger American organisation. In 1919, he affiliated with the AG General Council, which assisted him in fund raising toward purchasing property on which he established lively churches. However, within ten years, he left the AG and took with him many of these churches along with their ministers.

The SIAG affirms a biblical basis for divine healing endorsed by its Commission on doctrinal purity and the Church's Executive Presbytery. It is featured in Article 12 of the **Statement of Fundamental Truths** (p. 7-8) under the *Constitution and By-Laws of the South India Assemblies of God*, founded on 1 January 1916. The SIAG General Superintendent, T.C. George, shared with me the high value placed on faith for divine healing toward the church's outreach and pastoral care. On 23 June 1994 at Madras, the following threefold statement was adopted by the SIAG executive officers.⁹⁸

Divine Healing is an integral part of the gospel. Deliverance from sickness is provided for in the Atonement, and is the privilege of all believers (Isa 53:4,5; Matt. 8:16,17; James 5:14-15).

On 20th August 1974, the International Presbytery of the AG put forth a paper explaining the above three clauses and their implications for ministry,⁹⁹ which was

⁹⁵ Burgess, 'Pentecostalism in India', *AJPS*, p. 90.

⁹⁶ Burgess, 'Pentecostalism in India', *AJPS*, p. 92.

⁹⁷ A.C. George, *Trailblazers for God*, p. 40.

⁹⁸ T.C. George, Interview and clarifying several issues, 26.01.2004, Bangalore.

⁹⁹ Now available on the internet through their website: <http://www.ag.org>. See: W. Menzies, *Anointed to Serve: The Story of the Assemblies of God*, Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1971.

published under the caption: **Our Position on Divine Healing**.¹⁰⁰ Carlson, its General Superintendent, further expounded its tenets in: **Our Faith and Fellowship**.¹⁰¹ The SABC faculty in Bangalore and AG pastors from the four states in South India still utilise what I will hereafter refer to as the 'AG document' as the reference and chief resource for its theological stance.¹⁰² The AG is the most influential Pentecostal organisation in urban India and its distinct views on healing fuel several independent ministries. The perspectives below are from the subtitles and my assessment has been shared with Dhinakaran and those SIAG leaders who work in a partnership with him.

Divine Healing an Integral Part of the Gospel

The AG see healing as a gracious provision for God's people or as Carlson puts it: 'God chose to obligate Himself to provide healing for the physical body'.¹⁰³ Their stand has been outlined as follows: the work of God, according to the Word of God, based on the atonement of Christ, in the name of the Lord Jesus and to the glory of God. Healing for the whole person is at the core of the gospel as a manifestation of 'the Great Physician' whose nature, desire and purpose is always to heal the sick.¹⁰⁴ After Pentecost, charismatic healings are considered 'an extension' of Jesus' work through Spirit-filled Christians. The promise of healing is for 'all believers who would ask in His name', i.e. recognise his authority and submit to his will. The gospel and gifts are thus held together in witnessing to Christ's lordship in a pluralistic context.

Deliverance from Sickness Provided for in the Atonement

In the AG document, healing is 'closely connected' to Jesus' salvific mission. While the primary purpose of Christ's death was to cleanse from sin, it teaches that on the cross Jesus 'provided for the consequences of sin, including sicknesses'. The implicit theory is that all sicknesses are a direct or indirect result of sin, and initially the devil's work. It builds a case with the Hebrew concept that atonement 'in most cases refers to a ransom price paid for redemption and restoration' and then shows Christ's sacrifice as the full penalty for all sins. In destroying the devil's works, Jesus' death brings release, restoration and God's favourable 'blessings'.¹⁰⁵ Divine healing is a fulfilment

¹⁰⁰ Printed as 'Our Position on Divine Healing' AG Statement, *Paraclete*, Spring 1974, p. 7-25.

¹⁰¹ G. Raymond Carlson, *Our Faith and Fellowship*, Springfield, MO: Gospel Pub., House, 1994.

¹⁰² P. Thangiah in Karnataka, T.C. George and L. Sam in Kerala, Stubbs in Andhra Pradesh and D. Mohan in Tamilnadu. These AG leaders directed the author to this document during their interviews.

¹⁰³ Carlson, *Our Faith*, p. 91.

¹⁰⁴ 'Our Position', p. 8.

¹⁰⁵ 'Our Position', p. 8

of Isaiah's prophecy (53:3-4) with the language of physical illness and promise of wholeness due to Messiah's substitutionary death. The AG document acknowledges that Matthew applies 'by his stripes we are healed' to Jesus' earthly ministry (8:17) and Peter uses it to stress restoration from sin (1Pet. 2:24, 25). But, since Isaiah ties it with Jesus' saving work, for the AG, 'it is clear that these passages include healing from both the spiritual and physical effects of our sins and waywardness'.¹⁰⁶

Divine Healing is the Privilege of All Believers

The AG does not limit charismatic healings to the first century apostles since they are divine signs and miracles of grace. The gifts manifest Christ's presence in his body the church and his healing love as the privilege of all believers. Charismata are 'intended to edify the Church and are tied in with the witness to Jesus as Lord'.¹⁰⁷ AG churches encourage believers to 'have the faith to claim the privilege of divine healing'. Gospel passages are used to point out that while Jesus did not reject little faith or weak faith, he commended great faith and indicated the necessity to express faith in his ability to heal. Healing methods symbolically assist to 'express faith'. Importantly it states that faith is 'in the Lord Jesus and not in the means used to help them express their faith'.¹⁰⁸ In all this, as Carlson concludes: 'If a need is present and faith is present, the power of the Lord is present too - yes, even today'.¹⁰⁹

4.2 The Church of God in India (CGI)

The Church of God group was a precursor to American Pentecostalism. Its history dates back to the 1886 meeting in Barney Creek, Tennessee. Tomlinson recollects its modest beginnings and notes the role miracle healings played in its growth.¹¹⁰ Yet, it was not until 11 January 1907, at its Second Annual Assembly at Union Grove, Cleveland, the name 'Church of God' was adopted and member applicants were required to accept the doctrine of divine healing, with other Pentecostal distinctives like Spirit baptism with tongues and fuller sanctification subsequent to conversion.

In 1912, George Berg met Robert Cook at a convention in the USA. In obedience to a call, the next year the Cooks arrived in India as independent missionaries but joined

¹⁰⁶ 'Our Position', p. 8.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. 1Cor. 12: 7,3; 'Our Position', p. 9.

¹⁰⁸ 'Our Position', p. 11.

¹⁰⁹ Carlson, *Our Faith*, p. 98.

¹¹⁰ A. J. Tomlinson, 'Brief History of the Church now recognised as the Church of God', 1913, Details, Kay & Dyer, *Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies*, p. 7f.

the AG in Bangalore. Berg had mentored several native leaders from the Brethren assemblies like Cumine, Ummachan, Mammen and Matthai. Sadly Berg could not collaborate with Cook. Cook went on furlough but in 1929 returned with a clear vision to plant Pentecostal churches in South India. In 1936, having been befriended by J.H. Ingram, a CG, (Cleveland) minister, Cook left the AG and joined the CG, now called the Full Gospel Church of God. The formation of the Church of God in India (CGI) is credited to Cook's initiatives since his revival meetings, especially around Kerala produced a number of vibrant assemblies that were by confession 'Pentecostal'.¹¹¹

As work progressed (1940-1970) the CGI in several cities established prayer houses, congregations, Bible schools and undertook humanitarian activities. 'Demoniacs were released, divine healings took place, and the word of this group spread'.¹¹² During this expansion stage the CG sent C.E. French, Dora Mayers and William Pospisil, competent missionaries to consolidate the work. After studying the CGI's healing praxis Pospisil compiled their beliefs in a document called **Scriptural Divine Healing** that the CGI's Indian leadership published in 1959 at its Chengalur press, Kerala. Having interacted with CGI leaders at Faith Theological Seminary (Manakkala) and Bethel Bible College (Punalur), I will comment on some of the main CGI tenets on healing.

The Bible, Salvation and Divine Healing:

'Scriptural' in the title of the CGI book, reveals its commitment that is firmly grounded as the document states: not in 'any man made creeds or traditions' or even 'personal experience or observation but in the word of God'.¹¹³ With this literalistic view of the Bible, three truth claims were made: (i) Healing and salvation are forever linked in God's word (ii) Physical healing as much as salvation is certainly God's will (iii) Salvation and healing are possible only by God's unmerited grace. God's will is supremely disclosed in Jesus who never refused anyone who asked but 'healed all that came to him' (Matt. 4:23). The tree that healed the bitter waters of Marah and the brazen serpent that brought healing to Israel for them 'prefigure the cross, and indicate that healing was to come by means of the cross'.¹¹⁴ With such symbolism the CGI see

¹¹¹ S. Matthew, 'Church of God in India', *DAC*, p. 173; Charles W. Conn, 'Indian Flashback', *Where the Saints Have Trod: A History of the Church of God Mission*, Cleveland: Pathway, 1959, p. 219-225.

¹¹² Alex Philips, 'Selected Indigenous Church Movements', *Christianity is Indian*, p. 314. Others who provided information were M.E. Jacob, L. Sam, V.A. Varughese and K.J. Matthew, 20-21 Feb. 2002.

¹¹³ William Pospisil, *Scriptural Divine Healing*, Chengalur, Kerala: CGI Press, 1959, p. 2.

¹¹⁴ Ex. 15:26; Jn. 3:14-15. Pospisil, *Scriptural Healing*, p. 3-4.

healing 'in the atonement [meaning] healing of the body is fully provided for in the redemptive sacrifice of Christ, a finished work of Calvary obtained through faith'.¹¹⁵

The Finished Work of Christ and Healing Today:

Sickness is believed to be a direct result of the Fall and considered 'primarily a work of the devil'. Deliberate sins may be a cause of sickness, yet Jesus' vicarious death destroyed the devil's works to 'sets us free from sin, sickness, fears and bondage'. The CGI consider the Passover Lamb as a type of Christ (1Cor. 5:17) and a parallel is drawn between the Israelites who were protected and strengthened in their bodies by partaking of the lamb, and those who believe in the 'finished work of Jesus'.¹¹⁶ The CGI find celebrating Holy Communion a useful picture of the twofold work of the cross: 'The shed blood speaks of salvation. The broken body is for our healing'. They are convinced some at Corinth were sick because they did not discern this truth for 'they should have been healed, had they known or believed and appropriated the value of the broken body of Christ to themselves and received their healing'.¹¹⁷

The Church's Faith and Healing Ministry:

CGI churches teach: 'Healing is to continue through the Church age', since Jesus transferred his authority and power to his followers. They reason: 'Jesus would never have asked the disciples to do something that was not the will of God' and conclude: 'If one is a true believer, it is expected that he should lay hands on the sick and pray the sick person should recover'. Yet healing power is located in Jesus' name and not those who pray for the sick.¹¹⁸ CGI members are instructed: 'when sick [they] should seek God's help and not put their trust in man'. They strictly apply the promise in James 5:15: 'the prayer of faith will heal the sick and the Lord will raise him up'. Although 'not against the good work of doctors who assist nature', stories of king Ahaziah who did not seek God when sick and Asa who sought physicians instead, are used on one hand to warn and on the other to challenge believers to pray and trust in God as the ultimate Healer in the first place. The CGI are christocentric, looking to the cross for supernatural healing and testimonies are solicited not to prove God heals since the Bible and Christ's finished work settled that, but to 'inspire faith'.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ Pospisil, *Scriptural Healing*, p. 1.

¹¹⁶ Pospisil, *Scriptural Healing*, p. 4-7.

¹¹⁷ Pospisil, *Scriptural Healing*, p. 6.

¹¹⁸ Pospisil, *Scriptural Healing*, p. 8-10.

¹¹⁹ 2Kings 1, 4; 2Chron. 16:12.13. Pospisil, *Scriptural Healing*, p. 10.

4.3 The (Ceylon) Pentecostal Mission: (CPM, since 1984 TPM)

The Pentecostal Mission was founded in 1923 by Ramankutty as a 'full gospel' Pentecostal denomination. It was first called the Ceylon Pentecostal Mission since it was registered at Colombo, Ceylon (now, Sri Lanka), and recognised as 'one of the earliest Pentecostal movements in South Asia'. P.C. Martin believes that the CPM is 'one of the largest Pentecostal movements in the world'.¹²⁰ Ramankutty a Hindu dalit from Kerala upon conversion changed his name to 'Pastor Paul'. He worked as a catechist in the CMS before he received Spirit-baptism. Pulikottil is convinced that Ramankutty's role in Indian nationalism and the rise of indigenous Pentecostalism is incalculable. Besides adopting Indian forms of worship,¹²¹ he ordained the first national ministers like K.E Abraham acknowledged as the 'godfather of Indian Pentecostalism',¹²² who in 1933 developed the Indian Pentecostal Church (IPC) the largest Pentecostal denomination in India.¹²³ Today, C.K Lazarus is the Senior Pastor of TPM with over 848 branches that are led by 3984 full-time ministers.¹²⁴

Hoerschelmann notes that Pentecostalism in Tamil Nadu evolved 'mostly because of the more or less direct propaganda of the IPC against 'foreign influences'.¹²⁵ Individuals and many congregations owe their Pentecostalism to the CPM that is more legalistic and fundamentalist than the IPC. It is the largest Charismatic movement rather than a Pentecostal Church incorporating Spirit-oriented groups worldwide. I attended their Saturday 'Tarrying Meeting' with Pastor M.T. Thomas at their facility in Bangalore. Here, Assistant Pastor, Jasper, gave me a series of 15 publications on the C/TPM doctrines,¹²⁶ two of which I will use to clarify their views on healing: **The Doctrine Concerning Divine Healing** (1980) and **Divine Healing Messages** (1986).

Discerning Causative Factors and Defining Divine Healing

TPM connects sickness to the doctrine of original sin. A strong dualism is espoused with Satan as the author of curses and sicknesses and God, author of all blessings

¹²⁰ Paul Martin, (CPM senior leader, founder of the Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship), 'Brief History of the Ceylon Pentecostal Church' Hedlund (ed.), *Christianity is Indian*, 2000, p. 441, 444.

¹²¹ Sara Abraham, 'Indian Pentecostal Church of God', *Christianity is Indian*, p. 445-457.

¹²² Pulikottil, 'Emergence of Indian Pentecostalism', p. 52.

¹²³ Sara Abraham, *Christianity is Indian*, p. 445-57.

¹²⁴ Martin, *Christianity is Indian*, p. 437f., 441.

¹²⁵ Hoerschelmann, *Christian Gurus*, p. 40.

¹²⁶ Interview, Pastor K. Jasper, TPM Headquarters, Hennur Road, Kothanur, Bangalore, 29.12.2003.

especially bodily healing.¹²⁷ Distinct to TPM tradition are other causes of sickness viz. tobacco and alcohol, gluttony, overwork, fear, anger, jealousy and envy. The lack of hygiene and unworthy participation in the Lord's Supper, are regarded as moral sins related to physical sickness. TPM churches directly correlate healing to holiness. However, TPM members are not to condemn 'servants of God' if they fall ill because 'God may permit' sickness for a purpose; a trial of faith or revelation of his power, as in the case of Job and Epaphroditus.¹²⁸ God sometimes permits sickness to come upon believers as a redemptive *chastisement* or a righteous *judgement*.¹²⁹ The difference is: 'God may chastise someone in the hope of bringing that person to repentance, but if that person wilfully persists in sin, then, God ministers his judgement'.¹³⁰ Hence, the gift of discernment is essential to know the source [whether human or demonic] of sickness to overcome it.¹³¹ TPM claims are strict yet broad: 'divine healing alone can answer all problems, whether it is physical or mental, spiritual or diabolic'.¹³²

God's Healing Covenant: Curses, Blessings and Faith

TPM tends to tie together holiness and healing making the latter deeply relational within 'God's Healing Covenant'. Here, curses and blessings function as cause and effect and 'are opposed to each other'. TPM churches believe that 'God leaves both CURSE and BLESSING at the disposal of man, for him to choose what he would decide'.¹³³ Healing is promised only to disciplined, obedient children who 'renew covenants, faith, and claim healing'.¹³⁴ Sickness can be a curse: 'the counteracting result of forsaking God, who is our life, strength, power and protection'. The 'cross of Christ' is where God's new covenant was sealed and 'all the curses cancelled and made null and void, to redeem us of the law so that the blessings of Abraham might come upon us'.¹³⁵ Blessings 'in Christ' now include divine healing: 'children's bread' that believers 'have every right to claim'.¹³⁶ TCM members are reminded, 'Satan can

¹²⁷ *The Doctrine Concerning Divine Healing*, Adyar, Chennai, Pentecostal Press Trust, 1980. p. 1-4.

¹²⁸ *Doctrine Concerning*, p. 10-19, 29.

¹²⁹ *Doctrine Concerning*, p. 19-24. A list of names and particular sins reveal how God is not directly responsible for sickness, yet allows its consequences to affect the body and cause death.

¹³⁰ *Healing Messages*, Adyar, Chennai, Pentecostal Press Trust, 1986. p. 42.

¹³¹ 1Cor 12:10, *Healing Messages*, Pentecostal Press Trust, p. 9.

¹³² *Healing Messages*, p. 39.

¹³³ *Doctrine Concerning*, p. 31-38, p. 32 (Emphasis in the original).

¹³⁴ *Healing Messages*, Pentecostal Press Trust, p. 7.

¹³⁵ *Healing Messages*, p. 29; Interpreted from Paul in Gal. 3:13,14

¹³⁶ *The Anointing of the Holy Spirit*, (No.16), Chennai: Pentecostal Press, 1998, 2002, p. 117.

have access to our body through sin, unbelief and fear and afflict us with sickness' so, believers are exhorted: 'let us be vigilant and let us not be ignorant of his devices'.¹³⁷

The Spirit's Anointing and Charismatic Healing:

In TPM, divine healing, as with the AG and CG, is considered as a blessing from the atonement; however it is appropriated as the believers 'birthright and inheritance'.¹³⁸ Healing 'proceeds from the Spirit's 'anointing' as God's power is made present to heal, interconnected to the gifts and manifests God's power and glory'.¹³⁹ Further, sanctification is a prerequisite both for the healer and the sick. Fasting and prayer enables sanctification which releases the anointing.¹⁴⁰ TPM believe that normally healings in the body come as a result of the Spirit's works in the soul. TPM answers the question how to receive healing with four steps: (i) make sure you are God's child, (ii) Be reassured it is His will to heal, (iii) Pray that God shows the cause for the sickness and (iv) Stay dedicated when healing is delayed.¹⁴¹ If someone 'dies in faith', not receiving the promise of healing, it is not a defeat but a victory'.¹⁴² TPM submit that a 'law of faith' where believers, 'rather sacrifice their life than loyalty to Christ must be applied to the truth of divine healing also'.¹⁴³

5. A Brief Comparative Analysis of the Healing Theologies:

The two movements, divine healing and Pentecostalism, developed hand in glove in India to revolutionise Christian theology and mission in a significant and a pragmatic ways. First for the countless who experienced bodily healings, 'they symbolise[d] both a fresh understanding of God's relationship to sickness and the new life they had entered into'. Second, particularly for Pentecostal healing evangelists like Dhinakaran, the movement 'legitimizes and demarcates their larger ministries and enhances their personal power'.¹⁴⁴ The Pentecostal Gospel continues to be experienced in God's power to heal and is marked by an overwhelming sense of God's holy presence. As shown historically, evangelism and mission follow as the first fruits of revival producing fresh impetus for education and social concerns.¹⁴⁵ The Pentecostal healing

¹³⁷ *Healing Messages*, p. 10; *Doctrine Concerning*, p. 34.

¹³⁸ *Doctrine Concerning*, p. 64.

¹³⁹ *The Anointing*, p. 112, 113.

¹⁴⁰ *The Anointing*, p. 114, 119.

¹⁴¹ *Doctrine Concerning*, p. 95-100.

¹⁴² *Doctrine Concerning*, p. 17.

¹⁴³ *Doctrine Concerning*, p. 98.

¹⁴⁴ Jonathan Baer, 'Redeemed Bodies', p. 739.

¹⁴⁵ R.E. Davis, *I Will Pour Out My Spirit*, Tunbridge Wells: Monarch, 1992, p. 251-259.

revival gave prominence to lay people and to women, opening up opportunities for those at the margins to become agents of healing and bearers of a charismatic culture.

Cessationist theories sound absurd to Indian Pentecostals with their ardent belief in the charismata as the chief reason for the movement's attractiveness, relevance and growth. Healing gifts are manifestations of the Spirit in power encounters and exorcisms that result in evangelism demonstrate pastoral care. Testimonies and later Pentecostal statements on healing 'whether instantaneous or gradual' highlight the importance of fasting *prayer* and persistent *faith* to experience divine *power* and become healing '*agents* of the Lord'.¹⁴⁶ These four motifs that I call: fervency, expectancy, potency and agency are also key issues that surround charismatic healings.¹⁴⁷ Most Pentecostals recognise that charismata have been abused, however individual situations differ. The AG confess: 'we do not understand all that pertains to divine healing' however, Indian Pentecostals preach a gospel of healing, pray for the sick, cast out demons and expect miracles as 'signs to follow' those who believe.¹⁴⁸

Indian Pentecostals stress bodily healing but in theory, healing addresses one's totality of being and local socio-cultural beliefs have often shaped their theological views.¹⁴⁹ Gradually, as the need for critical reflection on their experiences arose they selectively adopted existing, systematic statements on divine healing. This I will show in Dhinakaran's healing theology. Yet, the biblical text is kept central but allowed to interplay with the Spirit's work and while the latter creates dynamism, the former helps curtail aberrations. The healing models of Jesus and the apostles govern truths about healing. In determining the sources or causative factors, on one side, the notion of sickness is related to original sin and the fall where Satan and demons continue to play a vital role. On the positive side, they preach God's healing grace from the cross of Christ, released by the Spirit's power as the remedy for all sickness. Human participation counts and is taken seriously. Therefore categories like personal sin, fasting and prayer, strong faith and holy living, determine the efficacy of healing.

¹⁴⁶ 'Our Position', p. 13, Mark 8:24f is used as a case in point.

¹⁴⁷ Larry Hurtado, 'Healing and Related Factors', *Paraclete*, Spring, 1970, p. 20-25; My findings from fieldwork and the feedback I have gathered on these four themes provide material for future research.

¹⁴⁸ 'Our Position', p. 13.

¹⁴⁹ 'A fully biblical South Asian spirituality' as Burrows and Hedlund point out 'will take cognizance of cultural and social contextual realities', *Quest for Identity*, p. 231.

I have identified three Indian Pentecostal healing theologies with their distinctive approaches and doctrinal emphasis: the SIAG, CGI and TPM, respectively. The SIAG, in the Wesleyan tradition, advocates a gospel of healing as the believer's privilege perceiving it as divine *providence* in the atonement. For the CGI, healing is supernatural and specifically related to Christ's *finished work*. In the same way and to the same extent that the blood of Christ forgives sins, his broken body is said to assure the believer of bodily healing. TPM tend to approach healing in *covenantal* terms with a strong dualism. Healing is an Abrahamic blessing closely associated with deliverance from satanic curses and dark powers. All three theologies accommodate a warfare worldview against disease-inflicting spirits but the emphases and indigenous features vary with the SIAG, CGI and TPM in the increasing order, and correspondingly, the value for medical treatment is in the decreasing order.

A holy life is believed to produce spiritual standing before God and to activate the healing gifts. For Indian Pentecostals, holiness unto the Lord is often expressed with external forms: all-night prayers, prophecy, fasting and abstinence from sex. Again, the AG would be more liberal in this regard and TPM with their ascetic practices like wearing white clothes and celibacy are more fundamentalistic.¹⁵⁰ The release of the Spirit's power to heal is deemed proportional to the moral purity of 'God's servant'.

The experience of Spirit-baptism following conversion is a work of grace as much as enduement with power. Thus, the rather western 'two-stage' (AG) versus 'three-stage' (CG) controversy¹⁵¹ in the *ordo salutis* is alien to most Indian Pentecostals, who see no tension between Christ's 'finished work' and his Spirit's sanctifying and empowering work in believers. However, a disconcerting shift has occurred with respect to the full gospel. What was once a radical holiness faith that denounced worldliness in the light of Christ's imminent return is now an incentive for power ministries and this-worldly blessings or prosperity. This is due to an *over-realised eschatology* that emphasizes healing from the *cross* but at the expense of the coming *kingdom*, which is shockingly absent in all three Pentecostal theologies. Healing is related to the kingdom and is a central theme in the Gospels and Acts. As Land has shown, healing is 'a sign of the eschatological breaking in of the kingdom'.¹⁵² But, if

¹⁵⁰ Paul Martin, *Christianity is Indian*, p. 439-440.

¹⁵¹ For Durham's 'Finished Works' doctrine and 'Schism', see Anderson, *Pentecostalism*, p. 45-51.

¹⁵² H. Ervin, *Healing: Sign of the Kingdom*, Hendrickson, 2002; Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, p. 95.

healing is available in the atonement here-and-now in the same way as forgiveness, a triumphalistic *Charismatic* theology over evil powers is advocated with little *compassion* for the unhealed or the need for a theology of suffering. Thus a framework is needed that deals with the reality of sickness, avoids an over-realised eschatology and offers a biblical view of the relationship between Satan, sin and sickness. It must take in account spiritual and those natural means by which God may choose to heal.

Indian Pentecostalism may be defined in relation to the Full or fivefold Gospel where divine healing lies at its heart and is indispensable for its life and witness. As a *sign* it authenticates the Pentecostal message and as an empowering *gift* it trail blazes global Pentecostal missions. David du Plessis aptly noted: 'The very fact that the Pentecostal revival was based upon a personal experience of receiving the Holy Ghost, who makes every recipient a powerful witness, has caused the development of indigenous churches and movements'.¹⁵³ In India, the Pentecostal healing movement has produced tremendous potential for growth and theological reflection. Yet, on the pastoral level it places heavy responsibility on the authoritative leaders and healing evangelists to ensure the authenticity and pastoral integrity of the faith experiences.

Dhinakaran has not assimilated any one healing theology *in toto*. Like most healers, he selectively appropriates some of the strengths from each. For instance, G. Sundaram, from the CPM and pastor of the Apostolic Christian Assembly, Madras imbibed in him the importance of holiness and pastoral care. It was the IPC pastor S.P. Daniel who taught him the value of being a wounded healer.¹⁵⁴ However it was the visiting US evangelists, T.L. Osborn and Oral Roberts who inspired his faith for miracles.

In sum, Charismatic Christianity in India offers powerful experiences that make Jesus real, releases 'sign' gifts that draw people to Christ and seeks to build the Church. Yet, questions abound: What kind of faith community is the movement creating? Can it keep its mind and soul together? How does it relate to the surrounding Hindu culture? Does it prepare its adherents for tough times, poverty and sickness or does it cause more wounds than it heals? To deal with such questions for the whole of India is impossible. Therefore, I have chosen Dhinakaran's healing ministry as a case study, through which I will explore relevant themes and assess problematic issues.

¹⁵³ David J. du Plessis, *Azusa Street and Beyond*, McClung (ed.), Plainfield, NJ: Bridge, 1986, p. 41.

¹⁵⁴ Dhinakaran, '40 Years with the Holy Spirit', *Jesus Calls*, October 2002, p. 4-9.

Chapter Four

The Dhinakaran Phenomenon: Healing, Charismata and Compassion

The maxim: 'Everything rises or falls on leadership', aptly describes the burgeoning healing movement in India, where Dhinakaran is the undisputed leader. Christians, Hindus and Muslims alike know 'brother DGS' as a modern prophet-healer due to his daily TV programmes and city-wide Prayer Festivals. This premier evangelist, forty years ago an obscure street preacher, is a household name in India and international figure, since he made it his 'sole business and concern with 20 facets of ministry, to communicate to the world the compassion of Christ'.¹ As an ecumenical, he works with the church at large supported by Pentecostals, Protestant and Catholics and has significantly shaped Christian thought in India.

In keeping with Indian culture, the Charismatic tradition receives and communicates truth orally and through shared experiences. 'The power of a story lies in its use as a vehicle to carry variable, multiple and changing messages to diverse audiences in different times'.² I have chronicled main events in Dhinakaran's life for the reader at the end of this chapter. Here, I will explore experiences that determined his advocacy of a 'charismatic faith',³ which informed his praxis of miracle healing and built his organisation. I will begin with his immediate context then examine key concepts he gathered from Indian and American (US) evangelists to formulate his own theology.

1. Locating Dhinakaran: Socio-Historical and Religious Contexts

Dhinakaran is a third generation convert from Tirunelveli near the Indian peninsula tip (see map). As Frykenberg observed, 'the world's great religious traditions have mingled and interacted, religious pluralism has been a special feature... yet ever since the eighteenth century, the compulsions of cultural and religious interactions have been profoundly changed by impacts of new Christian movements'.⁴ Under Fredrick Schwartz (1749-98), mass movements of conversion produced a radical and energetic

¹ Dhinakaran, 'About the Author' advertised and as an introduction, *Gifts of the Spirit* (back cover).

² B. Rutherford, 'Story as Vehicle of Social and Cultural Values', Paper, 30th SPS conference, 2003.

³ M. Stibbe differentiates between faith that leads to *conversion* (Eph.2:8), a *continuing* faith, a fruit of the Spirit (Gal.5:23) and *charismatic* faith as a special endowment, *Know Your Gifts*, 2000, p. 65.

⁴ Robert Frykenberg, 'Historical Introduction', David and Sarojini Packiamuthu (eds.), *Tirunelveli Evangelical Christians*, Bangalore: SAIACS, 2003, p. xiv.

faith among especially the Nadar caste (or Shanars) and the Vellalas.⁵ Dhinakaran's parents were Nadar members of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG), a missionary arm of the Anglicans since 1814.⁶

In 1799, the Christian Missionary Society (CMS) was founded and with the SPG was considered 'high church' for its formal, clerical and institutionalised worship and western methods for evangelisation. In 1820, K. Rhenius arrived and later B. Schmidt, both of whom encouraged the local Tamil evangelicals to add wider social reform programs to their pietistic revivalism and indigenous missionary zeal. CMS attempts to control affairs, led to Rhenius' dismissal and the Tamils adopted a resilient spirit to colonial missions as a hierarchical form of 'cultural imperialism'.⁷ Leaders like Rhenius were esteemed as Christian gurus within the popular 'charismatic' culture since they championed the native's cause to show how conversion produced a new identity and upward socio-economic mobility.⁸ This democratic process was seen as divine providence. 'The fullness of time has come for India and secularism, which helps to break away from traditional beliefs, is one sign of it. Secularism is not a march backward but forward. Christ is a symbol of progress and already in it'.⁹ Soon Dalit theologies arose to demonstrate that the introduction of modern science, medicine and western education actually proved the native leaders' capability to 'manage their own affairs' and contributed to their 'all-round wellbeing'.¹⁰

The rise of Indian nationalism encouraged the formation of numerous independent, indigenous congregations and ministries. On 27 September 1947, when the CSI was formed, the SPG was reluctant to support it since the union empowered laity to such an extent that Episcopal authority seemed undermined.¹¹ Lay leaders alongside their secular jobs initiated 'faith ministries' and travelled preaching, healing and doing

⁵ The Hindu caste system has four divisions: the *Brahmans*, priestly class; *Kshatriyas*, military class; *Vaisyas*, agriculturists and traders; and *Sudras*, servants. A fifth, *Harijans* or untouchables was later created. Within the third group, were *Vellalas* who were landowners and the *Nadars*, who were robust and respected for their socio-economic status, chiefly became *Christian gurus*. Hoershelmann (p. 14).

⁶ This date marked the consecration of Thomas Middleton as the first Anglican Bishop in Calcutta. In 1701, SPG was incorporated in the Royal Charter and in 1833, British parliament made the missionary enterprise official so Anglican priests came to India with the East India Company. Millington, *An Ecumenical Venture*, Bangalore: ATC, 1993, p. 1-11.

⁷ Frykenberg, *Tirunelveli Evangelicals*, 2003, p. xxxviii. For mission records see F. Balasundaram, *Dalits and Christian Mission in the Tamil Country*, Bangalore: ACT, 1987.

⁸ Solomon Doraisawmy, 'Conversion as Political Action', *Christianity in India*, Madras: CLS, 1986, p. 77. Hoerschelmann includes Ringeltaube from the German pietistic movement. *Christian Gurus*, p. 31

⁹ Ezra Sargunam, 'Strategy for India', *Perspectives*, Pasadena: William Carey, 1992, p. D-130.

¹⁰ Samuel Jayakumar, *Dalit Consciousness and Christian Conversion*, Chennai: M.E.T, 1999, p. 218.

¹¹ Millington, 'The Reaction of SPG to the Proposed CSI Formation', *Ecumenical Venture*, p.52f.

evangelism. J. Augustine's analysis of this 'evangelical efflorescence' demonstrates that 'the most dramatic growth took place outside the mainline churches'.¹² Caplan shows how these initiatives fed into a fundamentalist counterculture that 'placed greater stress on the significance of the Spirit, and the gifts it concurs. Crucial among these is the gift of healing and the performance and authenticity of miracles'.¹³

In 1953, Newbigin, the CSI bishop in Madras, perceived the 'Church's visible unity' within three streams: Catholic-sacramental, Protestant-evangelical and a third, he described as 'the community of the Holy Spirit'.¹⁴ Several churches in this third stream were experiencing and boldly expressing forms of a church life that, for want of a better word, he called 'pentecostal' and was convinced of its inevitable growth and potential to shape the future Indian Church. Newbigin submitted that this was a force to be reckoned with and decried that this stream at that time was 'largely outside' the Indian ecumenical movement. He saw at its core two outstanding traits:

- i) The primacy of an intense encounter with the Spirit, recognised as God's presence and power; a central element actually experienced and received reality, something involving an ontological change in the believer.¹⁵
- ii) A Spirit-filled fellowship, in which the Spirit's gifts are known and enjoyed and used for the edification of the Church and for witness to the world.¹⁶

These two elements: the first, defining what is typically 'pentecostal' and the second that which is distinctively 'charismatic', became the defining features of the Indian Pentecostal-Charismatic movement (not tongues) and remain as non-negotiable 'fundamentals' in what I have been referring to as 'Charismatic Christianity'.

In post-colonial India, charismatic bodies developed rapidly to take the centre stage and spawn networks of churches, institutions and parachurch agents such as the Jesus Calls organisation (1970-). They offered a new way of being 'church' with a shift in ministry focus from maintenance to mission. In India's modernising society, these groups offered opportunities, meaningful experiences and community activities to encounter God and resource daily discipleship. Subsequently, the established congregations as those of the CSI were regarded as highly institutionalised churches.

¹² John Augustine, *Religious Fundamentalism: Asian Perspective*, Bangalore: SATHRI, 1993, p. 132.

¹³ Augustine, *Religious Fundamentalism*, p. 130; Caplan, 'Christian Fundamentalism Counterculture', *Religion in India*, T.N. Madan (ed.) Delhi: OUP, 2002, p. 366-381.

¹⁴ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Household of God: Lectures on the Nature of the Church*, (The 1953 Kerr Lectures, Trinity College, Glasgow), Paternoster, 1998, p. 111-144.

¹⁵ Newbigin, *Household*, p. 112,113.

¹⁶ Newbigin, *Household*, p. 142.

Ecclesiastical powers were viewed as oppressive and unwilling to equip or release members. This created disillusionment and a growing discontent, while charismatic experiences led Christians to discover lively fellowships and relevant patterns of witness. A large exodus from the historical churches joined the converts in the indigenous Pentecostal movements making Charismatics, in size and influence, the mainline churches in India today.¹⁷ Dhinakaran, a by-product of this socio-religious development and paradigm shift, proved to be an important catalyst and ecumenist bringing a better balance and working relationship between the two and shaping the Charismatic movement to give it a strong national identity and global outreach.

2. The Making of a Charismatic Healer and ‘Apostle of Compassion’

Much of the information here was gathered from often-repeated episodes in Dhinakaran’s magazines and substantiated by interviews with him at the Jesus Calls headquarters in Madras, visits to his outreaches in various locations like Karunya Institute at Coimbatore, listening to scores of his audio-video tapes, and clarifying the facts and discussing issues with his associates and his critics.¹⁸ Several spiritual influences made Dhinakaran embrace a charismatic faith for healing and mass evangelism. Gandhi’s well-known saying: ‘You must become the change you want to see’, is illustrated in Dhinakaran’s journey into a successful contextual ministry.

Max Weber has argued that authoritative leaders may be legitimised in one of three ways: rational, traditional or charismatic recognition. When all three are present, one must ask which is the ‘ideal type’ that is most influential in a particular culture.¹⁹ For Dhinakaran, rather than an ecclesiastical appointment to office or personal attributes *per se*, the term ‘charismatic’ refers to the healing power he possesses by virtue of the special *charismata* the faith community believes God has bestowed on him. So, ‘charismatic power’ refers to the personal capacity emanating from *within* the one who speaks or works miracles that enhance and legitimise his external authority.²⁰

¹⁷ Millington, *Ecumenical Venture*, Bangalore: ATC, 1993, p. 52.

¹⁸ Those consulted were Christian teachers who promoted Dhinakaran’s ministry e.g. his training director Rajadhas at Karunya, Coimbatore, as well as others who were sceptical or highly critical of his ministry like Dr. Pushparaj, editor of the Tamil magazine *Jammakaran* residing at Salem.

¹⁹ Max Weber, *Essays in Sociology*, Gerth & Mills (ed.) NY: OUP, 1958, p. 262, *Economy and Society*, New York: Bedminster, 1968.

²⁰ Martha Stortz, *PastorPower*, Nashville: Abingdon, 1993, p. 78.

Analysing Dhinakaran's story and beliefs was difficult as little reliable information is available on this revered guru leader who has become a legend in his own lifetime.²¹ Indian Christians generally do not critique 'holy men' due to the fear of the crowds and 'speaking against God's anointed'. Hence, Dhinakaran's faith journey and views on healing are best approached against the backdrop of his spiritual upbringing and the influences that determined and interpreted his charismatic experiences.

2.1 Childhood and Schooling: The Cross, Salvation and Wholeness

Duraisamy Geoffrey Samuel (DGS) Dhinakaran was born on 1 July 1935. Hephzibah his mother had been unable to conceive, which socially is regarded as a curse or misfortune. Like Hannah, she vowed that if she were blessed with a boy child she would name him Samuel and groom him to be the Lord's prophet.²² Her prayers were answered and she went to her native town in Ramnad district, Tamilnadu to deliver her only son. Dhinakaran recollects how sufferings and sickness characterised his family. His father Duraisamy worked long hours as a schoolteacher to earn a decent salary and often 'blood used to ooze out of his throat'. His mother was 'tormented by the cursed disease of epilepsy'.²³ He himself was infected with polio when eighteen months old, which disabled his right leg. He is convinced it was his mother's prayers and strong faith that miraculously healed and strengthened him to walk again.²⁴

Dhinakaran's father, determined his son get the best education, sent him into St. John's School in Palayankottai. In 1947, Dhinakaran moved to Cuddalore where he completed higher secondary studies and started a B.Sc. at Kumbakonam Government College. Here, he failed his exams twice and his final year proved traumatic. On 11 February 1955, Dhinakaran calls 'a red letter day in my life', he attempted suicide.²⁵ He explains: 'Confronted with unemployment, sickness and hunger I resolved that death was better than such a miserable life on earth'.²⁶ He tried to kill himself on the tracks as a train approached but his uncle Alex Rathanam, a policeman, intervened.

²¹ Bergunder confesses, 'A lot of details are shrouded by hagiographic stories of his life and ministry', 'Dhinakaran: Christian Healer-Prophet', *Christianity is Indian*, p. 158.

²² Dhinakaran, *Jesus Calls*, July 1995, p. 2-3

²³ Dhinakaran, '50 Years with the Saviour', *Jesus Calls*, March 2005, p. 3.

²⁴ This is Dhinakaran's testimony in *Iyecu Alaikkirar* (Tamil, hereafter *Jesus Calls*), July 1995, p. 2-3.

²⁵ Dhinakaran, '50 Years with the Saviour', p. 2.

²⁶ This testimony is often retold, *Be Not Dismayed*, p. 28; *Blessed Are You*, p. 21.

Rathanam described Jesus' substitutionary death and advised: 'Freely tell God all your failures. He will forgive you, grant you a peace that the world cannot give, be a Father to you and render every help you need'.²⁷ Dhinakaran returned to his room, sought God and confessed his sins. He writes: 'I had an assurance that Jesus forgave all my sins instantaneously. There entered into my life a peace that the world cannot give' and as he applied himself to study, he writes: 'God granted me success. I got my job and regained my health'.²⁸ This 'conversion' began to shape Dhinakaran's theology of the fullness of life that comes in experientially knowing Christ.

Rathanam's portrayal of Jesus' atonement helped Dhinakaran to discover a God who is *compassion (suffers with us)* and a wholistic view of salvation. For him, the cross became 'a sacred symbol of divine love and a sign of hope'.²⁹ He cherished the idea of the fatherhood of God and from the Bible became acutely aware of the need to share God's healing love with others. The Pentecostal pastor S.P. Daniel water baptised Dhinakaran and several Christian gurus encouraged him to experience 'more of the Spirit's presence and power' that would critically shape his theology of power and healing.³⁰ At this point, at least five basic convictions can be identified within Dhinakaran's understanding of the reality of divine healing:

- i) God heals through prayer in inexplicable ways still today. Faith in God's will and the power of Christ's Spirit to do so is essential for the process.
- ii) Dhinakaran describes the practice of healing with the gifts as a 'wholesome ministry',³¹ since it takes into account the unitary nature of the human being. As M. Israel notes, 'body, mind (reasoning faculty), soul (feeling, evaluative aspects) and spirit (the centre of thrusting onward growth animated by the Spirit of God) are integrated into a whole person. Therefore healing that is real cannot bypass any of these four functions of the human personality'.³²
- iii) Christ's salvation offers fullness of life; hence the gospel extends to meet all areas of human need including one's domestic and socio-economic welfare.

²⁷ Dhinakaran, *Seven Sayings of the Saviour*, Madurai: Word of Christ. n.d. p. 13.

²⁸ Dhinakaran, *Blessed Are You*, p. 22.

²⁹ Dhinakaran, *Seven Sayings*, p. 5,13,14. This book is his compelling treatise on the sevenfold power of Christ's love: to forgive and regenerate, over pain, darkness and thirst, to triumph and to give life. Translated into the Indian languages and reasonably priced it is a best seller during Passion Week.

³⁰ This is a common tendency with healing evangelists within cultures based on pragmatism. When experience is used to determine theology or made normative besides biblical revelation, it can be dangerous. Hiebert, 'Healing and the Kingdom', *Anthropological Insights*, Baker, 1994, p. 244-245.

³¹ Dhinakaran, *Gifts*, p. 37.

³² Martin Israel, *The Quest For Wholeness*, London: DL&T, 1989, p. 9.

- iv) 'The cross' is central and significant in Christian healing where, in Jesus, 'God has made our cause his and his cause ours.'³³ It represents Christ's atonement that deals with the restoration of our humanness in its totality.
- v) Together with the objective elements in Christian healing, there are subjective aspects that Dhinakaran's followers accepted as 'miraculous'. Kuppozhackel notes that in Indian healing systems, as in the Graeco-Roman culture, such activities were beyond the boundaries of empirical science,³⁴ yet, were encounters in which spiritual powers, divine and demonic were engaged.

Through what Dhinakaran calls his 'turnaround',³⁵ he models an evangelical theology that stresses the need for a radical inside-out change and an 'I-Thou' experience with Christ. Yet equally his is a Charismatic theology of the cross, in Smail's words: 'one that depends on the Spirit's coming and working most of all'.³⁶ Baptism by immersion is an evangelical distinctive not practised in the 'liberal' CSI churches with its so-called social gospel. Tamil Christians 'in defiance of the CSI' regularly attended 'pentecostal services' where there was fasting prayer and the Spirit's fillings. Some retained their CSI membership, yet financed independent outreaches and 'declared themselves to be doing God's work on their own, as freelance evangelists on the Pentecostal circuit'.³⁷ Caplan rightly assessed the Charismatic movement as a counterculture that acts contrary to and constantly challenges nominal Christianity.³⁸

2.2 Vocation and Ministry: Divine Call and Anointing for Healing

After completing his degree, Dhinakaran followed in his father's footsteps and taught for a year at St. Davids School, Cuddalore. In 1956, he worked as a clerk at the State Bank of India (SBI). A normal feature in the banking system is the regular promotion of efficient workers but with it comes their transfer to various locations. So, Dhinakaran and his family were moved around South India - from Kurnool in Andhra, to Pondicherry on the west Coast, then from Mettur Dam in Tamilnadu to Mangalore in Karnataka. In 1962, he was awarded the prestigious status of a bank officer and served in cosmopolitan cities like Bangalore. Wherever he was relocated, he was

³³ John Hoad, *Healing and Salvation*, London: SCM Press, 1958, p. 18.

³⁴ Eliza Kuppozhackel, 'New Church Practices in Healing, their Importance in High Asian Cultures: India', (eds.) Chauvet & Tomka, *Illness and Healing, Concilium*, London: SCM, 1998 / 5, p. 111-112.

³⁵ A term Dhinakaran uses for his conversion. See his website: <http://www.jesuscalls.org/profile/dgs>

³⁶ Tom Smail, *Once and for All: A Confession of the Cross*, London: DL&T, 1998, p. 6.

³⁷ Augustine, *Religious Fundamentalism*, p. 121.

³⁸ Caplan, 'Christian Fundamentalism', p. 366.

known as an industrious, cordial, honest and humble worker. These transfers developed his managerial skills, cultural sensitivity, exposed him to the felt needs of common people and helped him empathise with their daily struggles.

Committed to the Christian ethic of hard work in his bank profession, Dhinakaran made time to study the 'Holy Bible' and without formal theological training, memorised copious portions of it. He is 'biblically literate', meaning, he is known to have a firm grip of confidence in the Bible, which also has firm grip on his life.³⁹ He has avidly read literature on Jesus' miracles, determined to model Christ's healing.⁴⁰ As a *bhakta* of Jesus, he writes: 'I desired that I should see Him and that He should perform miracles in my own life'.⁴¹ Alongside his secular job, Dhinakaran was famous initially as a street and radio preacher. In this sense, his healing ministry was subordinate to and collaborated with the proclamation of the gospel. However, for outreach, beyond the sacred Scripture, he developed a special sensitivity to the Spirit's voice. Edmunds notes: 'Prayer is [Dhinakaran's] powerful tool to invoke the Holy Spirit to guide him and his listeners. One can admire his tenacity of purposes and all his decisions are deeply rooted in God's guidance and his directions alone'.⁴²

While Dhinakaran attributes his conversion to Christ's atonement, he focuses on the Spirit's work when sharing his special call and empowerment to serve. He mentions three 'gifted evangelists' who played a determining role in what became his life's vocation.⁴³ In January 1961, Pastor J.K. Rowlands (a white African from the Full Gospel Church of God) ministering at the Apostolic Christian Church, Madras, laid hands on Dhinakaran to release him into a prophetic ministry, where the Spirit's gifts function in a similar way as the early Church. Second, in February that year, he attended the US evangelist T.L. Osborn's healing crusade in Madurai with over 80,000 people. Here, 'wonderstruck at the number of miracles' he cried out: 'O God, fill me with your spirit, give me also this power'. Third, the Pentecostal pastor J.S. Lemiur prayed that the Spirit bestow 'the nine gifts to engage in the ministry powerfully'. 10th October 1962, is Dhinakaran's 'unforgettable day' when 'in the Spirit' he had a

³⁹ Charles Swindoll, *Active Spirituality*, London: Word, 1994, p. 47.

⁴⁰ Dhinakaran's favourite authors on 'Healing' are Kuhlman, Wigglesworth and Osborn, whom he quotes and often refers to the experiences of these 'great servants of God', *Gifts*, p. 35, 46. He initially received Oral Roberts' magazine, *Healing Streams*, which he found inspirational.

⁴¹ Dhinakaran, *Blessed Are Ye*, p. 23.

⁴² T. Edmunds, 'Jesus' Miracles in Jesus Calls Ministry', p. 4.

⁴³ Dhinakaran, '40 Years', p. 5-6.

rapturous experience of heaven where God gave him the nine gifts (1Cor. 12:8-10) and sent him back with power for a ministry of compassion.⁴⁴

Dhinakaran's faith and praxis were radically affected by the sense of his 'divine call'. Not only had Christ mandated healing, the Spirit had anointed him with power to heal. This confidence propelled his evangelistic outreach in new directions with a method that integrated preaching the Bible with demonstrations of the Spirit's power as 'signs and wonders'.⁴⁵ In 1970, he organised his first public campaign at Vellore with the theme 'Jesus Calls', a name he later adopted for his organisation. In 1972, he was posted on bank duty to Madras, which he made his operational base. It was only in 1985, that he took voluntary retirement to engage in full-time ministry. The following points summarise Dhinakaran's charismatic healing theology:

- i) The gifts of healings (*charismata hiamaton*, listed fourth in its plural form in 1Cor. 12:8-10) are a vital part of Christian 'apostolic' ministry today, to be used as in the Bible and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- ii) The gifts of healings are not restricted to the institutionalised Church and its worship but are effectively directed through a 'signs and wonders' ministry that is effective and therefore experiential, both individually and collectively for pastoral ministry as well as evangelistic outreach.
- iii) At a basic level, beyond relieving suffering, charismatic healing demonstrates Christ's total victory over evil itself and his Spirit's wonder-working power. As an experiential reality, it draws masses to the gospel and can serve as a tangible assurance of God compassion: grace to forgive and power to heal.
- iv) God uses varied means for healing, yet in his sovereignty still endows some with special gifts to heal, i.e. 'he freely moves through a particular person to bring about healing',⁴⁶ in ways identified as supernatural or miraculous.
- v) Dhinakaran believes gifts for healings may be received 'directly from God' or mediated when God's 'chosen vessels' lay hands and pray for people.⁴⁷
- vi) Miracle healing authenticates the message and legitimises the messenger hence enhances personal power and the scope of one's healing ministry.

⁴⁴ *Jesus Calls*, Oct. 2002, p. 6; *Gifts*, p. 62. Dhinakaran's mention at this time his 'tongue began to stammer' in thankful praise – a God given experience, which 'surprised and baffled' him.

⁴⁵ Dhinakaran, 'Healing, Signs and Wonders in Evangelism', Ezra Sargunam (ed.), *Mission Mandate*, Madras: Mission India Publication, 1992, p. 122-130.

⁴⁶ Rodman Williams, *Renewal Theology*, Vol. 2, p. 365.

⁴⁷ Dhinakaran, *Gifts*, p. 27-28.

Two traits of Indian Charismatics need to be acknowledged. First, that while they challenge the institutional, they maintain a pragmatic imperative for Christian social concern. Second, what influenced Dhinakaran must be seen as a new form of fundamentalism, not the western ideology of biblical inerrancy nor a literalism that governs its interpretation. Neither is it the fundamentalism linked to the militant, authoritarian insistence on conversion, Christ's lordship or separation from 'worldly' activities.⁴⁸ Though these may be adjunct aspects, there is a *de facto* fundamentalism in the high value placed on the ability to minister 'charismatically'. Thus, 'real' faith is implicitly related to spiritual experiences of possessing gifts for miracle healings, which have become the unwritten yet uncompromising code for effective missions.

In India, charismatic modes of ministry are inevitably sustained by a pragmatism that subscribes to authoritarian styles of leadership that mirror the *guru* tradition. These tend to reproduce devotees and create dependence instead of empowering and releasing followers of Christ. Their 'power healings' appears dangerously *syncretic* with popular Hindu notions of illness, misfortune and the practice of exorcism which apparently works for other faiths. On a positive note, it demonstrates how the gifts can be used to advance the gospel and produce amazing growth of Charismatic churches. Four patterns of church growth are common: internal (maturity), expansion (community outreach), extension (daughter churches) and bridging (church planting across culture).⁴⁹ Independent parachurch agencies such as the Jesus Calls ministry, though directed by founder-gurus, facilitate all four types focusing on prayer-healing within the Charismatic movement at large. Yet, Dhinakaran was shaped by several Indian charismatic gurus and faith healers from abroad that need to be studied.

3. Influence of Indian Pentecostal Ministers

Though a member of the CSI, Dhinakaran's ministry is supported by and organised through the Pentecostal churches.⁵⁰ From 1960-1980 he was influenced by Indian Pentecostal leaders, Hoerschelmann describes as *Christian Gurus* and bearers of the

⁴⁸ Stephen Parsons, 'Towards Understanding the Fundamentalist Mind', *Ungodly Fear*, Lion Books, 2000, p. 229. Also, James Barr, *Fundamentalism*, London: SCM, 1977; George Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1991.

⁴⁹ Hawthorne & Winter, 'How Do Churches Grow?' *Perspectives: South Asian Version*, 1998, p. 163.

⁵⁰ It is predominately as a 'Pentecostal' that Satyavrata, Bergunder and others discuss Dhinakaran. I was introduced to Dhinakaran by Rev. Paul Thangiah, the Pentecostal pastor of the 8,000 member Full Gospel Assemblies of God, Bangalore who considers Dhinakaran his mentor and spiritual guru.

Pentecostal 'Four Square formula'.⁵¹ When interviewed, Dhinakaran chose to comment on five 'spiritual giants' who he admired for their 'mighty faith' and certain theological theme that became central to his 'ministry of compassion'.

3.1 J. S. Lemiur: Faith that Receives

In 1962, as the Anglo-Indian Pastor, J.S. Lemiur from Coimbatore 'shed tears' and prayed, Dhinakaran was Spirit-baptised. Lemiur taught Dhinakaran that 'even after receiving the Holy Spirit, it is necessary to secure the nine gifts of the Spirit to get ourselves engaged in the ministry powerfully'.⁵² His seven-year struggle for spiritual power now complete, Dhinakaran began to experience God's presence in prayer and realised he had the 'anointing', i.e. the gifts of power to 'bless' others with. He kept his bank job till 1985 but his public healing ministry grew and was attributed to his encounters with Jesus in private. On 10 October 1962, he claims he saw Christ for three hours and was commissioned be a healing evangelist. He recollects Jesus' words: 'My son, people have heard of my love, but have not tasted it. So I pour my compassion in your heart! This love will console their broken hearts and heal their diseased bodies. You will be witness to the power of My Holy Spirit'.⁵³ Dhinakaran saw Lemiur as 'a man of prayer with faith as a rock that moved God's heart'.⁵⁴

3.2 Paulaseer Lawrie: Prophetic Healing and Holiness

Bergunder notes: 'It was Paulaseer Lawrie who became the first famous Indian healing evangelist. From spring 1961 till 1966, Lawrie drew enormous crowds and it was he who introduced this kind of healing ministry into Indian Christianity.'⁵⁵ Lawrie was famous for 'anointing with oil' and exorcisms 'in Jesus' name'. Reports in his magazine *Healing Leaves* promoted him 'as preacher, healer, and victor over the devil and his demons'.⁵⁶ His power was believed to come from his proximity to God. He was linked with Oral Roberts who funded his 'Mass Salvation-Healing Campaigns'. Lawrie claimed he was chosen to usher in the kingdom and considered William Branham from Chicago as his forerunner. He set up the 'Bride Church', a

⁵¹ Hoerschelmann, *Christian Gurus*, 1998, p. 392. Jesus: Saviour, Healer, Sanctifier and coming-King.

⁵² Dhinakaran, '40 Years', p. 6.

⁵³ Dhinakaran, *Blessed are You*, p.48. Also quoted regularly on tapes and printed in *Souvenir* of 'Jesus Calls Good News Festival', Madras 1991, p. 3.

⁵⁴ Interview, *Jesus Calls* Head Quarters, Greensways, Madras, 31.08.2001.

⁵⁵ Bergunder, *Christianity is Indian*, p. 170. For a detailed account see Bergunder, 'From Pentecostal Healing Evangelist to Kalki Avatar: The Remarkable Life of Paulaseer Lawrie', *Christians and Missionaries in India*. Frykenberg (ed.), Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003, p. 357-375

⁵⁶ Hoerschelmann, *Christian Gurus*, p. 254, for controversies around Lawrie, see p. 244-332.

sectarian group at *Manujothi Ashram* and shifted his focus from healing to prophecy. The Indian government and CSI dreaded this controversial figure and eventually, this godman was 'discredited' for appropriating the 'Son of Man' title, claiming to be Christ's *avatara* (reincarnation) and setting dates for the church's rapture.⁵⁷

Dhinakaran, for obvious reasons, did not discuss Lawrie but he recollects his father telling him: 'The Spirit flowed from Lawrie like water'. In 1961, Lawrie invited Dhinakaran's family to his house, prayed for his mother's convulsions and encouraged him to preach at his meeting. When asked what he wanted most, he told Lawrie of how he 'longed for the Spirit's power to lead a holy life'.⁵⁸ Knowing Lawrie's complete story, Dhinakaran realises while personal holiness can enhance healing power, other 'forms of godliness' have destructive power and so he carefully avoids extreme forms of fundamentalism where divine status is ascribed to the agent.

3.3 S.P. Daniel: Pastoral Power of a 'Wounded Healer'

Dhinakaran realises that healing gifts or their social accreditation does not make the healer himself immune to sickness. In *I Am that I Am*, he writes: 'A great part of my life has been spent in tears, in 1969 my liver was damaged and I vomited blood. When I took ill in 1985 I was given one month's lease of life. Before I could recover I lost my daughter in a tragic accident... trial after trial.'⁵⁹ In 1967, when fatally ill, the IPC pastor S.P. Daniel offered the following prayer that revolutionised his understanding of healing:

Oh Lord, I am 67 and quite old. This suffering young man is only 34. Lord, I've completed your ministry in my life. So kindly let all the diseases in this young man's physique be transmitted to me; let me die! Restore him to life! Let him live many more years to do your ministry.⁶⁰

Dhinakaran believes God restored his health on account of S.P. Daniel's compassion. Thereafter he embraced a mystical notion of counter-transference and preaches the concept of the 'wounded healer' where because of his 'wounding', Jesus is the 'ultimate healer'. While Indian Pentecostals wrestled with issues of faith, power and healing, Dhinakaran discovered the value of redemptive suffering that can comfort and be a powerful source of healing for others. As Bergunder observed, 'Dhinakaran

⁵⁷ Hedlund, *Quest for Identity*, p. 226-227, 245.

⁵⁸ Dhinakaran, Interview, 31.08.2001.

⁵⁹ Dhinakaran, *I Am that I Am*, 1987, p. 52, realises it is precisely in the affliction for the righteous that Christ's com-compassion (suffering-with) and comfort is experienced (Psa. 38:19; Rom. 8:35, 37).

⁶⁰ Dhinakaran, *Gifts*, 1997, p. 25; *Blessed are You*, p. 9.

represents himself as a kind of 'wounded healer' (C.G. Jung), who got his healing power out of his own suffering'.⁶¹ His 'prayer warriors' are trained to listen with empathy and feel *for* as well as feel *with* sufferers who phone or visit 'prayer towers' before counselling them.⁶² Thus, the locus of Dhinakaran's power to heal and public appeal lies in his pastoral skills and compassionate service. He assures all pastors that: 'If they pray for their sheep with love and compassion God will certainly listen to them and whatever they ask for their sheep will definitely be granted by Him'.⁶³

3.4 Pastor G. Sundaram: The Pastoral Care of Souls

Pastor G. Sundaram, originally from the CPM, was known as a spiritual patriarch and conference speaker.⁶⁴ In 1948, he pioneered the Apostolic Christian Assembly, Madras and 'this congregation grew from 80 members in 1950, to 500 in 1970 and the total community is about 700'. Today, there are over 15,000 members and 158 other branches established.⁶⁵ Dhinakaran's New Year 'prophecy service' is held in his auditorium. Sundaram's strategy for church growth, Dhinakaran notes, was his magnetism and genuine love for people who found 'peace of mind' in his presence. With his wife, he visited homes and spent time counselling 'ordinary' factory workers. His sagacity was in his fasting regarded a means whereby spiritual power is acquired for holy living.⁶⁶ Sundaram was Spirit-led with a clear christological focus:

Christ is God incarnate... the object of pious love, devotion and adoration: 'If Christ is with you, you are the happiest man in the world!' Jesus (never God) appears or speaks in revelations. Yet even Christ is not immune from being made into an 'object' since the real interest in him lies in his 'purifying blood' which cleanses all sins, weaknesses, sickness, and bad luck.⁶⁷

Sundaram personally disciplined Dhinakaran and showed him the close link between Christlike *care* and the *cure* of souls. In 1972, he invited Dhinakaran home, showed him hospitality and gave him opportunities to preach. Dhinakaran recollects: 'I used to ask him a lot of nonsensical questions yet he patiently gave me practical answers. He preached holiness and lived it... I was touched by his love for me'.⁶⁸

⁶¹ Bergunder, *Christianity is Indian*, p. 165.

⁶² D. Sulmasy from Nouwen's work shows how hospitality, concentration, compassion and perspective are concrete signs of a 'wounded healer', *The Healer's Calling*, New York: Paulist, 1997, p. 49-51.

⁶³ Dhinakaran, *Gifts*, p. 25-26, which he bases on 2 Chronicles 30:27.

⁶⁴ See: *Eternal Grace: The Life of Pastor G. Sundaram*, Madras: Divine Deliverance ACA Pub., 1994.

⁶⁵ N. Amirtharaj. *A New Day in Madras: A Study of Pentecostal Churches in Madras*. Pasadena: William Carey. 1975, p. 50. Paul Martin, *Christianity is Indian*, p. 442.

⁶⁶ Dhinakaran, Interview, 31.08.2001.

⁶⁷ Hoerschelmann, *Christian Gurus*, p. 101.

⁶⁸ Dhinakaran, Interview, 31.08.2001.

3.5 Sara Navaroji: The Power of Songs and Role of Women

Dhinakaran recognises the power of *bhajan*-like bible songs for indigenous worship, as an attention-getter and therapy for the broken-hearted. He has been singularly inspired by Sara Navaroji (CPM): ‘the celestial singer [in whose] meetings, sermons, prayers, and testimonies pale in comparison to the singing.’⁶⁹ He knows he is no match to Navaroji: ‘She has mastered music and composes songs that are relevant to peoples’ needs’.⁷⁰ Themes of praise or thanksgiving create an ethos of acceptance, space for renewal and become a means of comfort. Interestingly, Navaroji is also a gifted healer and exorcist. She remains single with a simple lifestyle that denounces ‘worldliness’ and reveals ‘a mystical, virtually romantic relationship with Jesus’.⁷¹

Dhinakaran’s ministry is popularised through musical albums, some composed by him. Like Navaroji, he utilises the media of traditional folk culture for evangelism, to build relationships with seekers and deal with social concerns thereby giving voice to the voiceless. Dhinakaran naturally interweaves songs throughout his preaching, weeps and touches people’s emotions. This ‘singing saint’ carefully translates words into local languages to make his messages understandable. His attitude to women preachers-healers is noteworthy as most volunteers in his organisation are women. Against cultural norms, he warmly welcomes and empowers women, convinced that at the domestic level they are pastoral figures and bearers of Indian culture. He involves his wife and daughter-in-law in writing, public speaking and healings.

4. Impact of American Itinerant Healing Evangelists

Caplan notes how in the 1930s, western charismatic emissaries had small sectarian followings, but by the 1960s their overwhelming presence was related to the ‘increasing emphasis on international evangelism by mainly US-based organisations. US-inspired fundamentalism had spread with American overseas’ influence in much the same way as early missionary Christianity spread with colonialism’.⁷² No doubt India, Dhinakaran’s ministry in particular, was impacted by the global expansion of

⁶⁹ Hoerschelmann, *Christian Gurus*, p.118.

⁷⁰ Dhinakaran, Interview, 31.08.2001.

⁷¹ Hoerschelmann, *Christian Gurus*, p.122.

⁷² Caplan, *Religion and Power*, p. 158-159. See: David Harrell et. al., *Unto a Good Land: A History of the American People*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005.

the post-war II 'healing revival' from its cultural capital in the US, thus creating 'an important link between the Pentecostal movement and the Charismatic renewal'.⁷³

J. Augustine is right in attributing 'the Dhinakaran phenomenon' to an aspect of Americanisation within the evangelical upsurge. Yet he usefully admits, what Caplan and my thesis maintains, that 'whatever the global significance of this expansion, it also must be understood in the context of indigenous social and cultural circumstances'.⁷⁴ The American Pentecostal evangelists that Dhinakaran mentioned had affected his ministry are also pictured in the centre-fold of his major work, *The Gifts of the Holy Spirit*. The healers discussed below represent chiefly an American brand of televangelists known to stage the 'gospel of healing' to the masses. While rejecting some and reacting to others, Dhinakaran has selectively adapted a few techniques, recruitment tools, training methods within the dynamics of his religious organisation,⁷⁵ always desiring to learn more on the subject of 'healing'.

4.1 T.L Osborn: The Proof is in the Miracles

Tommy and Daisy Osborn, listening to a missionary from India, decided to come to South India as Pentecostal (CG) missionaries in 1945. But, they soon returned to Oregon, US in spite of the need, realising:

The Hindus had their Vedas. The Moslems had their Koran. We had our Bible. Without miracles, we could not prove to the people that the Bible was the word of God... The Hindus were wonderful people, and were kind to us, but we could not prove to them that Jesus is alive.⁷⁶

When they returned 14 years later to Lucknow, things were different. They saw 'great faith' among the masses and 'hundreds of people miraculously healed in that powerful meeting'. Osborn was convinced that 'the masses will gladly follow Christ if they can see Him confirm His word with signs and miracles [and] that there is no substitute for the demonstration of the Spirit and of power'.⁷⁷ In 1961, Dhinakaran for the first time attended Osborn's campaign at Madurai. When Osborn asked who would reach the millions, Dhinakaran claims Jesus personally assured him: 'Thou art

⁷³ Eddie Hyatt, *200 Years of Charismatic Christianity*, 2002, p. 171; Stephen Hunt, 'Winning Ways: Globalisation and the Impact of the Health-Wealth Gospel', *JCR*, 15/3, 2000, p. 341.

⁷⁴ J. Augustine, *Religious Fundamentalism*, p. 130-131.

⁷⁵ J. Augustine, *Religious Fundamentalism*, p. 125.

⁷⁶ T.L. Osborn & Daisy, *The Gospel According to T.L. & Daisy Osborn*, Tulsa: OSFO, 1985, p. 37-38

⁷⁷ T.L. Osborn, *Healing the Sick*, Madurai: Word of Christ, 1992, p. 402-403. Dhinakaran's book, *Gifts of the Spirit* has a similar format with personal illustrations and centre-fold photographs.

the man'.⁷⁸ Osborn is the tap root that spread 'power evangelism' around the world, yet his beliefs were carved out of his experiments with healings in India.

Osborn asserts that 'real faith' is needed for miracles, which has to mentally agree with God's Word: 'If God says I am the Lord who heals you, and who heals all your diseases, then act on that and put God to work making it good'.⁷⁹ Dhinakaran does prescribe a word-of-faith theology that 'puts God to work', but carefully relates healing to prayer and God's compassion. Nevertheless, he admires Osborn's faith, ability to perform miracles and has developed a similar international ministry: 'Millions gather to listen to Dr. T.L. Osborn wherever he goes, all over the world. So he preaches in such a manner as to focus their entire attention on the healing power of the word of God; he also has absolute faith in the power of God'.⁸⁰

4.2 Oral Roberts: Faith Partners for a Healing Enterprise

If Osborn was instrumental for Dhinakaran's public ministry, Oral Roberts has influenced him in building his organisation. Roberts was the first US evangelist to take tent healings to the public via the commercial media with live broadcast of testimonies. He is a great motivator and strategist in encouraging faith for miracles and to get people to invest or sow 'seed faith' as ministry 'partners'. Assuring believers that, 'something good is going to happen to you', Roberts submitted three famous secrets or biblical keys for miracle living: God is the source of your total supply, Seeding for your miracle, and Expect your miracle.⁸¹

Before Dhinakaran is linked to the prosperity gospel by association with Roberts,⁸² one must consider the Indian cultural and globalising context of his message and note he is a Christian banker with stewardship values, which I will assess separately. However Roberts and Dhinakaran taught that 'God uses prayer and physicians to complete his healing love'⁸³ and established hospitals alongside prayer towers. Many aspects of the 20 facets of Dhinakaran's ministry mirror Roberts' methods and style. For instance, his *Jebakoopuram* at Madras and Karunya Institute (now, University)

⁷⁸ Dhinakaran, *Jesus Calls*, June 1995, p. 9. Details of his 'call' are repeated to inspire faith in others.

⁷⁹ Osborn, *Healing the Sick*, p. 234.

⁸⁰ Dhinakaran, *Gifts*, p. 35, quoting Psalms 107: 20 and Isaiah 55: 11.

⁸¹ Philippians 4:19; Luke 6:38; Mark 11:24. Roberts, *The Miracle Book: God Made Miracles for You, You for Miracles*, Tulsa, n.d. inside cover.

⁸² McArthur, *Charismatic Chaos* on Roberts' undue emphasis on healing (p. 198-9), alleged vision of tall Jesus (p. 153), claims to receive revelations (p. 47-48) and 'seed-faith' idea (p. 198).

⁸³ Roberts, *Better Health and Miracle Living*, Tulsa: OR Evangelistic Association, 1976, p. 299.

of Technology at Coimbatore appear to be a replica of the 'Prayer Tower' and the Oral Roberts University, Tulsa, USA. When interviewed, Dhinakaran claimed his projects were according to the dictum that Jesus gave him. Bergunder points out how Dhinakaran's 'fund raising techniques through partner plans are similar to Roberts' 'Blessing Pact'.⁸⁴ Both televangelists have amassed wealth and property and have groomed their sons to take over the leadership of their respective healing enterprises.

4.3 Benny Hinn: Miracle Faith and Material Blessing

The third US healer often referred to as 'miracle man' that Dhinakaran is pictured with is Benny Hinn, who with Kuhlman, he describes as 'great servants of God [and] true to their faith, the Spirit comes down and thrills the people with his signs and wonders'.⁸⁵ Hinn teaches that healing and prosperity are provided for in God's plan of salvation which believers must claim as their rightful inheritance. He makes faith the key and offers three steps: (i) turn away from those who deny God's power, (ii) seek a miracle and ask for it in faith and (iii) turn that faith loose.⁸⁶ Indians are attracted to such a 'blessing theology' that Hinn bases on the Bible and God's love.⁸⁷

Dhinakaran at one time worked with Hinn on an international level but this relationship has become competitive as Hinn has a branch office to promote his work and raises funds in India. His telecasts, *This Is Your Day* and *Good Morning Holy Spirit*, create awareness of 'signs and wonders' that Indian viewers compare with Dhinakaran's ministry. In 2005, Hinn's campaign at Bangalore was controversial with Hindu political opposition therefore Dhinakaran chose not to be involved in it.

5. Contextual Interfaces: Glocalisation and Hybridity

Several insights can be noted from Dhinakaran's story, faith and healing. As I have shown, and develop in the next chapter, his ministry has drawn from both *local* indigenous Pentecostalism and the *global*, typically US, Pentecostal revivalism. His charismatic healing bears an ambiguous yet subtle combination of the local and the universal, the national and the international in modern expressions of Indian mission in an era of globalising Christianity. Inevitably, there is a 'glocalisation', i.e. 'local

⁸⁴ Bergunder, *Christianity is Indian*, p. 171, 169. For other comparative areas and theological issues see David Harrell, *Oral Roberts: An American Life*, Bloomington: Indiana University, 1985.

⁸⁵ Dhinakaran, *Gifts*, p. 35.

⁸⁶ Hinn, *Lord, I Need a Miracle*, Secunderabad: Ben, 1993, p. 84.

⁸⁷ Hinn, *The Biblical Road to Blessing*, Secunderabad: Ben, 1997.

actors' like Dhinakarans, 'modify elements from an array of global possibilities, thereby initiating some democratic and creative engagements between the local and the global'.⁸⁸ Concerning the meanings and methods of healing in India, the global is changing local cultural views and the local is informing and shaping the global scene.⁸⁹ This continuous flow and cross-pollination is enhanced by electronic media networks that Charismatics are using to rapidly diffuse and appropriate them.

Within this complex contextuality, Robbins shows how global Pentecostalism that is open to localisation, allow both continuity and change and reveals two paradoxes: It can become local without ever taking the local into itself; and it can prompt radical cultural change by adapting indigenous categories but not making itself dependent on them.⁹⁰ Dhinakaran exhibits the latter phenomenon. Appadurai has noted that locality is inherently social (as opposed to spacial or scalar) and like culture, is always in flux, fragile and vulnerable to agents remaking the social world either inadvertently, or by design. He carefully distinguishes between 'soft' cultural forms that are easily absorbable toward change and 'hard' forms that are welded to what is valued and hence hard to break.⁹¹ Dhinakaran's ministerial praxis recognises miracle healings and exorcisms as hard forms within the Indian culture, which are also the heart of pastoral theology and a global feature of Pentecostal charismatic practices.⁹²

The above glocal reality has shaped Dhinakaran's charismatic praxis towards a 'responsible syncretism' rather than a meaningless 'mishmash of religions'. On one level, germane to the Hindu subculture, Dhinakaran has indigenised Christianity (normally perceived as a western faith) with cultural styles of worship and familiar theological concepts as Christ's [blood] sacrifice.⁹³ He emulates Christian gurus like Sundaram and Navaroji and his healings, that involve supernatural power and evil spirits, reveal, what Sanneh terms, the 'translatability of the Gospel'.⁹⁴ They fulfil the

⁸⁸ Cohen & Kennedy, *Global Sociology*, New York: Macmillan, 2000, p. 377.

⁸⁹ David Maxwell describes a similar situation in 'African Gifts of the Spirit', *Fundamentalism, Church and Society*, Percy & Jones (eds.), Pilgrim Press, 2002, p. 165-169.

⁹⁰ Joel Robbins, 'On the Paradoxes of Global Pentecostalism and the Perils of Continuity Thinking', *Religion*, 33, 2003, p. 223.

⁹¹ Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalisation*, University of Minneapolis Press, 1996, p. 90. See Chapter 9.

⁹² David Augsburger, 'Possession, Shamanism and Healing', *Pastoral Counseling across Cultures*, Louisville: John Knox, 1986, p. 273-312.

⁹³ S.D. Ponraj, *Missionary Anthropology*, Chennai: Mission Education, 1993, p. 106.

⁹⁴ Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: Missionary Impact on Culture*, 1991; Hedlund, 'Indian Instituted Churches', *Churches of Indigenous Origins*, Snaitang (ed.), Delhi: ISPCK, 2000.

religious aspirations of natives. However, he has ‘responsibly’ avoided despotic messianic roles and destructive *avatara* claims that Lawrie was notorious for.

On another level, American Pentecostal healers have introduced foreign elements with a pragmatic theology that stresses human faith and ‘claims’ healing and prosperity. The thrust from the US end was on reports of miracle power and material blessings that makes the naïve observer think that is what the Christian gospel is all about. Healing evangelists like Osborn and Roberts, I will show in the next chapter, have influenced Dhinakaran on how to make his ministry media oriented and to engage the Christian public in financial partnerships, which is evident from his ‘Young Partner Scheme’ and daily national TV networks. To an extent, Dhinakaran has incorporated western patterns and techniques to promote his ministry. So, in a strict sense, his *Jesus Calls* ministry is Indian instituted but not entirely indigenous.

Dhinakaran’s ministry reveals a *hybridisation* especially since healings involving faith are profoundly cultural encounters common in many religious cultures.⁹⁵ Here, ‘hybridity’ refers to the natural way in which the fusion of socio-religious practices like miracle healings can be derived from heterogeneous sources, to produce a newly improved brand.⁹⁶ Studying the hybridity in Dhinakaran’s praxis helps us to understand and explain the relevance and effectiveness of his charismatic ministry. In such situations, contextualising the gospel presents the twin dangers of syncretism and universalism, two extreme positions that Christian healing must guard against. Nicholls is instructive on a dangerous syncretism at opposite ends: ‘We may reject our traditional culture in favour of a foreign culture or we may so identify the Gospel with our traditional culture that it is no longer good news’.⁹⁷ A universalism where all faiths are the same, directly contradicts the uniqueness of Christ and the Bible.

6. Healing Through Charismata and Compassion

Dhinakaran’s Pentecostal healings are theologically linked to the Spirit’s gifts of power and the grace of compassion. A brief note on each as well as how Dhinakaran perceives the two works together is necessary. He teaches the Spirit is *the* Gift that

⁹⁵ Sic-Ellen Kraft, ‘Syncretism/Anti Syncretism in Theosophy’, *Numen*, 49, 2002, p. 171.

⁹⁶ This happen with agriculture in the parthenogenesis of fruits and in sociology, ‘it refers principally to the creation dynamic mixed cultures’. Cohen, *Global Sociology*, p. 377.

⁹⁷ Bruce Nicholls, ‘Gospel in Indian Culture’, *Mission Mandate*, p. 273.

brings gifts, since, as Aker notes: 'Presence and manifestation are closely connected – and have loomed largely (rightly so) in Pentecostal theology and experience'.⁹⁸

At the root of the word *charisma*, plural *charismata*, is *charis* meaning grace. The suffix – *ma* implies the result of grace.⁹⁹ Dhinakaran teaches that since believers have received grace from God, they have the potential to exhibit any *result of* that grace.¹⁰⁰ However, there are nuanced meanings and ambiguities that arise in trying to define the concept of 'gifts of the Spirit', which he does deal with but simply relates the term to the 'nine gifts' in 1Cor.12: 8-10. One must object to this exclusive linkage since 'charismata' in the Bible is not a technical term referring to one identifiable entity and the key passages that address its use are neither comprehensive nor exhaustive.

For instance, in 1Pet. 4:10f., gifts are forms of speech or service that contribute to a wider range of activities in the faith community. In Rom. 12:6f., they are spontaneous and diverse, hence the need to value the other's in love. The third passage, 1Cor. 12, discusses 'charismata' at length and here it is used as a synonym with 'service' or 'working'.¹⁰¹ Dhinakaran combines all three meanings and uses 'charismata' in this third and general understanding of the word. I will use *charismata* in this wider sense to mean spiritual ministries that are christocentric and soteriologically grounded, i.e. gifts are manifestations of the Spirit that point to Jesus and work toward wholeness.

Further, 'charismatic' could refer to the Spirit's operational sphere and *modus operandi*, so much so, the realisation of the 'pentecostal' experience within the traditional churches was termed 'the Charismatic Renewal'.¹⁰² Weber applied *charisma* to 'certain qualities of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specially exceptional powers or qualities'.¹⁰³ Jesurathnam observed how Indian Pentecostals likewise extend the use of the adjective 'charismatic' from the gifts to 'persons thought to exhibit or possess a charisma or to have charismatic

⁹⁸ Benny C. Aker, 'Charismata: Gifts, Enablements, or Ministries?' *JPT*, 11/1, 2002, p. 67.

⁹⁹ Spiros Zodhiates, *Sickness Why? Healing How?* Chattanooga: AMG, 1999, p. 196.

¹⁰⁰ Dhinakaran, *Gifts of the Spirit*, p. 19.

¹⁰¹ 'Is this That?' *We Believe in the Holy Spirit*, London: Church House Publishing, 1993. p. 37-55.

¹⁰² Edward O'Connor, *The Pentecostal Movement In the Catholic Church*, Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 1971, p. 189, Burgees, 'Cutting the Tap Root', Wilson (ed.) *Spirit and Renewal*, *JPTS*, p. 64.

¹⁰³ Max Weber, *Theory of Social and Economic Organisation*, 1946, p. 358.

authority',¹⁰⁴ an understanding which Dhinakaran gleaned from the Christian gurus and US evangelists discussed above, and which he applies in his training ministries.

Dhinakaran's expectation for miracles in the Indian context and out-working of the charismata, was theologically balanced by pastors like Lemiur and S.P. Daniel who showed him the difference between the desire for 'power healings' and the pastoral power of love that heals. He came to realise the value of suffering and has developed a theology of compassion in which he sees himself as a wounded healer.¹⁰⁵ He declares: 'The ornament of a true servant of God endowed with the gifts of healings is Christ's compassion, found within him'.¹⁰⁶ He sees Jesus' healings as acts of divine compassion that reveal the Father's heart and will and what happens when someone is 'moved with compassion'. He maintains: 'it is only the compassion that flows from Him which perennially prompts Him to heal the people'.¹⁰⁷

The noun 'compassion', in Latin *com*, means 'with' and *passio* to 'suffer with', signals the deep human feelings with which one identifies with and bears another's pain. The verb in Greek (*splagchnizomai*, root *splagchna*) was used for the human inner organs, which Zodhiates notes were 'the location of the human emotions' or the seat of human emotions.¹⁰⁸ 1John 3:17, perceives it as the centre from which God's love proceeds to meet the needs of others. In Tamil, 'compassion' has no precise one-word English translation. It derives its meaning from two words: *manathu* meaning heart, and *urrukam*, to melt, which when combined, *manadhurukkam*, conveys a rich pastoral phrase meaning the 'melting of the heart'.¹⁰⁹

There were several reasons why Jesus healed and gave his followers miraculous power to heal the sick and to cast out demons. It has been argued that this was to draw attention to himself, prove his divinity, authority and thereby validate his message.¹¹⁰ But, in the gospels, Jesus the healer and miracle worker shunned fame, instructed the healed to secrecy and transferred such gifts of power to his disciples. This suggests there was a higher 'ruling motive' than using miracles to attract people

¹⁰⁴ K. Jesurathnam, 'Charisma, Renewal and Spiritual Gifts', *The Third Shift*, p. 4.

¹⁰⁵ Dhinakaran, *Love so Amazing*, p. 44, 70; *Blessed are Ye*, p. 48; *Voice of Love*, p. 17,18.

¹⁰⁶ Dhinakaran, *Gifts*, p. 311.

¹⁰⁷ Dhinakaran, *Gifts of the Spirit*, p. 305; Matt. 14:14; 20:34; Mark 1:40-42.

¹⁰⁸ Spiros Zodhiates, *Sickness- Why?*, Chattanooga: AMG Publication, 1999, p. 108.

¹⁰⁹ Spaulding & Pillai, *Winlow's English-Tamil Dictionary*, Delhi: Asian Educational, 1980, p. 227. Synonyms *Irrakum*, *Karunai* = mercy, *Parithabam* = to pity, *Anbu* = love, *Anudhabam* = sympathy.

¹¹⁰ Jack Deere offers at least ten reasons: *Surprised by the Power of the Spirit*, p. 117-131; 219-227.

and convince them to put their faith in him, as God's agent.¹¹¹ Dhinakaran recognises these reasons for healing miracles, then and now. However, his overall stress on Jesus' *compassion* or suffering love points not to Jesus' self-accreditation, but rather self-identification with sufferers, which seems to be the primary, underlying reason for Christ's 'mighty works' of healing and the basis of the Christian healing ministry.

Mayhue has shown why, biblically, compassion rates important.¹¹² He notes how as genuine service for the sick and suffering, compassion symbolises the epitome of Christianity and manifests God's grace and goodness that leads to repentance and faith. While we may not heal with the same success rate as Jesus, yet in obedience to his command we can share the gospel by following his example and demonstrating his compassion, which his Spirit extends through us to others in need. Furthermore, our prayers for the sick that appeal to God and ministry of comfort to fellow-humans represent our worship and our pastoral care, which have the potential for healing.

Dhinakaran's view of compassion is reflected in the three dimensions of Franciscan spirituality:¹¹³ It is *intensely personal* in its care for the suffering human soul, created in God's image; it is *incarnational and practical*, calling for action, coming alongside to listen, share in and work for justice; and is *imaginative* or mysterious since with eyes of faith human suffering is seen as a picture of Christ's suffering. As Drago clarifies, Christian compassion is 'based on the vision of life that Jesus had, taught and lived to the end... genuinely pastoral and authentically therapeutic',¹¹⁴ which echoes the aim of Dhinakaran's Jesus Calls ministry and his conviction that as a gift, compassion must be first experienced before it can be mediated. Dhinakaran, I believe, learnt such compassion from local pastors like S.P. Daniel, more than from visiting US evangelists, and now can make a contribution to global Pentecostalism.

For Dhinakaran, spiritual gifts are tools to enable healing, but *the Gift* is: 'The Spirit of the Lord, the Comforter, like Jesus Himself who pours God's love and compassion into people's hearts' (Rom 5:5).¹¹⁵ Thus, the fullness of the Spirit is a baptism of power that strengthens the believers for mission, but equally it is a baptism of love;

¹¹¹ J.S. Stewart, *The Life and Times of Jesus Christ*, Edinburgh: St Andrews Press, 1977, p. 95-96.

¹¹² Richard Mayhue, *The Healing Promise*, Secunderabad: OM, 2000, p. 262-263.

¹¹³ Daniel Salmasy, 'A Franciscan Spirituality of Health Care', *New Theology Review*, Nov. 2001.

¹¹⁴ C. Drago, *Healing Through Compassion*, Mumbai: Pauline Press, 2001, p. 8, 9.

¹¹⁵ Dhinakaran, *Gifts*, p. 21-22.

an immersion into divine compassion, which enables them to *comfort* (Latin, induce *with strength*), i.e. to empower the weak and heal the sick. In Dhinakaran's Charismatic theology, gifts are graces; such love is the Spirit's supreme gift and a fundamental dynamic in the healing process. Oden likewise sees love as a form of therapy; a mediation of divine grace through the healer's unconditional acceptance of the patient. Love, in this way is therapeutic since rooted in the context of a personal and pastoral relationships it reflects something of God's own relationship to us.¹¹⁶

In making compassion the rationale for his ministry, Dhinakaran has re-interpreted the 'miracle' element in charismatic healing from an exclusive 'sign of power' to a sign of the 'power of suffering love'. Latourelle has argued how Jesus for his Jewish context, initially needed to use miracles to force questions of his identity and clarify his divine authority. But gradually the Jews were brought to understand that God is also a God of mercy and tender pity. Latourelle, I believe, captures the dialectic in Dhinakaran's view of miracles in stating: 'Works of power, in the service of love; always works of the Almighty who exorcises, heals, and raises to life, but out of love, manifestations of omnipotent love, signs of *dynamis* in the service of *agape*'.¹¹⁷ Dhinakaran embodies and propagates such an view of the power of sacrificial love. This is valuable as it avoids a triumphalistic theology of brute power that makes faith an external force or gives humans the ability to manipulate the supernatural. Such practices are common belief in pagan magic but entirely foreign to biblical faith.

Dhinakaran's stress on God's compassion, that the Bible sees as a sovereign grace (Ex. 33:19), is beneficial for Indian Pentecostal missions. It makes divine revelation a primary source in the theological process but equally takes human need seriously in the different social, cultural and religious setting to give the gospel practical relevance.¹¹⁸ Put otherwise, this thesis argues, if healings in *Pastoral Pentecostalism* intend to demonstrate care and integrity, then *charismatic* manifestations of power must be prompted by and firmly wedded to Christian *compassion*. However, with respect to the praxis of charismatic healing and compassionate service, there are tensions between local and global beliefs that are best observed taking a case in point. For this, we examine the '20 facets' of Dhinakaran's Jesus Calls institution.

¹¹⁶ Thomas C. Oden, *Kerygma and Counselling*, Westminster: Philadelphia, 1966.

¹¹⁷ Latourelle, *The Miracles of Jesus*, p.21-22.

¹¹⁸ J. Athyal (ed.), *Relevant Patterns of Christian Theology in India: People as Agents of Mission*, Thiruvalla: CSS, 2000; W. Ma, 'Asian Pentecostalism: Theology in Context', *DD*, 2002, p. 13-33;

7. A Brief Chronology of D.G.S. Dhinakaran's Life and Works

Table 2:

- 1935 1 July: Duraiswamy G. Samuel Dhinakaran born in Ramnad, Tirunelveli.
- 1947 Dhinakaran's family move to Cuddalore and he studies at St. John's College, Palayankottai; he fails his Science degree twice at the Government College, Kumbakonam but eventually completes it at the National College, Trichy.
- 1955 11 Feb: Dhinakaran attempts suicide on railway tracks but is stopped by his uncle Rathinam who tells him of God's compassion depicted by the cross. This 'red letter day' in his life was when he was assured of his salvation.
- 1955 Water (immersion) baptised by Pentecostal pastor S.P. Daniel and begins teaching at St. David's school in Cuddalore.
- 1956 Appointed as a clerk with the State Bank of India (SBI), then promoted and transferred to Kurnool in Andhra and then to Pondicherry in 1958.
- 1959 Dhinakaran marries Stella
- 1961 Jan: J.K. Rowlands lays hands and prays with tears that he become a prophet like Ezekiel at Sundaram's Apostolic Christian Assembly (ACA) in Madras.
- Feb: US healing evangelist T.L. Osborne visits Madurai where 80,000 attend. Dhinakaran's first exposure to crusades where he 'was wonderstruck at the number of miracles that took place there' and was prophetically told, 'Thou art that man' to carry a miracle healing ministry to the millions of India.
- April: Stella's first miscarriage when he realises 'rich and educated or poor and illiterate all encounter sorrow or pass through pain'. *Voice of Love*, p. 15.
- 1962 4 Sept: Paul Dhinakaran born (*saved* on 21.07.80; *Spirit-filled* on 20.11.80)
- 10 Oct: Dhinakaran receives Spirit baptism (anointing) as pastor J.S. Lemiur and his wife from Coimbatore, pray to 'get the Spirit for Dhinakaran'. After which he testifies that he 'saw Jesus face to face' for three whole hours.
- Nov: After experiencing the 'abundance of the Spirit' he is transported to heaven to receive all the nine gifts (1Cor.12:8-10). This significant event he claims made him a 'powerful and useful tool with compassion for others'.
- 1968 His daughter Evangeline is born who was fondly called, Angel.
- 1969 Three 'nigh unto death' experiences and prayers by 'wounded healers'.
1. In 1969, both lungs damaged by tuberculosis and is given a week to live; S.P. Daniel, president of the IPC, prays for the pain and disease to transfer to him. God hears, Spirit fills, and Jesus appears to console and heal him.
 2. In 1985, again 'on his deathbed' with both lungs damaged. John Osteen comes to his home and prays for 6 hours, and around 11pm he is raised.

3. In 1990, his heart stops during surgery. Bishop E. Sargunam, Evangelical Churches in India (ECI), prays for him and he gradually recovers.

1970 Dhinakaran's debut with open-air, healing campaigns at Vellore, Tamilnadu

1972 Transferred to Madras and sets up the Jesus Calls HQ and operational base

2 March: Preaches for the first time on a radio broadcast by the FEBA, India.

His first writing, 'The Cause and Cure of Sickness' edited and published as *Healing Stripes* (trans. by A. Ebenezer an Indian doctor in USA) reveals his Pentecostal views on healing wherein he discusses original sin and the devil as primary causes for disease yet, offers 'deliverance in Christ through God's compassionate mercies that miraculously bring miseries to an end'.

1973 He registers the *Jesus Calls* evangelistic-charitable Trust, soon after which he travels on his first overseas mission and preaching-healing tour to Sri Lanka.

Starts his radio broadcasts with the Far East Broadcasting Association (FEBA) and then through the *All Indian Radio* in Tamil, Hindi, Telugu and English.

1975 The first edition of the Jesus Calls magazine is mailed to 200 subscribers with reports of 'miracles in answer to prayer'. Now, over a million subscribe to it.

1978 His favourite work *Love So Amazing*, (*urugayo nenjamey*) is published on the passion of Christ and his substitutionary atonement (foreword by CSI bishop Sundar Clarke and translated into English by D. Muller and S.I. Sathiaraj).

1979 His classic work *Prayer Brings Victory* (*jebamey jeyam*, trans. by Muller in 1980, foreword by CSI moderator-bishop Annanda Rao Samuel) is a charismatic spirituality of prayer showing the value and practical benefits of the discipline.

1980 *Doordarshan*, the nationwide telecast, for the first time on Good Friday broadcast his Jesus Calls programs, which due to popular demand was soon broadcast on other TV channels such as: *Jaya*, *Star* and *Vijay* (Tamil), *Surya* and *Asianet* (Malayalam), *Gemini* and *Teja* (Telugu) and *Zee TV* (Hindi)

July: According to Jesus' charge on 26 Sept. 1977, in Kodaikanal on holiday, the *Institute of Power Ministry* is established to train lay professionals for a 'signs and wonders' ministry using spiritual gifts for power evangelism.

July: Paul, his wayward son is 'converted' and in Nov. receives the Spirit's fullness. Then on 2 October 1994, God visits Paul directly to bestow on him 'all the nine gifts' and anoint him with 'a double measure of the Spirit'.

Dec: The video cassette ministry of messages and vernacular songs are distributed worldwide with 'a message of comfort, healing and deliverance'.

1981 May: The Lord appears and commands Dhinakaran to start a technical college for engineering and with that, he submits: 'my troubles began'.

- 1982 His 4th book (1st in English) *The Voice of Love*, sets forth the evangelistic aim of his pastoral ministry advocating the healing power of compassion.
- 1983 12 Aug: The Spirit guides him to start 24-hour Prayer Towers with 'prayer warriors' to take requests from callers in distress, a worldwide project today.
- 1984 The Bethesda Centre with Prayer Dome with Healing Pool is built for tourists as a vacation resort to offer and receive prayers. The Karunya Trust is registered and a proposal made for the start of a University of Technology.
- 1985 Dhinakaran takes voluntary retirement from SBI with benefits of a senior officer and leaves to the USA for seven months for his kidney treatment.
- 25 July (4 am): Jesus' presence fills his room and he is instructed to draw out the *Young Partners Plan* that offers prayers of 'blessing' for the protection, studies and future welfare of children. Their financial registration into this scheme in turn serves as a fund raiser for the Karunya University project.
- 1986 21 May: His daughter Angel dies in a car accident on the way to the airport. IPC chief pastor, S.P. Ernest prays for his consolation. A month later during family prayers the Spirit falls afresh to revive the 20 facets of his ministry.
- 4 Nov: The Jesus Calls Prayer Tower and national Head Quarters, Madras is dedicated and Karunya Education Trust inaugurates Institute of Technology with 200 enrolled, today, a 'Deemed' University with over 2,800 students.
- 1987 Jan: His series of messages from the Madurai Good News Festival (1984) on the Beatitudes published as *Blessed Are Ye*, presents his theology of blessing. This is the first of his talks that will be edited by his wife Stella.
- July: *Be Not Dismayed* a pastoral work on Christ's comfort is released from his messages at the Festival of Faith, Trichy (Nov. 1985). This work holds together the power of God's Word and Spirit to supply the believer's needs.
- Sept: *Born to Fly*, youth ministry inaugurated, first as a radio then TV broadcast, with messages and music to reach frustrated Indian youngsters.
- 1989 Karunya rural community hospital started to serve the 28 villages around it. Paul Dhinakaran marries Evangeline and gradually takes leadership charge.
- 1990 Spends 70 days in hospital for a major 15-hour heart surgery. Many are willing to die in his place. Pastor S. Stephen and Ezra Sargunam pray for his life and his 'heart was healed' but legs weakened and still need support.
- 19 June: Visits pastor T.B. Joshua in Nigeria, who after a four day fast is guided to pray for Dhinakaran's 'dead legs' and they receive 'new strength'.
- 1991 The Evangeline Matriculation School started as a community development project to educate tribal children in the villages surrounding Karunya Nagar.
- 1993 10 Oct: The Bethesda Prayer Centre and Pool was opened to the public. This included catered rooms/cottages, retreat facilities, a children's park and tours.

- 1995 *Seven Sayings of the Saviour* compiled by P. Devadass reflects Dhinakaran's triumphalistic theology of hope that speaks of the power of the Cross to forgive, save, heal, liberate, satisfy, and succeed in life and death.
- 1996 16 Nov: The youth club *Transformers* is started under Paul's Dhinakaran's leadership and in October 2003 renamed the *Youth Prayer Fellowship*.
- 1997 'Dr.' Dhinakaran's 10-day lectures *The Gifts of the Holy Spirit*, (3rd ed.) is released (also in CDs) as a practical guide on how to receive the powerful gifts for ministry; meant to resemble Spurgeon's *Lectures to My Students*.
- 4 Nov: *Priceless Pearl*, a magazine exclusively for Women published with special Esther Prayer Group events, prayer requests and reports.
- 1998 *In His Presence* comprising 60 different model prayers for many occasions becomes his single volume 'best seller' and is used as a daily prayer book.
- 2000 1 Nov: Jesus Calls' interactive website www.prayertoweronline.org with daily devotions and credit card facility is setup and updated with his schedule.
- 2001 Jan: meets CBN founder, Pat Robertson and on Benny Hinn's TV program
- 2002 10-19 May: The 27th batch of the IPM at Karunya campus exceeds the one thousand trainees' mark in which the author was an observer-participant.
- 2003 10 April: Meets with the Indian President, Abdul Kalam along with officials of Karunya University to discuss matters of spirituality and national education.
- 19 Aug: New Prayer Tower Project launched with key charismatic leaders.
- 8 Sept: Affiliation signed between Karunya and Oral Roberts University.
- 11 Sept: Dhinakaran organises special Prayer for America in Washington.
- 2004 14-17 April: Dhinakaran gathers church leaders at the capital, Delhi, for a 72-hour fasting and prayer before parliamentary elections and started a *National Prayer Alliance*.
- Karunya becomes the first deemed Christian University in Indian history and is inaugurated by Arjun Singh, government minister for Human Resources.
- 2005 11 Feb: Church leaders celebrate the 70th Birthday of this 'divine ambassador and mighty prophet' who said that his success was 'the reward of waiting'.
- 2005 Dec: A New Scheme, *SEESHA*: Samithi for Education, Environmental, Social & Health Action, is established to serve the poor and downtrodden

Chapter Five

The '20 Facets' of Jesus Calls Ministry: Pastoral Equipments

Revivalist movements adopt distinct cultural forms and theological emphases yet it is their organisational techniques that stand out.¹ Having drawn out the former in Dhinakaran's ministry, I now will also explore the latter within a rich description of what he terms 'the 20 facets' of his Jesus Calls organisation. These 20 departments demonstrably are pastoral tools for compassionate service within his 'wholesome ministry'.² Through these, his independent faith movement offers a clarion call for conversion, and empowers for total wellbeing and strategic charismatic witness.

Dhinakaran's encounters with the Spirit and expertise in banking have revolutionised his outreach. He uses spiritual gifts as well as high-tech marketing mechanisms to communicate the gospel and generate public prayers and monetary partnerships for his 'faith ministry'.³ His ministry needs to be assessed in the light of India's undying search for spirituality, Abhishiktananda calls: 'The Hindu longing'.⁴ Interpretations must take into account the reality that though India once looked to the west for technical-economic development, she now competes with and threatens the west.⁵ Mystery and materialism are paradoxical yet incontrovertible Indian aspirations. Dhinakaran's success lies in his ability to hold these two elements in creative tension as he reveals how *Jesus* can *call* people to both/and, not necessarily either/or.

From studying the 20 facets of Jesus Calls ministry, visiting the sites concerned, interviewing Dhinakaran and interacting with programme directors and participants, the praxis of healing can be said to take place primarily through 'prayer evangelism, [where] intercession on behalf of the felt needs of the lost is the best way to open up their eyes to the gospel'.⁶ Yet, within a *charismatic model*, where the healer's gifts are

¹ Simon Coleman, *Globalisation of Charismatic Christianity*, Cambridge: CUP, 2000; L. Moore, *Selling God: American Religion in the Market Place Culture*, Oxford: OUP, 1994; Carbondale & Edwardsville (eds.), *Televangelism: The Marketing of Popular Religion*, Illinois Univ. Press 1987.

² For Dhinakaran, ministry is as manifold as God's grace, *Gifts*, p. 37.

³ Susan Pitchford, Bader & Stark, 'Doing Field Research of Religious Movements: An Agenda', *Journal of Scientific Study of Religion*, 40/3, 2001, p. 379-392. Thomas Robbins and Dick Anthony, 'The Sociology of Contemporary Religious Movements', *Annual Review Inc.*, Issue 5, 1979, p. 75-89.

⁴ Swami Abhishitananda, *The Church in India*, Madras: CLS, 1971, p. 9-20.

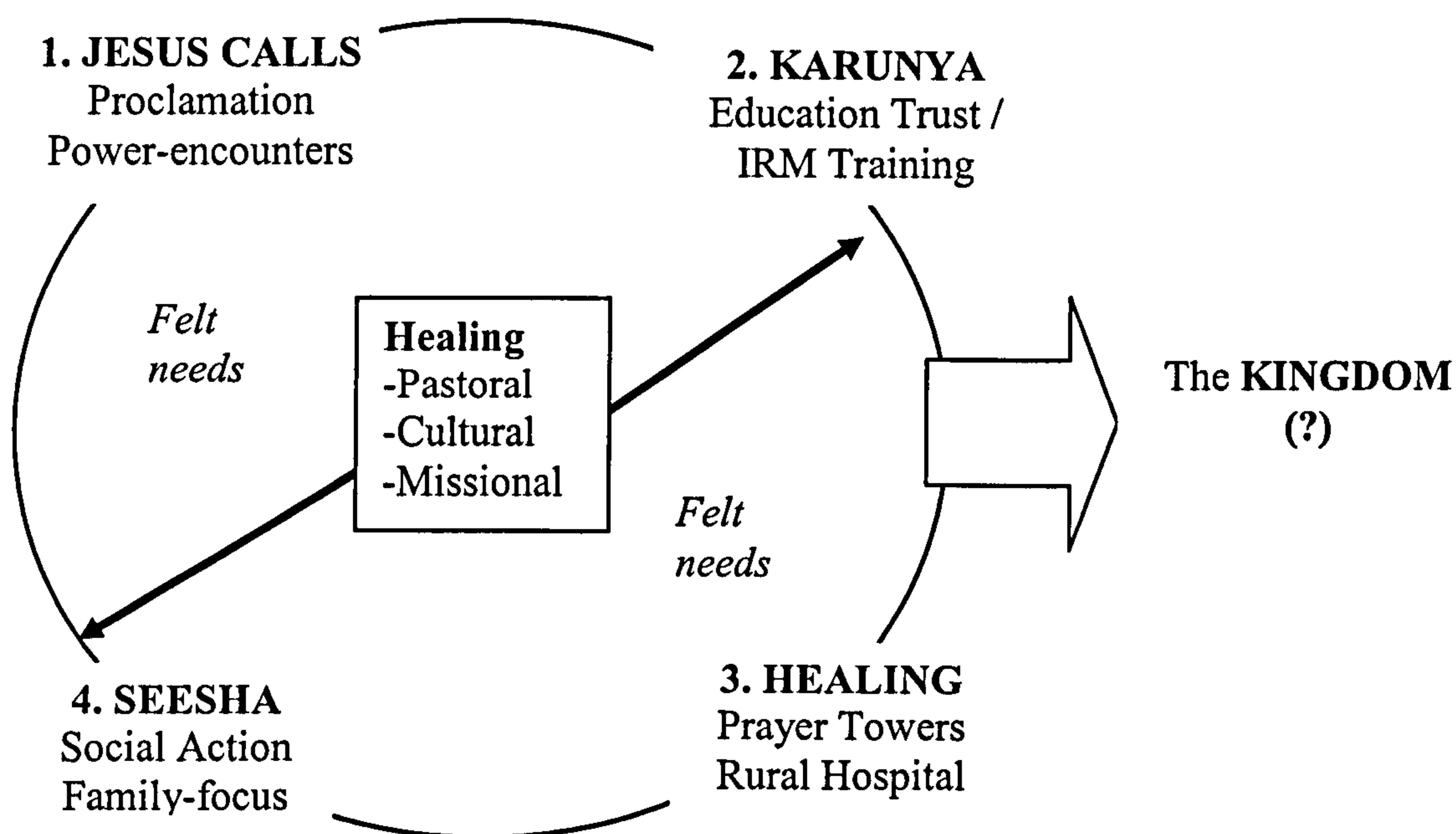
⁵ Gurucharan Das, 'New Money: Rise of Middle Class', *India Unbound*, Delhi: Viking, 2000, p. 272.

⁶ Ed Silvano, *That None Should Perish*, Ventura, CA: Regal, 1994, p. 57; S.D. Ponaj & J.D. Robb, *Transform Your World Through Prayer*, Chennai: Mission Education Books, 1999.

in direct use, there is clearly a sustaining *pastoral care model* in which individuals and teams charismatically administer to personal needs and provide general healthcare.

The Jesus Calls ministry has four main arms of service that reflect the power of Jesus' compassion as depicted in Matthew 9:36 under three pastoral-evangelistic categories: preaching, teaching and healing. I will allocate the 20 facets (F.1 - F.20) that mirror this pattern under the headings: (1) Public Proclamation and Media Ministry (2) Education and Literature (Karunya Trust) (3) Wholeness through Prayer and Practical Care, and consolidating these three is a fourth: (4) Family, Community and Nation building. Dhinakaran strategically tackles the Indian community's felt needs, common values and way of life. Taking advantage of the 'power of people group thinking',⁷ he effectively brings together his preaching, teaching and social responsibility with a 'signs and wonders' ministry that can be diagrammatically represented as follows:

Table 3: The 'Four Arms' of JESUS CALLS towards Pastoral Pentecostalism



I will show how Dhinakaran's integrated approach to mission is wholistic, builds community and is intentionally pastoral.⁸ Further, for India, as Mallampalli reveals, the local, national and international are three challenging 'sites of engagement',⁹ and it is remarkable how Dhinakaran's view of healing has evolved to impact all three

⁷ John Robb, *Focus: The Power of People Group Thinking*, Bihar, India: MARC Pub., 1989, p. 21-23.

⁸ Eric Petric, *Unleashing the Lion: The Power of God in Health*, London: SPCK, 2000, p. 154-155.

⁹ C. Mallampalli, 'South Asia', McLeod (ed.) *Cambridge History of Christianity*, CUP, 2005, p. 422.

arenas. Ultimately, through this presentation I want my readers to sense what 'Pastoral Pentecostalism' in Dhinakaran's ministry would look like. Given 20 facets together represent his ministry then arguably, by ratio, healing is mediated more through cameos of *compassionate* care than mere *charismatic* power encounters.

1. Proclamation: Preaching and High-Tech Media

John Haggai is convinced: 'we cannot use yesterday's methods for evangelism in today's world and stay in business tomorrow'.¹⁰ In India, the challenge is to proclaim God's eternal word to a constantly changing world in relevant ways. Raja notes, 'Christian communication is an on going hermeneutic process that becomes effective if the communicator can interact with audiences as equal partners'.¹¹ From small beginnings, Dhinakaran has been flexible in his methods but contemporary in sharing the healing message by all means. He vitalises his visions and manages change well.

F.1. Jesus Calls Good News Festivals:

In 1970, Dhinakaran held his first public campaign at Vellore. The next year, the CSI organised one at Erode that was felicitated by bishops and politicians where the name *Jesus Calls* was given to his ministry. Stewart observes the principle whereby 'crowds bring crowds'¹² and the Jesus Calls 5-day citywide rallies draw an average of 500,000 and is 'the biggest avenue through which the gospel is reached out to the masses'. People of all ages and faith attend these meetings and 'irrespective of their caste, creed, race or language they come to hear their Brother [Dhinakaran] bring God's message'.¹³ Usually a large field (*maidan*) adjacent to the city centre is selected, a gigantic stage constructed, the place brightly lit and the program, songs and sermon broadcast over loudspeakers. People sit on the ground to hear Bible stories, witness miracles and most people interviewed had 'come to receive spiritual blessings'.¹⁴

Dhinakaran's *en masse* evangelism was initially called crusades, but with the rise of Hindu fundamentalism (*Hindutva*) this was changed. Today, public banners, street posters and popular magazines advertise it with the non-threatening caption: *Good*

¹⁰ The *Haggai Institute* founded by John Haggai, trains non-western leaders at Singapore and Maui.

¹¹ John Raja, *Facing the Reality of Communication*, Delhi: ISPCK, 2001, p. 280.

¹² James Stewart, *Evangelism*, Louisiana: Revival Fires Publication, 1971, p. 12.

¹³ Details how campaigns are to be organised with samples of advertisements are shown in the *Jesus Calls Campaign Manual*, used by the organisers and leadership teams. Mr Ravi Frederick, the manager-in-charge was helpful in providing details. See website: <http://www.jesuscalls.org/crusade>

¹⁴ The researcher as observer-participant attended five Prayer Festivals between 2000 and 2003.

News Prayer Festivals. Open-air gatherings are planned during festivals (*thiruvizha*), holidays and celebratory events, which has made Christianity a visible and joyful movement.¹⁵ Such revivalist events tap into the socio-cultural moorings and make the experience of Christ not just personal but communal. Thus, the healing ministry in the Indian church is practically made perennial. Dhinakaran's campaigns allot time for power encounters, charismatic manifestation and testimonies of miracles that are 'staged' at the end. All these special effects serve as drawing cards for the public.

F.2. Radio and Televangelism:

In India, the radio and the TV (since 1959) are the primary entertainment-education communication modes for commerce, trade, politics and religion.¹⁶ In 1972 Dhinakaran's messages were aired on the Far East Broadcasting Association (*FEBA*) and, since the 1980s on TV. He realises that 'the advent of electronic revolution has changed every aspect of life and has tremendous impact on the life of people'.¹⁷ His media ministry seeks 'to heal the broken hearted' and offers God's comforting presence and later advertises upcoming events or products. Each program begins with his famous *Iyecu alaikkirar*, 'Jesus calls us all' song. One stanza in English reads:

*Wiping our bitterest tears, guarding us safe in His arms
Bearing us through painful losses, He surely restores us to safety and joy
Wasted by sickness and pain, No matter wherefrom you came
Draw near the fountain of healing, freely bestowed on who ask in His name.*¹⁸

People of all faiths stop work to listen to his programs and in rural areas, congregate at a house with a TV. As Dhinakaran prays, some touch the TV hoping to be healed or materially blest. Thousands of national and Non-Resident Indians (*NRIs*) overseas are 'TV Club Partners'.¹⁹ By 2005, Jesus Calls was, 'telecasting nearly 4600 programmes, both within India and abroad, in 12 languages through 22 channels and Dhinakaran reported '100 millions lives [were] freely touched across the globe'.²⁰

F.3. Audio-Video tapes, CDs and DVDs

Since 1973, Dhinakaran's sermons and songs are recorded on audio-video cassettes. His prophetic messages, special testimonies and 10-lecture series from the Institute of

¹⁵ Immanuel Sundarajan, *Indian Culture and Christianity*, Secunderabad: OM Books, 2000, p. 55-56.

¹⁶ Moti Gokulsing, *India: The World of Indian Televised Soaps*, Bombay: Vikas, 2004, p. 3-7.

¹⁷ See details and offers: 'Watch a prophetic encounter' on website <http://www.jesuscalls.org/media>

¹⁸ This tape/CD is translated into many languages and available in secular stores in India and overseas.

¹⁹ *Jesus Calls*, Jan., 2004, p. 26. The other three are: Young Partners, Jesus Calls and Karunya Partners.

²⁰ Ministry Report for 2005, 'Television', *Jesus Calls*, January 2006, p. 16.

Power compiled in one album may be purchased by devotees who could not attend. The talks of his son, Paul to teenagers on life issues and songs by his grandchildren, Sam, Sharon and Sweetie, known as 'rising stars', are available on CDs and DVDs.

F.4. Internet and International Ministry:

The *Jesus Calls* Internet ministry has put Dhinakaran in cyber-world. His website opens with the phrase, 'Heaven is the limit! Reaching the e-world', and he writes: 'Certainly the last decade belongs to the explosion of information over the Internet. All of a sudden information is available to everyone about virtually anything under the sun. No wonder millions of people including you, right now are hooked on this powerful media'.²¹ In November 2000, his webpage claims to be 'the first ever prayer portal' with 120 audio prayers for all occasions, a 'promise for today' section and counselling via the net. There is a section for 'His Kids' with feature stories, interactive games, prayer-on-line facilities in Hindi, a 'guest book' to sign-in and a space for comments. This service caters to the emerging IT culture with increasingly busy lives.²² For confident users, who value the net, this undoubtedly is a convenient way to receive *Jesus Calls* materials. Its credit card facility makes it 'a simple, speedy and secure way of sending donations... in a single click'.²³ CSI Bishop, Chakiath of Kerala, posited: 'Being part of an electronic world we cannot live in an ivory tower, to be passive onlookers, to carry on as though the structures of society have not been changed. If we wish to be up-to-date with modern men and women whom we are called to evangelise, our prime effort must be to get to the bottom of the forces that are behind today's cultural upheaval'.²⁴ Dhinakaran has a leading edge in media evangelism with which he has outdone many Indian bishops.

2. Education (Karunya): Training and Literature Evangelism

Dhinakaran's childhood struggles with poverty, watching his father toil as a tutor and the pain of being refused admission to an engineering college showed him the value of formal learning.²⁵ In India, degree-holders are 'fortunate' since they can get a well-paid job. Students study hard in a competitive society where there are no state (free) schools. Interestingly, *Saraswathi* is the Hindu goddess for education, and Indian

²¹ <http://www.jesuscalls.org/web>; See: '33 Years of Media Ministry', *Jesus Calls*, March 2003, p. 2-5.

²² *Jesus Calls*, January 2003, p. 10 reported over 48 million (*hits*) people visited this site.

²³ 'Credit Card facilities in Jesus Calls web-site', *Jesus Calls*, Nov., 2004, inside back cover page.

²⁴ Foreword, Karackat Francis, *The Mass Media from a Christian Perspective*, Bangalore: Kristu Joyti, 2001, p. xviii.

²⁵ Dhinakaran, *Blessed are Ye*, p. 31, pictures him going to his college interview with his father.

society places a 'religious' premium on literary and practical skills. While Dhinakaran understands, as Stanley Jones put it: 'We need knowledge without it we perish [and] science is power', he would also agree with Jones that 'science does not give you the power to use that power. A moral choice is necessary'.²⁶ In 1986, Dhinakaran started an educational and medical trust for educational and social reform called *Karunya*, literally meaning, active grace or *compassion at work*.

F.5. Karunya Institute for Technology and Educational Trust

Karunya Institute, established in 1981, is Dhinakaran's flagship for practical ministry and is seen as a sign of hope for 'top notch' education in India. As his other projects, this was constructed in obedience to Jesus' direct command: 'The Youth go astray because of bad companions in college, drug addiction and vicious habits. Frustrated by unemployment many of them commit suicide. As a remedy for all this you must start this college'.²⁷ Since Dhinakaran received much criticism, he 'dodged this command' and prayed the burden be taken away. But, in 1984, in another vision God directed him: 'Build this University at once. It will not affect your ministry... You will ever be in the vanguard of the Gospel ministry'.²⁸ In 1986, against all odds, he completed *Karunya* and 200 students enrolled. Today there are over 4000 students and *Karunya* is 'the first self-financing autonomous Institute in the whole nation' offering degrees in engineering, management and IT.²⁹ In October 2000, B. Lakman, President of India's Bharathia Janatha Party (BJP), laid the foundation stone for *Karunya's Software Centre*.³⁰ Its grand vision is 'to raise professionals of high academic calibre and excellent character who will be placed in the higher echelons of society and serve the needs of humanity with a heart of compassion'.³¹

On 8 September 2003, an agreement was signed between Oral Robert's University, USA and *Karunya*. Paul Dhinakaran as the managing trustee took the lead with Richard Roberts in an alliance for 'the growth of education, the exchange of faculty and for research and technological advancement'.³² *Karunya* is proud of its rank holders, conducts sports competitions and has gained athletic trophies. Its service

²⁶ E. Stanley Jones, 'Religious Education', *Conversion*, Nashville: Abingdon, 1959, p. 179.

²⁷ Dhinakaran, *I Am that I Am*, p. 72.

²⁸ Dhinakaran, *I Am that I Am*, p. 72.

²⁹ The Bible characters Esther and Daniel are the role models

³⁰ Annual report, *Jesus Calls*, January 2000, p. 23.

³¹ 'The *Karunya* Story: Raising Leaders in Technology with Values' as narrated by Dhinakaran on its 18th anniversary in the *Jesus Calls* special issue, October 2004, p. 2-9.

³² *Jesus Calls*, January, 2004, p. 11.

extends to the community's poor and rich alike. The Evangeline Matriculation High School is known for its quality education and extra-curricula activities for locals. Karunya's student teams offer primary health care to villagers and the International Residential School maintains world-class standards and facilities. *Angel Gardens*, a housing facility near the campus, has land at reduced rates for faculty and partners.

F.6. Correspondence and Literature Outreach:

Since 1973, personal letters have been *Jesus Calls*' 'main link' to its partners. Hand written replies to queries show Dhinakaran still sees potential in this pastoral tool and asks: 'Do you have a pressing need? Do not forget to write us we are here to pray for you'.³³ There was a significant decrease in letters received (1,000,346 to 800,000) between 2000-2001 indicating email is taking over.³⁴ Yet, Dhinakaran continues the task of letter-writing aware that elderly supporters are not computer literate and prefer a personal note. Besides, in this way he can respond to the many poor who on hearing from God's servant 'brother DGS' are delighted (even if the form letter has his signature printed). Moreover, it is Dhinakaran's acclaimed practice to lay hands and pray daily over each letter but today, a pile is prayed over and a computerised system sends out replies. People still find something mystical if not magical about receiving a letter 'touched' by God's servant and are comforted by its answers or prophetic words.

F.7. Book Ministry:

Dhinakaran believes in the power of the pen and publication. In 1973, his first booklet *The Cause and Cure for Sickness* (Tamil) was followed by 19 others translated into 7 different languages. These can be seen next to the Bible on shelves in Christian homes. Several are out of print since the bulk of the material was incorporated into his newer titles like *The Gifts of the Spirit*, his most comprehensive and widely distributed work. Dhinakaran's books claim to be written under divine guidance and illustrate the power of compassion, strengthen faith and aid in spiritual growth.³⁵ Paul Dhinakaran's books target youth with a clear message of success. In 1990, he wrote *Born to Fly* named after his radio talk, followed by *Secrets of Success* and *Blessings of the Beloved*. Stella's books *Priceless Pearl*, *Voice of My Cry*, *Fruit Yielding Tree* and *The Wise Woman* and her sequel to Dhinakaran's *Prayer Brings Victory* inspire spiritual

³³ <http://www.jesuscalls.org/letter>

³⁴ *Jesus Calls*, January 2002, p. 10.

³⁵ <http://www.jesuscalls.org/books>; Details and summary of DGS's writings in his chronology: Table 2.

disciplines, Christian values for home making and the role of women. Topics on spirituality, prosperity and posterity are generally intertwined.³⁶

F.8. Monthly Magazines:

Dhinakaran produces, and Stella edits, three monthly magazines: *Jesus Calls* for a general readership, *Priceless Pearl* to uplift women and *True Friend* a 'youth mag', by Paul and his wife Evangeline, with Bible quizzes and comics for youth.³⁷ This ministry is a 'live wire', the chief informant of Dhinakaran's schedules, updates and contact details. It is also pastoral with hortatory Bible studies and is used to centralise and disseminate items for prayer. The magazines are reasonably priced, in vernacular languages and in great demand. In May 1975, *Jesus Calls* began with 200 subscribers in Tamil and English, today it is produced in 7 languages and distributed to over half a million within India and overseas. Even non-Christians get copies and I know of rural pastors who regularly preach Dhinakaran's outlines and use his illustrations.

F.9. Institute of Power Ministry (IPM):

On 26 September 1977, Dhinakaran claims, Jesus appeared to him and asked: 'My son, when you die, who is to continue your ministry on earth?' and, then instructed:

All over the world men and women are keen on doing my ministry. Teach them the triumphant road to Calvary, which you have trod, the nine gifts of the Spirit and the fruits of the Spirit. In the end when you place your hands on them, and if their hearts are receptive, I shall pour on them all the gifts that you have received and use them as mightily as I have been using you.³⁸

Dhinakaran's IPM that began in an *ashram* like setting with a dozen participants, in May 2002 at Coimbatore (where I was an observer-participant) had snowballed to over one thousand. Another 1,576 attended the Bangalore and Madras IPMs and over 1,100 were present at Singapore and Malaysia. This guru-like, culturally appealing method that expounds biblical truths while allowing for deep spiritual experiences Dhinakaran has used to revolutionise the concept of 'power evangelism' in an exponential way. Women and men learn how to nurture spiritual gifts on a daily basis and to pass on to other leaders who, in turn, train others to minister with 'signs and wonders'.

³⁶ These are being translated into Indian languages (*Kanada, Sinhala*) that do not have much Christian literature. *Jesus Calls*, January 2002, p. 12, Stella Dhinakaran, 'Prosperity Offered by the Lord', p. 24.

³⁷ Dhinakaran, *True Friend*, started in 1989 was launched as 'part of God's plan to bless the youth, and further help young partners to receive more of God's blessings,' December, 2003, p. 2. Evangeline, although shy and soft spoken by nature, is groomed into leadership and is now a good preacher.

³⁸ Dhinakaran, *I Am That I Am*, p. 20.

It is significant that Dhinakaran changed the name 'Institute for Evangelism' to IPM after 1980, which clarifies its charismatic distinction and programmatic goal.³⁹ According to Garg, the IPM Dean, 'each year, more applications are rejected than accepted'. Mohan Dass, the coordinator said that 'participants come from all denominations though most are from Charismatic churches that support the Jesus Calls philosophy'. Jebaraj Samuel, the promotional director of the Hindustan Bible College, Arul Raj a senior evangelist and Professor J. Kingsley, assist Dhinakaran in the 'Holy Spirit session'. Here, lay professionals expect 'to receive *the blessing* [filling] and become a blessing'.⁴⁰ Participants commit to pray and to give their time, services and finances to Jesus Calls and take responsibility for the charismatisation of their faith communities. The best promotions for this 'power ministry' are human not just material resources since, typically in India devotees *are* the advertisements for spiritual programs. Dhinakaran is an expert in gathering, mentoring and re-casting IPM graduates as vital ligaments in the healing movement and has created a contagious volunteerism through faith partners and prayer warriors.

3. Healing: Intercessory Prayer and Medical Care

A third category, alongside proclamation and education, is intercession for healing. Jesus Calls has become a synonym for wholeness through prayer. Scientific research has confirmed the value of prayer with 'randomized controlled double-blind studies' that demonstrate how prayer causes a relaxation response with psycho-physiological consequences resulting in incremental health conditions. These 'health' benefits of prayer take into account expectations of supernatural healing and the patient-healer cooperation in imaging wholeness.⁴¹ Dhinakaran does not discount the possibility of psychosomatic effects, catharsis or placebos nor debate them.⁴² He sees medical science and faith healing as complementary and his Karunya hospital is evidence. For Dhinakaran, intercessory prayer is a fundamental pastoral action. Personal touch, counselling and spiritual discipline allow people to be open to the Spirit's work.⁴³

³⁹ Dhinakaran, *I Am that I Am*, p. 20, in effect this helped decrease his schedule and increase partners.

⁴⁰ Personal Interviews at the IPM, Coimbatore, May, 2002.

⁴¹ Larry Dossey, Benson, et. al. *Healing Through Prayer*, Toronto: Anglican Books, 1999, p. 15-58.

⁴² Dhinakaran, Interview, at Jesus Calls Headquarters, 16 Greenways Road, Madras, 31.08.2001.

⁴³ See, R.C. Byrd, 'Positive Therapeutic Effects of Intercessory Prayer in a Coronary Care Unit', and G. H. Colt, 'The Healing Power of Touch', Issue: Alternate Approaches to Health Care, Spirituality and Healing, *The Indian Society of Health Administrator*, July 1996 & December 1997, p. 191-201.

F.10. Individual Prayer and Prophetic Ministry

Dhinakaran's campaigns used to have prayer-lines that lasted till midnight but due to his weak feet, he now sits and people bend so he could lay hands on and bless them. In spite of his hectic schedule, Dhinakaran gives people personal attention and mentors individuals. He advocates fasting as the key for a powerful healing ministry and his book *In His Presence* promotes intimacy with God and shows the close link between holiness and healing. Professionalized medical systems with economic policies often lack personal touch, a basic tangible way to show the sick we are *there* and do *care*. Dhinakaran with the help of his prayer network and partners does this. He is better known as a praying man than a faith healer. Without denying the benefits of prayer, he teaches how it can bring about those benefits for others. He presumes that God intervenes in time and nature to bring about events that would not have occurred had not prayer been offered. Such a theory of 'impetratory prayer', warrants agency:

God's transcendence implies that his agency in the world is almost always mediated: He acts by means of secondary causes. God acts through natural events which occur according to the laws of nature and also in things done by human agents. God in his omnipotence is able to perform miracles [within the natural order and not necessarily, always contrary to it] in answer to prayer.⁴⁴

Dhinakaran also practices what Stibbe calls 'prophetic evangelism' wherein 'God uses revelatory phenomena to speak to the hearts of those who don't know Jesus'.⁴⁵ He believes that during prayer his word-of-knowledge gift helps him 'prophetically' 'speak forth' truth. These may include significant details of future events. Deva Gowda, a state chief minister and Arjun Singh, union cabinet minister, attribute their rise to political positions to his predictions and blessings.⁴⁶ Dhinakaran also uses his prophetic gift to *pastorally* encourage or reassure Christians of their divine call.⁴⁷

There is a dual advantage in a 'prophetic' ministry of prayer. First, it solicits requests and gives the curious public in India an opportunity to express their felt needs and pastorally share their anxieties of the future, which has therapeutic value. Second, it cultivates an environment that, to use Helland's phrase, 'tends the sacred fires of

⁴⁴ Vincent Brunner, *What Are We Doing When We Pray?* London: SCM Press, 1984, p. 60-61.

⁴⁵ Mark Stibbe, *Prophetic Evangelism*, Milton Keynes: Authentic Media, 2004, p. 3.

⁴⁶ Testimonies in *Jesus Calls*, February, 1995, p. 8; Shri Arjun Singh inaugurated Karunya Deemed University. For prophecy-fulfilment of other dignitaries see *Jesus Calls*, November 2004, p. 18-20.

⁴⁷ At the IPM graduation, as I queued with the others, Dhinakaran had a prophetic word for me: 'You will travel the world and people will come and ask you to take them to your God'. At that time, I considered this biblical quote ambiguous and generalised. Yet, when I travel for WCC conferences or train internationals at *Haggai Institute*, I deeply think about this prophesy since Dhinakaran had met me only once before and knew that I was a lecturer researching charismatic healing in India.

healing'.⁴⁸ Space is created for those who desire to practise holiness through spiritual disciplines like fasting and exercise their gifts in an affirming place, which is often lacking in the traditional churches. In this way, 'the prophethood of all believers' is facilitated. As Strongstad shows, 'the Spirit of prophecy' though given primarily to empower with words and works for witness, also produces in the community purity, joy, courage and generosity.⁴⁹ Leech, in his pastoral theology sees the need for such a 'prophetic dimension' that weds personal holiness with social concerns. He warns: 'It is all too easy and common for non-prophetic, privatised spirituality to become mere convention, as well as to lose its humanity and become nothing more than religiosity'.⁵⁰ Dhinakaran's prayer ministry connects people to people in relational networks that foster prophetic elements of faith for community care. As people hear from God and address other people's needs, they can be a reservoir of healing *power*.

F.11. Prayer Towers and Counselling:

Dhinakaran's head office in Chennai from a distance is identified by the gigantic 'praying hands' sculpture in front and the inscription: *Prayer Brings Victory*.⁵¹ This main Prayer Tower is a solace and daily comfort for countless people. There are four groups of service providers: (1) *administrators* who manage the system, (2) *prayer warriors* to anoint with oil and pray one-to-one, (3) *counsellors* who are senior partners, give advice and welcome key leaders, and (4) *volunteers* who serve as hosts and guides, hand out brochures and direct visitors to the bookstore with numerous *Jesus Calls* keepsakes: calendars, diaries, bookmarks and stationery. The facilities operate from 8 am to 8 pm, although volunteers serve daily 24 hours in cycles, thus making Dhinakaran accessible to the public virtually round the clock.

Tiny bottles of oil 'blessed by Dhinakaran' are distributed free of cost and a special Healing Service is held each week. During 2000, reports said, 408,948 people contacted this prayer tower and by 2004, there were prayer towers in 9 state capitals that were visited by 1,770,368 people of whom 723,971 were personally counselled and 973,265 oil bottles were distributed.⁵² Prayer towers are now 'fully computerised'

⁴⁸ Roger Helland, *The Revived Church*, Kent: Sovereign Word, 1998, p. 163-168.

⁴⁹ Roger Strongstad, *The Prophethood of All Believers*, Sheffield Academic Press, p. 121-124.

⁵⁰ Kenneth Leech, *Spirituality and Pastoral Care*, London: Sheldon, 1986, p. 74.

⁵¹ Dhinakaran tells of the renaissance painter Albrecht Durer who first painted these famous hands and how his friend Franz Kingstein worked hard and lost the use of his own hands to put him through art school. With this Dhinakaran illustrates Christ's substitution. *True Friend*, February 2004, p. 26.

⁵² *Jesus Calls*, Ministry Reports, February 2000, p. 16; and January, 2004, p. 8-9.

and Dhinakaran's latest project is to 'rise and rebuild' a *New Prayer Tower*. Blueprints show a state-of-the-art auditorium, comfortable prayer booths, personal counselling cells, recording studios and a waterfall with soft music to, 'feel the presence of God!'⁵³ Such phenomenal success show how mission and recruitment take place at once. The leaders are usually graduates of the IPM, who expedite what they have learnt. Yet, the system is designed for volunteers who want hands-on-experience in order to become spiritual directors. Over 35 years, an incredible lay professional movement has spread charismatic healing within the church and Indian society by creating a forum for those with *charismata* to develop *compassion* through prayer.⁵⁴

F.12. Bethesda Prayer Dome and Healing Pool:

In 1984, Dhinakaran claims he was divinely instructed to build *Bethesda* (house of mercy or compassion) a resort centre with a prayer dome that is nestled adjacent to Karunya University in the beautiful Siruvani hills (see photographs, p. 279). He realised his itinerant ministry took him almost five years to return to a particular city therefore, Bethesda was made a round-the-year pilgrimage centre. Jesus assured Dhinakaran: 'When people come and prayer warriors apply oil over their heads, I shall touch them with my hands and heal them'.⁵⁵ On 1 May 1988, A.N. Selvaraj, the night watchman said he was struck by light from a person whose stature rose to heaven. Believing this to be Jesus, this spot was named *The Vision Site*. An industrialist whose debts were cleared due to Dhinakaran's prayers erected a cross of granite here and engraved Jacob's words: 'Surely the Lord is in this place' (Gen. 28:16).⁵⁶

In 1974, when Dhinakaran visited Israel he noticed the pool at Bethesda with its five porches (John 5:1-8) had dried up. When constructing the Bethesda prayer centre at Coimbatore, he built a similar pool with a statue of an angel in the middle. Behind it he constructed life size statues depicting the passion of Christ in the *Seven Stations of the Cross*. Indian Christians crowd these sites for medication and many testify they are

⁵³ *Jesus Calls* July 2004 has a model inside the back cover. Several like V. Dalmaida have given their new job's first salary toward this cause. There are 20 options to pledge support such as New Year's salary, from family savings, relatives abroad and school collections, *Jesus Calls*, March 2004, p. 9.

⁵⁴ I was asked to preach at the first English service of Bangalore city's *Jesus Calls* Prayer Tower after it was opened and was surprised to find members of Baptist, CSI and other churches taking a lead. For instance, Leela Antony was a prayer warrior who in the Brethren Church was not allowed to lead and Sam Prince led worship with a guitar, which I knew he had longed to do in his own CSI congregation.

⁵⁵ 'Jesus Strolls in Bethesda!', *Jesus Calls*, Nov. 2004, p. 4-8; <http://www.jesuscalls.org/bethesda>

⁵⁶ The details of A.N. Selvaraj's vision with photos of people kneeling in prayer at the spot where the cross is erected is found in *Jesus Calls*, June 2003, p. 2.

helped 'to comprehend the agony of the cross and thereby receive the blessings of God',⁵⁷ which has raised issues with regard to his Charismatic healing theology.

Some Indian Pentecostals considered such prayer stations as Catholic sacramentalism or worse a form of Hindu idolatry. For Bergunder, this shows Dhinakaran's 'crypto-catholic' views.⁵⁸ I believe, this form of healing prayer reflects Dhinakaran's latent roots in the Anglo-catholic (SPG) tradition and reveals his ecumenical agenda. It demonstrates a pragmatic spirituality that he bravely adopted for cultural relevance that facilitates pilgrimages to holy sites. Risking an apparent syncretism, he has managed to blend the 'sacramental' with the 'pentecostal'.⁵⁹ It further underscores the fact that his healing praxis is more concerned about function than forms. For the observer, it simply links his blessing theology to the cross and atonement theories.⁶⁰ One must admit that Dhinakaran's initiative at Bethesda is a bold step in reclaiming for Indian Pentecostalism with its democratisation of charismata, the forgotten 'theology of sacred place', i.e. the localisation of God's worshipful presence, which draws Jews to Jerusalem, Hindus to Thirupati and Muslims to Mecca.

F.13. Karunya Community Hospital:

The width and scope of Dhinakaran's view of healing is best observed in his health care services where his words, works and wonders come together. Dr. Soundravalli Harris gave me a tour of his rural hospital in Karunyanagar. At the entrance is a picture of an operating theatre with doctors around the table and a luminous picture of Jesus behind that reads: 'We treat but Jesus heals'. The aim of this 'project [is] to bring healing to suffering humanity' and is considered as 'God's gift to the people'.⁶¹ It is set up to serve the poor, women and children in the surrounding 28 villages with around-the-clock medical care. Vans are available in emergencies for those unable to travel, which otherwise serve as a primary health care units offering villagers routine vaccines for dreaded diseases like polio, malaria and typhoid. Karunya students share self-help information and staff teach courses on the importance of hygiene. The remaining facets of ministry show how the fruits of Dhinakaran's evangelistic efforts are conserved without letting caste or creed get in the way.

⁵⁷ Dhinakaran, 'Jesus Strolls in Bethesda', *Jesus Calls*, Nov. 2004, p. 7.

⁵⁸ Bergunder, *Christianity is India*, p. 173.

⁵⁹ See useful study by Ralph Del Colle, 'Pentecostal/Catholic Dialogue: Theological Suggestions for Consideration', *Pneuma*, 25/1, 2003, p. 93-96.

⁶⁰ Dhinakaran claims, 'countless miracles are taking place even today', *Jesus Calls*, Nov. 2004, p. 7.

⁶¹ More details on www.jesuscalls.org/hospital

4. Social Action (SEESHA): Building the Home, Community and Nation

Indians consider loyalty to family as one of the highest socio-cultural values. This implies honour by way of mutual respect, material support and self-sacrifice that contribute to harmony in the home: a sign of blessing. Faith is fostered in families and education that secures jobs is prized as the doorway to blessing. In such community-oriented cultures healing, beyond providing services and opportunities for health, involves 'the restoration and strengthening of the [community's] role in this undertaking'.⁶² The family being the unit of society, Raj poignantly notes:

Today there are Herculean efforts and colossal strategies devised to evangelise Indians, but the final result is rather microscopic. The Indian evangelist by and large has lost his image of national values. He has lost a great part of his prophetic identity. Because the societal issues have become irrelevant to him, his message has become irrelevant to the society.⁶³

Dhinakaran, convinced God's blessings make believers a source of blessing to their home, society and nation, mobilises prayer for social welfare and parliamentary elections.⁶⁴ Houghton, OMS missionary in India since 1965 and Principal of SAIACS, considers evangelism as 'a commendable contribution to nation building'.

When a man or woman receives Christ and becomes his follower it need not disrupt communal harmony... The personal outcome is a dynamic effective cause of an upward mobility that immediately benefits the family unit, the household, the neighbourhood, the village and finally the nation. Therefore we are about the business of building the nation.⁶⁵

F.14. Young Partner Plan: Prayer, Prosperity and Posterity

As the *Jesus Calls* enterprise expanded, larger capital and running costs were needed. Dhinakaran believes any 'dictum from God' will come into fruition as God prompts his people to resource these projects that he also calls 'schemes'. With great faith, as a wise manager and strategist, he motivates and mobilises 'partners'. A project is presented as a compassionate cause, the vision is shared and responsible giving encouraged. Dhinakaran's Young Partner Plan which illustrates his fundraising method began as an encounter with Jesus in a motel in Houston, USA. He recollects:

⁶² *Growing Together in the Healing Ministry: New Strategies for Asian Christians 2000 A.D.*, Report from the CCA Consultation, Bangkok, 1989, p. 89.

⁶³ Ebe Sunder Raj, *Our Mission, Morality, Motherland*, Chennai: Bharat Joyti, 2002, p. 12.

⁶⁴ '72-Hour Prayer for Leaders chosen by God to Rule India', *Jesus Calls*, June, 2004, p. 1-5

⁶⁵ Graham Houghton, 'Nation Building', *Perspectives: Asian Version*, Bangalore, 1998, p. 13; Thesis *Impoverishment of Dependency: History of the Protestant Church in Madras 1870-1920*, CLS, 1983

At 4 am on the 25th July 1985 the presence of Jesus filled my room. He said: 'My son, I am in great agony when I see children and youngsters below 25 years go astray. I want you to enrol them in a Young Partners Plan and pray for them tearfully each day. I shall take them into my safe keeping, bless their studies, keep them above want and ensure for them a blessed future'.⁶⁶

Dhinakaran advertised: 'We need 120,000 partners to contribute Rs. 1,000 each to build the Karunya Institute of Technology' and declared that God has promised to bless young partners in three ways: (1) protect them from all evil, (2) take care of their educational needs and (3) keep them away from poverty.⁶⁷ Personal reward, pastoral benefits and social privileges accompany such offers.⁶⁸ The pastoral ethics of this pay-for-prayer system I will take up later. Nevertheless, in 1985 this plan helped complete the Karunya Engineering College. Such schemes in India abound as long as parents see the need for their children to be divinely protected and prosper materially.

F.15. Children's Club:

Dhinakaran's childhood experiences, Stella's two miscarriages and his teenage daughter's death, have caused him to stress prayer for the wellbeing of children. Traditional Indian society views childlessness as a misfortune or a curse. Mothers-in-law expect a grandchild, preferably a boy, soon after the first year of marriage. Such stigma creates a crisis for childless couples and by equating posterity with prosperity, homes with children are considered as 'blessed'. As doctors see difficulties for the wife to conceive, family and social issues heighten. People turn to God believing he can make the human womb fruitful, and so they contact Dhinakaran. Couples send prayer requests and when their child is born, register it as a *Jesus Calls* club member. Such 'miracle baby' stories are published to encourage others. The 'Children's Club' is a network that meets every Saturday. Each child is given a Bible and customised notebook and taught how 'to live pleasing to God in this evil world'.⁶⁹

F.17. Youth Transformers

Paul Dhinakaran, who went through difficulties as a youth, has masterminded a program that deals with issues young people face. In 1996 the *Transformers Club* was

⁶⁶ Dhinakaran, *I Am that I Am*, pp. 21,22

⁶⁷ Dhinakaran, *Blessed Are Ye*, p. 64.

⁶⁸ Benefits include: (1) prayers for protection twice daily (2) preference for admission into *Karunya* (3) opportunity to personally meet the Dhinakarans when in town (4) One-year free subscription to *True Friend* magazine (5) Personal birthday greetings by Dhinakaran (6) Award certificate with promise verse. See, *Jesus Calls*, July 2003, p.1; *True Friend*, Dec. 2003, p. 28; March 2004, p. 19.

⁶⁹ Website <http://www.jesuscalls.org/kids> has a section that keeps people informed of the activities.

started with creative activities that give youth opportunities to produce their own dramas that are staged publicly in the afternoons at Dhinakaran's campaigns. His TV programmes include serial plays that address the addictions of youth for which society and churches 'brand them as bad'.⁷⁰ Their potentials are recognised and the need for change, renewal and friendship is met. Dhinakaran challenges youth to invest their lives in things of moral value that help them succeed. He offers them promises of spiritual blessings (heavenly dew), divine protection (from curses and black magic) and stresses the need to study well, work hard (sow in tears) and excel in leadership (be the head and not tail).⁷¹ Paul teaches them a sow-to-reap principle in his citywide 'Student and Youth Blessing' prayer meetings. He offers 'tips to improve' and urges them to take vows that would bring them 'hundredfold blessing'.⁷² Youth meetings answer questions and deal with practical subjects like 'overcoming temptation'.⁷³

F.18. Esther Prayer Groups

Ministry to and by Indian women has been one of the most marginalized and challenging undertaking for Christian mission. Stella with Dhinakaran plays a pivotal role in making a difference in a male-dominated India. Athyal's review is telling:

Women are oppressed from the womb to the tomb; denied justice, freedom and comfort. They work long hours outside their homes, are paid less, and when they come home, are made to serve their husbands and children. They have to be subservient to men, suffer ridicule, snide remarks and violence in all forms. They lose their health because of the work burden and repeated pregnancies. Though they are deified as gods and mothers, they are treated as brooms, slippers and like curry leaves that are thrown away after use.⁷⁴

The creative leadership of Stella and Evangeline is changing the above situation by renewal and social reform. Both preach at conferences, organise monthly meetings, contribute to *Priceless Pearl*, a magazine committed to show the indispensable value and immense capabilities of women at home, in the workplace and society. Esther Prayer Groups illustrate the enormous transformation that is taking place and at an incredible rate. In 2000, there were 248 groups formed in Tamilnadu, which by 2003 exploded to over 600 vibrant missional groups all over India and around the world.⁷⁵

⁷⁰ See 'Our Concern for Youth' and 'Transformer Club' on <http://www.jesuscalls.org/youth>

⁷¹ Dhinakaran, 'Blessings in the Lives of Young Partners', *Jesus Calls*, July, 2003, p. 5-9

⁷² Paul Dhinakaran, 'Hundredfold Blessing', *True Friend*, March 2004, p. 2-7.

⁷³ Paul Dhinakaran, 'Way to overcome temptation', *True Friend*, November, 2003, p. 4-10.

⁷⁴ Jesudas. Athyal, *Relevant Patterns of Christian Witness*, Thiruvalla: Chrishava Samithy, 2000, p. 61

⁷⁵ *Jesus Calls*, January 2001, p. 17; July 2003, p. 11. The 3rd International Esther Group Conference drew over 1,100 women in 168 groups from the newly formed state Jharkhand to South Africa.

F.19. Marriage and Employment Bureaus:

Dhinakaran finds appropriate forums to address and meet family and community needs. With charismatic piety at the core and compassion as the motif, he tailor-makes 'club-like' settings in which believers covenant to maintain biblical values in their relationships. A major stress for Christian parents is finding a suitable life partner for their 'godly girls', in view of the complex caste and career issues. Dhinakaran's marriage bureau seeks to relieve this with a match-making service that is professional yet done with grace after fasting and prayer. While personal data are collected, stored and kept confidential, the selection is left to the discretion of both parties. Importantly, in keeping with the tradition of the Mukti mission, 'women who have been abandoned by their husbands, widows and divorcees can also register themselves in this plan'.⁷⁶

India's unemployment crisis has consequences on healthcare. Dhinakaran's 'love for the brethren' and social gospel finds expression in his equal opportunity and placement network for community-building. The process is clarified and registration or application may be done online. Forms are filled on one side for prayer and job vacancies or skills needed advertised on the other. Dhinakaran has a sanctified view of work, and believes in a God who blesses the hands of hard workers to prosper them.

F.20. Community Development and Social Relief:

Dhinakaran recognises that in India, individual worth is measured precisely by what is done toward community transformation. Therefore he established the *Karunya Trust* that finances educational and medical projects. The site for Karunya University was located in a scenic but under-developed area outside Coimbatore. Yet, Dhinakaran's practical theology of compassion led him to contact government welfare officials in order to develop the surrounding rural communities. Urban Christians, the college staff and students, together formed outreach teams to create a 'new' community that served the villagers. Dhinakaran used India's standard rural development theory where creating jobs or industrial opportunities, attracts workers with their families.⁷⁷ The local community to be self-sufficient needed a decent lifestyle for which they needed proper houses, electricity, water, roads, transport facilities, shops, schools, hospitals,

⁷⁶ 'Marriage Bureau' confidentiality is kept on: mb@jesuscalls.org; *Jesus Calls*, Jan. 2003, p. 37.

⁷⁷ B. D'Sami, 'Human Development in the Context of India's Social Problems, *Towards a Theology of Human Development*, Gurukul, 1998, p. 125-131; G. Shiri, *Christian Social Thought in India 1962-77*, CLS, 1982, p. 59. Development is value-oriented with people participation for structural change.

post-offices etc., It is not incidental that such urbanisation has led to that township now named Karunyanagar (*Karunya* means compassion and *nagar*, town).

In 1991, Karunya Trust built and dedicated the Evangeline Matriculation School to serve tribal peoples, which annually enrolls over 500 students. Land for poultry and agricultural farming is developed to create jobs for the poor to help themselves. The *Angel Gardens*, Dhinakaran says, is a 'project with the sole aim of providing good housing facilities for people who lived in that rural area'. Karunya students involve themselves in educating the rural masses by conducting literacy and adult education programs, 'giving them opportunity to survive in this challenging world'.⁷⁸ The Trust collaborates with the city's Public Works department to help lay or improve roads, to provide transportation and basic public conveniences.

Dhinakaran is keen to practice what he preaches viz., 'Give and it will be given to you' (Lk. 6: 38). While his ministry went through a financial crisis, he claims, Jesus challenged him to support other missions with a tithe of his organisation's income. His webpage declares: 'Charity begins at home' which he believes: demonstrates 'love to our co-brethren by our deeds' and supports 'God's work' worldwide and prepare this planet for Him together'.⁷⁹ Individuals, known to me, were granted scholarship funds to attend Karunya University and the A.G. Church in Trichy that once burnt down received immediate and substantial financial aid from Dhinakaran to be rebuilt.⁸⁰

The latest radical demonstration of Dhinakaran's view of healing and his 'ministry of compassion' is SEESHA: *Samati* for Education, Environment, Social & Health Action, inaugurated in 2005 after the tsunami destroyed countless lives and houses in the Indian subcontinent. Paul Dhinakaran takes a leading role in this new scheme that supports victims of natural disasters and helps the destitute by giving loans to farmers and starting night schools for poor children. A recent statement by Paul Dhinakaran vividly outlines the development and the new face of Jesus Calls:

For the past 50 years we were **praying** for the people's needs through *Jesus Calls*, for 20 years we are in the educational service through *Karunya* serving the needy through the churches. Now, we are starting *SEESHA* to do social

⁷⁸ See further details in 'Community Service' on www.jesuscalls.org/community

⁷⁹ <http://www.jesuscalls.org/missions>

⁸⁰ Dhinakaran took the Sunday service at this AG Church where his magnanimity was appreciated. J. Jerry, an alumnus of SAIACS on the pastoral staff, shared with me the details of this act of charity.

service by helping the poor and needy affected by natural calamities and afflicted by various circumstances of life⁸¹ (emphasis mine).

5. Toward a Wholistic, Pastoral Pentecostalism

Dhinakaran's journey with healing continues but his understanding of it has evolved drastically with some mega shifts. Over half a century, there has been a useful de-spiritualisation and de-mystification of his views on faith for healing.⁸² He has moved beyond a solely *Word-cum-Metanoic* approach that preaches and calls individuals to repentance. While disparaging healing through the prayer paradigm is unthinkable for Dhinakaran, he has embraced a socio-political healing model that stresses 'ministry to structures' in order to involve in the local, national and global community. Here, as Oliver observes, the living out a social theology often 'arises from a deliberate pragmatism in response to urgent personal and social needs that cannot be ignored'.⁸³

I have demonstrated how Dhinakaran's Jesus Calls ministry has positively deepened as well as widened his healing movement to illustrate how *Healing is Wholeness*.⁸⁴ While the words *wholistic* and *holistic* are used interchangeably with little technical difference,⁸⁵ I prefer the former to the latter since in the Indian culture, the word *holistic* easily conveys ideas of intuitive mind-cures, New Age therapies or Alternate medicine,⁸⁶ which Pentecostals distance their ministries from. Further, a theological understanding of 'spirit' in the *holistic* medicine movement is often about maintaining balance and harmony with the forces of nature that is alien to the Bible. It also radically differs from Charismatic pneumatology that encourages experiences of the Spirit as a person with mind, emotions and will. I will use *wholistic* which better describes a biblical, and Dhinakaran's view that I have shown:

- i) Relates healing to the whole-person, *imago Dei*: body-mind-emotions-spirit.
- ii) Accepts there is a greater whole; healing is one part of the total *missio Dei*.

⁸¹ Paul Dhinakaran, 'Yet Another New Scheme in Serving God', *Jesus Calls*, December, 2005, p. 26.

⁸² Rainer Bucher, 'Cosmos-Church-Body: Observations on the Notion of 'Healing Pastoral Work'', *Concilium*, Quinn & Tamez (eds.), Vol. 2, London: SCM, 2002, p. 85-86.

⁸³ Gordon Oliver, 'Model and Myth in Pastoral Care', *Anvil*, 6/3, 1989, p. 219.

⁸⁴ H. Booth, *Healing is Wholeness: Ministry Initiatives in the Local Church*, London: CCHH, 1987.

⁸⁵ Abigail Evans, *The Healing Church*, Cleveland, OH: United Church Press, 1999, p. 33-34.

⁸⁶ In India the 'holistic' approach communicates a host of methods from self-healing, yogic mind cures to Ayurveda or Homeopathy which are alternative rather than complementary. *Indian Health Administrator*, 1996, p. 56; Luis Vas, *Master Approach to New Age Alternative Therapies*, Delhi: Pustak Books, 2001. Andrew Weil, 'Patient Heal Yourself' philosophy has championed this notion in the west, *Spontaneous Healing: How to Discover and Enhance Your Body's Natural Ability to Maintain and Heal Itself*, New York: Ballantine, 1995.

- iii) Conjoins the so-called full gospel with meeting humans at whatever point of need, thus dissolving the unnecessary evangelism versus social action debate.
- iv) Offers healing in a whole host of ways from personal pastoral touch to political structural change with different types of benefits toward wellbeing.
- v) Makes healing an essential task of the whole church with all its varied skills and *charismata*, but focuses one's faith on God's Spirit, not human potential.

The 20 facets, put together, show that Dhinakaran's concept of healing is complex, pluriform and a multidisciplinary construct of a broad array of observable phenomena from miracles to marriage bureaus. His understanding of health includes yet goes beyond the absence of pain or functional disability. But, it does stress the therapeutic value of experiencing the Spirit's reconciling and empowering presence. His 'wholesome ministry' seeks a wholism that, in Rowland's words, 'views man as a whole being and deals with the need the person expresses, whether physical, social or spiritual. One part may be addressed sometimes and at other times another. And all aspects may also be considered simultaneously'.⁸⁷ It follows that such a view will carefully *integrate* the different yet identifiable means and methods of treatment.⁸⁸

Dhinakaran's Jesus Calls healing ministry can be pictured as a kaleidoscope since this instrument represents many highly-coloured and rapidly changing patterns. While, in India, specialised ministries choose to focus on and commit themselves to one or the other of the three main aspects of outreach (preach, teach or heal), Dhinakaran has chosen to be a general practitioner. His genius lies in his ability to integrate the gospel in its three dimensions: *words*, *signs* and *deeds* and hold them in creative tension for a balanced ministry. Importantly, he strategically applies this threefold emphasis on healing to what it implies for the believer to follow Jesus and fulfil his great commission in India today. Thus the 'call to heal' is placed at the core of Christian discipleship and national witness. He maintains a Pastoral Pentecostalism where healing is a mutual 'charismatic' community enterprise, i.e. it is the resultant movement of God's Spirit within and on behalf of a responsive faith community that is *careful* in doing evangelism in socially relevant ways.

⁸⁷ S. Rowland, *Multiplying Light and Truth: Community Health Evangelism*, GLS, 2001, p. 14.

⁸⁸ Andrew Fergusson, *Health: the Strength to be Human*, Leicester: CMF/IVP joint publication, 1993.

Having considered Dhinakaran's journey toward wholeness, with prayer towers, educational and medical institutes and social action projects on its way, three points may be made regarding charismatic healing and Pastoral Pentecostalism. First, 'pentecostal' gifts of power when exercised with a pragmatism that incorporates genuine compassion will find the gospel of healing intensely social. As Woodward notes, like its parent Judaism, 'Christianity has always seen a person's fulfilment as within a community and has always had a communal structure which contained provision for pastoral care'.⁸⁹

Second, it is unfortunate that the *charismata* are separated from natural gifts. This has caused for some Indian Pentecostals a spiritual elitism and fostered an escapist attitude to the natural world. Hence, charismatic faith is notorious for its undue focus on the individual, bodily needs often at the expense of healing our environment.⁹⁰ In contrast, Pastoral Pentecostalism would perceive the Spirit at work within the natural order, in co-operation with the created world. Thus *charisma* is the very ability to exercise the so-called *service* gifts, which are listed alongside the *sign* gifts, as hospitality with inspired utterance (Rom. 12: 6-21) or healers with helpers and martyrs (1 Cor. 12:27-13:13). This should indicate to us that 'there is always a base in nature for charismata, always a natural foundation for all spiritual gifts'.⁹¹

Third, Dhinakaran's theology of healing has been shown to be an authentic Indian Christian theology insofar as it relates to three aspects. As Yung has argued, such a 'theology in context' will be primarily rooted in a biblical mission, it will develop a firm pastoral practice that is socially transforming and it will take culture seriously.⁹² Dhinakaran's Jesus Calls healing prayer towers and public evangelism, characterised by power encounters, healing, exorcisms and prophecy, have positively contributed toward conscientizing the Indian masses and empowering the church-at-large for the great commission with 'signs and wonders' following. The sociological dynamics of his Pentecostal-Charismatic ministry, typified by *Karunya* (compassionate action) has involved him in social concerns through a focus on the Indian family providing welfare and vocational skills. It has also compelled him to start *SEESHA* that engages

⁸⁹ James Woodward, 'Toward a Theology of Healthcare', *JHCC*, December 1993, p. 7.

⁹⁰ John Drane, 'Healing Ourselves and Our Environment', *What is the New Age still Saying about the Church?* London, HarperCollins, 1999.

⁹¹ Paul Fiddes, *Participating in God: A Pastoral Doctrine of Trinity*, London: D.L &T, 2000, p. 269.

⁹² Hwa Yung, *Mangoes or Bananas?*, Oxford: Regum, 1997, p. 61-145.

him in relief projects and socio-political action which, in turn, have enhanced his local, national and global outreach. Finally, he has deliberately sought to indigenise the gospel in the native Indian soil. While Indians are becoming creatures of a global culture, Dhinakaran is keen to align his healing praxis to activities that celebrate cherished Indian cultural values: festivals, pilgrimages to sacred sites and shrines, worship, art forms, and above all a strong affirmation of the family unit, sense of community and national heritage. He is not a blind slave to Indian culture, as his ministry to women reveals a brave counterculture, yet he is sensitive to culture and thus models what it means to be an Indian-Christian healing evangelist.

Each evangelist and community caregiver will need to travel their own pathway to wholeness. After portraying Dhinakaran's journey, I realise that each one must ask: Without distorting the gospel or betraying our distinctive cultures, how can we together bring Christ's healing to the nations? It is a joy and a privilege to inculturate the gospel but not without struggle and there will be criticisms. In chapter six I will construct Dhinakaran's theological model for healing and in chapter seven assess his healing praxis. In this chapter I have elucidated the 20 facets of Dhinakaran's Jesus Calls ministry and shown that where *soul winning* and the *care of souls* are united, there lies a Pastoral Pentecostalism that demonstrates how the power of *charismata* experienced in signs and wonders and, perhaps more so, in *compassion* as acts of mercy and in the form of social action, has incredible potential for Christian mission.

Chapter Six

Dhinakaran's Theological Model for Compassion Healing

The Bible and theology provide us with models of God that help us grasp something of the reality to which they point.¹ 'The role of models for effective ministry is a subject long acknowledged as important in Pentecostal and Charismatic circles', notes Robeck, and 'most frequently the call is to follow Jesus as the model *par excellence*'. He submits: 'In the ministry of scholarship there is still the need for models'.² Dhinakaran with a Charismatic healing theology adopts a distinct pastoral model of compassion to which the masses in India are magnetised. It has opened up the Indian communities to the gospel and the Spirit's empowering work. Healing models serve as interpretative tools of Charismatic spiritualities wherein experience is valued and cultural phenomena incorporated.³ Here, as Pilch explains, the preference is for a *cultural* hermeneutic model, as against a biomedical model,⁴ since illness realities and healings are essentially an interpretative exercise carried out in accordance to specific interpretative strategies adopted by the healer.

During research several people claimed substantial healings with testimonies of alleged cures that were medically inexplicable and a few permanent. Yet there were also cases of failure in spite of fervent faith where people afterwards felt emotionally manipulated. The ratio between the two groups, the degree of accuracy in their testimonies, or the actual number healed from all his campaigns nationwide, are impossible to establish. My primary concern is not to empirically judge the efficacy, credibility or success of Dhinakaran's healing events,⁵ but examine the content of his message and demonstrate how over forty years it has advanced in a pragmatic way.

Historically, pastoral theology has been known to deal with the care of souls and for its study of God's concern for human wellbeing 'related to the need to guide, heal,

¹ Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church* (1976) *Models of Revelation* (1983) both New York: Doubleday.

² Cecil M. Robeck, Jr. (editor of *Pneuma*), 'Models for Ministry' *Pneuma*, 10/2, 1988, p. 83.

³ Thomas Csordas, adopts this approach in his study *The Sacred Self: A Cultural Phenomenology of Charismatic Healing* (UCLA, 1998) and *Body/Meaning/Healing*, Macmillan, 2002.

⁴ John Pilch 'Biblical Healing: Selecting the Appropriate Model', *Biblical Theology Bulletin*, 18/2, 1988, p. 60-66.

⁵ Reliable data with medical and scientific value are difficult to find and establish. Personal reports are subjective in nature and maintained also by Hindu miracle workers like Sai Baba in South India.

reconcile and sustain community'.⁶ As an exercise in pastoral theology, this thesis reflects both on Dhinakaran's healing praxis seeking to meaningfully conjoin normative sources (the Bible and Christian tradition) with human experiences (bodily healing) and (Indian) cultural resources - three fundamental elements that Whitehead, Kinast and others have shown as crucial for pastoral decision making.⁷

Dhinakaran inextricably links his theological method for his charismatic healing to core doctrines that are based on key biblical texts and concepts.⁸ Such a 'biblical theology' typically correlates the sources and causes for divine healing with themes from the Bible such as Christ's atonement, dealing with evil spirits and the role of the *charismata*. The Pentecostal-Charismatic movement, characterised by what Cox calls an 'experiential religiosity' that includes cultural elements of indigenous spirituality, I take up later.⁹ Adherents experience the sacred (Spirit infillings) that normally are accompanied by a display of God's power to heal and to deliver from forces that cause diseases. Dhinakaran functions within this revivalist tradition and believes experiences of the Spirit's fullness release healing gifts that empower for evangelism and contribute to church growth. He advocates that such experiences are repeatable and essential for, what Faupel has called, 'experiential life in Christ'.¹⁰

Dhinakaran uses an evangelical (Bible-based), charismatic (Spirit-encounter) model in which healings are a source for theological reflection, potentially providing a norm for theological formulation and can assist toward reclaiming and re-evaluating other contextual healing theologies. So, the method I employ, sensitive to Indian culture, enquires whether what takes place in his *Jesus Calls* movement is in keeping with his evangelical truth claims.¹¹ Dhinakaran does not systematise his practical theology, yet, an implicit healing theology undergirds his praxis which I will try to draw out and articulate in a systematic way. The model that I present here is to an extent a co-

⁶ J. Woodward & S. Pattison, *Pastoral and Practical Theology*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2000, p. 1.

⁷ Whitehead and Whitehead, *Method in Ministry: Theological Reflection and Christian Ministry*, 1995, Kinast, *Let Ministry Teach: A Guide to Theological Reflections*, 1996. An overview of the topic with various approaches is in Killen and de Beer, *The Art of Theological Reflection*, 1994.

⁸ Jacques Theron, 'Towards a Practical Theological Theory for the Healing Ministry in Pentecostal Churches', *JPT*, 14, 1999, p. 49-64, suggests that comparing Dhinakaran's teachings in healing with the existing standards of biblical evangelical orthodoxy can be a useful method for appraisal.

⁹ Cox Harvey, *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century*. Reading, MA: Addison-Westley, 1994.

¹⁰ Faupel, 'The Function of Models in Interpretation of Pentecostal Thought', *Pneuma*, 1980, p. 59.

¹¹ S. Bevans, 'Issues in Theological Method', *Models of Contextual Theology*, NY: Orbis, 1998, p. 11; David Lyall, 'Pastoral Action and Theological Reflection' and E. Lartey, 'Practical Theology as a Theological Form', *Spiritual Dimensions of Pastoral Care*, London: Jessica Kingsley, 2000.

construct insofar as I have interviewed Dhinakaran as subject, and my fieldwork with Indian Christian leaders familiar with his work confirms it (see List of Interviews). Key pastoral-theological issues that arise from this model I will, in chapters 7-10, test against other wider evangelical perspectives for congruence and integrity.

1. Dhinakaran's Theology of Compassionate Healing and Blessing

Hiebert, after many years of missionary service, observed that the problem with new movements in the Indian church is that they often focus attention on one person in the Trinity losing sight of the others. He correctly insists: 'A theology of God's work in human affairs must begin with an understanding of God himself – as Father, Son and Holy Spirit'.¹² Dhinakaran espouses a Trinitarian approach to charismatic healing. In *Gifts of the Holy Spirit*, he succinctly encapsulates his view as follows:

The God of Trinity is full of compassion at all times - at Old Testament times, when God was involved with the people directly, and at the time when he manifest himself in the flesh as Jesus Christ, the Son of God and walked upon the face of this earth, and at the present time when he moves among us as the Holy Spirit, it has been established that it is only the compassion that flows from him which perennially prompts Him to heal the people. Showering the gifts of healings on the hearts of his servants, he fills them with compassion and induces them to heal countless people all over the world.¹³

Dhinakaran emphasises the propositional content of God's self-disclosure in three persons across time from the Bible. Without being dogmatic, he makes statements on healing the starting point for his practical healing theology. For him, compassion is the outstanding characteristic of all God's attributes, which he consistently equates with divine healing love, i.e. sacrificial love that affects healing.¹⁴ He is convinced compassion is the 'sole reason' Christ healed and today it is the prime motive underlying and enabling Christ-like healings.¹⁵ He reckons that God on account of Jesus' atonement invites people to experience his Spirit's power that heals. As we have seen from the 20 facets of his ministry, this view encompasses the concept of wholeness (body-mind-spirit) and widens to include aspects of social concern.

¹² Paul Hiebert, 'Healing and the Kingdom', *Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues*, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994, p. 228.

¹³ Dhinakaran, *Gifts*, p. 290-291. Ps. 86:15; 111:4; 116:5; 145:8.

¹⁴ During my theological studies in the west, compassion was not discussed among God's primary attributes e.g. omnipotence or holiness. See: C.S. Song, *The Compassionate God*, London: SCM, 1982.

¹⁵ Dhinakaran, *Gifts*, p. 288.

Dhinakaran depicts the triune God's healing mission within a salvation-history where each member plays a prominent yet complementary role within three dispensations. In 'the present time', he is convinced that healing occurs chiefly by the Spirit. This accounts for his constant stress on experiencing the Spirit as Jesus' empowering presence, and exercising the Spirit's gifts, particularly the nine 'sign' gifts, since they manifest Christ and are 'enablements' that reveal Jesus' ongoing ministry through his Spirit-filled followers. His Charismatic theology in effect is a 'blessing theology' that incorporates a two-way process of receiving and relaying the blessings of Spirit's healing love and power. Dhinakaran claims to be used as a charismatic healer chiefly due to two interrelated gifts: Christ's *compassion* and the Spirit's *charismata*, all nine revelatory of power, that work in and through him to administer healing. He gives details of how he received 'power to heal' as a model from which he teaches how the Spirit wants to fill believers with compassion and the gifts for healings.¹⁶

With the above philosophy, Dhinakaran is passionate to mentor other human agents for divine healing, whom he fondly calls 'servants of God'. He desires to leave a legacy of divine compassion as the remedies for all human sickness and sorrow. He believes the healing gifts are useful for diaconal and missional purposes and are signs that point to the power of the Father's compassion which in turn draw people to his Son Jesus, who embodies that compassion. Dhinakaran insists on repeated pentecost-like experiences he refers to as being 'Spirit-filled' [never 'Spirit baptised'] in order to release the healing *charismata*. This sets him apart as a 'pentecostal' healer with a Charismatic theology of power. His focus on Jesus' *compassionate* death and task of caring for the whole person with a whole-life discipleship incorporates a theology of suffering and a 'wounded healer' role that gives him a stronger 'pastoral' identity.

Stone considers the essential character of God, Christ and the Christian in terms of compassion and notes that a *compassionate ministry* is 'an expression of and recovery of the image of God... a constitutive element in the life and mission of the church'.¹⁷ I will draw out from Dhinakaran's works his Pentecostal theology that is pastoral in nature and advances the Jesus Calls healing movement. I will present his Charismatic theology of compassion and healing model with three theological propositions:

- (1) Rooted in the Father's compassionate nature and will,

¹⁶ Dhinakaran, *Love so Amazing*, p. 45-46; *Gifts*, p. 290-291, p. 289.

¹⁷ Bryan Stone, *Compassionate Ministry: Theological Foundations*, Maryknoll: Orbis, p. 142.

- (2) Procured and available because of the cross of Christ and
- (3) Realised in Believers through the operative power of the Spirit.

1.1 'The Father': Healing Rooted in Divine Compassion

Dhinakaran's experiential theology is shaped by the care of his father, Doraiswamy. He often narrates struggles his father went through as a poor, constantly sick, teacher to provide for the family.¹⁸ He argues from the lesser to the greater to show how much more a 'loving heavenly Father' would provide for his children.¹⁹ There are several salient features in Dhinakaran's understanding of God the Father as healer:

The Fatherhood of God is the divine image of pastoral care that is foundational to Dhinakaran's vision of healing and appropriating the Father's providential care is the key to his theology of blessing. In his first publication *Love so Amazing*, he writes:

When the clouds of life's problems surround us, let us kneel and pray tearfully, telling our Father all our needs. He will hear our prayers and release us from all our trouble. Our God is no distant 'father, which art in Heaven'. He loves to dwell in the midst of his devotees sharing in their weal and woe.²⁰

Dhinakaran popularises the above relationship that is unique to Christianity by holding together divine transcendence and immanence: God is a good Father always alongside his children to offer protective care and meet them at their point of need. He teaches that it is the Father's desire and nature to heal those who trust him. With a covenantal view of healing he resorts to biblical promises where although *sovereign*, God heals those who believe he is *faithful* to his word.²¹ Since he considers demons in the causative factors for sickness, the Father is pictured as a shepherd, warding off destructive forces and defending his children.²² Dhinakaran uses numerous Bible promises to reaffirm people of God's *providence* that he calls 'all round blessings'.²³

Dhinakaran believes the Father suffers mysteriously with those who suffer.²⁴ Hence compassion is the most featured of divine virtues in his messages that interestingly can become a human virtue, that can contribute toward healing the sick. He presents God

¹⁸ Dhinakaran, *Jesus Calls*, January 2002, p. 2.

¹⁹ Dhinakaran, *In His Presence*, p. 7, 29. 'Loving' is used interchangeably with 'compassionate'.

²⁰ Dhinakaran, *Love so Amazing*, p. 53, 82.

²¹ Dhinakaran, *Love so Amazing*, p. 50. 'Blessed are You!', *Jesus Calls*, January 2002, p. 2.

²² Dhinakaran, *Prayer Brings Victory*, p. 1, 27, 37. Prayer and Bible promises are powerful 'weapons'.

²³ Dhinakaran (*Blessed are Ye*) and his son, Paul (*Blessings on the Beloved*) stress divine providence.

²⁴ Dhinakaran, *Love so Amazing*, p. 50.

as a Father who blesses his children with 'good gifts'. As the 'Father of all mercies' (2Cor. 1:4) he takes the initiative to reconcile people and bless his children. Yet 'the divine blessing is to receive the Holy Spirit and its gifts',²⁵ which comes by knowing God's word and developing 'an unquenchable thirst for spiritual gifts'.²⁶

1.2 'The Crush': Healing Available in the Cross of Christ

For Dhinakaran, the basis for the Father's blessings is 'the cross', that supreme symbol Stott notes, 'originated in the mind of Christ himself and that Christians stubbornly refused in spite of ridicule to discard'.²⁷ Dhinakaran's healing theology is *cruci-centric* and Jesus is his ultimate wounded healer. His argument advances as follows:

Dhinakaran finds God's compassion fully revealed in Jesus and his earthly ministry. Without diluting Jesus' deity he stresses his humanity showing the ontological unity between Father and Son and how Jesus is the Father's 'love manifested'.²⁸ Jesus' mission confirms God's will to heal and in doing the Father's will, Jesus healed all who in faith asked him. Matthew's summary statements (4:23, 9:35) 'bear a glorious witness' to the compassionate nature of Jesus' healing ministry and reveals that 'the same healing power of the Lord of heaven was manifested also in him'.²⁹

Dhinakaran is eager to establish that Jesus' liberating message was actualised in his healing miracles as an intrinsic part of the gospel, not something extra. Healing is how Jesus went about his Father's business, and Dhinakaran has made it his business.³⁰

With the following syllogism, he argues that it is always God's will to heal the sick:

- Jesus clearly reveals the Father's perfect will,
- Jesus healed every sick person who asked him to, unless revealed otherwise,
- It is the Father's will to heal everyone who asks him to in Jesus' name.

Dhinakaran recognises that in reality all who pray do not get healed. Yet, without questioning God's ability, he is persuaded that God's will and word are inseparable from his *nature*, i.e. his *name* - Jehovah Ropha, One who [continually] heals.³¹ His focus is on 'The Crush': when Jesus' 'entire body was broken, wounded all over for

²⁵ Dhinakaran, *Love so Amazing*, p. 83.

²⁶ Dhinakaran, *Love so Amazing*, p. 83. (John 5:39, 1Cor. 14:1)

²⁷ John Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, Leicester: IVP, p. 25.

²⁸ Dhinakaran, *Love so Amazing*, p. 53. Matt. 1:21, Col 1:15, Heb. 1:3, John 10:30

²⁹ Dhinakaran *Gifts*, p. 287, 297.

³⁰ Dhinakaran, *Seven Saying of our Saviour*, p. 7-11. Luke 2:49; John 8:29

³¹ Dhinakaran, *Gifts*, p. 288, 312f.

our sins and our diseases'.³² He claims that Jesus bore our sicknesses on the cross; therefore healing belongs to the atonement. 'The Crush' denotes his *Dalit* understanding of 'the outcast(e) God' who is rejected, yet suffers not only *with* but also *for* others. Rajendran notes how the downtrodden in India long for a 'God with a human face'.³³ Dhinakaran points to Jesus. His emphasis shifts from Jesus' ministry to his messianic task; from a relational model to a legal or judicial model in which he advocates the notion of penal substitution. He believes that '[Jesus] experienced in his own body the weakness and disease which we suffer from'. He then preaches: 'The wounds inflicted on Jesus were for every disease of yours. Believe that the compassion of Jesus will pierce through you. He will heal you in his mercy'.³⁴

For Dhinakaran, 'the Crush' or Jesus' wounding brings healing since it dealt with the ultimate cause that brought suffering, sickness and death to the world - sin.³⁵ God, in Christ, has reconciled humanity and provided for its restoration, health and salvation. Thus, Jesus is *the wounded healer par excellence*; a truth on which Dhinakaran constructs a theology of all round blessing that is triumphal and comforting at once. With two pastoral images: God's shepherd laying down his life and sinless lamb shedding his blood, he makes his theology of the cross, symbolic and liberational.³⁶ However, he contends that God's blessings, beyond what is *written* (Bible) must be mediated by Christ's *living* Spirit. For this he promotes an *I-Thou* experience with the healing Christ, that is possible on account of his Spirit's presence and power.³⁷

1.3 'The Fire': Healing Realised through the Spirit's Power

For Dhinakaran, the incarnation, apart from atoning for sins, had 'another important reason' that is captured in Jesus' words: 'I came to set the earth on fire' (Lk. 12:49-50). As he correlates 'the Crush' with 'the Fire', i.e. what Jesus accomplished on the *cross* and the *Spirit's* work of 'setting the earth on fire',³⁸ his pneumatology unfolds.

³² Dhinakaran, *Love so Amazing*, p. 44, 49-58, 'The Crush' described breaking a glass bangle under the heavy boot by heartless people. Interview, Gnana Thomas, Bangalore, Jan., 2002.

³³ J. Rajendran, *The Outcast God: A Theology of Liberation*, Madras, 1984, p. 12. For M. Phule, 'Dalits' are the crushed, oppressed, untouchable caste. cf. J. Arulraj, *Jesus the Dalit*, 1996.

³⁴ Dhinakaran, *Love so Amazing*, p. 46.

³⁵ Dhinakaran, *Love so Amazing*, p. 56-58.

³⁶ Dhinakaran, *Healing Stripes*, p. 25-26. John 10:11, Lev.17; Mk. 10:18; Heb.10, 1John 1:7.

³⁷ Dhinakaran, 'Blessings from the Cross: Power over Pain', *Seven Sayings*, p. 41f.

³⁸ Dhinakaran, *Love so Amazing*, p. 58-59. Luke 10:19, 1Tim. 1:15. For Oliver Davies, 'the presence of the Spirit is the enabling power that unites the speaking of the faithful today with the speaking of the Father and the Son in the incarnation', hence a theology of compassion is a pneumatological study. *A Theology of Compassion*, London: SCM Press, 2001, p. 211.

Dhinakaran points out how John the Baptist's prophecy and Jesus' promise to his disciples were fulfilled when the Spirit fell on Pentecost and: 'Filled them with the fire and the Holy Spirit'. 'The Fire' is the Spirit's empowerment that he equates with: 'Love shed forth'. He differentiates this event from Old Testament outpourings since it 'descends through Jesus, abides with us forever and draws out of us rivers of living waters'. Importantly, Dhinakaran clarifies that the 'undying fire of the Spirit issued from the agony experienced by Jesus [and] confers blessings on mankind'.³⁹

Dhinakaran believes 'the place of Jesus on this earth has been filled' by the Comforter that Jesus promised which is the Spirit's healing presence.⁴⁰ If Jesus can be said to be God's face, then, for Dhinakaran, the Spirit is Christ's powerful presence. He underlines that the 'Spirit of the Lord... pours God's compassion into our hearts (Rom 5:5)'. Thus, compassion is a gift that produces a charismatic healer: 'When the Spirit overwhelms the life of somebody it is quite natural that God's compassion darts towards the sick, from the man of God.'⁴¹ He explains how the Spirit heals due to his compassionate nature and through the charismata he bestows:

The compassion that flows from [the Spirit] perennially prompts him to heal the people. Showering his gifts of healing on the hearts of his servants, he fills them with compassion and induces them to heal countless people.⁴²

The power to heal, Dhinakaran teaches, is an enabling grace-gift that comes from the 'Spirit of grace'.⁴³ Both divine *sovereignty* and unmerited *favour* are at work as the Spirit chooses to endow ministers with the power of 'compassion' that Dhinakaran calls: 'the ornament of a true servant of God'.⁴⁴ The other polarity in his view of healing is the two sides to compassion: the *pastoral* soft side that can be perceived as 'mercy healing' and a strong side in what is typically *Pentecostal* 'power healing'.

It is crucial to note that Dhinakaran does not validate the nine gifts of 'power' from 1Cor.12:8, 9, if the Spirit's nine-fold fruit (graces) listed in Gal. 5:22-24 are lacking. The latter he reduces to its overriding expression: compassionate love, which in turn

³⁹ Dhinakaran, *Love so Amazing*, p. 60, 62; 1Kings 18:37-39; 2Chron. 7:1-3; Matt. 3:11, Acts 1:5.

⁴⁰ Dhinakaran, *In His Presence*, contain prayers for wellbeing that incorporate and apply this theory.

⁴¹ Dhinakaran, *Gifts*, p. 289.

⁴² Dhinakaran, *Gifts*, p. 291.

⁴³ Dhinakaran, *Gifts*, p. 289. cf. Heb. 10:29; Zach. 12:10. Paul seems to define *grace* in a similar way: 'But by the grace of God I am what I am and his grace to me was not without *effect* (1Cor. 15:10).

⁴⁴ Dhinakaran, *Gifts*, p. 311.

he links to Christ's character. He is convinced that the purpose of the cross was 'to confer this boon on every one' and he categorically declares: 'It is God's will that all those who love Jesus should receive this Divine fire and through that, the nine Fruits of the Spirit and the power from above for extolling Christ to the world'.⁴⁵

Thus, for Dhinakaran, the compassionate Spirit is primarily the 'Spirit of power'. However, he discusses two other titles by which the Spirit functions in his healing theology: First, the 'Spirit of burning' that he reckons is the Spirit's holy presence that 'arouses a consciousness of sin... cleanses, and consumes sin, thereby guarding the believer in holiness'.⁴⁶ Holiness and healing belong together. Second, the 'Spirit of supplication' (Zech. 12:10) he is convinced produces intercessors.⁴⁷ At this point, his theology of power becomes profoundly *pastoral*. He argues that those who receive the Spirit as a grace-gift are transformed to be gracious and caring to those who suffer; prayer being the basic stance. He writes: 'the Fire of the Spirit in the soul is not content with saving it from the power of sin... it creates divine love and concern for other souls'. The Spirit's presence is empowerment for mission (*Pentecostal* view), which for Dhinakaran includes the mission of prayer, empathy and suffering.

As a result, Dhinakaran adopts a theology of suffering. Boyd rightly contends that pain is part of what it means to be human and raises questions of 'meaning and action' that are 'inter-related' with practical implications for the sick as well as the healers.⁴⁸ Dhinakaran's theology of compassion takes seriously the healing potential that is inherent in suffering love, both divine and human. He does not deny the reality of pain by treating it as illusionary (*maya*) or blindly accepting all suffering to be the consequence of some past sin or one's fate (*karma* or *kismet*). Rather, he advocates the power of pastoral care that with mystery and paradox enables Spirit-filled believers to participate in the afflictions of others and thereby manifest Christ's healing love.

⁴⁵ Dhinakaran, *Love so Amazing*, p. 74.

⁴⁶ Dhinakaran, *Love so Amazing*, p. 64 - 66.

⁴⁷ Dhinakaran, *Love so Amazing*, p. 67.

⁴⁸ Kenneth Boyd, 'Pain, Sickness and Suffering', *Spiritual Dimensions of Pastoral Care*, London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, p. 81.

2. Radical Discipleship and Redemptive Suffering

Having discussed the theme of suffering in more detail elsewhere,⁴⁹ I want to briefly mention key concepts in Dhinakaran's view on suffering as it relates to charismatic healing. Dhinakaran starts with Jesus, 'God in the flesh' who was 'a mighty prophet in word and deed' as well as the embodiment of compassion in whom divine 'power and love were intermingled'.⁵⁰ In *Love so Amazing* he lays out his understanding of suffering and redemption, and indicates the miracle-working capacity in them:

[Jesus] has borne on his body every suffering that might be yours in every stage of your life... He himself leaped into the sea of sorrows, experienced all sufferings, tasted death on the cross and saved all mankind. Once you accept that Jesus experienced all that suffering for you, there will spring in you a divine faith, and God will perform many a miracle in and through you.⁵¹

Dhinakaran depicts the full extent of Jesus' sufferings to show that they enabled him to sympathise with all forms of human pain.⁵² His tears and supplications demonstrate that God is not *impassable* and his heart can be moved to change the situation of suffering. Dhinakaran pays attention to affections, particularly to Jesus' emotional life and uses it to help sufferers understand that his Spirit is always 'there' and is 'for them' especially in the midst of suffering. He underlines that Christ's total agony was substitutionary, i.e. on behalf of human beings, and concludes on two rapturous notes: 'What a great mystery!' and 'What a comforting truth in this!'⁵³

In essence, Dhinakaran's christology is a contextual pastoral theology. His messages seek to communicate the gospel in a way that is relevant to the Dalit Christian realities and applicable to people's daily needs and struggles. He talks about a charismatic Christ who gives believers miracle-working power, but he also presents the masses, as Arulraja's book puts it: *Jesus the Dalit*.⁵⁴ Jesus is identified with suffering *for* and *with* people in their 'brokenness' and 'oppression'. A contrast between Arulraja's and Dhinakaran's approach is that the former, a social activist, seeks social justice and confronts political structures while Dhinakaran's ministry of compassion is characterised more as a prayer movement and humanitarian service.

⁴⁹ Chris Gnanakan, 'Suffering and Glory in 1 Peter: Implications for Pastoral Ministry in South India', D.Min. dissertation, SAIACS, Bangalore, 1990.

⁵⁰ Dhinakaran, *Gifts*, p. 18. Note the devotional nature and genre of Dhinakaran's works, (see p. 14)

⁵¹ Dhinakaran, *Love so Amazing*, p. vi-vii.

⁵² For Dhinakaran, guilt from sin, the devil, sickness and poverty all 'embitter' people's lives. *Be Not Dismayed*, p. 52-53. Gethsemane represents intense emotional 'sorrow', *Love so Amazing*, p. 11.

⁵³ Dhinakaran, *Love so Amazing*, p. 6, 7, 13.

⁵⁴ M.R. Arulraja, *Jesus the Dalit: Liberation Theology by Victims of Untouchability, an Indian Version of Apartheid*, Secunderabad: Jeevan, 1996, p. 3, See introduction on 'dalit reality'.

Dhinakaran's theology of suffering is consistent with traditional Christian thinking. He teaches that 'in Jesus' God suffers. God's redemptive purpose for the salvation of humanity and the cosmos were accomplished by Jesus' self-giving love and the sacrifice of himself. On the cross, Jesus dealt with sin's penalty and power - the reason for the Fall, and root cause for all sufferings including sickness. However, this was possible because of the incarnation - the Word, in putting on 'flesh' was able to experience human sufferings and taste death for human beings. Since God chose to take on human nature, in Christ, God unites with humanity to encounter and deal with the effects of the Fall and the influence of Satan, viz. sin and sickness.

Dhinakaran does not sharply distinguish between suffering in general and physical sickness but, instead of allocating either to sin in a person's life, he points to the wonderful mystery of God's purposes in the death of Christ. Although the Just [Christ] suffering for the unjust [sinful humanity] is mysterious, for Dhinakaran it is not pointless. The incarnation and the cross define and promote compassion. Further, it creates the possibility for believers 'in Christ' to develop and show compassion by sharing in the suffering of others thereby in 'the sufferings of Christ'. He writes:

It is not surprising that those who follow Jesus in the path of the cross, should also participate in the suffering on that path. Paul's statement 'I fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ' is an incomprehensible secret mystery. But still, this happens in the lives of many servants of God.⁵⁵

Dhinakaran's solution to the puzzle of suffering, human and divine, and subsequently his explanation for healing is not philosophical nor argumentative but experiential. He acknowledges that sickness 'can enable Christians to thoroughly examine life and then to draw closer to God'.⁵⁶ Yet, his proposition with Christ's sufferings and death is that it was redemptive, i.e. it was a sacrifice that caused the restoration of others to wholeness. Offered in terms of the benefits of the cross, his theology of healing entertains mystery, exhibits paradox and entails compassion. While his Jesus *Calls* ministry extends comfort to sufferers, it is also a radical *call* to discipleship; to participate in people's suffering, thereby in Jesus' healing mission in the world:

Be prepared to show the compassion of Christ... Jesus himself is on the look out for those who take upon themselves the burden of others, plead for them

⁵⁵ Dhinakaran, *Gifts*, p. 322.

⁵⁶ Dhinakaran, *Be Not Dismayed*, p. 11.

with Jesus and bring about miracles for them to receive. Jesus expects you to be filled with his compassion and healing powers.⁵⁷

Two aspects in Dhinakaran's teachings on redemptive suffering are noteworthy. First, far from advocating a blind faith or what Bonhoeffer called 'cheap grace', he promotes 'a demanding faith' and clarifies: 'Christian discipleship is costly... after accepting Christ, we too should share in [Christ's] sufferings'.⁵⁸ Second, the *mystery* of suffering is conjoined with the *paradox* of the cross. From Christ's wounding flows healing power, is how Dhinakaran understands: 'by His stripes you are healed' (Isa. 53: 4, 5). Such counter-transference, Dhinakaran believes is possible because 'Spirit-filled' believers are given God's 'divine nature' (2Pet. 1:4),⁵⁹ so *in spite*, or rather *because* of human fragility and weaknesses, they can be wounded healers.

3. Wounded Healers and Healing Evangelism

A 'wounded healer' uses his or her own affliction in a way that provides inspiration, hope and healing to others. Here, the healer's own wounding and pastoral call is profoundly important to the healing process. Dhinakaran, although he does not use the term, 'wounded healer', concurs and explains its value in relation to the gift of compassion: '[God's servants] will feel that the sufferings of others are their own and will intercede with the Lord for them, filled (empowered) with compassion... in their path of tears, they will be a source of blessing to the suffering'.⁶⁰

The Greek myth about Chiron, a centaur son of the Olympian god Kronos, tells of how he earned the reputation of being a great healer. Yet he himself suffered life-long with a wound that was caused by an arrow in his own knee that he could not heal. Chiron is believed to have taught young Asklepios the art of healing who in turn was teacher to Hippocrates the well-known Father of Medicine.⁶¹ By way of accepting and overcoming the pain of his own physical wound, Chiron became the compassionate teacher of healing and he mentored several other heroes.

⁵⁷ Dhinakaran, *Blessed Are Ye*, p. 49.

⁵⁸ Dhinakaran, *Seven Sayings of the Saviour*, p. 55-56.

⁵⁹ Dhinakaran, 'The Blessings of Long Sufferings', *Jesus Calls*, March 2004, p. 2.

⁶⁰ Dhinakaran, *Gifts of the Spirit*, p. 132.

⁶¹ James Watt (ed.), *What's Wrong with Christian Healing?* London: CCHH, 1993, p. 5-7. Chiron taught Asklepios, the herbalist-surgeon whose serpent entwined staff is a modern medical emblem.

Bryant explains how archetypes like the wounded healer are not merely a 'pious metaphor' or a 'poetic way' of stating what could be better explained in exact prose. He believes such images can be a 'psychic reality... a powerful symbol able to release a flow of spiritual life [healing] in us, if only we would take them seriously and through imaginative reflection open ourselves to their impact'.⁶² Nouwen's *The Wounded Healer* is a classic that specifically discusses the Christian pastor's role. He reminds the minister that he 'must look after his own wounds, but at the same time be prepared to heal the wounds of others'.⁶³ Nouwen then argues that a deep understanding of their own pains makes it possible for them to turn their weaknesses into strengths, and in offering their own painful experiences they become a source of healing. This healing comes especially to those 'who are often lost in the darkness of their own misunderstood sufferings'. The point is that when a minister has suffered pain this in a sense qualifies him with the needed wisdom and ability to be a healer.⁶⁴

Empirical studies have shown that the healers sought after are particularly those with the 'ability to get in touch with the feelings and needs of the person seeking healing'.⁶⁵ Several Pentecostal healing evangelists from Wigglesworth to Wimber would agree with the mystery and paradox involved in being a wounded healer. Eliade views the shamanic initiation as a 'paschal mystery', which in the history of religion finds its perfect example in the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus.⁶⁶ I will demonstrate how the *manthiravadi*, a south Indian shaman, gains his 'rite of passage' and credibility through his own struggles within the world of spirits, only after which he is considered gifted and empowered for the service of others.

Dhinakaran discusses ways in which one 'suffers for others!' with biblical figures such as Moses, Elijah, Jesus and Paul who were examples of innocent and patient suffering yet like Jesus' these servants were made 'perfect through sufferings'. Dhinakaran notes that one person described him 'as a piece of [Christ's] broken body' and proceeds to record the extent of his sufferings with vulnerability:

⁶² Christopher Bryant, *Jung and the Christian Way*, London: DL & T, 1983, p. 124.

⁶³ Henri Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society*, New York: Image, 1979, p. 64; Marjory Foyle, a medical missionary in India, wrote about the effects of various stresses on Christian workers and how to cope and prevent them, *Honourably Wounded*, MARC, 1987.

⁶⁴ Morton Kelsey, *Prophetic Ministry*, Dorset: Element, 1982, p. 90, 91.

⁶⁵ McGuire, 'Suffering and Empathy', *Ritual Healing*, London: Rutgers Press, 1998, p. 172.

⁶⁶ Mircea Eliade, *Zalmoxis: The Vanishing God*, 1972.

There is no disease, which has not afflicted [Dhinakaran]. Four times he had a close brush with death...the suffering caused by cruel and wicked people have shattered his heart... insulting libels of his own deceitful friends and fellow-workers... then a tragic situation arose, making him shed tears of blood, when he lost his daughter precious to the whole family... the torment and the humiliation he had to undergo, to execute each plan given by God and to collect resources from people, humbling himself before them.⁶⁷

Dhinakaran recalls the 10 October 1962, when he was 'filled with God's matchless compassion' and writes about a special empathy he discovered in himself since then:

Today when people seek my prayers I weep profusely as if the cancer or tuberculosis of others is tormenting me myself. I pray to God for hours together with tears for their diseases. It is through this compassion that Christ enables me to take upon me the sorrows of the people as mine and place them before the throne of God ⁶⁸ (emphasis mine).

Dhinakaran in considering himself as a 'wounded healer', without using the term itself, offers fresh insights and a needed corrective to abuses in charismatic healing. First, as a biblical image of God's Suffering Servant, it provides a way to understand sickness and minister healing. It keeps the 'mystery' factor in healing making it a sign of the kingdom yet to come in all its fullness. Thus healing is not always now, instantaneous and miraculous, since the healer paradoxically serves as a human sacrament with no inherent power but himself a means of grace and weak channel.

Second, faith is not made a criteria, condition or the cause why healing happens or may not be experienced. Instead, divine compassion enters into the place of pain to comfort sufferers. The warmth of the charismatic healer's presence and care is a reminder of Immanuel – God who is *there* with them even a little closer in their pain. This costly identification points to the cross and reflects the power of suffering love that is poured by the Spirit into our hearts - nothing other than the work of the Spirit.

Third, such an understanding of charismatic healing embraces, in Luther's words, as a 'true Christian theology': a *theologia crucis* that proclaims the power of the Crucified holding in 'creative tension' *theologia gloriae*, his triumphant victory that is ours because of the cross but by the Spirit's empowering. It does not advocate charismatic power without compassion but shares in the paradoxical mystery of the

⁶⁷ Dhinakaran, *Gifts of the Spirit*, p. 131-132.

⁶⁸ Dhinakaran, *Blessed Are Ye*, p. 48.

suffering-glory involved. Wounded healers serve others by the grace of Jesus Christ and the corresponding power of the Spirit. Hence the Cross and Spirit work together:

The Spirit initiates us into a life-sharing relationship with Christ who can get to glory only through suffering, to victory only through defeat, to power only through weakness, to life only through death. If we try to get to spiritual power of the resurrection without being ready to go with Jesus to Calvary, through defeat failure and suffering, what we reach may turn out not to be authentic spiritual power at all, but just a cheap, superficial counterfeit of it... The definite power encounter is our encounter with the crucified Lord.⁶⁹

Thus, at least in theory, Dhinakaran's pastoral theology seeks to redress 'pentecostal power' with the needed balance between what Smail sees as 'the love of power and the power of love'. Importantly, he is committed to mentor 'young men and women who can take upon themselves the sorrows and sufferings of others as their own and carry the love and compassion of Christ to the world'.⁷⁰ He rightly believes that the healings gifts were given not to keep Christians healthy or happy but to spread the gospel and share its power to the needy. The healing *charismata* if motivated and truly empowered by *compassion* will be mission-oriented. Since God's power is seen to work best through weak people, their gifts and the gospel will reflect God's glory.

Over 40 years, Dhinakaran has developed charismatic healing for mission in India. He has successfully expanded his services with an increasingly receptive audience and his approach is profoundly personal, pastoral and evangelistic. He writes:

My ministry has one single aim. There are so many people who suffer in unemployment, as I did, who suffer in diseases like me and who like me lost their children. There are countless men and women burdened of their problems and seek relief in death. I have to go to each and every one of these people and tell them that there is a living Jesus who can deliver them from all their worries... I have to bring them comfort and consolation from the Lord.⁷¹

Dhinakaran's chief intent in developing his Institute of Power Ministry is: 'to train the participants to do the Lord's ministry with power and compassion in a way that signs and wonders and miracles will follow and to bring God's comfort and His transforming love to multitudes in need'.⁷² An obvious pattern emerges from his writings, one that dramatizes Jesus' healing. On one side is the desperate plight of the sick, poor and needy and on the other, Jesus' compassion – that capacity to share in

⁶⁹ Tom Smail, 'The Love of Power and the Power of Love', *Anvil*, 6/3, 1989, p. 227.

⁷⁰ Dhinakaran, *Blessed Are Ye*, p. 50.

⁷¹ Dhinakaran, *Voice of Love*, p. 24-25.

⁷² 'Compassion that Heals' was Dhinakaran's topic when I attended the IPM, May 2002.

their condition whatever the hurt. Jesus entertains sufferers: He makes himself available for them, gently approaches them with concern, listens to their cries, is touched by their pains, seeks to shoulder their grief and losses, calls them to himself, and extends to them his healing touch. Jesus cares, therefore He heals. Charismatics who show such compassion embody the gospel of Christ.

‘Healing evangelism’ is a pastoral demonstration of the gospel, i.e. preaching by healing. It reveals God’s desire to aid the sufferer and signals his ability through Jesus’ followers to feel human suffering and sympathise with people in their distrust, loss and powerlessness. The gospel of compassion that is sensed in the Jesus Calls ministry is a fulfilment of Jesus’ mandate and the church’s healing mission. The 20 facets need to be interpreted as pastoral instruments for evangelism. There are three distinct ways to view Dhinakaran’s ministry: compassion for the unsaved can be seen as *evangelism*, compassion for the suffering as a form of the ministry of *mercy*, and compassion for the powerless as *justice*.⁷³ Jesus and his followers in the gospels were not simply ‘saving souls’ as some see evangelism. Rather, the kingdom was inaugurated and present in Jesus’ person and works that were characterised by compassion. Jesus was anointed to preach and heal but also bring justice and liberation (Lk. 4:18-19). Dhinakaran’s ministry gradually but surely progressed in these areas of human need.

4. The Practical Application of the Model: Four Key Motifs

Dhinakaran’s theory on the power of charismata and compassion healing raises a basic pragmatic question: how does he make this work in reality? The rhetoric of his healing practice evokes four motifs that appear independently throughout his preaching, teaching and precipitate in a cluster. The four themes and concerns they raise are:⁷⁴

1. *Fervency*: How does prayer affect the healing process?
2. *Expectancy*: What part does human faith have in healing?
3. *Potency*: What is the source and nature of power?
4. *Agency*: What roles do gifted healers or the ‘charismata’ play in healing?

Dhinakaran’s ministry advocates the healing power of prayer and mobilises people to do so. For him, these four foundational themes are ‘interlinked’ and ‘collaborate’ to produce results.⁷⁵ Essentially, these four components are pastoral tools in his theory on

⁷³ See similar pattern in R. Croucher’s article on ‘Church and Mission’, *Grid*, Summer, 1991.

⁷⁴ T. Csordas considers prayer and faith as a ‘predisposition’ and the other two key aspects in the process of ‘empowerment’ and ‘transformation’, *Body/ Meaning / Healing*, Macmillan, 2002, p. 27.

⁷⁵ Dhinakaran, *Gift of the Holy Spirit*, p. 280, 285.

how prayers of faith have power to effect healing. He illustrates how these elements worked together in the case of a dying man who was brought to him for healing:

It was just at that time, I had entered by the grace of God. I took him into the home again and spoke to him words of comfort and *prayed* for him with overflowing tears. The gift of *faith* sprang up from within me. The gift of faith became *operative*; I [*agent*] rebuked the disease. Amazingly, he recovered.⁷⁶

For instance, his book *In His Presence*, begins and ends with the petition that, 'faith may descend wholly and bring power and might into life'.⁷⁷ In *Healing, Signs and Wonders*, he states his chief task: 'It is the direction of God to me to take the ministry out of the supernatural and the results are dramatic. It is primarily due to the effect of PRAYER and the ASSURANCE of his calling to his healing ministry'. He rests his case for healing with the doxology from Ephesians (3:20, 21) that ascribes glory to God through Jesus, who, Dhinakaran quotes, 'is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us'.⁷⁸

Feedback from my questionnaire (see Appendix 2) revealed these four motifs as key concepts and problematic areas for charismatic healing and Dhinakaran's ministry in particular. Respondents identified a variety of methods of *prayer* as the definitive and normal means by which God heals. Most interviewees spoke of the vital role of the Spirit's *power* in healing in terms of overcoming various afflictions. The vast majority considered *faith* as essential, i.e. trust in God's desire and ability to heal. Apart from prayers of faith and divine power, the feature that bound these three aspects was the Spirit's gifts at work through 'anointed' *agents* commonly called 'God's servants'. I have built these four elements into Dhinakaran's model and healing procedure and suggest that they be considered as main themes when assessing theologies of healing.

Other related themes that rated lower concerned confession of known sin and fasting before healing prayer, or the laying-on-of-hands, anointing with oil or simply obedience. Other technical details included the use of the name 'Jesus' or pleading his blood, which some found mandatory. These were included as details under these four major themes. It was most interesting how even before probing the reasons for highlighting these four central themes, respondents began to quote from memory the following Bible references in order to substantiate the importance of these themes:

⁷⁶ Dhinakaran, *Gift*, p. 284. Emphases mine to correlate words with the corresponding four themes.

⁷⁷ See Dhinakaran, 'A Prayer of Faith', 'Prayer for Faith', *In His Presence*, p. 4, 193.

⁷⁸ Dhinakaran, 'Healing, Signs and Wonders', p. 30.

- *Ask* and you shall receive (John 16:24); the *prayer* of faith shall heal (Jas. 5:15)
- Your *faith* has healed you (Mk 5:34); if you have *faith* as a mustard seed (Mt. 17:20)
- *Power* went out of Jesus to heal (Mk 5:30); for *power* was present to heal (Lk.5:17)
- He gave *them* power and authority (Lk 9:1); to another, *gifts of healing* (1Cor. 12:9)

Dhinakaran's Jesus Calls 'ministry of compassion' is built on the above philosophy and at the core it a service of intercessory prayer. His prayer towers are strategically located at major Indian cities where he conducts prayer festivals. His ministry is fabricated with numerous volunteers serving as prayer warriors and is sustained by Esther groups and a variety of prayer partners. In this way, Jesus Calls ministry is a holiness and prayer revivalist movement that operates on the principle of Pastoral Pentecostalism where the Spirit's charismata and Christlike compassion bring healing.

5. A Representative Diagram: Pastoral Pentecostalism at Work

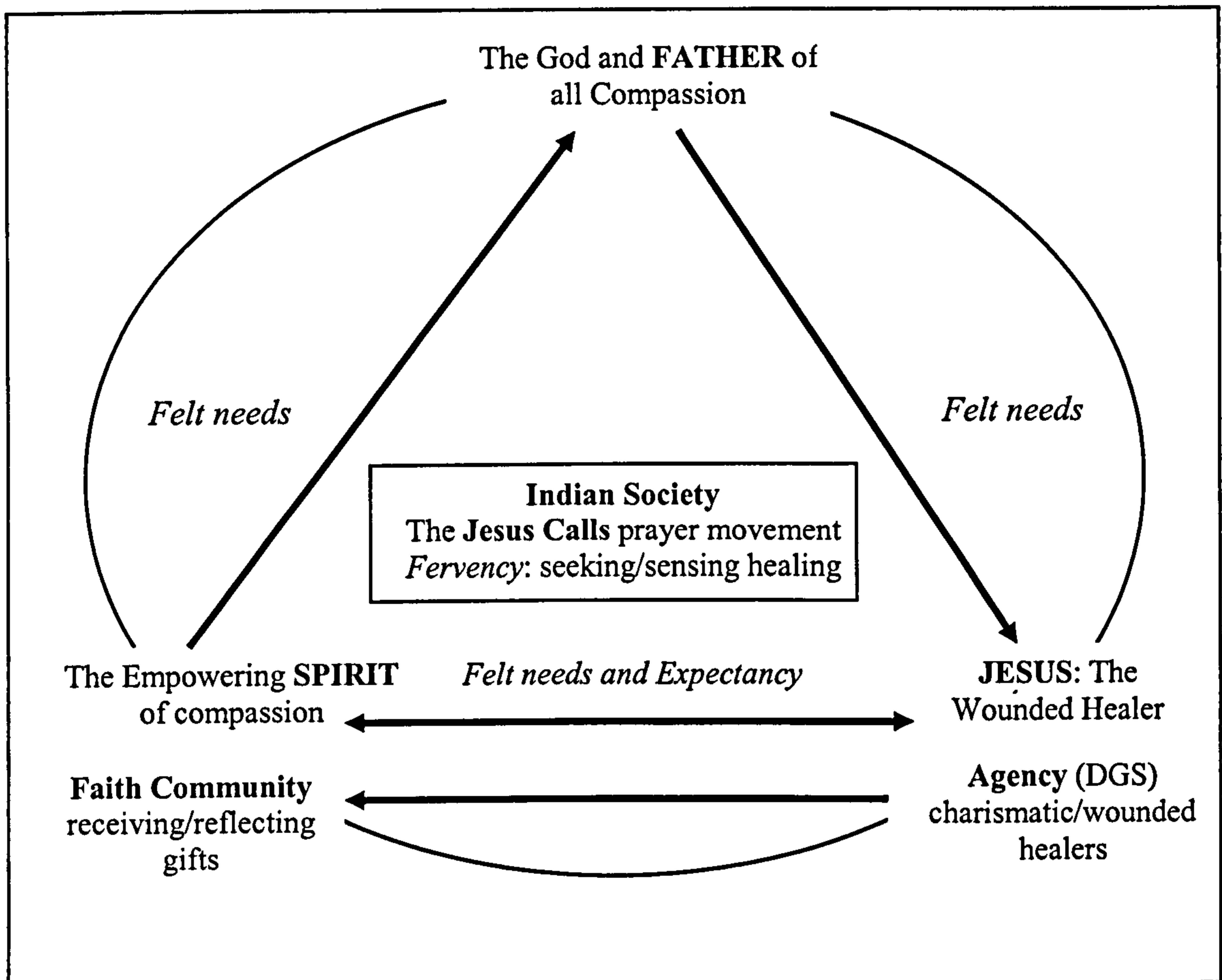
In this chapter, I have explored the evangelical-charismatic theology and constructed a compassion healing model that Dhinakaran adopts for his Jesus Calls ministry. I have shown the scope and breadth of its application as a revivalist prayer and missionary movement. I have presented a Trinitarian framework with a threefold divine resource that he utilises: the Father's compassion and creative energies offered to all who trust him, the blessings available on account of the compassionate life and atoning death of Jesus the wounded healer *par excellence*, and the Spirit's life-giving presence and gracious gifts that empower believers to administer healing with Christlike empathy.

The significant outcome of Dhinakaran's understandings of the Spirit in terms of power, purity, prayer and pastoral care is threefold: it establishes a vital link between pneumatology and mission, it provides the strategy for those who desire to serve with Christ's love and the Spirit's power and, it advances ministry where the fruit of the Spirit (i.e. *graces*, compassionate love being supreme) not only combines effectively with but is firmly established as the basis for ministering the *gifts* of the Spirit.

I have presented three core concepts entailed in Dhinakaran's model for charismatic healing: (1) a theology of *compassion* as the basis, (2) wounded healers as the agents of the power of love, which results in (3) *healing evangelism* within a needy world. Each of these may be held within a theological apparatus to make interpretative sense

of his healing praxis resulting in the phenomenon of Pastoral Pentecostalism, which can be diagrammatically represented as follows:

Table 4: Dhinakaran's Theological Model for Healing and Pastoral Pentecostalism: The Healing Power of Compassion



As Dhinakaran's prayer movement equips and releases charismatic healers who in turn use their gifts to point people to God, a circle of divine compassion is formed. Put otherwise, there is a cyclic flow of divine compassion as 'suffering and healing love' that proceeds from the Father's heart that is revealed in the Son's mission as the wounded healer and realised in human hearts by the Spirit's work of grace. So, in Dhinakaran's Charismatic mission the healing gift of compassion keeps on giving.

Having examined Dhinakaran's life story and healing praxis, the issues that have come to the fore need to be given attention and evaluated. His charismatic approach and useful teachings on compassionate healing must be affirmed yet problematic concepts and practical inconsistencies that arise from these, in terms of their scriptural basis and effect on the people involved, need to be critically assessed, which I will do next.

Chapter Seven

An Assessment of Dhinakaran's Charismatic Healing Ministry

Dhinakaran's story is marked by spiritual adventure and material success. His passion for healing grew out of intense struggle in coming to terms with a compassionate God and key elements of the Christian faith. He began the Jesus Calls ministry convinced that the Spirit calls and empowers ordinary people with extraordinary charismata to fulfil Christ's mission.¹ 'Revelatory experiences' became defining moments in his career for the expansion of his work.² Beyond God's action in history and revelation in Christ, the Spirit's leading is made an argument for his Charismatic mission theology. Behind his ministry is a simple pragmatic theory that appropriates and co-operates with the Spirit's powerful presence. He discerns what God wants and with prayer commits himself to the task, only to discover that the Spirit is already at work in and through other people toward the same ends.³

I found Dhinakaran to be a visionary in tune with the Indian *sitz im leben*,⁴ proactive in discerning the *kairos* or opportune moments when imaginative change can make a difference. In India, he functions like the 'sons of Issachar', of whom it is recorded: 'they understood what was going on at that time and knew what Israel should do' (1Chron. 12:32). In addition to his ill health and daughter's death, he has faced severe ecclesiastical criticisms and political barriers. Yet he conducts healings with intense Pentecostal piety and determination. The religious impact, human resources, and social networks with which he diplomatically mobilises healing are remarkable.

Edmunds sees Dhinakaran as a 'perfectionist and workaholic who with relentless restlessness and sense of divine calling, has accomplished a Herculean task' and submits: 'unless God guides, no man can achieve what Dhinakaran has achieved so far'.⁵ While establishing an enterprise for healing, he managed to complete a Ph.D.⁶

¹ Dhinakaran, *Love So Amazing*, p. 49, 58, 72.

² The subtitle of Dhinakaran's book, *Gifts of the Holy Spirit*, reads: 'A Practical Guide to Heavenly Visitations and Supernatural Experiences and Ministry of Spiritual Power',

³ This sort of 'charismatic' pragmatism is a way Christians find courage and hope to move on through common fears and daily struggles. Rick Warren, *Answers to Life's Difficult Questions*, Word, 1999.

⁴ J. Barton argues that this term must be left untranslated because 'setting in life' conveys very little unless one has already learnt the meaning in German, *Reading the Old Testament*, DL&T, 1984. p. 33

⁵ Edmunds, 'Jesus' Miracles', p. 18.

⁶ Dr. DGS Dhinakaran, C.A.I.I.B., Ph.D., D.D.(USA), D.Litt.(Canada) are the degrees on his official letterhead and he told me his PhD was from the University of Los Angeles in business administration.

Satyavrata identifies him as the most influential evangelist with the largest non-denominational, para-church charismatic network and best known spiritual *guru* with 'large groups of followers in the mainline, Catholic and Protestant Churches'.⁷ Dhinakaran equips thousands of local pastors and lay leaders for healing evangelism.

Dhinakaran's approach to healing uses a biblical literalism with a literal realism that takes Jesus' mandate, model and promises seriously. He sees wholeness through Christ as an essential way forward in evangelising India. On one hand, his sufferings have developed in him a pastoral orientation and *compassion* for those who hurt, i.e. he is a 'wounded healer'. On the other hand, in line with the Pentecostal tradition, he ministers with the *charismata* of power that operate when he is Spirit-filled. In this way, Dhinakaran promotes expectations for miracles in healing evangelism. I verified (chapter five) how the '20 facets' of his ministry are pastoral mechanisms and from his model and theology of compassion (chapter six) contended that he engages these 'pastoral' tools to spread 'pentecostal' power through Pastoral Pentecostalism.

In India, where the masses seek heroes to worship, from cinema idols to cricket stars, it is easy to let success become the test for truth. Size and audience response can be used to determine true greatness. In a culture based on pragmatism, drawing theology purely from personal experience is natural but dangerous.⁸ Most itinerant healers and televangelists have weaknesses and theological issues,⁹ Dhinakaran is no exception.¹⁰ I will first focus on the socio-religious and evangelical-charismatic trends in order to highlight Dhinakaran's positive contributions to Indian culture. Next, I will discuss some 'matters' for serious concern and then assess in the following chapter problems related to the syncretic nature and teaching on prosperity in his ministry. Several factors have given Dhinakaran credibility and set his ministry apart. The key is that he works with the socio-religious trends in order to set new directions for healing.

1. Socio-Cultural and Religious Trends

Dhinakaran is the architect for a healing movement characterised by prayers of faith and his journey is one of constant change. Christianity's centre of gravity shifted outside the west to the south where it flourishes due to Charismatic congregations with

⁷ Ivan Satyavrata, 'Contextual Perspectives', *The Globalisation of Pentecostalism*, 1999, p. 207.

⁸ Hiebert, *Anthropological Reflections*, p. 243-244.

⁹ Fisher & Goedelman, *The Confusing World of Benny Hinn*, St. Louis, MI: Freedom Outreach, 1999.

¹⁰ Wilson & Cresswell (eds.), *New Religious Movements: Challenges & Responses*, Routledge, 1999.

enormous vitality and evangelistic zeal. 'Jesus Calls' is an appeal and a model for change that must be seen as part of the changing face of the global church.¹¹

1.1 Spiritual Renewal Brings Social Reform and Upliftment

The 'Dhinakaran phenomenon' is a realisation of the hopes of the 19th century CMS and SPG missionary movement that in spite of paternalistic attitudes, brought changes in the Dalit and low caste consciousness and caused upward socio-economic mobility. The Nadars of Tirunelveli, a larger and spiritually responsive group, put in the extra effort in evangelism and in the process improved themselves.¹² This case in point shows how divine sovereignty and human responsibility work together and that renewal can lead to social reform, two of Dhinakaran's convictions.

The gospel transformed the Nadar Christians in three basic ways: First and foremost, it fulfilled the personal quest for wholeness, where spiritual conversion was basic and became the new impetus for all other changes. Second, it addressed the experiential, existential and socio-cultural needs where fervent prayers and the community's faith led to divine providence and the Spirit's empowerment for witness. Third, it offered liberation from the oppressive caste system and ecclesiastical hierarchy and helped in forming egalitarian and reconciling communities. Dhinakaran's mission strategy reveals the 'power of group thinking' that triggers people movements.¹³ It teaches that while individual responses are important, the gospel is for whole communities in need.

Forrester observed that the 19th century mass movements in Buddhism, Sikhism and *Bhakti* movement led by Ramanuja, were mainly of Dalits searching for a new life.¹⁴ In the 1860s, an immediate reason for Nadar conversions was the offer by western missionaries of a dignified lifestyle and release from the oppressive caste system. However, a reversal of fortune ensued as caste feelings and discrimination persisted, but this time within the denominational churches with western forms of worship. This led to a new identity crisis and dilemmas with church leadership structures and patterns of witness. In this way, Longchar notes, westerners albeit unconsciously,

¹¹ Charles Ringma, *Catch the Wind: The Shape of the Church to Come*, Oxford: Lion, 1994; Tim Jeffery & Chalk, *Connect!*, Carlisle: Authentic Media, 2003. p. 38-41.

¹² S. Jayakumar, *Dalit Consciousness and Christian Conversion*, Chennai: MET, 1999 (Part Two); C.B. Webster, *The Dalit Christians*, Delhi: ISPCK, 1992.

¹³ John Robb, *Focus: The Power of People Group Thinking*, Lalgarh, Bihar: MARC, 1989, p. 21-28

¹⁴ D. Forrester, *Caste and Christianity: Attitude and Policy on Caste*, London: Curson, 1979, p. 69-73.

rendered these native Indians a 'mission of disintegration' that was thrice alienating: from their spiritual heritage, own community and now their fellow-Christians.¹⁵

The valuable contribution of western missionaries in the area of liberation must be gratefully recognised.¹⁶ Yet, Imsong points out that in evangelical churches mission almost exclusively meant 'conversion and church planting' with at least three serious drawbacks:¹⁷ First, there were spiritual casualties as believers abandoned the church or worse in some way, functional casualties who were members without evangelistic fervour. Second, an 'ecclesiastical capitalism' was caused with denominationalism, internal power struggles and scandals within the status quo church. Little attention was paid to the plight and cries of the marginalised and the need to incarnate the gospel in the social situation. Third, stress on the personal-spiritual dimensions of salvation at the expense of the economic-political, made social action an enemy of evangelism and created a split between a 'spiritual gospel' and 'social gospel'.

Dhinakaran's healing ministry is rooted and flourishes in the above matrix in which his message on 'all round prosperity' finds relevance and thrives. He boldly claims 'to work tirelessly in many ways in healing the broken hearted treating them as his brothers and sisters irrespective of their caste, creed, race or language'.¹⁸ A significant segment of his supporters are disappointed Nadar lay leaders in traditional churches. Dhinakaran has seized the moment to capture the spiritual and organisational leadership of a spontaneous revival and has become responsible for a deluge of Charismatics. Claiming God-given visions and unction, he seeks to bring Christ's love and the Spirit's power to bear upon the sick, poor and the unfortunate or *misfortunate*. Since 1970, his citywide pan-denominational campaigns and hi-tech media ministry have been effective strategies to spread the gospel nationwide. Dhinakaran aims to promote what Forrester more recently termed 'The Perennial Pentecost' envisioning the Church, like the inclusive community in Acts 2 that set aside all worldly distinctions, to be: 'A fellowship in which people, women and men, are accepted on the basis of their faith, not their birth, status purity or ethnic origin'.¹⁹

¹⁵ Wati Longchar, 'God's Mission for Justice and Peace', *Re-Routing Mission*, p. 82.

¹⁶ For a summary of India's mission history, M.P. Joseph, 'Be Witnesses to Life: Toward a People's Concept of Missions', *Re-routing Mission (Indian Perspectives)*, Tiruvalla: CSS, 2004, p. 6-14.

¹⁷ Intimar Imsong, 'In Search of a Mission Paradigm from the Perspective of the Marginalized', *Mission and Evangelism*, Das (ed.), Delhi: ISPCK, 1998, p. 175-178.

¹⁸ Dhinakaran, *Campaign Manual*, Madras: Jesus Calls, n.d. p. 3.

¹⁹ Duncan Forrester, 'The Perennial Pentecost', *The Expository Times*, 116/7, April 2005, p. 225.

Critics vary in their opinions on Dhinakaran's message. Some feel he preaches a simplistic salvation, others a 'doctrine of comfort' or a gospel for prosperity,²⁰ but no one has denied that he presents the Christian gospel to everyone. Indian evangelists would admit with Yesudian that: 'DGS has faithfully preached the Lord Jesus to large audiences and top government officials, positively with pastoral sensitivity'.²¹ Most of the leaders interviewed, took Gamaliel's pragmatic view that if God was with Dhinakaran, no one can stop his progress, if not, he could not have lasted. Many, like the apostle Paul did, rejoiced that 'by some means, Christ was being preached'.²²

The development of the Jesus Calls ministry illustrates how Indian Pentecostals propagate their group's experiences. They have progressed, as Miller argued, 'beyond theories of deprivation' as they 'routinised the movement and begun the process of institutionalisation'.²³ In the heritage of *Pandita Ramabai* and *Amma Carmichael*, *Brother DGS* has gradually engaged in forms of social justice, prayer being the entry point for action. Gandhi, in *Non-Violence in Peace and War* wrote: 'Prayer is not an old woman's idle amusement. Properly understood and applied it is the most potent instrument of action'.²⁴ The story of Dhinakaran's Karunya University and medical community projects reveal this truth. In 2004, a *National Prayer Alliance* was inaugurated at the capital Delhi, which is a strong signal that Dhinakaran is dealing with health and poverty as justice issues. By winning the hearts of the public, leaders of the churches and Indian politicians, he has widened his view on healing and taken his ministry from the local to the national and has made it part of a global network.

1.2 A Gospel for the Rich Hindu: Mystery and Materialism

Dhinakaran communicates the gospel in relevant ways to popular Hinduism. He uses external forms like festivals, pilgrimage to healing sites, proverbial stories and poetic songs. His preaching style reflects what Kierkegaard called 'indirect communication', which in the Indian situation, Raja notes takes on 'aesthetic elements'. Like Jesus, the

²⁰ V. M. Spurgeon, 'Charismatic Spirituality of India Christians', *The Third Shift*, p. 128.

²¹ Prakash Yesudian, Indian Evangelist and the Director of *Life Focus Ministries*, has ministered with and critiqued Dhinakaran's work. Interview, *Haggai Institute*, Maui, 3, May 2004, Email 21.08.2005. Pushparaj, editor, *Jamakaran* (Watchman), is one of Dhinakaran's severe critics yet he commended him for his evangelistic efforts. Interview, Office, Salem Junction, 3 July, 2001.

²² Acts 5:38-39; Phil. 1:18. Since confidentiality was pledged names are not mentioned.

²³ Albert Miller, 'Pentecostalism as a Social Movement: Beyond the Theory of Deprivation', *JPT*, Vol. 9, 1996, p. 101-102.

²⁴ *The Macmillan Dictionary of Religious Quotations*, M. Pepper (ed.), London: Macmillan, p. 189.

preacher 'invites the hearers to enter into the story, to feel and to play the roles and [thereby] enable them to become aware of the meanings'.²⁵ The advantage in this method is that it not only gets the audience's attention, it begins from their standpoint using experiential genres and familiar expressions of belief. For Dhinakaran, Christian communication is not primarily information about doctrines, church activities or even Christian faith. Rather, it is what Raja describes as: 'The process of sharing the experience of God's involvement in people's lives and interpreting the gospel through all forms of communication'.²⁶

With *bhakti* piety, Dhinakaran maintains inner aptitudes that appeal to Hindus. His prayer and deliverance ministry are in mystical tune with Hindu forms of worship and rituals that involve the supernatural. They are pragmatic because he presents its 'mystery' side thus drawing people in.²⁷ His Charismatic theology perceives a spiritual realm behind the physical and material. Christ as Lord of all - what is understood and inexplicable, the seen and the unseen. Hindus who are attracted to his ministry do not set spirituality against getting materialistic needs met. Besides, in his messages, materialistic overtones get eclipsed by the spiritual or mystical elements.

Fox observed how Christians within Asian 'shame-honour' societies adopt a mysticism that 'tends to synthesis and unify, seeking wholeness'. Unlike the Western mind that is more rationalistic and less intuitive, for Indian thinkers, 'the basis or criterion for moral discernment is drawn not from universally accepted moral norms but from what their cultures say'.²⁸ Taking into account India's long history of multi-religious life, Samartha insists that Indian christology takes seriously at least two factors that have emerged: (1) the acceptance of a sense of *Mystery* and (2) *Tolerance* or rejection of an exclusive attitude where ultimate religious matters are concerned. Both these traits are characteristic of Dhinakaran's message of healing and compassion. Samartha explains the value of mystery for Indian Christian theology:

Mystery is not something to be used to fill up gaps in rational knowledge. Mystery provides the ontological basis for tolerance, which would otherwise run the risk of becoming uncritical friendliness. It is beyond cognitive knowledge (*tarka*) but is open to vision (*dristi*) and intuition (*anubhava*)... This emphasis on Mystery is not meant as an escape from the need for rational

²⁵ J.J. Raja, *Facing the Reality of Communication: Culture and Church*, Delhi: ISPCCK, 2001, p. 207.

²⁶ J.J. Raja, *Facing the Reality*, p. 198.

²⁷ Dhinakaran, *Gifts*, p. 312, 313.

²⁸ Thomas Fox, *Pentecost in Asia*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, p. 43.

inquiry, but it does insist that the rational is not the only way to do theology. In religious life, Mystery and meaning are related.²⁹

Thus Dhinakaran's 'visionary' experiences in which God reveals future blessings and building projects are not usually criticised, but respected by Hindus. When asked if there was some theory behind his 'miracle healings', he said these were 'divine and transcend the academic and so we cannot limit them to our finite minds, although they call us to exercise our minds'. He teaches that one needs the humility to accept that God can reveal himself without having to explain himself to us.³⁰ With spiritual hunger and prayer, 'humility is that virtue that qualifies us to receive the gifts and be powerfully used of God'.³¹ His openness to the Spirit's work in other faiths and willingness to admit his weaknesses have garlanded him with a tolerance and the grace of compassion that resonates with Indian spiritualities and captivates audiences.

Dhinakaran presents 'the blessing' of health and prosperity both as a mystery and a wholesome gift. Regarding the seen or material needs for life in the here-and-now, his views favour the Neo-Hindu view that understands humanisation in the modern world with its struggle with the forces of evil as one valid expression of salvation.³² This is significant both for a ministry of 'signs and wonders' and social compassion where prayers are offered against structures of evil that cause sickness and poverty.

Traditional forms of Hinduism, initially, were reluctant to accept the positive aspects of the globalising forces of technology and social change. This was, at least in part, due to the fear that secular humanism could destroy faith altogether or replace it by scientific revolution. But gradually, the process of modernisation has changed the contemporary social reality in India. Hindu philosophies recognise that the goals for life (*purushathas*) are not merely to be preoccupied with the ultimate realisation of the oneness of all things (*moksha*). They were also intended to 'bring witness of oneness and equality within the social structures created for the human pursuit of wealth (*artha*), temporary happiness (*kama*) and duty (*dharma*)' – the three main goals in

²⁹ Stanley J. Samartha, 'Cross and Rainbow: Christ in a Multi-Religious Culture', *Readings in Indian Christian Theology*, Sugirtharajah and Hargreaves (eds.), Vol. 1, London: SPCK, 1993, p. 105-106.

³⁰ Interview, *Jesus Calls* Head Quarters, Greenways Road, Madras, 31.08.2001.

³¹ Dhinakaran, *Gifts of the Holy Spirit*, p. 43-44.

³² M.M. Thomas (ed.) *Church's Mission and Post-Modern Humanism*, Delhi: ISPCK, 1999, p. 101.

life.³³ Not surprisingly, today, India is a leader in IT development and with computerised business outsourced from the west, is a major player in global economics.³⁴ But, as the economy rises, the gap between the rich and the poor increases creating a serious problem that Dhinakaran unfortunately fails to address.

My main point here is a simple one. Modern socio-religious trends in India are not against the creation of wealth and Dhinakaran makes the gospel relate to the rich Hindu as much as it does to the poor Dalit. *Artha* denotes worldly success in the form of wealth, fame and power and is a major goal in life for Hindus. Stephens observes how for some it 'may be better than mere pleasure (*kama*), because it is a social achievement' He points out, Hindus proverbially admit: 'To try to extinguish the drive for riches is like trying to quench fire by pouring oil over it'.³⁵ Interestingly, Dhinakaran's gospel to the rich stresses a sort of *dharma* as one's duty to family and community. In this way, he sanctifies the selfish profit-motive in *artha* by linking the creation of wealth to a higher goal, *moksha*, i.e. liberation or salvation, but for others.

Dhinakaran invites people of all faiths and urges Christians from all denominations to be involved in his citywide 'Jesus Calls' Prayer Healing Festivals. In particular, he encourages Hindu political leaders to come and 'grace the occasion'. Some consider this a diplomatic move and others a dangerous syncretism. While either way, caution is required, one cannot deny this is indeed a bold venture in the light of Hindutva. His gospel presentation and overall effort seem to promote an ecumenism, not a vague notion of blindly uniting all people of any faith. It does articulate a biblical message of 'the cross of Christ' and promotes 'evangelical ecumenism' insofar as 'it rises from a common allegiance to the evangel' for salvation.³⁶ But, his leadership is charismatic in persuasion and consciously operates with the Spirit's power and gifts.

2. Evangelical Trends and the Role of the Charismatic Healer

The widespread success of Dhinakaran's ministry reveals some emerging trends in protestant faith in South India. An unmistakable feature is the useful merger and delicate balance of evangelical and charismatic perspectives, where the written Word

³³ Anand Amaladass, 'Christian Contribution to the Hindu Philosophy of Being and Becoming Human', M.M. Thomas (ed.) *Church's Mission*, p. 101.

³⁴ UK Prime minister, Tony Blair, (Nov. 2005) and US President George Bush (March 2006) both found it important to visit India and to make economic and nuclear policies with India.

³⁵ Sunil Stephens, 'Doing Theology in a Hindu Context', *JAM*, 1 / 2, 1999, p. 184.

³⁶ Vinoth Ramachandran, *The Recovery of Mission*, Delhi: ISPCK, 1999, p. 283.

and the Spirit's gifts together administer an effective wholistic gospel. Dhinakaran's struggle with Christian sectarianism has made him an advocate for a healing mission that embraced the best of both groups. It has proved advantageous that he started in the conservative CSI circles as an evangelical Bible preacher and then integrated the strengths of the Indian Pentecostal-Charismatic tradition, like apostolic leadership and Spirit-anointing for exorcism. Maintaining his 'roots', he has developed 'wings', broadening his view to incorporate social projects from the so-called 'liberal' stream.

2.1 The Charismatic Guru-Healer and Evangelism

Much has been written on the relationship between Christian medical missions and the Indian church's healing ministry.³⁷ But there is little record of the significant contribution of itinerant charismatic healers in the spread and nurture of the Christian faith. Partly this is due to a lack of integration between modern science and popular religions and certainly because of suspicion and power struggles between the two. Yet, the gifted healer, endowed with supernatural powers, has always been functional and unofficially acknowledged not only in society but the Indian church at large. Hoerschelmann's study (1970) of sixteen Christian gurus divided them into rural and urban settings. Dhinakaran unlike these predecessors, ministers on both fronts and his social projects assist urban development. Indians understand a 'guru' as:³⁸

A servant of the holy scriptures, a teacher of divine truth and an intermediary without whom salvation cannot normally be attained. His followers (disciples or *shishyas*) typically accepted his claims to divine powers, direct divine revelations and the ability to heal and free people from evil (in the widest sense of the term).

With the serious exceptions of the guru's intermediary role in obtaining salvation for his devotees, and the radical difference in the scriptural source (*Vedas* or *Agamas*) from which they draw inspiration,³⁹ the above description is typical of charismatic healing evangelists. It is also a fair statement on the expectations of the charismatic community from their apostolic leaders. In a pluralistic and non-institutional setting, Dhinakaran can be perceived as a Christian version of the Indian guru, functioning as a parallel phenomenon. He bases his teachings on biblical texts and is empowered by the Spirit with special revelatory and healing-exorcism gifts for evangelism and

³⁷ Jacob Chandy, *The Healing Ministry of the Indian Church*, Madras: CLS, 1970; J. Isaiah, *The Healing Ministry of the Church in the Indian Context*, M.Th. Thesis, 1983; M.M. Thomas, *The Church's Healing Ministry in India*, Delhi: CMAI, 1992.

³⁸ Hoerschelmann, *Christian Gurus*, p. 2.

³⁹ Vishal Mangalwadi, *The World of Gurus*, Bombay: GLS, 1999, p. 14.

pastoral care. Tapes of his preaching, hagiographical testimonies in his magazines depict him as a guru, and a large following consider him their spiritual guide.

Dhinakaran has several qualities that are admired in gurus as mentors. The two key functions closely linked to the guru's role as a *healer* is that of a *prophet* - speaking truth about God or as a representative of God and a *guide* - illumining the mind, revealing the way and warning of dangers.⁴⁰ G.R. Crow lists a few other ideals in a guru: a life of purity, able to explain scriptures, true intercessor and caring mediator, completely non-violent, full of compassion and devoted to the wellbeing of others.⁴¹ Dhinakaran's pious life-style and 'spiritual' mannerisms have powerfully shaped some of his followers who observably emulate not just his healing methods, but also his eyebrow movement in prayer and his quivering voice in song.

Dhinakaran is acutely aware of the problems in being referred to as a 'guru' in Indian society, where 'the guru's presence makes God's presence real to his disciples'.⁴² He prefers the endearing title 'brother DGS'. For some, 'God and the Guru are one and the same', thus the human guru is ascribed with the status of an *avatara* or divine manifestation as was the case for Paul Lawrie, and Dhinakaran has learnt to refer to himself as 'a humble servant of the Lord Jesus'. In the bhakti tradition, *guru-seva* (service of the master) implies an unquestioning obedience that creates subordination and dependency. Dhinakaran carefully avoids these extremes by making it his goal, 'to *disciple* servants of Christ not *devotees* who blindly follow me'.⁴³ Yet, he uses the respect he has and the influence he has earned to motivate and mobilise those who imitate his faith to unite and 'mightily do Jesus' ministry with love'.⁴⁴

Making Dhinakaran's work the centre piece, I want to record and briefly analyse for posterity the significant impact of contemporary charismatic healers for evangelism and mission in India. It is worth clarifying that mission, which is an outflow of the Church's worship and communion is wholistic and includes healing. On the other hand, 'evangelism, while not excluding the different dimensions of mission, focuses

⁴⁰ George Bond, 'The Contemporary Lay Meditation Movement and Lay Gurus', *Religion*, 33, 2003, p. 23-55; Tal Brooke, once a disciple of Sai Baba a 'true Master', *Lord of the Air*, Herts: Lion, 1976.

⁴¹ G.R. Crow, *The Guru: Jesus Christ and His Teachings*, Bombay: GLS, 1972, p. 10.

⁴² Thomas Thangaraj, *The Crucified Guru: An Experiment in Cross-Cultural Christology*, Nashville: Abingdon, 1994, p. 94; Sr. Vandana, 'The Guru-Shishya Relationship in Indian Tradition', *Third Millennium*, III/2, 2000, p. 61.

⁴³ Dhinakaran, Interview, Jesus Calls, Madras, 31. 08. 2001; *Gifts*, Introduction, p. 3-5.

⁴⁴ Dhinakaran, *Gifts*, p. 3.

on explicit and intentional voicing of the gospel, including the invitation to personal conversion to a new life in Christ and to discipleship'.⁴⁵ Dhinakaran's healing is evangelistic and edifying - it has strengthened the mission of the Indian Church.

Table 5: I interviewed 70 practitioners and scholars of healing, who were familiar with and willing to assess Dhinakaran's ministry. The following list is the ten main reasons people found his mass healing festivals worthwhile. Such events, they said:⁴⁶

1. Reach thousands for Christ who otherwise might not hear the gospel.
2. Mobilise the churches to come together to pray and participate showing they both expect great things from God and attempt great things for him.
3. Demonstrate through accompanying 'signs and wonders' how God's Spirit can work in powerful ways.
4. Allow Christians to present a united front to their pluralistic society.
5. Cause Christians to catch a vision for evangelism and some receive a call to the ministry of healing (as Dhinakaran did in Osborn's crusade).
6. Reap the harvest of seeds already sown by individuals across the churches.
7. Stir up backslidden believers who re-dedicate to a dynamic Christian faith.
8. Place the public media at the disposal of Christianity and stir a locality creating a sense of celebration and hope in the air.
9. Encourage isolated believers in rural areas and attract young people in urban centres who have been largely indifferent to the local Church.
10. Provide opportunity for Christians to bring relatives and lead others to Christ.

Dhinakaran has built the facets of his ministry on the above benefits. He maintains a strong biblical basis in spite of the changing faces of Charismatic Christianity in modernising India. With a sharp focus on prayer and the gifts, he promotes a total wellbeing, therewith he advocates healing evangelism. Experiences of healing have rapidly taken centre stage in the faith praxis of Indian churches. Retired western missionaries and older church members testify that increasingly the 'gifts of the Lord's power' in miracles, healings and prophecy are used for evangelism.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ J. Matthey (ed.), *You Are the Light of the World: WCC Statements on Mission*, Geneva, 2005, p. 64.

⁴⁶ This priority was compiled from the responses of interviewees (Appendix 2 and List of Interviews).

⁴⁷ I refer here to the testimonies particularly of Gene Tozer and George McComick of the Ceylon India General Mission and Graham Houghton from the Overseas Missionary Society.

Further, 'anointed' messengers from charismatic churches, at times self-proclaimed, have extraordinary experiences that produce a sense of divine call and provide the legitimisation to minister, their charismata, in turn, spread their fame. Dhinakaran's life's story inspires countless Indian lay to consider a 'full-time' healing ministry. For his vision and ministry to thrive, Dhinakaran needs to network with local charismatic churches. There is mutual benefit, as he facilitates revival prayer and creates opportunities for evangelism within and through these supporting churches, and many of their members volunteer their services and become financial 'partners'.

Dhinakaran's public service is not only a 'contact point' for church-goers but is an 'entry point' for unbelievers to experience salvation. Furthermore, they are 'access points' for Christians to experience Spirit-fillings (baptisms) that empower them for a miraculous ministry, which for many serves as an initiation or rite of passage into what evangelicals such as Packer call, 'the charismatic life'.⁴⁸ However, I must add that while charismatic healings are attention-getters, the sustaining power lies in the effective follow-up or power of pastoral care that ensues through other facets of the Jesus Calls ministry that I have shown to be pastoral tools.

In this way, Dhinakaran has organised a social movement that places the resources for healing, spiritual and socio-economical, in the hands of the people. As each care for the other they contribute to make the church a healing community that looks beyond itself and takes initiatives for evangelism. While his social vision of health has been enlarged to covertly share the gospel in the social and political arenas, at the same time he has contributions in making health and healing an ecumenical concern.⁴⁹

2.2 Equipping for Exponential Growth and Going Global

Dhinakaran's Jesus Calls movement is a catalyst for charismatic healing nationwide. J. Augustine's survey shows that in 1971, this work began with 2 persons and by 1991, the operation had 102 full-time staff.⁵⁰ In 2001, my research found that it employed over 800 staff at its Madras Head Office and University in Coimbatore. Dhinakaran has become a national figure due to what may be called the 'politics of prayer',⁵¹

⁴⁸ J.I. Packer, *Keep in Step with the Spirit*, Leicester: IVP, 1984, p. 170-199.

⁴⁹ *Healing and Wholeness: The Churches Role in Health*, Geneva: WCC/CMC Report, 1990, p. 5.

⁵⁰ J. Augustine, *Religion and Fundamentalism*, 1993, p. 132.

⁵¹ See: Matthew Schofferleers, 'Prayer Healing and Politics: The Quietism of the Healing Churches in South Africa', *Concilium*, Vol. 5, 1998, p. 101-105.

which takes place at two levels. On one plane, he pastorally shows the therapeutic power of prayer with indigenous approaches like festivals and pilgrimage centres, which relate to suffering *individuals*. On another plane, he organises high-profile prayer events that take care of social justice issues and address political *structures*. For instance, on 2 October 2004, which is Gandhi's birthday, Dhinakaran organised prayer for the nation's elections and welfare at the capital, Delhi. This was attended by 200 clergy, 25,000 Christian leaders and the Chief Minister, Shiela Dixit.⁵² Here, *politics* is used in a broad sense (its Greek root *polis*, suggests shaping 'city' affairs) as it concerns that which shape those powers that tend to govern human community.

The explosive growth of Dhinakaran's Charismatic movement of prayer must be accounted for by another inextricable component that drives it - compassion. Borg has rightly argued that for Jesus, compassion was political:

For Jesus, compassion was more than a quality of God and individual virtue: it was a social paradigm, the core value for life in community... He directly and repeatedly challenged the dominant socio-political paradigm of his social world and advocated instead what might be called 'politics of compassion'.⁵³

For Dhinakaran, possessing compassion links Christ's presence in his Spirit-filled followers with the service of loving care. This invitation to discipleship i.e. *imitatio Christi* and its empowerment for mission is the rationale for his Jesus Calls ministry. In this sense, compassion is part of his socio-political vision to create charismatic faith communities. He has remarkably transcended the evangelical-liberal split that offers one part of the gospel to sinners and another to the sick and poor. His ministry embraces all the needy and affirms their concerns – an important first step for healing. His concern for the sick and poor, as Taylor puts it in *Not Angels But Agencies*, 'is not an *implication* of the gospel as it is worked out in the life of the believer. It is the *definition* of the gospel: the point at which every Christian has to begin'.⁵⁴

The above politics of prayer and compassion have summoned Dhinakaran to a global perspective. His vision has not limited his ministry to a narrow nationalism although he is patriotic. The appointment of Arun Thomas as the 'International Coordinator of Jesus Calls ministries' reveals Dhinakaran is serious about having a global impact especially in view of the fact that a significant number of Non-Resident Indians

⁵² Details and photographs were presented in *Jesus Calls*, November 2004, p. 24-26.

⁵³ Marcus Borg, *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time*, New York: HarperCollins, 1994, p. 49.

⁵⁴ M. Taylor, *Not Angels But Agencies: Ecumenical Response to Poverty*, London: SCM, 1995, p. 44.

(NRIs) abroad who want to be 'international Indians'. His '2004 Ministry Report' had a world-map that marked locations for his Prayer Towers and 152 TV monthly broadcasts in 11 languages in every continent (except South America).⁵⁵

Dhinakaran in his generation has sustained the expansion of charismatic healers yet he owes much to the message and methods of the previous independent ministers both within India such as Sundaram and from overseas like Osborn and Roberts who triggered the healing revival. In collaboration with the CSI and Pentecostal churches his ministry facilitates new paths and fresh faith for 'healing evangelism'. His many initiatives to train trainers indicate a favourable shift is taking place in Pentecostal healings: the transition from a one-man, faith-oriented evangelist to charismatic teams administering healings in local communities. However, Dhinakaran manages to maintain his own globally expanding ministry while empowering local leaders.⁵⁶

The importance of mentoring needs to be emphasised and there is a critical need in the light of Indian guruism and Dhinakaran's authoritarian ministry, to point out the fine but radical difference between being an 'enabler' versus an 'equipper'. Bishop Green, in his study of the dynamic growth of Asian churches, does this well.

The *enabler* recognizes that the different members of the body of Christ have different gifts, and tries to allow them space to be expressed. That is a great step from the one-person ministry which so inhibits growth. But it is inadequate all the same, and the Chinese [I would add, Indians] realized this. Their leaders are not so much enablers as *equippers*. They do not merely gain a vision from God of what goals their church should have, but they train the members so that those goals are commonly owned and become achievable.⁵⁷

Dhinakaran through his Institute of Power Ministries (IPM's) continues to release thousands of 'top notch' Indian healing evangelists. Arul Raj, Jebaraj Samuel, Rajan John, Mohan C. Lazarus, S.R. Manohar, to name a few, have their own flourishing ministries, yet, emulate him and are contagious carriers of the same charismatic culture. Dhinakaran is an icon for Christian healing in Hindu India and a service provider via the modern media. He exemplifies the saying: 'Charismatics do not just believe in miracles; they rely on them'. His evangelism is programmatic with strategies that have generated an incredible force of volunteers, 'prayer warriors' and

⁵⁵ *Jesus Calls*, January 2005, p. 10. His TV ministry extends not only to western affluent societies as the US and UK but also as far as Iceland and into difficult places like Pakistan and the Middle East.

⁵⁶ John Wimber with an 'interview model' with procedures assisted charismatic churches in the west through this difficult paradigm shift: Wimber with K. Springer, *Power Healing*, 1986, p. 181-244.

⁵⁷ Michael Green, *Asian Tigers for Christ*, London: SPCK, p. 74.

'partners' within the '20 facets' of his ministry. Keeping in step with parallel global trends, he has had to face common global issues.⁵⁸ The formative stage of his ministry was impacted by Christian gurus and the Pentecostal 'healing movement' from America. Not surprisingly, his ministry resonates with western patterns. But, he has selectively adapted aspects that pass through the grid of culture and that have value for the future of 'healing revival' in India's globalising context.⁵⁹ I will now recapitulate his unique contribution in the light of charismatic healing trends within India. Dhinakaran's healing movement manifests a Pastoral Pentecostalism with which it has positively advanced the Indian church's healing ministry in the following ways:

Bringing Integration and Innovation

By Indian independence (1947) the mission of the traditional church in society was fragmented. Some evangelicals, in reformation style,⁶⁰ focussed on preaching 'the absoluteness of the Bible' and stressed individual and spiritual aspects of salvation. This led to a form of religious (US) fundamentalism.⁶¹ Liberal churches concentrated on social service, believing the gospel is best expressed in good deeds through liberation praxis. The CSI moved from the first to embrace a type of the second and was accused of becoming a liberal church with a 'social gospel'.⁶² In a third direction, indigenous Pentecostal churches sprung up and mushroomed with an overemphasis on signs and wonders. Their CPM branches were against medicine and Pentecostals, in general, were accused of 'de-intellectualising and de-formalising Christian faith', promoting emotionalism and catering to people's existential needs.⁶³

Dhinakaran entered ministry at a time when a wider view of healing was the need of the hour. 'Mission as reconciliation and healing' had increasingly replaced earlier paradigms where mission was considered in terms of proclamation, inculturation, liberation or dialogue.⁶⁴ Dhinakaran came 'anointed' with spiritual charismata but equally with pastoral skills that depicted the practical nature of Christian compassion. He has learnt from sectarian shortcomings and made an effort to re-dress the balance.

⁵⁸ P.G. Chappel, 'Healing Movements', Burgees (ed.) *DPCM*, 1989, p. 335- 374; David Harrell, 'Healer and Televangelists after World War II', V. Synan, *The Century of the Holy Spirit*, Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001, p. 325-347.

⁵⁹ Eddie Hyatt, *2000 Years of Charismatic Christianity*, Lake Mary, FL: Strang, 2002, p. 168-171,

⁶⁰ D. Hilborn, 'The Evangelical Legacy', *Picking Up the Pieces*, Hodder & Stoughton, 1997, p. 149.

⁶¹ Wati Longchar, 'God's Mission', *Re-routing Missions: Indian Perspectives*, 2004, p.83.

⁶² Caplan, *Religion in India*, 'Christian Fundamentalism as a Counter-Culture', Delhi: OUP, p. 368.

⁶³ P.A. Augustine, *Jesus and Christianity in India*, 1999, p. 121-123.

⁶⁴ Kirsteen Kim (ed.), *Reconciling Mission*, Delhi: ISPCK, p. xv.

He states the aim of his charismatic healing ministry quite succinctly: 'To receive through God's perfect, yet varied grace (II Cor. 9:8), the gifts of the Spirit [since] only then, we can have a *wholesome* ministry'.⁶⁵ This statement underlines his kaleidoscopic view of charismata as gracious gifts for 'wholistic' Christian service.

It is befitting to describe Dhinakaran's Jesus Calls ministry as a kaleidoscope since the instrument represents its many highly-coloured and rapidly changing patterns. While, in India, specialised ministries often choose to focus on and commit to one or the other of the three main aspects of outreach (to preach, teach or heal), Dhinakaran chose to be a general practitioner. His genius lies in his ability to integrate the gospel message in its three dimensions: *words*, *signs* and *deeds* and hold them together in creative tension for a balanced ministry. More importantly, he strategically applies this threefold emphasis on healing to what it implies for the believer to follow Jesus and fulfil his great commission in India today. Thus the 'call to heal' is placed at the core of Christian discipleship and witness. He also maintains that healing is a mutual enterprise. It is the resultant movement of God's Spirit within and on behalf of a responsive community of faith that cares to do evangelism.

Transforming Indian Culture

Dhinakaran communicates the gospel in consonance with ingrained aspects of the socio-cultural milieu. His Jesus Calls ministry is a powerful prayer healing movement that is changing the Indian socio-religious scene. Its indigenous expressions make cultural sense as it spreads the gospel in organised ways. Although not apolitical, it is well received in spite of the rise of Hindu fundamentalism. On the contrary, Hindu politicians who are members of parliament (MPs) are his well-wishers.

Within India's religious societies, Dhinakaran's ministry validates the thesis that the church's inculturation with its charismata and compassion makes it an effective agent of reconciliation both at the personal and social levels. His Charismatic theology that stresses the centrality and need for what Cox calls 'experiential spiritualities' mirror and resonate with elements of primal, indigenous religiosities.⁶⁶ This has cultural relevance in evangelising rich Hindus and potential for social upliftment as in the case

⁶⁵ Dhinakaran, *Gifts*, p. 37 (emphasis mine).

⁶⁶ Harvey Cox, *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality*, Reading: Addison, 1994.

of Dalit and Nadar Christians. The Spirit, in turn, generates a people movement that is 'Christward' and therefore mission becomes, at once empowering and liberational.

Dhinakaran's charismatic ministry when collaborating with the traditional churches in India has forcefully ushered in a 'restorationism' of first-century experiences and spiritual gifts to do mission with a similar authority, freedom and love.⁶⁷ Without neglecting cultural values in the existing church structure or forcing people to join alien cultures, Dhinakaran constantly pushes the boundaries of the Indian church's healing ministry, in keeping with international trends to give it a global identity. This involves taking risks and being vulnerable to the critics of secular modernity. In Rahner's words, his mission is one of 'venturesome love', where discipleship is measured by active expressions of love rather than theological packages.⁶⁸ He has created intercultural currents within India and has made a transnational impact.

Evangelism and Ecumenism: Home and Abroad

Dhinakaran's egalitarian healing ministry has drawn spectacular numbers of Indian Christians from traditional and newer churches, the poor and the rich, women and men, young and elderly, from the margins of rural India and in its urban centres. All these have joined hands with him to bring God's healing mission to the nation. In choosing a heterogeneous approach as against the homogenous principle that tends to perpetuate the caste system, the healing gospel becomes relevant and ecumenical, bringing together people of all castes, classes and creeds. In this way, a new spirit of cooperation or ecumenism is present for a movement toward united front for charismatic healing. It promotes 'pentecostal power' enabling independent churches and para-church movements to forge their way into people's everyday lives with vitality.⁶⁹ Dhinakaran's parachurch organisation finds the need for support and to collaboratively serve so that, 'all churches in every area are revived and swell with new seekers following every Jesus Calls Meeting'.⁷⁰ His pan-denominational services give live credence that: 'Evangelism is the test for true ecumenism'.⁷¹

⁶⁷ N. Wright, *Radical Kingdom: Restoration in Theory and Practice*, Eastbourne: Kingsway, 1989.

⁶⁸ Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations XI*, London: DL&T, 1974.

⁶⁹ Selvanayagam (ed.), *Moving Forms of Theology: Faith Talk's in Changing Contexts*; Delhi: ISPCK, 2002; R. Banks, *Redeeming the Routines: Bringing Theology to Life*, Wheaton: Victor Books, 1993.

⁷⁰ Dhinakaran, 'No Church Formation', *Campaign Manuel*, Madras: Jesus Calls, n.d. p. 5.

⁷¹ Philip Potter, WCC general secretary (1972-84), quoted by Jacques Matthey, *You Are the Light of the World*, Statements on Missions by WCC, p. i.

The Jesus Calls ministry reinforces the truth, Grundmann posited, that 'healing becomes explicitly Christian only when perceived as a potential encounter with salvation and redemption'.⁷² In Dhinakaran's charismatic healing, professedly, it is Christ's redeeming Spirit who is encountered. Firmly rooted in the evangelical-charismatic tradition, he reaches out with compassion, mindful that there can be no genuine and lasting Christian social reform without spiritual renewal. His healing mission teaches us to take Jesus' life as seriously as his death and resurrection.

Dhinakaran's distinct piety, effective methods, theology of compassion and captive Indian audience has made him a national sensation. His teachings are attractive as they present compassion as a kind of Christian *dharma*, i.e. the proper action that engages in and contributes to society's welfare.⁷³ Moreover, his international offices and a demand from the NRIs abroad have extended his influence and a reversal of role has occurred. Dhinakaran's western counterparts now need him for their international outreach and an exposure to missions in India which Dhinakaran has made no longer the 'white man's burden' but a duty and privilege of the natives. He has created a new respectability for a fresh breed of healing evangelists, who, without the exclusivist tendencies and extremes of classical Pentecostals, exercise charismata alongside compassionate social services. His ministry offers a fullness of life in the Spirit as it seeks the welfare of India. Thus Dhinakaran, as McGavran's landmark book puts it, is a principal 'bridge of God' for charismatic healing in India today.⁷⁴

3. Critical Concerns and Pastoral-Theological Issues

The valuable input for charismatic healing in India has been identified. However, in a movement of this magnitude, one can expect to find areas of weaknesses and there are serious concerns about Dhinakaran's praxis that need to be pointed out. Having contended that an integrated, wholistic understanding of healing is needed, I want to show that some 'positive deconstruction' of ideas and a critical balance is required.⁷⁵ Taking the different nuances of the concept of healing apart will help analyse what takes place in today's charismatic culture, and reveal dangers in uncritically absorbing

⁷² Christoffer Grundmann, 'Healing a challenge to Church and Theology', *IRM*, XC, 356/357, p. 33.

⁷³ Irrespective of caste, *dharma* is the moral obligation of all members in society. S. Fuchs, 'Religio-Ethical Concepts', Hedlund (ed.), *Culture and Evangelization*, Madras: ELS, n.d. p. 81-82.

⁷⁴ Donald McGavran (known in India as the Father of the Church Growth Movement), *The Bridges of God*, Madras: India Church Growth Association of India, 1998.

⁷⁵ This process identifies the underlying worldview and analysis it in order to affirm areas of truth and discover errors. Nick Pollard, *Evangelism Made Slightly Less Difficult*, IVP, 1997, p. 48-59.

attractive ideas. It is vital that charismatic healers understand that to work for people's health is a moral endeavour. In his book *Ethics: the Heart of Health Care*, Seedhouse shows the vital link between health and morality. He insists that those who work for health start by asking a key question: 'In each case and in general, what is the highest moral intervention possible to enhance their lives and the lives of other people?'⁷⁶ With this question in the background I will examine some pastoral-theological issues with Dhinakaran's teachings and ministry.

The setbacks created by Dhinakaran's healing praxis can be better assessed with an actual case in point. The following testimony was published after his Prayer Festival at Trichy, where I was present (11-15 Jan. 2002). The caption read: 'Trichy Miracles; the Lord's Liberation'. This report, which I will allude to throughout this section, is typical of the monthly reports and claims made by Dhinakaran and his followers.

For the last two years, my whole family was in the grip of the devil. Moreover there was a lump (fibroid) in my uterus. I had unbearable stomach ache. There was no benefit at all through medication. During prayer time Brother Dhinakaran called out my name and said, 'Saraswati, Jesus is blessing you. You prayed so much, Jesus has heard your prayer and has given you liberation; your whole family have been delivered from the devil. Jesus is blessing you'. Immediately a power flowed into me, I felt as if something got out of my body. Now I feel completely cured. - *D. Saraswati, Trichy.*⁷⁷

Such evidence and the diagnoses offered for 'miracle healing' based on personal revelations and individual testimonies are disturbing. Critics of mass-healing events in the Indian church are increasingly, and rightly, recognising 'the cathartic (emotional releases) element' in such healing revivalism.⁷⁸ This happens annually on a large scale at Dhinakaran's Festivals of Joy (*perinba peruvizha*) on Madras beach that I attended (4-6 May, 2002). The majority in attendance were women and there was an emotionally charged 'altar call' at the end that may have added to some psychosomatic cures.⁷⁹ There was an appeal for money to meet the enormous expenses incurred. But asking people to hold up their cash or cheques and sit down only after the offering was collected, left a bad taste of the grace of Christian giving.

⁷⁶ David Seedhouse, *Ethics: The Heart of Health Care*, New York: John Wiley, 1988, p. 28-29.

⁷⁷ D. Saraswati, *Jesus Calls*, March 2002, p. 20. NB: Indian surnames are generally abbreviated with a capital letter (initial) in front of the name.

⁷⁸ J. Athyal (ed.), *Relevant Patterns of Christian Witness in India*, Thiruvalla: CSS, 2000, p. 208

⁷⁹ See W. Kay's empirical data on: 'Personality and Healing', *Pentecostals in Britain*, p. 265f.

Arles observes 'two illnesses' that are present in the Indian church: 'Charisphobia', the fear of gifts and their use, evident in the traditional churches, and 'charismania', which is an overt emphasis to teach about the gifts and the vast scope for people to manifest them found in Pentecostal circles.⁸⁰ A mass movement like Jesus Calls that impacts the Indian church and society is threatening to the established forms of Christianity and causes judgemental or superiority feelings. Although Dhinakaran strives toward a wholistic approach, it can be shown to be imbalanced and leaning heavily toward charismania, which is the constant focus in his ministry and reports. From my participation and feedback, I will identify four specific areas for caution:

3.1 Worldview Matters: 'Super-natural' Miracles?

The question of worldview is a necessary starting point for a theological enquiry into miracle healings. The Hindu idea of *advaita* or non-duality (literally, *not two*) does not differentiate between spirit and matter, i.e. a divine creator and created beings and often notions of healing are about balancing impersonal energy forces.⁸¹ But, true to the Bible, Dhinakaran preaches a personal God who intervenes according to his sovereign will to heal people who ask him. Interestingly, as I will explore in chapter nine, popular Hindu aetiologies do not subscribe to a purely rationalistic view that denies the existence of evil spirits. Rather like the biblical paradigm, they consider demons as sickness-afflicting spirits and Dhinakaran with a literal reading of the Bible shares a similar demonology. Jesus, for instance, recognised an evil spirit crippled a woman for eighteen years, and rebuking a spirit, he healed a man who had been deaf and dumb. Dhinakaran follows this pattern of ministry.⁸²

However, the biblical worldview does not make any distinction between the natural and supernatural spheres. Hollenweger points out that, 'both realms of reality – the one which we think we understand (the so-called 'natural') and the one which we do not (or not yet) understand (the so-called 'supernatural') - are God's creation and realm of his reign'.⁸³ In keeping both worlds together, God's sovereign work may be perceived in the predictable aspects of nature, i.e. creation and providence; and in his

⁸⁰ Siga Arles, 'Charisma and Revival – Relevant or Redundant?', *Third Shift*, p. 112-113.

⁸¹ Lama Yeshe, *Medicine Dharma Reiki: the Secret Inner Practices*, Delhi: Full Circle, 2001; Deepak Chopra, *Quantum Healing: Exploring Frontiers of Mind/Body Medicine*, London, Bantam, 2002.

⁸² Luke 13:10-13; Mark 9:35. Dhinakaran, *Gifts*, p. 282. This is a common argument for deliverance.

⁸³ Hollenweger notes: 'The New Testament does not know the word 'hyperphysikos' (supernatural), and it is quite impossible to translate supernatural into Hebrew'. *Pentecostalism*, 1997, p. 226.

direct intervention in the daily affairs of his created order. Both expressions of divine grace are sensed by humans but not necessarily explained by human intellect.

While western theologies tend to subscribe to a 'secular' deistic view that refuses to see the 'miraculous' in the healing process,⁸⁴ Dhinakaran in order to accommodate 'miracles' has over-emphasised 'the supernatural' in his reports. He categorically declares: 'It is the direction of God to me to take the ministry out of the supernatural and the results are dramatic'.⁸⁵ Dhinakaran, in constantly stressing the 'supernatural' nature of his ministry and advertising 'miracles', comes dangerously close to a western dualism where 'real' miracles are God's spectacular acts and by default, consigns the 'natural' to human sciences. At the same time, he has entertained an eastern dualism that along with popular Hinduism is quick to associate healing with a miracle-working God and tends to readily attribute sickness to demonic spirits.⁸⁶

Dhinakaran does not draw attention to the fact that in India reported healings are not necessarily evidence of the activity of the Christian God, nor automatically bring people to faith in Christ. Jesus himself warned of a future age characterised by revival of supernatural phenomena with false prophets performing 'signs and wonders' to try and deceive Christians. This calls for discernment and the need to test movements that specialise in miracles,⁸⁷ which I undertake in the next chapter.

3.2 Healing Report Matters: A Positive De-construction

Allen, a West Indian psychiatrist and theologian, believes the Church has a health problem in that she allows erroneous western views to sidetrack her from developing a more biblical theology for healing. With the case of healing at the pool of *Bethesda* (John 5; the name of Dhinakaran's Healing Centre), Allen shows the vital need to make wholeness an accessible reality and explains how its different aspects integrate:

In ministering to the *physical* illness of the [crippled], Christ addressed the *psychological* dimension as he related to hopelessness, the *social* dimension as he meets alienation with his presence and caring, and the *spiritual* dimension by calling for a change of heart from rebellion against God.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Nathan and Wilson, *Empowered Evangelicals*, Ann Harbor: Servant, 1999, p. 90-95.

⁸⁵ Dhinakaran, 'Healing, Signs and Wonders', p. 129.

⁸⁶ Hinnels and Porter (eds.), *Religion, Health and Suffering*, London: Kegan Paul, 1999, p. xii.

⁸⁷ 2Thess. 2:9-10; Matt. 24:24-25; 1 Tim 4:1; 1John 4:1-2.

⁸⁸ E. Anthony Allen, et.al. 'The Church's Ministry of Healing, Challenges to Commitment', *Health, Healing and Transformation*, Monrovia, CA: MARC Publication, p. 17 (emphasis in original).

As Saraswati's testimony and the results of my interviews at Dhinakaran's Bethesda Pool show all dimensions are claimed as 'miracle healing'.⁸⁹ Those allegedly healed are immediately brought on to the dais to share their 'feelings' of wellbeing without medical attestation.⁹⁰ The problem with such reports is that the curing of disease is confused with the healing of illnesses.⁹¹ Fergusson explains:

When [medicine] uses the word heal it means *cure* – the removal of physical or psychological symptoms, and this understanding of *healing* is the one that many Christians have when they use the word in the Church context. Christians often mean *cure* when they make claims of healing, [but] medicine rightly has strict scientific criteria for validation of claims, and all too often does not find evidence to justify them.⁹²

Charismatic healings are a complex phenomenon, and with jargon-like semantics and ritual symbolisms, it can become a socio-cultural construct. People usually approach Dhinakaran after other means have failed, so healing prayer is used as the common, all-purpose cure and is suggested as the best remedy. Dhinakaran sees no contradiction between medicine and prayer healing and irrespective of the means and he simply thanks God for having compassion. However, he does celebrate miracles and implies that a superior faith is involved. He narrates the healings of two Pentecostal pastors he respected: S.P. Daniel and G. Sundaram.⁹³ These 'men of God' were healed through prayers without the use of medicine. Dhinakaran attributes this to their intimacy with God and 'firm and deep rooted faith'. However, he allows others with 'a weak and fragile faith', as the Bible advises, to consult a doctor. Dhinakaran does not criticise either group but does differentiate the two types of faiths.⁹⁴ Hardly any referral is made from Dhinakaran's organisation to medical doctors or psychiatrics.⁹⁵

Dhinakaran fails to teach plainly that healing in one sphere, be it spiritual, emotional, physical or demonic, can contribute to healing in any other.⁹⁶ Prayers for healing are offered broadly to all these different aspects of wholeness viz., forgiveness, inner

⁸⁹ Interviews with those who claimed they were healed or had received blessings. 10-19 May 2002.

⁹⁰ Medical doctor, David Lewis' report on Wimber's Conference at Harrogate (1986) randomly picked 100 individuals who after six months showed signs of physical healings, that were consistent with the Bible and God's character, *Healing: Fiction, Fantasy or Fact?* London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1989.

⁹¹ Ian Cowie, 'Healing/Therapy', *Jesus' Healing Works and Ours*, Glasgow: Wild Goose, 2000, p. 11.

⁹² The words for 'healing', *therapeuo*, *iaomai* and *sozo*, combine a blend of medical, therapeutic and spiritual care A. Fergusson, *What is Wrong with Christian Healing?* London: CCHH, 1993, p. 82.

⁹³ Sundaram was from the strict CPM. His story in, *Eternal Grace*, Madras: Divine Deliverance, n.d.

⁹⁴ Dhinakaran uses the prophet Isaiah's advice to King Hezekiah (Isa. 38:21) Paul's to Timothy (1Tim. 5:23) and quotes Jesus: 'those who are sick need a physician' (Luke 5:31), *Gifts*, p. 314-316.

⁹⁵ I am aware of a case of epilepsy and another of severe depression that were held in prayer for well over a month. Both cases worsened and other initiatives were taken to admit both to hospital.

⁹⁶ Francis MacNutt, *Healing*, Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria, 1974, p. 166.

healing, 'prayers of faith' for physical cures, and deliverance from evil spirits, respectively. Moreover an answer to prayer in any one area is reported as a 'miracle'.

My main concern is that in spite of his theology of suffering, Dhinakaran's reports say nothing about those not healed, which is the vast majority. This is a theological conundrum that amounts to a lack of compassion. It allows guilt to enter into the unhealed and to those who are not familiar with Dhinakaran's writings, it causes doubts: Was the right kind of faith missing? Is there some unconfessed sin? Is God's power limited or his compassion missing for my situation? Many I met were disappointed, wondering why their name was not called out? Concerning 'calling out names' (surnames are not) and naming diseases or areas of discomfort, there is much generalisation and a high probability factor. Bergunder calls this 'blind shooting' and given the high level of expectancy and numerous complex needs of the masses, one can see how this can 'transform [his] vague statements into personal messages'.⁹⁷

While it is a challenging task to communicate the concept of integration to the Indian masses, healers owe this to them and need to do so for their own integrity. People experience some remarkable healings that may be medically inexplicable, but reports of healing are given in other faiths and Christian honesty requires that failures also be reported and we guard against a one-sided spirituality that is reflected in the way testimonies of physical healing muddle with inner healing and easily slip into categories of the demonic or translate into material blessings. Such reporting gives critics ample cause to say that 'the evidence they bring forth to justify their healings is often weak and unsupported, and over-exaggerated'.⁹⁸

3.3 The Kingdom and Cross Matters

Ariarajha in *Gospel and Culture* highlights two major changes within the missionary movement since the 1960s. First, emphasis was placed on the 'Kingdom' and the 'World' over against an excessive stress on the church as the focus of missionary thinking. Second, churches worldwide were called as a primary task to enter into 'partnership in mission' with other local churches.⁹⁹ These developing trends

⁹⁷ Bergunder, 'Ministry of Compassion', *Christianity is Indian*, p. 167-168.

⁹⁸ John MacArthur, *Charismatic Chaos*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992, p. 216.

⁹⁹ Wesley Ariarajha, *Gospel and Culture*, (WCC Publication), Tiruvalla: CSS, 1994, p. 17.

challenge the theological values of Dhinakaran's healing ministry in terms of the kingdom and the ethical principles of partnership and accountability in mission.

Miracle healings and exorcisms are 'signs' of the *eschatological* kingdom that, in Jesus, has *broken into* history to meet human need. This truth has been well established and argued for forcefully.¹⁰⁰ For instance, Kappen writes: 'Jesus saw the cures he worked for the sick and the possessed, the revelation of the same creative, liberative power of God. 'If it is by the finger (power) of God that I drive out devils, then be sure the kingdom of God has already come upon you'.¹⁰¹ God's kingdom is the realm and expression of his righteous rule. Stewart shows how Jesus clarified that God's rule in the believer's *hearts* was moral not nationalistic, actual not ideal and spiritual not material. Equally, the kingdom was about God's rule in the *world*, and here, Jesus made the distinction that it was social not individualistic, universal not local and importantly it 'awaits a final consummation, and is not yet complete'.¹⁰²

In all Dhinakaran's books, the topic of the kingdom in relation to healing is strikingly absent. His only article 'Healing, Signs and Wonders' in *Mission Mandate* has large sections that mention the kingdom but these have been directly taken from Wimber's article, 'Power Evangelism', sadly without acknowledging the source.¹⁰³ In *Blessed Are Ye*, Dhinakaran defines the kingdom as 'a state of bliss that one can experience in this earth itself. It is a spiritual experience'.¹⁰⁴ His messages present healing as a benefit of the atonement or one of the 'blessings' for believers because of what Jesus did on the cross. Instead of integrating the work of the *cross* which advanced and defined the nature of the *kingdom*, Dhinakaran stresses the former and has neglected the latter. He does not teach healing in relation to Christ's eschatological kingdom,¹⁰⁵ and interestingly he rarely preaches on the soon coming King.

¹⁰⁰ Soares-Prabhu, 'The Miracles of Jesus Today', *The Dharma of Jesus*, New York: Orbis, 2003, p. 133-145; Paul Hiebert, 'Healing and the Kingdom', *Anthropological Reflections*, 1994, p. 217-253; Howard Ervin, *Healing: Sign of the Kingdom*, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002.

¹⁰¹ S. Kappen, *Jesus and Society*, Delhi: ISPCK, 2002, p. 10 (Luke 11:20).

¹⁰² J.S. Stewart, *The Life and Times of Jesus Christ*, Edinburgh: St Andrews Press, p. 49-54.

¹⁰³ Dhinakaran, 'Healing, Signs and Wonders', p. 125, 129-130; John Wimber, *Renewal Journal* # 10, Brisbane, 1997, This was part of his class notes for his MI510 course in 1983 at Fuller Seminary, US.

¹⁰⁴ Dhinakaran, *Blessed Are Ye*, p. 17, (emphasis mine).

¹⁰⁵ His article on the kingdom in *Mission Mandate*, as I show later is questionable since it contains large portions from Wimber's work reproduced word-for-word without acknowledging its source.

As in Jesus' healings, those healed experience God's sovereign rule. However, as Jesus taught his disciples to pray, this supreme reign had yet to come in its totality 'on earth as it is in heaven'. Healings are signs, or a foretaste of Jesus' 'already' and 'not-yet' kingdom. They point beyond themselves to King Jesus and the wholeness that he now makes available. Eager to receive all the benefits of the coming kingdom in the here-and-now, Dhinakaran appears guilty of an over-realised eschatology.

Dhinakaran teaches that healing belongs to the atonement based on Matthew's (8:17) comment about Jesus' *earthly* healings in fulfilment of Isaiah's (53:4) prophecy: 'He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases and by his stripes we are healed'. In the Bible, the healing of sickness is a picture of the *full* salvation, not just physical healing, that is available due to what Christ accomplished on the cross. This is how 1Peter 2:24, applies Isaiah 53:4. For sure, in a sense, the cross is the basis for every blessing the Christian enjoys. However, the fullness of salvation, when there will be no more sickness and all believers will have perfect bodies, is yet to come with the fullness of the kingdom. The Bible does not guarantee physical healing because of the cross for believers now, nor does it suggest that it can be 'claimed' for now. It certainly does not assure physical healing in the same way as the forgiveness of sins.

When Dhinakaran uncritically preaches healing in the cross and neglects the future fullness of the kingdom, it reveals a fundamental weakness in his theology. First, he ends up building a doctrine based on one or two controversial verses that associate healing indirectly to the atonement. Surprisingly, there is hardly a hint in the epistles that there is physical healing for believers in the atonement. Second, the focus and emphasis in Scriptures as a whole is that Christ atoned for our *sins* on the cross and nowhere asserts that sickness requires atonement.¹⁰⁶ In all Paul's writings, he does not mention that Christ atoned for our *sicknesses*. Therefore, physical healing is at best a secondary blessing of the cross and believers are not promised this as an automatic blessing. This teaching is absent in Dhinakaran's theology of healing.

Dhinakaran adopts a 'spiritual' view of the kingdom and relates the cross to miracle healings and exorcisms. However, some Indian theologies on the cross and kingdom

¹⁰⁶ Rom. 3:25; 5:6-11; 2Cor. 5:18-21; 1Pet. 2:24.

seek to be a counter culture to rising socio-economic and political powers that cause sickness and poverty in the first place. Kariapuram summaries this position well:

The cross of Christ should become for us a symbol of our confrontation with the forces and powers of evil at work in society. We need to join in the struggle to take on the demonic forces that keep people poor. When the forces of casteism, communalism, globalisation and cultural chauvinism are at work, our life calls for active apostolic involvement and not monastic withdrawal. In a situation of inequality, impartiality or non-involvement is an injustice. Christ paid the price dearly for the convictions he stood for.¹⁰⁷

‘The kingdom’ has become the watchword of Indian Christian theology and is central to all aspects of life and ministry. P.A. Augustine in *Jesus and Christianity in India* notes that the kingdom comes with power: in the offer of God’s pardon, Christ-like acts of compassion, recovery of the lost, release of those bound and burdened and in the experience of God’s favour to the despised poor. He notes how Jesus ushered in a revolution in human relations and a new order of precedence, wherein: ‘Compassion for Jesus was an authentic expression of human solidarity’.¹⁰⁸ Such a radical view of the kingdom, beyond a preferential option for the poor, calls for solidarity with sufferers in an incarnational mission. As much as Pentecostals take Jesus’ healings literally, Indian Christians are urged to adopt the simplicity of Jesus’ socio-economic lifestyle. The call is to champion the weak by actually living among them and serving their cause, e.g. a Mahatma Gandhi or Mother Theresa approach.

Somen Das, a theology professor at Bishops College, Calcutta, sees the gap between the church’s ministry and prophetic mission as ‘ecclesiastical schizophrenia’. Calling it ‘the bane of the Church in India today’ he insists: ‘that we loudly and even boldly proclaim that the mission of the Church must embody the kingdom of God values’.¹⁰⁹ Kariapuram expresses how the kingdom is actualised in terms of economic justice: ‘The task of the [Indian] Church is to be counter-culture in the face of craving for wealth power and position, holding fast to and proclaiming aloud the values of the kingdom, where freedom, justice, equality, simplicity etc., are cherished’.¹¹⁰

Healing in relation to the kingdom for many Indian theologians is ‘prophetic’, not in the Pentecostal sense of fore-telling material blessings for believers, but on the

¹⁰⁷ Kariapuram, *Contextual Reflections*, p. 21-22.

¹⁰⁸ P.A. Augustine, ‘Jesus and the Kingdom of God’, *Jesus and Christianity in India*, 1999, p. 62.

¹⁰⁹ Somen Das, ‘Conversion, Social Action and Ecclesiology’, *Mission and Evangelism*, 1998, p. 116.

¹¹⁰ Mathew Kariapuram, *Contextual Reflections*, Shillong: Sacred Heart Pub., 2003, p. 22.

contrary, believers taking upon themselves the task of being the voice for social justice and political change by speaking out against any oppressive means, especially economic power structures that create a gap between the rich and the poor.¹¹¹ Quite bluntly, for Das, 'this hiatus can be illustrated by the misuse of **power and money**'.¹¹² Here, notions of healing and reconciliation go beyond Dhinakaran's social gospel and politics of prayer and compassion. Essentially, it is a critical 'justice issue' involving the struggle with and for human dignity and equality in society. Further, as Traber has shown, 'globalised mass **media** with their attendant technological infrastructure are businesses in their own right'. Looking at globalisation from the point of view of the victims, he notes how it is firmly bound up with a universal capitalism that 'presupposes an alliance with the nation-states and their political and economic elites. In this way, the spirit of capitalism is more effective than old-style military imperialism'.¹¹³ Applying this to the Christian healing ministry, one could say that when money and the media are perceived as its driving force, the true values of Christ's kingdom get distorted. Dhinakaran in several ways gives this impression.

It is evident that the commercial media and money (donations) as 'sanctified' commodities play a prominent role in Dhinakaran's healing ministry. While in the past early years of ministry, he has had to face poverty and suffering, presently he and his family maintain an affluent lifestyle. His Jesus Calls and Karunya ministries have amassed properties with material resources that have made it one of the wealthiest Christian organisations in India today. His son, Paul, has been now groomed to take over the enterprise as successor. Matthew's criticism is that Indian 'Evangelicals are clannish. They are committed to their families and endeavour to build their family empires or at least fiefdoms'.¹¹⁴ Rajendran commenting on Family Dynasty mission in India sees such nepotistic tendencies a real problem when 'the family member is the only one who has been trained to take over and others are passed by' and is convinced that 'this shows worldly selfishness'.¹¹⁵

Further, Dhinakaran proactively organises prayer for America, a symbol of global economic power and maintains links with US televangelists like Roberts and Hinn. He

¹¹¹ Anthoniraj Thumma, *Wisdom of the Weak*, Delhi: ISPCK, 2000, p. 250-252.

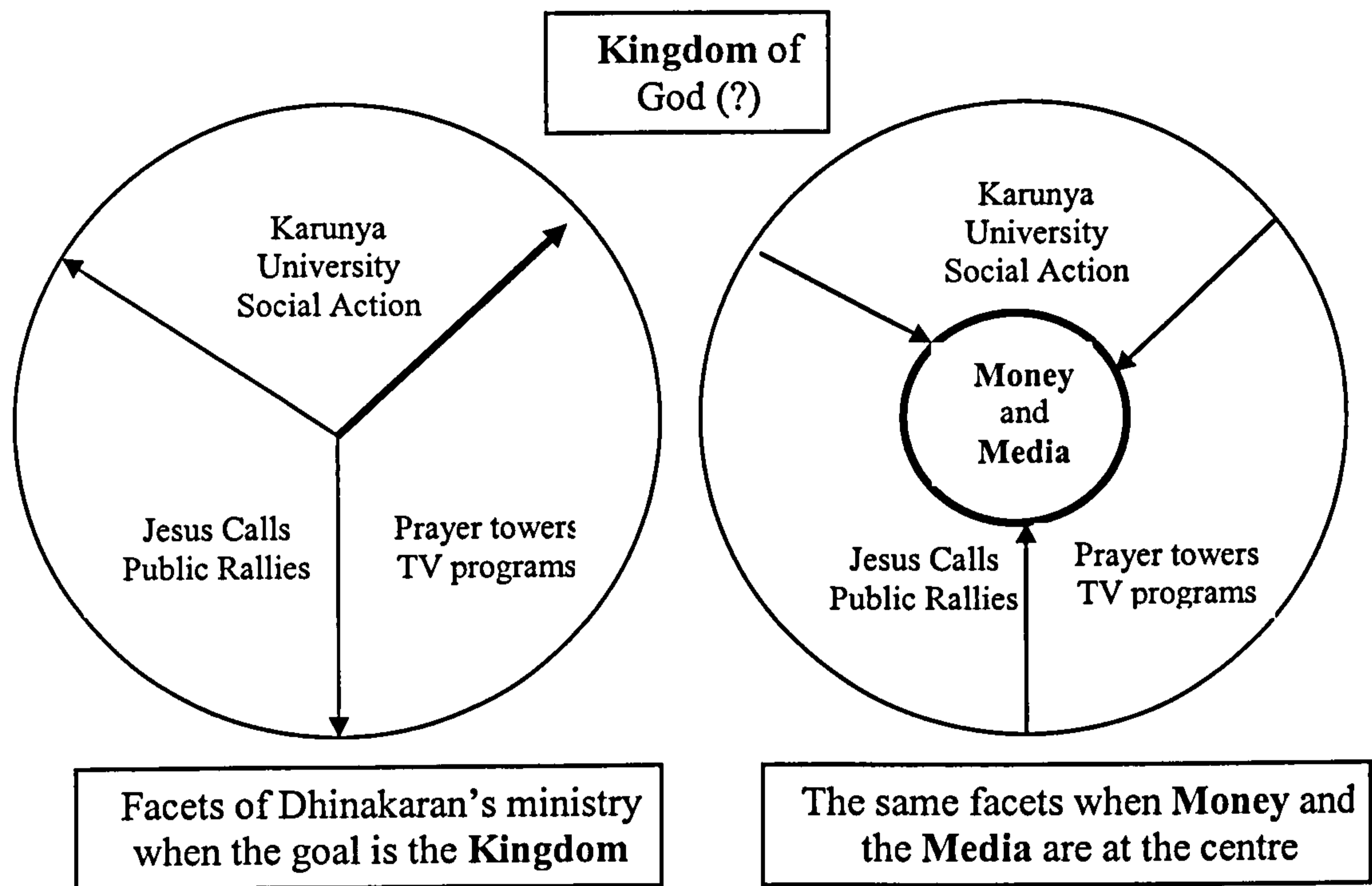
¹¹² Somen Das, *Evangelism and Mission*, p. 117. (Emphasis is in the original).

¹¹³ Michael Traber, *Globalisation, Mass Media and Indian Cultural Values*, Delhi: ISPCK, 2003, p. 186-189; Also, John Raja, *Facing the Reality of Communication*, ISPCK, 2001, p. 218-229.

¹¹⁴ C. Matthew, 'Evangelicals?', S. Lazarus (ed.) *Proclaiming Christ*, Madras: CGAI, 1992, p. 15.

¹¹⁵ K. Rajendran, *Which Way Forward Indian Missions?*, Bangalore: SAIACS Press, 1998, p. 191.

raises funds for his numerous projects through his national TV broadcasts. In these ways, a consumerist lifestyle and culture can easily be perceived at the core of his ministry, and can be illustrated as follows:¹¹⁶



A critical question with respect to Dhinakaran's agenda to equip believers for power evangelism is: To what extent are his material resources and trainees directed to build God's kingdom rather than his own organisation? Stone points out: 'Participation in the [subversive] kingdom demands, the political and human preferences which correspond to God's own compassionate taking sides with those who suffer... compassionate evangelism is corporate as well as personal'.¹¹⁷ A commonly voiced criticism asked how Dhinakaran takes up justice issues or shows solidarity with the poor with his affluent lifestyle and allegiance to the USA. Answers lie in his theology of miracles and prosperity that I take up later. Yet, the wealth and professionalism of his healing enterprise raise doubts on his pastoral integrity and genuine compassion.

3.4 Leadership and Partnership Matters

Perhaps the best development in Dhinakaran's ministry was to move beyond a one-man healing evangelist to a model that equips lay leaders for the churches' healing

¹¹⁶ Adapted from Andy Raine, *Given for Life: Motivational Gifts*, Suffolk: Mayhue, 2004, p. 59.

¹¹⁷ Bryan Stone, *Compassionate Ministry: Theological Foundations*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 1999, p. 147.

ministry, which makes him more vulnerable to criticisms. Dhinakaran is committed to train 'simple-minded persons who have a burning zeal to preach the gospel with signs and wonders'. Concerning his approach he writes: 'I was not trained in any theological college. All the biblical knowledge I have is what the Holy Spirit imparts to me, quite directly... A single testimony of personal spiritual experience is more an unparalleled blessing than a thousand sermons'.¹¹⁸ While Dhinakaran is not against academics as the founder of Karunya Technological University, when it comes to the church's healing ministry, he discourages critical reflection. In this way, he is perceived as anti-intellectual and falls into the trap of using experiences to determine theology and not testing experiences against a theology based on biblical revelation.

Dhinakaran with his esoteric experiences and stress on the revelatory gifts such as prophecy and 'word of knowledge' places himself in a special category and his team members in an illumined 'inner circle'. This gives the naïve observer the impression that they have a direct-line to God and exclusive insight into future events. Paradoxically the priesthood of all believers gets dissolved as a spiritual 'upper class' or elitism is formed. This attitude easily leads to a comparative spirit and Indian Pentecostal churches are notorious for 'splits'.¹¹⁹ Those without the 'gifts of power' become discouraged, jealous or resentful that they lack the faith or piety, and those who manifest these gifts easily become proud and develop selfish motives. Such abuses reveal a theological flaw in not accepting the Spirit's sovereign distribution of the charismata and the true nature of the church, where 'the exercise of one or more gifts by all Christians is not demanded, nor should be expected'.¹²⁰ Such divisions reveal a lack of compassionate love - the antidote for the abuse of gifts (1Cor. 13).

Closely related to issues of illuminism and elitism, due to charismania, are questions of leadership and the love of power. Gifts that ought to signal servanthood can be used to create celebrities and their proper stewardship turned into selfish gain. Indian Pentecostals now recognise the shift that has taken place as their once 'ridiculed' leaders have gained 'respectability' with this world's politics at the expense of losing Pentecostalism's original purity and power. In other words, charismatic churches have become less a counterculture. Several words of warning seem pertinent to

¹¹⁸ Dhinakaran, *Gifts of the Spirit*, p. 3-4.

¹¹⁹ Reuben Gabriel, 'Reflections on Indian Pentecostalism' *DD*, 2002, p. 75; A.C. George notes: 'In reality, Pentecostalism is more fragmented than any other churches', *FTR*, 2001, p. 12.

¹²⁰ Donald Bridges & Phyper, *Spiritual Gifts & the Church*, Ross-shire: Christian Focus, 1995, p. 115.

Dhinakaran's independent healing enterprise. Isaac Mathew regrets that 'the gospel for the poor is becoming a prosperity gospel, with a capitalist look and a version of Christianity being baptised into capitalism by the dominant classes'.¹²¹

Alongside 'Hero Worship', Gabriel finds Indian Pentecostals are involved in their own 'Kingdom Building and Power Mongering' and he describes the scene: 'Money and numbers feature prominently in powerful Pentecostal ministries today. Apparently without these there can be no divine favour and blessings. It is important for the sense to be satisfied to make good religious service'.¹²² A.C. George sees a leadership crisis, not the lack of leaders but the right kind of leaders, which he believes is 'the greatest hindrance to Pentecostal witness':

We have all kinds of leaders in our churches: self-appointed leaders who play 'Absalom politics' in the Church, leaders who reach the top rung of the ladder by trampling on others, leaders who use influence and 'money power' to get into the seat of power, leaders who perpetuate 'dynasty succession'; leaders who want to monopolise all the official positions.¹²³

In the light of the above comments, it seems Dhinakaran has neglected what can be a forward gain for independent healing ministries – Partnership. His Jesus Calls ministry, like no other parachurch agency in India, has taken upon itself numerous dimensions of outreach and care. It seems to function like a modern supermarket with something for everyone. There are numerous other agencies that demonstrate compassionate services with their charismata in specific cultures and challenging context. In 1995, Rajendran analysed 86 different member organisations of the Indian Missions Association (IMA) showing how each has its own ethos and vision yet they partner together with mutual accountability.¹²⁴ Among these agencies, 55 stressed *evangelism*, 54 engaged in *church planting* (Dhinakaran does not consider this as his specific 'calling') and 55 were involved in *social community development*. Serving under the IMA entails integration and enhances a national wholistic mission. Partnership is vulnerable but valuable. It shares resources for a common mission without losing individual identity, fosters pastoral integrity and builds credibility.¹²⁵ Dhinakaran's Jesus Calls organisation is not a partner member of any such group,

¹²¹ Isaac Mathew, 'Neglected Elements of Christianity in Pentecostal Churches', *FTR*, 2001, p. 45.

¹²² Reuben Gabriel, 'Reflections on Indian Pentecostalism', *DD*, 2002, p. 72.

¹²³ A.C. George, 'The Pentecostal Witness', *FTR*, 2001, p. 12.

¹²⁴ K. Rajendran, *Which Way Forward Indian Missions?* Bangalore: SAIACS, 1998, p. 63; chart p. 64.

¹²⁵ The author contributed to a course on *Partnership* for The Association For Theological Education by Extension (Bangalore: TAFEE, 2003), dealing with its *why* and *how* for mission in India.

which may indicate to some that its integration and wholeness are somewhat an internal matter and the compassion it espouses, to a great extent, self-preserving.

Dhinakaran's efforts can be viewed as a microcosm of what the whole Indian Church ought to be demonstrating, together with a greater unity. He 'eagerly desires' and almost exclusively promotes the nine charismata of power. But, his sole commitment is to vitalise the Jesus Calls vision - to bring Christ's compassion to heal the broken hearted. Understandably, he uses his special call and ministerial success in a pragmatic way to justify his projects. In this regard, Schwarz's warning is worth noting:

Gift-oriented ministry does not mean 'just doing what I want'. Rather, it means allowing God to determine when and where he wants to use us. It's entirely possible that teachings on spiritual gifts will be used and twisted quite a bit to fit [to make our lives as comfortable as possible], but who cares? Whenever the gift-oriented approach is confused with the whim of the moment, self-justification is right around the corner.¹²⁶

Kosala, the president of Mercy Services in Madras, believes evangelism takes place whenever the gifts are exercised in love. He rightly notes that the Bible does not exhaust the list of gifts and the spectacular ones can cause an air of superiority. Yet he insists from Scripture that evangelism means, 'the whole Body of Christ working together in unity... realising the necessity of calling for accountability and responsibility in the use of the spiritual gifts'.¹²⁷ The theological concerns and the advantages of a charismatic or gift-based organisation over against institutional or office-based structures of Christian service is a complex, on-going debate.¹²⁸ But clearly the New Testament affirms the priesthood of all believers and the gospel fosters an egalitarianism within which both are called into a mutual accountability.

The above issues indicate a lack of accountability, often justified by Pentecostals by the theory that the minister who directly hears from God is accountable only to God. Dhinakaran's ministry warrants some institutional form of service to safeguard both his integrity and the gospel. While no one organisation, charismatic individual or office is meant to or possibly can embody what the Body of Christ itself is, in India as in the early church, gift-based ministries (rather than office-based) have proved efficient. Hence, Dhinakaran for his own good needs to make his organisation

¹²⁶ Christian A. Schwarz, 'The 3 Colors of Ministry', *ICGQ*, Oct-Dec, 9/3, 2002, p. 8.

¹²⁷ Kishore Kosala, 'Spiritual Gifts and Church Growth', *ICGQ*, Oct-Dec, 9/3, 2002, p. 5, 14

¹²⁸ H. Quinley, *The Prophetic Clergy: Social Activism Among Protestant Ministers*, New York: John Wiley, 1974; Paul Stevens, *The Abolition of the Laity*, Carlisle: Paternoster, 1999.

answerable to a larger recognised body like the IMA or CSI that will oversee and also encourage and release Dhinakaran to impact India with his healing gifts.

Summary Remarks

Within the Indian pluralistic and pragmatic culture, Dhinakaran has been tempted to work mainly with a performative attitude toward truth, which is in danger of reducing Christian truth claims about healing to existential dimensions of narrative testimonies. Besides the *pragmatic* test, he does not attempt to apply the test of *correspondence* to see if the claims are consistent with lived reality, or the test of *coherence* to ensure if it is logically consistent with the whole of the Bible and human experience. It is crucial to apply all three tests, since when it comes to charismatic healing any one is insufficient.¹²⁹ The Spirit may well be at work but not necessarily in every case and what is true for the person concerned should not be made normative for others. The confusions surrounding countless unhealed people often leave the poor more vulnerable and spiritual longings seem to be exploited.

However, given the width and diversity of Dhinakaran's ministry over 35 years, he settles for what he believes is of primary importance - the perfectly valid biblical concept of compassionate prayer for healing. In excelling in areas of *mercy* he has not engaged boldly in *justice* issues that on the other end bring the necessary balance. Yet, in upholding compassion alongside charismata he is still at an advantage because truths that liberate and the need for compassionate healing is not always and only in the middle. Often benefits are found at both ends and there is blessing in working the charismata-compassion dialectic with care. 'Together we need to move beyond cure to care', Fergusson is convinced, 'and even beyond care towards that positive enhancement of every aspect of life'.¹³⁰ Within the unity of the Christian life, spirituality and theology belong together. As MacQuarrie aptly remarks, 'A theology without a spirituality would be a sterile academic exercise. A spirituality without a theology can become superstition or fanaticism or the quest for excitement'.¹³¹

My assessment has shown that Dhinakaran is not getting the balance quite right nor integrating all aspects of a wholistic healing ministry. This is chiefly due to his over-

¹²⁹ 'Coherence, Inspiration and Ultimacy', *We Believe in the Holy Spirit*, London: Church House, 1991, p. 126-133; Pollard, *Evangelism Made Slightly Less Difficult*, p. 53-54.

¹³⁰ Andrew Ferguson, 'Answering the Question', *What's Wrong with Christian Healing?*, 1993, p. 85.

¹³¹ J. MacQuarrie et. al. 'Prayer & Reflection', *The Study of Spirituality*, London: SPCK, 1986, p. 587.

realised eschatology and triumphalistic healing theology. The issues I have identified are not so much sins of commission as much as sins of omission due to extremes that have led to abuse or misuse. However, a proper critique of Dhinakaran's stance requires a closer look at his healing theology within the Indian context with regard to three pastoral-theological issues that have loomed large:

1. The *pursuit* of 'miracle healings' in his signs and wonders theology
2. The *undue stress* in his demonology on power and 'exorcism', and
3. His 'All Round Prosperity' theology associated with *money* and the *media*.

Dhinakaran claims the Lord has specifically called him to a 'miracle ministry' where the gifts of power and the gospel contribute to the growth of Christianity. Some Indian pastors maintain a simplistic, pragmatic view that if this has worked for 40 years it must be true. So why critique Dhinakaran or bother with theology? It must be clarified that what follows is not a criticism of Dhinakaran as a person but a closer assessment of his teachings and methods, which he is aware that I am doing. A critical review of his healing theology and ministry is needed at least for four reasons: First, in order to affirm aspects of his theology that are central to the Bible and true to the experiences of Indian Christians. Second, because, as shown, there are reasons to doubt whether his emphasis is faithful to the Christian gospel. Third, to address concerns about the Indian Church's healing apostolate in the light of some of Dhinakaran's practices and fourth, as a pastoral task for those who have to live with the painful consequence of not receiving 'miracles'.

In the next three chapters I will closely examine and critically assess Dhinakaran's Charismatic theology and his Jesus Calls healing movement as they relate to the above three issues concerning faith for miracles, power for healing and money for mission.

Chapter Eight

Dhinakaran's Theology of Miracles: Healing as Signs and Wonders

Introduction

The constant appeal in India for what is typically termed 'miracle healings' reveals the deep longing and high value placed on 'signs and wonders'. In 2004, *Gospel for Asia* recorded that Karab Toshan had led over 125 Irular tribal people to Christ in Tamilnadu, of whom 20 suffered from sicknesses related to demonic oppression and fear. Toshan bore witness: 'When prayers were made in the matchless name of Jesus, satanic powers left individuals. They all received Jesus as Lord because of their deliverance'.¹

Evangelical leaders of the *Friends Missionary Prayer Band* reported:

Thousands are flooding into the fold of Christ in the mission fields. Most of them are attracted to Jesus Christ by witnessing or experiencing miracles. There are many occasions where whole villages have acknowledged Christ on account of miracles. The Lord is doing great wonders among the people to show them that he is the almighty one.²

Rajamani Stanley, the Director of the *Blessing Youth Mission*, in Tamilnadu, has recounted the contemporary worth of miracles for Christian mission in India:

Miracles are the best crowd pullers. 'A great crowd followed [Jesus] because they saw His signs' (John 6:2). This is still true today. Science or Technology cannot quench the thirst in man to witness and experience the supernatural. Miracles in the name of Jesus testify to his resurrection... that he is alive'.³

The Jesus Calls festivals claim: 'Mighty Miracles in the Healing Services', 'Miracles as in the Bible Days!', 'Miracles in Europe' and benefactors testify of 'miracles received'.⁴

Dhinakaran advertises his meetings through handbills, street posters, cloth banners and the secular newspapers. Auto *rickshaws* (three-wheel public transport) with megaphones and TV programmes announce these events. Steering committees are formed, volunteers recruited and political dignitaries and church leaders who are invited make these grand occasions. Jesus Calls reports: 'Millions of people around the world have miracles in the soul, mind and body through the prayers of Dr. D.G.S. Dhinakaran'.⁵

¹ K.P. Yohanna, 'Sent to the People of Darkness', *Send*, GFA Publication, 24/2, 2004, p. 12.

² *Friends Focus*, 'Miracles' January 2002, p. 15-18, Over 21 cases with names are listed and I have had in-depth interviews with the General Secretary, P. Joshua and the Training Director, G. Edward.

³ R. Stanley, 'Signs and Wonders', *ICGQ*, 1991, p. 136. Stanley is also an engineer (M.Tech.).

⁴ Phrases taken from *Jesus Calls*, June 2005, p. 7, April 2005, p. 1 and May 2005, p. 20 respectively.

⁵ Direct quote from Dhinakaran's *Jesus Calls Campaign Manual*, p. 22.

Healings and exorcism are regular activities at Hindu temples, Muslim shrines and Christian festivals by faith healers, shamans and televangelists.⁶ While the west with the problem of a closed universe asks: 'Are miracles possible?', Yung notes, 'in much of Asia that is a non-question because the miraculous is assumed and regularly experienced. The question rather is: who or what lies behind a particular miracle?'⁷

The Indian scholars and practitioners of healing, whom I interviewed, did not doubt that countless people throng to hear Dhinakaran preach the gospel and large numbers experience miracle healings, although nowhere near the numbers claimed. The real problem was in understanding what exactly Dhinakaran *meant* by 'miracles', and what is their *significance* for the gospel and mission in India. Here, I will theologically assess Dhinakaran's theology of miracles and, by briefly noting the role of the guru as a miracle worker, offer a *critical assessment* of his 'signs and wonders' ministry.

1. An Investigation: The Tuticorin Prayer Festival

The Jesus Calls Prayer Festival held at Tuticorin, 14-18 January 2004, was a spectacular event with over 200,000 in attendance.⁸ At 5:30 pm each evening, worship was led by the talented choir from Karunya University. After the CSI Bishop Jeyapaul David's inaugural prayer, P.H. Pandian, a Member of Parliament recollected his early association with Dhinakaran and announced: 'There is no greater power than God'.⁹ Choreography and sketches entertained the audience to celebrate the culture and their TV programs, bookstore and club membership were promoted. People were encouraged to give a sacrificial offering to meet expenses and the organisers were commended and bishops and political leaders were garlanded. Expectations were built up to the time when Dhinakaran came to the podium, and the crowds clapped and welcomed him.

Dhinakaran's sermon was on: 'Trusting the God of Impossibilities', in which he used several Bible texts to teach a faith that was holy, strong and glorious (1Cor. 1:7, 2Pet. 1:3, Jude 1:20). With many illustrations, anecdotes, personal experiences and songs, he exhorted listeners to trust in a God who will never let them down. His closing prayer caused dramatic effects in the audience, believed to be responses to the Spirit's

⁶ R. Raguram et.al., 'A Report of Temple Healing from India', *BMJ*, Vol. 325, 2002; B. Pfleiderer, 'The Semiotic of Ritual Healing in a North Indian Muslim Shrine', *Social Science*, 27/5, 1988.

⁷ Hwa Yung, *Mangoes or Bananas?* Delhi: Regnum Books, 1997, p. 230.

⁸ I am grateful to Pastor Sannaci V. Thomas, member of the Healing Festival's steering committee who hosted me and connected me to key people for interviews and supplied details for this research.

⁹ Photographs and details in *Jesus Calls*, March 2004, p. 16-24.

presence. As Dhinakaran pleaded with God to show compassion there was praising, weeping, shaking and outcries. He rebuked evil spirits in Jesus' name and commanded them to stop tormenting people and leave. He ended with an 'altar call' as those 'touched' by the Spirit came up to the dais and testified to 'blessings' received. These included stories of ecstatic experiences, spiritual salvation and bodily healings.

The Jesus Calls magazine cites about 40 testimonies each month with the name, photo and city of those who claim miracles. The article on this Festival read: 'Manifestation of the Power of God at Tuticorin'. Dhinakaran tries to disclaim that miracles happen due his own powers by repeatedly ascribing 'all glory to God'. Yet, the effect seemed the opposite. People continue to link miracles to his special gifts and prayers and testify: 'When Brother Dhinakaran prayed...'. A report by a local attendee Asantha Mary, whom I interviewed, illustrates the complex phenomena and related issues. This fairly standard testimony gives a feel of the language and the way stories are reported:

I was suffering for three years due to demon possession. For two years due to a severe pain in the neck region. The doctors examined me and reported that the bones have been affected and I should not go for any work. Yesterday at the time of prayer, Bro D.G.S Dhinakaran said: 'Those who suffer from any pain, lay your hand on the place of pain and pray.' I said to myself: 'Lord I am attending the meetings for the past five days I have not experienced any miracle. Today, the neck pain must leave me completely. If you give me the healing I will witness for you. I trust you fully. I laid my hands on my neck and prayed. Then I went back home. The Lord listened to my prayers and healed me completely. Now I do not experience any pain. Previously I could not do any work at home. But now I am able to bend freely and do any work. God has blessed me with a miraculous healing. Praise be to God.'¹⁰

Bodily healings, or rather functional increment in health (not what doctors call organic cures) and exorcisms were the main miracles featured with a variety of extraordinary, unexpected and inexplicable phenomena. The manifestations of the nine spectacular gifts (1Cor. 12:8-9) and particularly what Dhinakaran calls 'the revelation of the Lord's power', viz. faith, healings and miracles were in this group.¹¹ Emotional and bodily responses to a 'spiritual presence' were in vogue. The following quotes are samples of other categories of unusual experiences claimed and reported as 'miracles':

- P. Mercy, from Tuticorin, said: 'I felt a bright light shining on me. I realised that all the curses in our family had already left us. Now I am in great joy'.

¹⁰ *Jesus Calls*, March, 2004, p. 21.

¹¹ Dhinakaran, *Gifts*, p. 26. The other two are *communication with the Lord* (tongues, interpretation, prophecy), and *receiving revelations from the Lord* (words of knowledge, wisdom and discernment).

- The report, 'blessings received by Fatima', referred to her encounter with the Spirit when she received, 'the anointing and gifts of the Holy Spirit'.
- Gnanamani that evening was assured that: 'The Lord defeated Satan!'
- Dhinakaran with a 'word of knowledge' called out 'Jaya Mary by name'.
- A prophetic word was given in which: 'God revealed the future of Phabhu'.¹²

2. Dhinakaran's Charismatic Theology of Miracles

Dhinakaran stresses the gifts alongside spiritual disciplines that normally include prayer and fasting, holy living, a passion for God, victory over temptation and a total commitment to do God's will. At least four features are discernable in his theology: First, it seeks to be *bible-based*. Although Dhinakaran tends to use verses as proof-texts with countless 'the Bible says' phrases, he considers the 'Holy Bible' as authoritative, dynamic and liberating: a powerful tool in the Spirit's hands to heal, forgive and comfort and its words 'emanate from Life and bring perfect health to the people'.¹³

Second, Dhinakaran's theology of miracles is *cruci-centric*. His Jesus Calls ministry seeks to model itself on 'Jesus the healer' and fulfil Christ's mandate to preach, heal and cast out demons.¹⁴ He exhorts the sick: 'Believe that the compassion of Christ will pierce through and heal you in his mercy. As he himself bore these diseases in his person at the cross'.¹⁵ He is evangelical-charismatic insofar as all blessings, internal and external, are viewed as a result of Jesus' death on the cross. Christ's redemptive work and the Spirit's empowering gifts belong together and are 'at play' whenever miracles occur. Christ's words and the Spirit's work are in a promise-fulfilment continuum.¹⁶

Third, Dhinakaran advocates *signs and wonders*,¹⁷ which make him 'evangelical plus' and typically 'Pentecostal' since miracles are made a necessary part of church life and, contra cessationists, a primary tool for evangelism.¹⁸ His praxis within Indian culture is a form of the 'Third Wave' theology that Wagner links to the desire 'to experience the power of the Spirit in healing the sick, casting out demons, receiving prophecies and

¹² This selection is from the 25-30 people who came forward and whose testimonies were later published. *Jesus Calls*, March 2004, p. 21-22.

¹³ Dhinakaran, *Gifts*, p. 297, quotes Psalm 107:20: 'He sent his word and healed them and delivered them from their destruction'. Also, that God fulfills his promises in his word, *Voice of Love*, p. 43-44.

¹⁴ Warrington, *Jesus the Healer*, Paternoster, 2000, believes Jesus' model was a *unique phenomenon* rather than a *paradigm* for Christian ministry. Dhinakaran subscribes to a both/and view, not either/or.

¹⁵ Dhinakaran, *Love So Amazing*, p. 46.

¹⁶ Suurmond, Jean-Jacques, *Word and Spirit at Play: Toward a Charismatic Theology*. London: SCM. 1994, Simon Ponsonby seeks to bridge the evangelical-charismatic divide, see: *More: How you can have more of the Spirit when you already have everything in Christ?* Eastbourne: Kingsway, 2004.

¹⁷ Dhinakaran, 'Healing, Signs and Wonders in Evangelism', *Mission Mandate*, 1992, p. 122-130.

¹⁸ John MacArthur, *Charismatic Chaos*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992, p. 106-127.

participating in other charismatic type manifestations, without disturbing the currents governing their congregations'.¹⁹ His movement is quintessential of what Barrett perceived as 'a major new vitalising force' fuelled by non-whites.²⁰

Fourth, and most characteristic of Indian Charismatics, is that Dhinakaran operates with a *warfare worldview*. Such a perspective on reality, Boyd notes, 'centres on the conviction that the good and the evil, fortunate and the unfortunate, aspects of life are to be interpreted largely as a result of good and evil, friendly or hostile spirits warring against each other and us'.²¹ There are parallels between his theology and Indian aetiology and demonology. For him, miracles include 'deliverance from demonic powers' and it is 'the duty of every evangelist [to] proclaim the kingdom has come with great power to confront and overcome sickness, sin, death, hell and the devil'.²²

The above tenets, in the light of the reports from Dhinakaran's meetings, reveal the contextual nature of his charismatic theology. He starts by addressing issues relevant to the Indian situation, not by digesting systematic western theologies. It is pragmatic since its focus on experience and its intention is to solve existential concerns embedded in the socio-religious culture, ring true to real life experiences and attract crowds in India.²³

2.1 The Meaning of Miracles: Signs that Cause Wonder

In the Bible, miracles seem to have a voice and studied in their context, communicate something meaningful and purposeful. Jeffery John points out two main approaches to biblical miracles: The *reductionism* that wants to trim out the miraculous element to something that is readily grasped in scientific terms, and a *literalist* approach that takes a miracle at its plainest level of meaning to have happened exactly as recorded and therefore proves the supernatural.²⁴ Dhinakaran, who belongs to the latter, defines a miracle as 'an act beyond human power' and identifies four interpretative positions: (i) Rationalists, who dispute and try to explain miracles away, (ii) Apologists, who defend and try to prove them, (iii) Believers, who study them and derive personal application

¹⁹ Peter Wagner, 'The Third Wave', Burgess (ed.), *DPCM*, 1990, p. 843-844.

²⁰ David Barrett, 'Global Statistics', Burgess (ed.), *DPCM*, 1990, p. 810-829, describes the movement as non-western (66%) and among the poor (87%). Dhinakaran also reaches the Indian middle class.

²¹ Gregory Boyd, *God At War: The Bible and Spiritual Conflict*, Downers Grove: IVP, 1997, p. 13.

²² Dhinakaran, 'Healing, Signs and Wonders', p. 124-125.

²³ Christian existentialism stresses a personal commitment to Christ that affects one's whole existence, D. McKim, *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms*, Louisville: John Knox, 1996, p. 98-99.

²⁴ Jeffery John, *The Meaning in the Miracles*, Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2001, p. 2-3.

and (iv) Worshippers, who contemplate and adore miracles.²⁵ Dhinakaran fits into the third and fourth groups. He does not argue with philosophers or debate apologists nor desires to prove to sceptical non-believers that miracles actually occur. Rather, in the context of prayer, he sees a personal God purposefully intervening in the affairs of his created order on behalf of suffering humanity and his children in need.

Dhinakaran refers to three words that denote the miraculous, the first two from Greek: *thaumasion* (Latin, *miraculum*) used for 'that which causes wonder and astonishment, being extraordinary in itself and amazing or inexplicable by normal standards' and *semeion* or sign which means 'indicating something beyond itself'.²⁶ His third and favourite phrase is 'mighty works' (*dunamis*) with which he highlights the unusual events that accompany miracles, especially bodily healings. For him, while signs and wonders defy human explanation they evoke human awe and make room for the 'supernatural'. Importantly, they point to the power of the whole gospel of Christ.²⁷

2.2 Manifestations of Jesus' Power Today

Dhinakaran uses 'mighty' as a synonym for 'manifestations' of the Spirit's presence and 'demonstrations' of the gifts like healings and prophecy. He links Spirit-fillings with 'signs and wonders' and associates such experiences with miracle power. In *Be Not Dismayed*, he submits: 'God will grant those [nine] gifts to everyone who asks and fill them with His holiness and power'.²⁸ Dhinakaran's creative ideas and strategic programs advance evangelism. He is seeker-sensitive and purpose-driven but beyond this, his strength and the appeal of his theology is that it fosters what Charismatics call the 'manifest presence' of God,²⁹ which he correlates to the power of Jesus' Spirit.³⁰

Indian church leaders refer to Dhinakaran's messages as 'power talks' since Jesus' power is said to be displayed in diverse ways.³¹ The charismata are exercised to meet people's felt needs. Dhinakaran teaches that when the Spirit comes in power, people are

²⁵ Dhinakaran, 'Healing Signs, p. 122-123. (*Webster's World Dictionary, Britannica, Vol. 12, p. 269*).

²⁶ Dhinakaran, 'Healing, Signs and Wonders', p. 123.

²⁷ Dhinakaran, 'Healing, Signs and Wonders', p. 123-124.

²⁸ Dhinakaran, *Be Not Dismayed*, Madras: Jesus Calls, p. 78 (Acts 2:8; Heb. 2:4).

²⁹ J. Vine notes, such 'manifestations' 'make visible or known' God's presence in an outward and experiential way. *Spirit Works: Charismatic Practices and Beliefs* Broadman & Holman, 1999, p. 62

³⁰ R. Colle, 'Holy Spirit: Presence, Power and Person', *Theological Studies*, 62/2, 2001, p. 322-340;

³¹ This is a common interpretation in Asian Third Wave theology. A. Chia, 'A Biblical Theology on Power Manifestations: A Singaporean Quest' *AJPS*, 2/1, Jan 1999, p. 19-33; M. Bagalawais, 'Power in Acts 1:8: Effective Witnessing Through Signs and Wonders' *JAM*, 3/1, 2001, p. 1-13; Hwa Yung, 'The Pentecostal-Charismatic Renewal and the Asian Church', *AJPS*, 6/1, 2003, p. 63-82.

‘thunderstruck and overwhelmed with emotions’,³² and miracles can be expected. ‘Power encounters’ occur as the *Holy Spirit* confronts *evil* powers (*peeys*) and delivers those possessed or tormented by them. Exorcisms are therefore vivid expressions of ‘Pentecostal’ power yet at the same time, are essentially a pastoral activity since in Powlinson’s words, they are ‘a way [of] addressing life problems that finds varied expressions both in pastoral ministry and personal growth’.³³ Since Jesus is the one experienced as *the* miracle worker and exorcist, the power of the gospel is shared in practical ways that evoke faith in unbelievers. As a result, what Wimber popularised as ‘power evangelism’ takes place since demonstrations of power become ‘catalytic in accelerating the transition through the presence, proclamation and persuasion stages of evangelism’ and, as Kraft has argued, ‘gives believers a new authority’ to serve.³⁴

3. The Source and Agents of Miracles

Dhinakaran clarifies that ‘true miracles can be performed by only one person, the Almighty God Himself... the abode and source of miracles’.³⁵ Aware that miracles that strike people with wonder can be conjured up by human skills such as Pharaoh’s magicians, he insists on using the ‘gift of discernment’. For him, miracles performed by God’s servants have two definitive traits: they exhibit God’s compassionate nature and change hardened hearts.³⁶ Thus, miracles have transformative value insofar as they are epiphanies of the Spirit linked to God’s grace and Christ’s mission. But, Dhinakaran goes overboard in teaching that God does ‘marvellous things without number’ implying that miracles are widespread, common means by which unbelievers recognise ‘the finger of God’.³⁷ Problems compound when he instructs believers on ‘how to’ access this divine source and become ‘Pentecostal’ agents of power endorsed by miracles.

3.1 From Divine Source to Human Agency

Dhinakaran’s christology is the key to understanding his praxis of miracle healing. He correlates the source of miracle power, not to one’s faith or effective prayers but to God, the Father of all compassion and Jesus, ‘the God of miracles in the form of man’ who

³² Dhinakaran, ‘Healing, Signs and Wonders’, p. 126.

³³ David Powlison, discusses what he coined as *EMM* (Ekbullistic Mode of Ministry, literally the ‘casting out’ of demons), *Power Encounters*, Grand Rapids: Baker Books 1995, p. 29.

³⁴ Wimber with Springer, *Power Evangelism*, Hodder & Stoughton, 1985, p. 58; Charles Kraft, *I Give You Authority*, London: Monarch, 1998, p. 221-258.

³⁵ Dhinakaran, *Gifts*, p. 326.

³⁶ Dhinakaran, *Healing Stripes*, p. 50, 51.

³⁷ Dhinakaran, *Gifts*, p. 326-327.

did wonders that could not be recorded.³⁸ For him, Jesus, in perfect relationship with the Father, was empowered by the Spirit to miraculously heal all who asked him to in faith. He quotes Jesus saying: ‘...believe me for the sake of the [miracles] themselves’.³⁹ Jesus is God’s supreme agent, who by his Spirit resources his servants with healing gifts. Dhinakaran discusses ‘the working of miracles within man’, where Elijah, the apostles and Paul, are presented as ‘servants of the Lord’ gifted to move in the miraculous realm. He explains how miracle working power is channelled today:

Jesus, coming down on this earth sacrificed his own life for the salvation of mankind. He ascended to his Father and pleaded with him and received from him the ‘Gifts’, including the working of miracles for his disciples and he is granting them liberally to all those who yearn and plead for them.⁴⁰

Dhinakaran’s teachings on miracles are derived from his model of compassion. Here, within the dialectic of ‘the *cross*’ and the *Spirit*, the divine graces of charismata and compassion become experiential realities and foundational to his mission theology.⁴¹ Some ministers, due to Christ’s atonement and the Spirit’s special anointing, seem to possess abnormal powers beyond their physical capacities. Dhinakaran views such agents as Christ’s ascension-tide gifts to the church at large who are effective due to ‘an indescribable power from above’.⁴² He contends: ‘Jesus, gives the Spirit of his Father (Matt. 10:20) to his servants and works miracles through them (Gal. 3:5)’.⁴³

3.2 Miracle Power through Channels of Compassion

Dhinakaran admits that in the Old Testament, ‘signs’ were known as ‘terrors’ or ‘great tribulation’ (Deut. 26:8), but in the New Testament, he asserts they ‘were almost without exception miracles of grace’.⁴⁴ Thus his view of modern miracles excludes the word *teras*, translated ‘wonder’, which Geisler notes, ‘almost always refers to a miracle’.⁴⁵ In spite of his language of power, Dhinakaran’s prefers that the true nature of miracles be considered in terms of God’s mercy or grace, which justifies his emphasis

³⁸ Dhinakaran, *Gifts*, p. 327.

³⁹ Dhinakaran, *Gifts*, p. 326. Luke 24:19; 1 Tim. 3:16; Matthew 1:21; John 14:11; 20:30; 21:25.

⁴⁰ Dhinakaran, *Gifts*, p. 329-330.

⁴¹ See Mark Stibbe, *Fire and Blood: The Work of the Spirit; The Work of the Cross*, London: Monarch Books, 2001, p. 12ff.; Paul Fiddes, ‘The Theology of the Charismatic Movement’, David Martin & Mullen (eds.), *Strange Gifts?*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1984, p. 19ff,

⁴² Dhinakaran, *Love So Amazing*, p. 73. Eph. 4:8.

⁴³ Dhinakaran, *Gifts*, p. 331.

⁴⁴ Dhinakaran, *Gifts*, p. 124.

⁴⁵ Norman Geisler, *Miracles and Modern Thought*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982, p. 114, also points out among its 16 NT references, it is once used of a counterfeit or satanic sign (2Thess. 2:9).

on compassion and the cross, the ultimate symbol of suffering love. However, in not stressing judgement, Dhinakaran often neglects preaching repentance.

While Dhinakaran displays authority in commanding evil spirits to leave, he is popularly known as ‘the weeping prophet’. He cries out in public, on TV and his writings are punctuated with the words like ‘tears’ and ‘tearful prayers’. He clarifies the paradox in God’s name, ‘Almighty God’ (*El Shaddai* in Hebrew) which discloses a fusion of divine softness and strength. God is ‘strong-shouldered’ as well as the ‘soft-breasted’ one.⁴⁶ Dhinakaran does make the effort to link his power healings to God’s ‘soft side’, i.e. divine compassion (*manadhurukkam*, ‘the melting of heart’ that leads to divine action) and sees this as the reason God’s Spirit moves in power to heal. He categorically states: ‘Our God is merciful. His compassion heals broken hearts and builds up broken homes, and is prepared to work out many miracles for this purpose even at the present time’.⁴⁷ For Dhinakaran, the distinguishing mark of miracles in Christianity is that they are perceived as divine *charis* - God’s *merciful* acts through the Spirit’s *charismata* expressing Christlike compassion: ‘The Spirit fills [Christ’s servants] with compassion and induces them to heal countless people’.⁴⁸ Thus, the motif of *mercy* is brought forcefully to the fore alongside the *power* factor in healing.

4. The Significance of Miracles: Evangelism through Pastoral Care

Regarding the theology of miracles, Dhinakaran correctly notes that they are not just works of wonder, but signs. The question is: What do they point to? During interviews at this ‘miracle’ campaign, people in general had come seeking peace, an encounter with God and hoped to receive bodily healings, deliverance from demons, curses removed and specific answers to prayer. Christians said they came to hear God’s word, receive spiritual power, be released from sinful habits and be empowered to witness. The ‘blessings’ promised include spiritual protection and material prosperity.

Dhinakaran offers some reasons why miracles occur to highlight their function that can be discussed under the themes: pastoral care and evangelism. For each point, he habitually moves from the biblical text to narrate personal experiences or examples from the contemporary context. I want to show the strengths and weaknesses in his arguments

⁴⁶ Dhinakaran, *I Am that I Am*, 1987, p. 46.

⁴⁷ Dhinakaran, *Gifts*, p. 338.

⁴⁸ Dhinakaran, *Gifts*, p. 291.

but also to argue that his miracle ministry is a pastoral endeavour as much as an evangelistic tool within Indian culture, thereby it illustrates Pastoral Pentecostalism.

4.1 The 'Miracle' Power in Pastoral Care

In the gospels, apart from bodily healings and exorcisms, Jesus performed miracles of nature such as instantly calming storms, multiplying loaves and fish and raising the dead.⁴⁹ Dhinakaran excels in 'miracles for healing the sick', though in an interview he spoke about a time when after prayer, rains ceased at his public meetings and a person in a coma was resuscitated without medical assistance. Yet most of his miracle stories, as in the gospels, concern healings worked by a combination of touch, spoken word and faith, nurtured through prayer and biblical counselling. In this sense, miracles although a sub-set of the paranormal, are not anomalous or arbitrary. They are ways in which a personal God interacts with people and his agents in response to desperate prayers. Thus, one can expect miracles and Christian aspirations to go together.

Second, from Jesus' ministry to the masses like the feeding of the five thousand, Dhinakaran teaches miracles are for 'meeting the material needs of life'. He focuses on family needs and notes how Jesus' first miracle, the turning of water into wine, was 'to perfect what was lacking in the house of the wedding'. He refers to Elijah's miracle of multiplying oil in order to clear a family's debt.⁵⁰ To illustrate how such miracles happen today, he tells of a poor mother who made her livelihood by selling milk but found her cows were dying of some ailment. When she applied the oil that Dhinakaran had prayed over, the cows revived. The next day she discovered that the oil in the bottle was full again. With such examples, Dhinakaran presents the *effects* of the miracle, but does not discuss its scientific *possibility* or give *details* of names, dates or places.

Dhinakaran's third role for miracles is to 'comfort broken hearts and homes'. He touches the most enduring value of Indian society saying: 'Our God is powerful enough to perform miracles to build up shattered families and revive broken hearts even today, as He did in the biblical days!'⁵¹ The raising of the widow of Nain's son, Jairus' daughter and Lazarus are linked to Jesus' compassion for family members who sorrow. All Dhinakaran's audio-video tapes are captioned: *A Message to the Broken Hearted*

⁴⁹ H. Lockyer, *All the Miracles in the Bible*, Zondervan, 1961; Josef Imbach, *Miracles: A 21st Century Interpretation*, Springfield, IL: Templegate, 1999; Rex Gardner, *Healing Miracles*, D.L&T, 1986.

⁵⁰ Dhinakaran, *Gifts*, p. 333-334, (Matt 14:19; 15:32) and cf. 2 Kings, chapters 4, 5 and 7.

⁵¹ Dhinakaran, *Gifts*, p. 336.

which strategically addresses illness and healing as a socially learned and sanctioned experience, in terms of personal guilt and the emotional healing of wounded histories.⁵²

Testimonies of ‘miracles received’ from Dhinakaran’s ministry reveal that basic care has been communicated or demonstrated to people who suffer in some way. One realises that the Spirit bears witness not only through signs and wonders but also, and at times more powerfully, through kind words in prayer, personal touch and deeds of mercy. Many who claimed healing, had first ‘felt’ accepted by the friend or relative who invited them, encouraged by a counsellor or comforted by Dhinakaran’s message. Jesus Calls is a highly organised ministry with an efficient follow-up system to ensure that people’s existential needs are meaningfully addressed. Sustaining and guiding are healing initiatives and operations of pastoral practice that aid ‘the restoration of a functional wholeness that has been lost or delayed’.⁵³ Dhinakaran’s ministry creates a safe space for people to better understand or re-discover and boldly share their own life stories but in a way that fits into God’s *wonderful* grace and providential care. Thus much of what is accounted for as ‘miracles’ is indeed the power of pastoral care.

4.2 Miracles: ‘The Heart-beat of Evangelism’⁵⁴

Dhinakaran has found miracles to be effective faith-builders that help people to trust Christ for personal salvation. Hence he is convinced that ‘miracles enthrall and draw people to Christ’ and Jesus and the evangelist Philip are his models.⁵⁵ For him, it is important to first get the attention of the audience if there is to be reception of the message. He believes that ‘the surprise factor’ caused by ‘signs’ raises significant questions regarding the message and authority of the person demonstrating them. He notes how after Jesus’ miraculous catch of fish, the disciples asked: ‘Who can this be?’ Just as the disciples ‘forsook all and followed [Jesus]’, Dhinakaran is confident that those in India today who witness miracles will in the same way follow Christ.⁵⁶

Further, Dhinakaran shows the effect of miracles as signs that ‘create holy fear in people’s hearts’ who have not taken God or his word seriously. He recalls Jesus cursing the fig tree that dried up, Ananias and Sapphira who were struck dead for lying, and

⁵² Russ Parker, *Healing Wounded History: Reconciling People and Places*, London: DLT, 2001.

⁵³ Richmond, Kent & Middleton (eds.), *The Pastor and the Patient*, Nashville: Abingdon, 1992, p. 23.

⁵⁴ Dhinakaran uses this phrase in ‘Healing, Signs and Wonders’, p. 127.

⁵⁵ Dhinakaran, *Gifts*, p. 340, 304, cf. John 6:1, 2; Acts 8:5-8.

⁵⁶ Dhinakaran, *Gifts*, p. 340. Mark 4:41; Luke 5:11.

Paul pronouncing blindness on the false prophet Elymas.⁵⁷ He then tells of the time when leprosy returned on a disobedient church member that caused fear in that congregation and served to teach them not to take their faith for granted.⁵⁸

Third, Dhinakaran quotes verses as evidence that ‘the Lord performed many miracles to confirm the gospel preached by his disciples’.⁵⁹ He refers to Paul’s ministry ‘by the power of signs and miracles’ that led Gentiles to obedient faith in God and teaches that miracles are a ‘confirmation of the word preached by [God’s] servants’.⁶⁰ As signs they validate the gospel preached and authenticate God’s ‘anointed’ messenger before audiences. Thus for him, ministry with ‘signs following’ bears God’s signature on it.

5. Dhinakaran’s Argument for Miracles: Some Affirmations

The people who experience miracles in Dhinakaran’s ministry serve as the evidence in his pragmatic argument for a miracle-working God. What the community perceives as miraculous become ‘infallible proofs’ of Christ’s resurrection and his Spirit’s presence assuring them of God’s grace to forgive and power to heal. Here, faith rests in Jesus’ compassionate nature and promise to be ‘the same yesterday, today and forever’.⁶¹

Dhinakaran’s signs and wonders theory can be represented in the form of a syllogism:

- Miracle healings are signs that draw crowds and serve as faith-builders,
- Evangelism aims to draw people and challenge them to have faith in Christ,
- Therefore, miracle healings are a strategic key to mission and evangelism.

Dhinakaran takes Jesus’ healing apostolate seriously. His literalist view of the Bible and ministerial success has produced in him a passion for miracles, as ‘an inevitable mission, which requires implicit obedience’.⁶² For him, miracles and mission are at the indivisible and cohesive core of the gospel. His argument is based on obedience to Christ’s command and experiences of the Spirit’s power and is advanced as follows:

At the Fall, human beings lost their God-given authority and due to Satan, sin and sickness reign in the world. But, Jesus at the cross ‘deposed’ Satan and ‘disarmed his powers’. The believer is now delivered from Satan’s power, ‘reinstated’ in a right

⁵⁷ Dhinakaran, *Gifts*, p. 339. Mark 11:20-21; Acts 5:11; Acts 13:9-12.

⁵⁸ Dhinakaran, *Gifts*, p. 339.

⁵⁹ Dhinakaran, *Gifts*, p. 338. Rom. 15:18-19, Mark 16:20, Acts 14:3.

⁶⁰ Dhinakaran, *Gifts*, p. 304.

⁶¹ Dhinakaran, quoting words from Hebrews 13: 5-8, *Gifts*, p. 342.

⁶² Dhinakaran, ‘Healing, Signs and Wonders’, p. 130.

relationship with God and Spirit-empowered to perform miracles in Jesus' name.⁶³ Jesus' threefold ministry (preach-heal-exorcise) models the way *words* and *wonders* together demonstrate the power of his love. Dhinakaran teaches that 'the body of Christ is commissioned by our Lord to announce the good news to all creation through healing signs that would accompany and authenticate the message wherever it went'.⁶⁴

Dhinakaran contends that believers are endowed with two essentials to minister like Jesus through miracles: authority (*exousia*) and power (*dunamis*). The former comes from one's relationship with the Father and the latter from the power of the Spirit.⁶⁵ The Spirit's anointing 'enables us to obey the word of God and challenge the defiant proving the veracity of his word'.⁶⁶ Thus miracles are a radical mission strategy.⁶⁷ For him, miracles have not ceased, rather a simple faith in Jesus' promise and the expectation for 'signs to follow' is missing. However, such inertia is overcome by the Spirit's empowering. He significantly notes that miracles are not a transaction of power but a result of intimacy with God: 'In the spiritual realm, position and authority are not to be understood in structural but in relational terms. True spiritual authority is a service, not a structure of dominance [and] to know God intimately is the greatest objective of performing signs and wonders'.⁶⁸ He concludes with a conundrum:

It is ignorance of God that makes belief impossible, but knowledge of him makes unbelief impossible. Ignorance of him makes miracles incredible; knowledge of him makes miracles simple.⁶⁹

Having attended Dhinakaran's miracle healing meetings, there are many positive aspects to affirm. Without doubt, his *Good News* festival at Tuticorin was a success in that it publicly celebrated God's desire and ability to miraculously heal and meet people's needs in tangible ways. It certainly drew large crowds, the gospel was clearly preached and the message grounded in the witness of the Bible. With 'compassion' as the theme, there was a renewal and re-discovery of the sign gifts and charismatic ministry - a neglected or forgotten aspect in the traditional churches. It indicated what

⁶³ Dhinakaran, 'Healing, Signs and Wonders', p. 129.

⁶⁴ Dhinakaran, 'Healing, Signs and Wonders', p. 128.

⁶⁵ Dhinakaran, 'Healing, Signs and Wonders', p. 129. John 17:2; 3:35; Luke 4:14-18.

⁶⁶ Dhinakaran, 'Healing, Signs and Wonders', p. 130.

⁶⁷ McGee, points out this was a Pentecostal mission strategy in South India since Aroolappen (1860-), 'Power from on High', *Pentecostalism in Context*, Ma & Menzies, Sheffield: JPST, 1997, p. 321.

⁶⁸ Dhinakaran, 'Healing, Signs and Wonders', p. 128, 129, he cites Matthew 20: 25, 26.

⁶⁹ Dhinakaran, 'Healing, Signs and Wonders', p. 130.

Davies calls, 'the constants in revival': urgent persistent prayer, powerful Christ-centred preaching and an unusual sense of God's presence and holiness.⁷⁰

Dhinakaran's use of the sign gifts in the Indian cultural context to reach out pastorally to those who sensed the need for deliverance from evil powers was remarkable. He is keenly aware that people are in a spiritual battle much greater than themselves, and underlines the power of God to combat the forces of darkness and evil structures. In a society that feels dominated by manifold forms of personal power, he presents Jesus as the supreme power, who must be obeyed by every other power, visible or invisible. This assures believers that they are protected from fears and their felt needs are cared for.

The immediate context and primary purpose for miracles in the Jesus Calls ministry for evangelism is commendable. Jesus did not do many 'private miracles' to keep believers happy or healthy, never to satisfy the curiosity of his sceptics and certainly not 'on demand'. Almost all the recipients of Jesus' miracles were those who today could be considered 'non-churchgoers'. Jesus' 'mighty works' were public displays of the power of his compassion. Several pastors appreciated Dhinakaran's view of signs as *attention-getters* that drew people to experience for themselves that 'Jesus is alive'. They were *pointers* to the gospel of God's love portrayed fully in Christ's death, thus used as an evangelistic tool. Dhinakaran, to use a term from banking, regards miracles as the *signature* of Jesus' Spirit that authenticates the message and the agent of healing.⁷¹

In sum, Dhinakaran recognises there are contrasting views that divide scholars on the meaning of 'miracles'. He subscribes to a biblical literalist view that trusts in a God, who sovereignly intervenes in human affairs. God by his Spirit does wonders and as Grudem puts it, 'in less common ways that bear witness to himself'.⁷² Dhinakaran's interest is not in the possibility or credibility of miracles (neither did Jesus' critics debate this) but in the *authoritative power* behind what is understood as miracles and the *teleological goal* toward which they can influence those who want to trust God. Miracles, though inexplicable, are designed to communicate the gospel, which begs the question, how does this translate within India's predominant miracle-working culture?

⁷⁰ R.E. Davis, *I Will Pour Out My Spirit*, Monarch, 1992, p. 217-227; R. Warner, *Prepare for Revival*, Hodder & Stoughton, 1995; Walker & Aune, *On Revival: A Critical Examination*, Paternoster, 2003.

⁷¹ These four key functions of miracles were confirmed by Dhinakaran, Interview, Madras, March 2002.

⁷² W. Grudem, *The Kingdom and the Power*, Greig & Springer (eds.), Ventura: Regal Books, p. 101.

6. Indian Miracle Workers and Guru Healers: Some Warnings

According to the Bible and religious experience, performing extraordinary feats and prodigies are not limited to Jesus or the Church. South India has numerous miracle workers; the most famous is Sai Baba. *In Search of a Miracle* records many incremental cures and humanly impossible feats that Carolynn O'Brien with breast cancer was enabled to do by encountering Sai Baba. Psychologist Haraldsson in *Miracles Are My Visiting Card* shows parallels between the miracles of Sai Baba and those of Jesus.⁷³ Murpet testifies to Sai Baba's miraculous powers with copious examples such as visionary experiences, multiplying small amounts of food and other material, healing the sick and deformed by touch and on rare occasions, bringing the dead to life.⁷⁴

Hoerschelmann notes: 'people flock to Sai Baba in hundreds and thousands... a divine *avatara* of the famed saint of Shirdi Sai Baba and for countless Indians and foreigners he is a miracle worker par excellence'. Other famous healers in India are Sri Narayan who is said to have healed the blind and cleansed lepers and Kunjan Pillai who 'began to cure diseases by anointing the sick with *bhasma* and to exorcise the possessed'.⁷⁵ While the scope of this thesis limits discussion, it is important to note that in India, as Babb found, 'the credibility of miraculous occurrences is never really the main issue; what matters most is what such events, in specific instances, actually mean'.⁷⁶

In Asia, Davis points out, there is no exact equivalent for the term 'miracle' and so he lists three types of extraordinary phenomena: those that stress the unusual character (*alaukika*) of an event, others that emphasise response or evoke wonder (*adbhuta*), and those that point to non-human agencies (*deivas*) believed to cause the marvel.⁷⁷ The truly indigenous characteristics of Indian healings are depicted by the guru as miracle worker. Within the Tamil Shiva *bhakti* devotional worship, gurus remain the most influential practitioners in this genre. They offer healings referred to as 'magico-religious medicine'.⁷⁸ Egnor's comments on the demand for such Indian guru healers:

⁷³ Teri O'Brien, *In Search of a Miracle*, Bangalore: Sai Towers, 2002; Erlendur Haraldsson, *Miracles Are My Visiting Cards*, NY: Hastings, 1987, has an alleged resurrection report, p. 239-241, 250.

⁷⁴ Murpet, *Sai Baba, Man of Miracles*, p. 12f (Quoted in Hoerschelmann, *Christian Gurus*, p.60.)

⁷⁵ Hoerschelmann, *Christian Gurus*, p. 49, 59, (other details about healings. 45-51).

⁷⁶ L. Babb, 'Sathya Sai Baba's Miracles', *Religion in India*, Madan (ed.), Delhi: OUP, 1991, p. 292.

⁷⁷ Richard Davis (ed.), *Images, Miracles and Authority in Asian Religious Traditions*, Oxford: Westview, 1998, p. 8. The classifications are from *Vaman Apte, English-Sanskrit Dictionary*, 1987.

⁷⁸ C. Leslie, (ed.) 'The ambiguities of medical revivalism in modern India', *Asian Medical Systems*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1976, p. 356-367.

Gurus are often approached for solutions to life problems, including illness. Solving such problems through both mystical and rational means is their principal function. The sacred ash they distribute, their blessings, glance, their touch and above all their words are believed to have healing powers.⁷⁹

In the Indian context, a miracle healer like Dhinakaran is regarded as a Christian guru who 'stands up with the Christian truths with all his being'.⁸⁰ Such an understanding is unavoidable among the masses and the charismatic community. Guruism, Brent notes, is 'the rock on which the whole of Indian spirituality has been based'.⁸¹ Therefore the status ascribed to Dhinakaran and his theology of miracles cannot be taken lightly.

In *Guru as Healer*, Kakar evaluated the ideology of the guru within India's religious culture. From 800 BC, the guru's function was essentially teaching (*shiksha*), then gradually it assumed that of initiation (*diksha*) into salvation and decisively the guru's person replaced Vedic rituals as a path (*marga*) to spiritual salvation (*moksha*): 'The guru became a reservoir of mercy and teaches out of compassion to the multitude... the relationship between the guru and disciple was intimacy, not merger'.⁸² However, Kakar notes a critical shift in the guru's role after the rise of the *bhakti* cults (700 AD): 'The guru not only was one who shows the way to the Lord but is the Lord'.⁸³ Such a romantic idealisation of the spiritual powers of a guru has ever since lent itself to unquestionable submission and adoration for the guru's person, not merely as a divine agent, but as a source of 'healing light'.⁸⁴ The healing process became centred and dependent on the therapeutic encounter and relationship between the healer and his disciples (*guru-shiksha*). The healer by touch, and even his very presence as a 'god man', helps to relieve emotional sufferings and their somatic manifestations.⁸⁵

An Indian Christian healer like Dhinakaran is normally perceived as miracle working guru hence an agent of power. His virtue or gift (charisma), skills and experience with the co-operation of the sick individual is regarded as a source or channel of power

⁷⁹ Margaret Egnor, 'Death and Nurturance in Indian Systems of Healing', *Social Science and Medicine*, Vol. 17, Pergamon Press, 1983, p. 935.

⁸⁰ Hoerschelmann, *Christian Gurus*, p. xiv.

⁸¹ Peter Brent, *Godmen of India*. London. 1972. p. 1.

⁸² Sudhir Kakar, 'Guru as Healer', *Essential Writings*, Delhi: OUP, 2001, p. 142, 141-160.

⁸³ Kakar, 'Guru as Healer', p. 143, (emphasis mine). This explains how a human being like Siddharata through self-realisation could become and be venerated as the Enlightened One - the *Buddha*.

⁸⁴ A scientific mind understands the esoteric nature of healing considering the guru-healer as a source from which a form of energy, say light, germinates on account of the spirituality (Life-force) within.

⁸⁵ Kakar see such ways of healing by philosophical gurus as equal to the rituals of popular shamans in the sub-culture, 'Healing and Culture', *Shamans, Mystics and Doctors*, Delhi: OUP, 1982, p. 271ff.

(*shaktipath*). Culturally, belief in the healer's ability to facilitate or create openness to healing power (*shakti*) is a prerequisite and several techniques are used by the healer. Often the interactive process between the healer and the sick is a ritualistic affair as negative energies, perceived as evil spirits, are released. For this, greater *shakti* needs to be received and the event manifests itself intensely and dangerously. As Brockman notes this may involve heavy breathing, strange utterances, singing in languages never learned, dancing, falling on the ground, rolling and beating oneself.⁸⁶

From the above discussion, observably the phenomena accompanying charismatic healings are not unique to Christianity and there are common elements like fervency (petitions), expectancy (faith), potency (power/*shakti*) and agency (healers). In India, non-Christian healers also promise spiritual and material 'blessing' alongside healing miracles. While culture provides a key to understanding miracles, the question is: What makes miracles distinctively 'Christian'? Discernment is needed and the inherent dangers in Dhinakaran's theology of miracles and power need to be pointed out.

7. Miracles and Pastoral Pentecostalism: Pastoral-Theological Concerns

Pastoral Pentecostalism advocated in this thesis, finds no biblical justification for rejecting *a priori* the possibility of miracles and the spectacular, revelatory sign gifts, especially for frontier or pioneer evangelism in India. However, having noted how the masses seek after and venerate miracle-working gurus, 'demonstrations of power' in relation to the gospel must be treated with caution. In a pluralistic society, one cannot be ignorant of the potential dangers in allowing charismatic experiences to determine Christian doctrine or in themselves to validate the gospel message. While positive aspects of Dhinakaran's ministry challenge the Indian church in mission, there are inconsistencies and inevitable pastoral-theological damages that are most disturbing.

While Dhinakaran seeks a balance in his 'word and wonders' approach to evangelism, his advertisements and reports, as in Asantha's testimony, for many evangelicals add up to a marketing technique that shows that his primary focus is on signs and wonders. He gives the impression that miracles are commonplace and can meet the real needs of people. On the contrary, it is the gospel of Christ that meets people's needs that sadly, in reality, becomes secondary. A closer look at Dhinakaran's methods in relation to faith,

⁸⁶ Richard Brockman, 'Possession and Medicine in South Central India', *Journal of Applied Psychoanalytical Studies*, 2/3, 2000, p. 299 f., See photographs.

divine sovereignty and the personhood of the sick and possessed shows that his motives get distorted and leave a credibility gap. He fosters a 'culture for miracles' that if not guarded against, can be counterproductive to 'Christian' healing.

It was regrettable when some Christian leaders and non-believers were disappointed by the emotionally-charged atmosphere during which Dhinakaran was seen to be in control of the proceedings. The combined responses of over 300,000 people appeared as mass hysteria and it was hard to tell genuine manifestations of the Spirit from possibly satanic counterfeits, social conditioning or mere outward conformity. Some believed that there was mind-control and social conditioning taking place and a few felt manipulated. At this stage, for all purposes the healing revivalism became human-centred.⁸⁷

The taking up of offerings and appeal for funds from those present, a large segment being non-Christian, was disconcerting. The organisers alluded to the huge costs involved in 'arranging a miracle healing event of this scale'. The crowds were asked to stand with their money in hand, lift their love-gifts towards heaven for a blessing and sit down after the collection was taken. The grace of giving was made something distasteful, especially when one realises that Jesus never in anyway associated money with his healing miracles.⁸⁸ One becomes aware that announcements are self-presentations of the Jesus Calls organisation and recruiting techniques for supporters and 'faith partners'. While local churches cooperated, there was no real partnership and clearly Dhinakaran's team was in charge of what at times seemed a performance.

Dhinakaran 'stages' testimonies in public as 'proofs' for miracles, which again is a pastorally damaging exercise. The condition of the person prior to the alleged healing is not verified, and there is no clinical follow-up. Some testified to their healing and returned from the platform with persisting symptoms. The exhibitionism involved in 'prophetic' naming and calling people to the dais never characterised Jesus' miracles which stemmed out of his compassion. Most worrying was that Dhinakaran had no 'word from God' or encouragement for the majority who were not healed each night.

⁸⁷ See other cautions, Rob Warner, *Prepare for Revival*, Hodder & Stoughton, 1998, p. 117-125.

⁸⁸ Jesus' only miracle of *nature* involving money was to catch a fish with the exact amount to pay the disciples' tax. Interestingly only Matthew (17:24-27) notes this and the miracle itself is not recorded.

Dhinakaran claims that miracles build faith, and for some they do, yet for others they create doubts and destroy faith. A few correlated non-healing to their lack of faith and reasoned, if their faith was not good enough for physical healing it was not valid for their salvation. Dhinakaran's stress on human faith undermines his teaching on divine compassion as 'the sole reason' for healing. While in his writings he carefully recognises that not all miracles are from God, he fails to teach that miracles do not guarantee or automatically increase faith. The problem with Dhinakaran's argument is that it is one-sided and makes a fatal assumption that people who witness miracles will believe. But both scripture and church history show that they also harden people in unbelief. Often demonstrations of power may lead *some* to believe, but, as in Acts, they also excite the enemy to greater opposition leading to persecution and death.⁸⁹ Indian evangelist J. Paul further cautions against sign-seeking:

Miracles appeal to the eyes, not necessarily to the will. It increases appetite for more so you would see great crowds flocking to a 'miracle worker' [but] don't turn to God... Jesus warned those who sought after signs (Matt. 12:39; John 6:26-34; 20:29). Jesus commends faith that comes by not seeing.⁹⁰

Theologically, comparing Dhinakaran's teachings against his practical ministry there are some inconsistencies. For him, Christlike compassion is the criterion and necessary ingredient that distinguishes miracles as 'Christian'. However, he tends to mix the *source* (God of compassion) with the *means* (the virtue or agent of compassion) that confuses the true object of faith in healing, i.e. the sovereign God. Thus people seek out Dhinakaran thinking that his healing gift, special prayers or compassion, bring healing. Dhinakaran also teaches through paradoxes, for instance, 'miracles of grace' is meant to show God's power in weakness. But, often the crowd perceives miracles in the opposite way. Propaganda and reports celebrate the 'power factor' rather than God's mercy in miracles. Moreover, Dhinakaran's gospel presentation links miracle healing with the finished work of Christ (cross) which gives people the idea that it is already there for them to claim. Since he does not refer to it as a sign of the 'not yet' kingdom, those not healed are left bewildered and question God's selective compassion.

Indian Christians read in the Bible of the kind of power that Jesus passed on to the apostles and glibly equate it to Dhinakaran's gifts. The apostle Paul ministered with miracles and wonders (Rom. 15:18-19) and described some *charismata* as extraordinary

⁸⁹ Paul Hiebert, 'Spiritual Warfare and Worldview', *ERT*, 24/3, 2000, p. 251.

⁹⁰ John Paul, *Charisma or Catastrophe?* Madras: Ambassadors for Christ Pub., 1977, p. 14.

capacities that endow believers with new potentials or enhance their natural abilities to higher levels of service.⁹¹ However, Dhinakaran focuses narrowly on the nine 'sign' gifts and highlights one particular strand within it - faith, healing and miracles (1Cor. 12: 9-10). Thus he exclusively promotes the supernatural and as a result, his 'gifts of power' are classified above the natural 'ordinary' service gifts that he rarely mentions. This has drawn him into the debate on the theological blunders inherent in 'pentecostal power' gifts,⁹² which is unfortunate since Paul's whole argument in the passage is to dislodge the notion that the Spirit is more present in certain kinds of gifts. Paul pleads that the apparently less spectacular gifts be more encouraged and warns the Corinthian believers of a spiritual elitism that acts independently of each other with a better or holier-than-thou attitude (v. 25), which divides and brings pain to the whole church. Indian churches with caste-lines need reconciliation, but Dhinakaran in caricaturing the 'powerful' sign gifts against other types of service gifts, tends to cause a divisive spirit within evangelical-charismatic circles that itself needs healing and reconciliation.

Dhinakaran sets himself up for failure in advertising: 'Miracles as in the Bible Days'. His examples of modern miracles are substantially inferior to the biblical account, second-hand and reveal a categorical difference to Jesus' healings. For instance, he refers an account he read of Rabindranath from Tirunelveli who allegedly brought a child back to life before a sceptical crowd, but avoids any scientific discussion on the matter.⁹³ He uses biblical narratives to argue from the greater to the lesser by submitting that if Jesus did resurrection miracles, how much more will he take care of families in deep pain due to broken relationships.⁹⁴ God does make himself present through miracles in Jesus Calls festivals and healings give people new meaning and empowerment to re-engage in their social world, nevertheless Dhinakaran's ministry stands in stark contrast to Jesus' which shunned publicity and silenced propaganda.

8. Criteria for Discernment: When Charismania Ruins Compassion

Dhinakaran's preoccupation with miracle healings and the demonic, unintentionally yet certainly, promotes charismania. This, in turn, gives the false impression that God is only really involved when he works outside the established order he created. Less

⁹¹ Dhinakaran, *Gifts*, p. 340; Kelsey, *The Christian & The Supernatural*, London: Search Pub., 1976.

⁹² Max Turner, *The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts: Then and Now*, Secunderabad: OM, 1996, p. 181.

⁹³ Dhinakaran, *Gifts*, p. 336ff.

⁹⁴ Empathy for inner healing of wounded relationships is a typical cry in India. Thelma Johnson, *Jesus in Tears*, Bangalore: ATC, 1995; M. Usha, *Hidden Springs to Healing*, Mumbai: St. Paul, 2002.

wonder, only recently he has taken up concerns related to natural disaster and environment, in response to the need created in India by the tsunami in December 2004. His over-focus on the miraculous causes him to neglect justice issues for the oppressed and the urgent need to challenge economic structures that cause poverty and sickness. In forcefully advancing strategies for 'power evangelism' his views on compassion, the 'wounded healer' and 'miracles of grace' are in danger of being eclipsed. Many attend his programs to witness miracles and tend to follow Jesus for what they can get out of him. Without being grounded in biblical truth or aware of Dhinakaran's theology for suffering, the love for power rather than the power of love seems to rule the day.

Dhinakaran makes a mistake in stressing the *phenomena over function* of the gifts, which he teaches is to reveal the power of God's love. His ministry of compassion has the proper intention but resorts to a wrong use of charismata. Dye usefully notes:

Spiritual gifts are just tools to help us carry out Christ's great commission more effectively. They are not given to thrill or entertain the saints. And they *never* measure our spirituality. They are grace gifts which are given to worthy and unworthy alike. They should not to be seen as rewards for repentance or righteousness. They are by-products of the presence and activity of God.⁹⁵

Those who promote Dhinakaran's ministry need to discern the 'miraculous' and test their experiences against more reliable criteria. First, like the believers at Berea (Acts 17:10-11), Indian Christians must 'search the Scriptures' and ask whether Dhinakaran's teachings and their experiences add, take away, ignore or violate biblical truth. Second, since the Jesus Calls movement seeks to exalt Christ, which is what the Spirit does (John 16:14), therefore activities that draw attention to themselves, the Christian guru or healer rather than Jesus, must be denounced. Miracles demonstrate Christ's lordship and those who experience them will follow Christ by taking up their cross daily and willingly suffer for his sake. Third, the gifts come from a relationship to the Spirit, as does the fruit of the Spirit. According to Jesus, counterfeit prophets and 'false christs' work miracles to gain a following and rather than miracles, a changed life and character evidenced God's presence (Matt. 7:20). Fourth, public enthusiasm is different from emotionalism and chaos. God's Spirit is known to give believers not only power but also love and a sound mind (1 Tim. 1:7). The Spirit will not abuse common sense and is not honoured by confusion or disorder. Fifth, miracles are not proofs to satisfy public curiosity nor meant to keep Christians healthy. They are meant to bring glory to Christ

⁹⁵ Colin Dye, *Revival Phenomena*, Kent: Sovereign World, 1996, p. 25.

and help people put their trust in him, not in signs and wonders, which relate more to evangelism than growth in grace and Christian maturity.

Though Dhinakaran acknowledges that it is more important to seek 'the Giver' than the gifts and disclaims personal powers, he is still perceived as a Christian guru and miracle worker. His miracle crusades and prayer partner schemes create in some people expectations that jeopardise God's sovereignty. Miracle power when perceived as 'magical' or used mechanically, makes healing unchristian as it can be viewed as a coercive force in the hands of religious mediators to manipulate spiritual powers. Undue stress on miracles as signs of God's power, easily undermines his love and freedom. It leaves the unhealed wondering if God is dispassionate or feeling guilty for their lack of faith or for some sin in their lives. This is the antithesis of Pastoral Pentecostalism since here, charismata disengages from being compassionate and becomes pastorally harmful.

In spite of his strong accent on the value of signs and function of miracles in relation to human need, interestingly, Dhinakaran does not altogether discount the non-miraculous. He realises that miracles are 'the sign' of divine power and not 'the measure' of it. He notes how John the Baptist as 'a prophet of the Most High' did no miracles and correctly contends that one 'can not gauge [divine power] by the number of miracles nor can say that because there are no miracles there is no power'.⁹⁶ This is a crucial statement by which Dhinakaran admits that John did not attempt or need to perform miracles in order to point people to Christ. Yet, all that John said about Jesus was true and what he accomplished, significant. Nonetheless, Dhinakaran adamantly claims: 'It is the direction of God for me to take the ministry out of the supernatural and the results are dramatic' and pursue miracles, which continue to present contentious issues.

Dhinakaran has shown that God's hand is not shortened to save by the power of his word and compassion. For this generation, he has recovered the role of charismatic healing for the evangelisation of India. Christians need not treat the modern healing movement as an enemy but see it as a challenge to reclaim the fullness of the gospel. However, given the conflicting ideas and confusions prevalent within the Indian cultural context where miracles are craved and miracle-mongers rampant, a ministry that *promotes* 'miracles' causes more problems than it solves and it seems best to avoid this.

⁹⁶ Dhinakaran, 'Healing Signs and Wonders', p. 124 (John 10:41; cf. Lk. 1:17, 76).

Chapter Nine

Dhinakaran, the Shamanic Manthiravadi and Exorcism ¹

Introduction

Several indigenous and faith-based approaches to healing as in Hindu Ayurveda and Islamic Unani are still practised in their socio-cultural contexts in Asia. Simpson points out that ‘some of the oldest known systems of health and bodily healing’ by supernatural or natural means were developed in India.² While much data on forms of therapies is lost, Indian folk religiosity through oral tradition retains beliefs where healing rituals in communities serve as a strong socializing force. They have a logic that for them explains the importance of supernatural experiences and the need for deliverance, of which many Indian Pentecostal churches themselves are unaware.

‘The world is, to a degree at least, the way we imagine it’, wrote Wink, and ‘through the lens of our world view we make sense of our experiences’.³ Phenomena associated with faith, the demonic, and miracle healings are as ancient as the human race and documented in every religious culture.⁴ Taking cognisance of the insights of cultural anthropology helps to understand how people through an agent (exorcist) are relieved of distress as a consequence of external forces (e.g. the Holy Spirit) and gain control over other external forces (demons) causing such distress. In India, Caplan notes:

Popular Hinduism in Madras [recognises] a hierarchical order of divinities with gradations of benign and malign powers, shaman-like figures who become a medium for the deity, and drive out the spirit either by appeasing it with a sacrifice, or threatening it with his or her superior power, or both.⁵

The Indian ‘shaman’ (from Sanskrit, *sramana*) is a religious specialist who exercises control over spirits and around whom the magico-religious life of the society centres.⁶ Due to the perceived link between sickness and evil spirits, the shaman is considered a spiritual doctor who possesses gifts or *charismata* (in Latin, *fortuna*) that bring well-being, hence, the automatic correlation between exorcism and the restoration to health.

¹ A large part of this chapter is being published under the title: ‘South Indian Demonology and the Manthiravadi as a Wounded-Warrior Healer’, Peter Riddell (ed.), *Angels and Demons: Perspectives and Coping Strategies in Diverse Religious Traditions*, Leicester: IVP, forthcoming.

² Liz Simpson, *Crystal Healing*. London: Gaia, 1997, p. 99. Ironically, these are called non-orthodox.

³ W. Wink, *The Powers That Be: Theology for a New Millennium*, New York: Augsburg, 1998, p. 14.

⁴ Thornton & Malony, ‘Faith Healing’, Hunter (ed.) *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counselling*, Nashville: Abingdon, 1990, note that faith healings ‘occupy a prominent place in the Hebrew-Christian Scriptures, particularly in the ministry of Jesus.’ p. 401.

⁵ Caplan, *Class and Culture in Urban India*, Clarendon, 1987, p. 225-226; Moffat, 1979, p. 241f.

⁶ Mircea Eliade, ‘Shamanism’, *The Encyclopaedia of Religions*, London: Macmillan, 1987, p. 202.

Pioneer evangelism in India normally takes place in the context of spiritual warfare with healings and exorcisms.⁷ The Indian Christian and the Pentecostal subcultures advocate a 'miraculous fundamentalism' that claims the gifts are essential for ministry and assert: 'the devil and all his legions are still abroad in the world and, if anything, Christ is needed as never before to save people from these malignant powers'.⁸ Indian Pentecostalism mushroomed within this firmly established folk religiosity wherein it flourishes. Bergunder estimates that 80% of Indians follow popular religions 'looking for a power or person who is capable to save, heal and solve the problems of their lives'.⁹ He also observed that 'Dhinakaran acts within a framework that is absolutely Christian, but his ministry resembles in many ways that of popular healers'.¹⁰ There are such parallel phenomena, within which Dhinakaran's demonised worldview has not yet been compared theologically nor critiqued in relation to the Christian gospel.

Religious movements, Christian or otherwise, have saviour-figures and healers who are agents of power and material blessing. Therefore, Saliba insists: 'Not only must Christianity clarify its own position and defend itself against misinterpretations and attacks, it also must develop a theological framework that makes some sense of the presence of other religions'.¹¹ Having discussed Dhinakaran as a miracle-working guru, I want to explore his deliverance ministry by comparing him with the traditional *manthiravadi*, a Hindu shaman who aids those afflicted by evil spirits (*peeys*) in the process of detecting causes and finding remedies. The *manthiravadi* uses *mantras* (incantations) to contact and control spirits. As an agent of power, he offers a valuable focal point to examine the pastoral aspirations of the sick and concepts of deliverance. I will argue that both these agents are 'warrior healers' as well as 'wounded healers' and show thereafter radical ways in which the nature of *power* in Christian 'miracles' and exorcism differ from the religio-magical power wielded by the Indian shaman.

1. The Popular Hindu Warfare Worldview

In Indian cosmology, all forms of existence - spirit or matter, inanimate or ultimate reality - belong to a unifying life force, *prana*. No categorical difference seems to exist

⁷ Ed Gross, *Miracles, Demons & Spiritual Warfare: An Urgent Call for Discernment*, Baker, 1990.

⁸ Caplan, 'Christian Fundamentalism as Counter Culture', *Religion in India*, 1991, p. 371.

⁹ Bergunder, 'Miracle Healing and Exorcism', *ICGQ*, 8/2, 2001, p. 12.

¹⁰ Bergunder, *Christianity is Indian*, p. 171; 'Miracle Healing and Exorcism', *ICGQ*, 8/2, 2001, p. 8.

¹¹ John A Saliba, *Understanding New Religious Movements*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995, p. 175.

between creator and creatures or human and non-human, and plausible boundaries are blurred.¹² Hiebert's analytical framework usefully correlates the unseen (pure spirits) powers in the heavens with lower empirical forms (pure matter) in the natural world. Hiebert points out how a western dualistic, deterministic worldview tends to develop a 'blind spot' to a mezzanine level that he popularised as 'the flaw of the excluded middle'.¹³ In this category are supernatural yet this-worldly spirits including demonic forces that surface when analysing spiritual causes in the battle against diseases.

Hindu deities and demons are placed within a hierarchy in the socio-religious system.¹⁴ At the highest level is *Devam* or *Kadavul*: ultimate reality, divine but unembodied and impersonal. Next are *devas*: deities who are worshipped as beneficent and pure beings, comprising mythological figure such as Shiva, Parvati and Vishnu. These gods are customized for each tribe or family and festivals surround their exploits. At the third level are *devatas* or godlings who serve the community as territorial protectors and welfare controllers. These comprise the local gods like Parvati's sons, *Ganesha* and *Murugan*, and the mother goddess *Kali*, also represented symbolically as the goddess *Shakti* (divine energy/power) and worshipped at village shrines as *Amman* (mother). While devatas expect to be regularly propitiated and may possess humans, they are usually dignified powers and considered as benevolent.

However, at the fourth and lowest level are *demons*: uncouth, capricious ghosts called *bhuts* or in Tamil, *peeys*.¹⁵ These malevolent spirits get involved mischievously in human affairs causing trouble, misfortune and destruction. They are blamed for natural disasters, physical accidents and a host of failures in life including the lack of harvest, barrenness in women or a child not passing its exams. Fundamental to Indian aetiology is the conviction that *peeys* disrupt, create havoc and injure humans and are the main cause for sicknesses. They are believed to attack weak-willed and morally vulnerable people. Both illness and ill luck are generally consigned to this battalion of evil.

Territorially, notions of *peeys* differ slightly but on the whole they are notorious for oppressing, afflicting and taking up residence in humans, a belief traced back to the

¹² Alan Beal, *Gopalpur: A South Indian Village*, London: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1980, p. 48.

¹³ Hiebert, *Anthropological Reflections*, Baker, 1994, p. 189-201.

¹⁴ S. Weightmen, *Hinduism in the Village Setting*, Milton Keynes: Open University, 1978, p. 26-28; Caplan, *Religion and Power*, p. 56-58; Moffatt, *An Untouchable Community*, Princeton Press, 1979.

¹⁵ The Tamil Bible uses *asutha avi* or *ketavi* for all kinds of evil spirits or the Sanskrit derivative *pissacu*, but usually *peey* is employed to depict an afflicting spirit.

Hindu scriptures, Artharvedas (1500 BC).¹⁶ Both Hindus and Christians respond to demons as hostile entities who share their living space so exorcism is a common practice. Peeys function with emotions and wills. Each have an identity and operation of their own,¹⁷ e.g. an afflicting demon from forests (*kaattu picaacu*), an angry spirit (*muni*), or a disturbed ancestral spirit wandering after untimely death by drowning, suicide or murder. Dhinakaran recognises evil spirits within similar categories.¹⁸

Two thirds of India lives in village settings. Elsewhere, despite rapid urbanisation and westernisation, most ethnic communities maintain folk values and ingrained beliefs regarding affliction and healing.¹⁹ In rural areas, medical aid is unavailable, inaccessible and often unaffordable hence cultural beliefs govern and guide faith. Indian culture is diverse, plural and has been shaped historically by several religions. Despite an apparent threat by a globalised culture, Indian religiosity is eclectic and as Das aptly puts it, 'robust enough to be able to maintain its richness and identity'.²⁰

Western forms of medical missions, as Newbigin observed, became 'a powerful secularising force',²¹ but did not totally erode these die-hard beliefs in Indians. As research advanced in disease diagnosis, biochemical treatment and surgery, the culture of scientific medicine was acutely aware of the danger of excluding spirituality or attributing non-medical healing as 'superstition'. Indian medics maintain a holistic view where the administration of medicine is viewed as an expression of divine grace.²² Efforts have been made to improve medical missions from a 'mono' to such a 'wholistic' approach.²³ Consequently, both *supernatural* and natural means of healing are associated with the idea of sacred and a 'miraculous', yet legitimate path (*marga*) toward solving personal, psychosomatic and social problems. A faith perspective is an essential reality in the cultural construct of what it means to be fully human, and alleviating symptoms are related to a ritual process wherein relationships are vital.

¹⁶ E.g. Bhuta-Vidya form of exorcism, Wolfgang Wagner, et al. 'The Modernisation of Tradition: Thinking about Madness in Patna, India', *Culture and Psychology*, Delhi: Sage, 1999, p. 419.

¹⁷ David Mosses, 'Catholic Saints and the Hindu Village Pantheon', *Man in India*, 29, June 1994, p. 320; Caplan, *Religion and Power*, CLS, 1989, p. 32-71, Hoerschelmann, *Christian Gurus*, p. 378f.

¹⁸ Dhinakaran, *Healing Stripes*, p. 33-35.

¹⁹ Ram Ahuja, *Society in India: Concepts, Theories and Recent Trends*, Delhi: Rawat, 1999, p. 372.

²⁰ Guruchand Das, *India Unbound*, Delhi: Penguin, 2000, p. 349.

²¹ Lesslie Newbigin, *Honest Religion for Secular Man*, Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966, p. 18f.

²² V. Thumbu, *Be Thou My Vision: Spiritual Resources for a Healing Ministry*, Delhi: TRACI, 1997. R. Ballentine, *Radical Healing: Integrating the World's Great Therapeutic Traditions*, New York: Harmony Books, 1999, p. 5. The concept of *sanus* (healthy) has direct coherence with *sanctus* (holy).

²³ Vinod Shah, Report on the Indian Health Scenario, *The Church in India*, (eds.) Hrangkhuma and Kim, Delhi: ISPCCK, 1999, p. 152-156.

In this way, spiritual encounters are powerful integrating forces at the heart of what the community perceives as crucial to counteract misfortune. Deliverance puts sufferers in touch with their inner selves and engages their whole family in the conflict with cosmic powers. 'Hindus flock to shamans, fortune-tellers, gurus, and priests to receive information about the future, to ameliorate their suffering and take remedial action against the evil designs of the enemy, known or unknown'.²⁴ The main task is to divine from 'the world of spirits', some organic explanation and an appropriate treatment for which a spiritual specialist, mediatory or advocate is normally consulted.

2. The Manthiravadi, Sources of Affliction and Demonisation

It is crucial to note that in South India the wilful practitioner of harmful magic is not the manthiravadi. It is another agent known as the *suniakaran* who uses black magic to deliberately orchestrate evil forces to control life events. The suniakaran is equivalent to a modern anti-social wizard, or witch, who resorts to divination and witchcraft that connect him to spirit beings and he inflicts pain on individuals and upsets community harmony. In contrast, the manthiravadi, as Caplan notes, is 'the self-proclaimed guardian of the public against all manner of mystical attack'.²⁵ He has chosen to be a sympathetic exorcist and is socially regarded as a benevolent people-helper and agent for healing. Though he has the potential for sorcery, he uses white magic to help people and champions the good of his fellow humans. Thus, the image of a warrior healer is befitting for this advocate for personal and community welfare.

Generally three sources of affliction are recognised: (1) *Natural*: disorders created within or by nature, (2) *Spiritual*: both divine and demonic and (3) *Human*: sorcery, black magic, spells and evil eye/mouth/acts.²⁶ Maintaining a common spiritual root humans are believed to bring sickness on themselves. Illness can be a result of divine punishment for sin against a god, breaking some moral code, violation of a religious sanction (taboo) or failure to fulfil religious duties. There is no demarcation between sickness and misfortune and ritual sacrifices are obligatory to prevent further crises that are readily attributed to demons. All this calls for the manthiravadi's services.

²⁴ Thirumalai, *Sharing Your Faith with a Hindu*, p. 23.

²⁵ Caplan, *Class and Culture*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987, p. 226.

²⁶ Caplan, *Religion and Power*, p. 40; D.K. Srinivas & Trivedi, 'Knowledge and Attitude of Diseases in a Rural Community of South India', *Social Science and Medicine*, Vol. 16, 1982, p. 1635-82.

Pilch clarifies that, 'Healing is directed toward illness, that is, the attempt to provide personal and social meaning for the life problems created by sicknesses'.²⁷ Here, the diagnosis may include interaction with spirits. However, due to the embedded or *emic* aetiology there has been a demonological basis for illnesses. Consequently, *illness*, a culturally determined explanatory concept, is equated with the blanket term *sickness*, the real human experience of disease and used interchangeably. Two illustrations explain how the ritual transforms the meaning of illness, change is actualised, the symptoms removed, and the exorcist-healer's pastoral services are appreciated.²⁸

A baby crying through the night with diarrhoea or colic is often believed to be possessed by a wandering *peey*. The mother takes the baby to the manthiravadi who intuitively identifies the spirit behind the diarrhoea. Mantras are chanted above the baby's cries or simply whispered in its ear. He blows or spits on a lemon, circles it thrice around the baby's head, crushes the lemon and carefully discards it. If another child comes in contact with that lemon, that child is liable to the same symptoms. This objectification of disease idealises transference and is psychologically important as it signals the removal of illness.²⁹ A sacred string is tied around the baby's neck or waist and a copper-plate (talisman) around the arm to permanently ward off other *peeys*.³⁰ After this, the baby's crying subsides and it is breastfed. The mother and other family members leave with relief, assurance, and gratitude. While there is no official charge, a few rupees are usually placed in the hand of the manthiravadi's helper at the door.

Indian children, particularly good-looking boys, have a spot of black paste (*mai*) put on their face to avoid the evil eye.³¹ Due to a strong belief in witchcraft, humans are known to possess invisible powers they can project deliberately or unknowingly to cause misfortune, harm or death. These powers are said to be concentrated in the eye and made effectual by an evil mouth. A curse or a word spoken out of envy or jealousy can therefore affect health. Misfortune is transferable by the evil touch of certain individuals, who are avoided or uninvited to auspicious occasions. A person's total wellbeing - health and relationships such as marriage, family, education, business and

²⁷ J. Pilch, *Healing in New Testament and Medical Anthropology*, Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000, p. 25.

²⁸ I have observed these processes with manthiravadis at work in Seppin's Road and Lingarajapuram, Bangalore. See Brockman, 'Possession and Medicine in South India', *JAPS*, 2/3, 2000, p. 303f.

²⁹ Sudir Kakar, 'Psychoanalysis and Eastern Spiritual Healing Traditions', *Journal of Analytical Psychology*, Vol. 48, 2003, p. 659-678.

³⁰ Bhagwat & Chirmulay, 'Traditional Healing in Rural Karnataka', *Man in India*, 77/1, 1984, p. 74.

³¹ Burnett, *World of Spirits*, Tunbridge: Monarch, 2000, p. 43; Hiebert, *Folk Religion*, p. 154f.

property, are all vulnerable if they are not insured against such evil spiritual forces. In order to remove, curb or prevent such evil, again the manthiravadi is consulted.

From the foregone discussion, three governing presuppositions make Dhinakaran's deliverance ministry relevant and useful. First, his Charismatic theology is in tune with the underlying cultural beliefs about the causes and remedies of illness and misfortune. His honest acceptance of demon-possession rings true to their objective existence in Jesus' day and is not inconsistent with the modern scientific outlook in India. Importantly, he cares enough to address people's fear of evil spirits and offers the Holy Spirit's miracle working power. Second, there is a close relation between distress perceived as demonic and its effects on one's family life and social norms and control. Dhinakaran's strength is that he accepts people with afflictions who are in some way social misfits and allows them to experience God's compassion. Third, he has tapped into the *de facto* recognition and demand for specialists with the strong 'notion that access to certain kinds of sacred knowledge is, in fact, restricted as it may be obtained only by favour of some supernatural power or agency rather than individual effort'.³²

3. Pentecostal Demonology, Dhinakaran and Deliverance

There are several parallels between popular Hindu and Pentecostal aetiology of affliction. In Indian Pentecostal circles both miracle healings and exorcisms take place primarily for evangelism. Exorcisms are adjudged as 'miracles' since, in *effect*, they also cause amazement, indicate power, relieve the oppressed and are used in a pastoral context to reach out to non-believers with the gospel.³³ Christians, on the other hand, have God's promise of 'divine healing', and generally it is accepted that 'born-again' believers cannot be demon-possessed. Pentecostal churches recognize that Jesus separated 'healing' from 'casting out demons', and although they often accompany each other, the latter is more dramatic and usually results in the former.

There are at least four reasons why Indian Pentecostals engage in spiritual warfare and exorcism. First, *culturally*, belief in the evil influence of unseen spirits and the need for relief is a powerful religious idea that Indians are responsive to. It is in deliverance ministry that the indigenous character of Indian Pentecostalism is most distinct.

³² T.N. Madan, 'Sacred Persona'. *Religion in India*, Delhi: OUP, 1991, p. 261.

³³ Ajith Fernando notes in Mark 1:22 the exorcism/miracle was astonishing and 'elicits a comment about Jesus' teaching' (v.27). He finds at least 12 times in Mark where amazement and fear result from such miracles, *Jesus Driven Ministry*, Leicester: IVP, 2002, p. 195.

Second, *biblically*, Pentecostals find nothing in the Bible that suggests that demons ceased to exist or have stopped tormenting humans. On the contrary, it was a vital part of Jesus' model and mandate for the church's mission, believers are asked to stay alert to satanic attacks, and the early Church is seen confronting the powers of darkness. Third, *missiologically*, like Jesus, they regard disease as an alien intruder and not part of God's purposes. Unclean spirits certainly are not native to God's kingdom so, the casting out demons is a way of bringing sufferers the fullness of the gospel and hope. Fourth, *pragmatically*, Pentecostals with their stress on fasting, prayers and power encounters are now the fastest growing denomination in India. Numerous testimonies reveal that members usually join Pentecostal churches after experiencing deliverance and healing from oppressive spirits through prayer and power encounters.³⁴

Some Pentecostals seem to find demons behind every Hindu idol, but usually *peeys*, also called 'devils' (*picaacu*), are linked to the myriads of fallen angels who assist Satan. Vasu, superintending pastor of the Madras Pentecostal Assembly, describes five ways demons afflict and keep people from knowing God: By causing: (1) *Insanity* or mental ill-health, (2) *Sicknesses* and muteness caused by witchcraft, (3) *Spiritual blindness* that enslaves people in meaningless traditions and blocks the light of the gospel, (4) *Oppression*, where people who are medically fit are inactive and dejected and (5) *Possession* which is 'the complete take over of the human mind by demonic powers'.³⁵ Hence, when demons are exorcised, people are expected to return to their sane minds and turn to God. J. Daniel of the Laymen's Evangelical Fellowship teaches that devils oppress people where there is no Christian gospel, that there is victory only through Jesus' blood and that faith should be strong when casting out devils.³⁶

Dhinakaran's praxis of deliverance seeks to reflect a biblical worldview but also resonates with many popular Hindu beliefs. He highlights the conflict between a good-healing God and a sickness-afflicting devil, where healing and deliverance are both a part of an infernal conflict between the two kingdoms. Dhinakaran's emphasis is clearly on the power of the *cross* rather than the advancing *kingdom*, which is inferred from his use of the Spirit's presence. He practises 'deliverance evangelism' where

³⁴ Roger Greenway, 'Prayer and Exorcism', *Go Make Disciples*, Secunderabad: OM, 1999, p. 105.

³⁵ Prabhudoss Vasu, 'Lord over Darkness and Demons', *Jesus Christ is Lord*, Bangalore: Pentecostal Fellowship of India, 1993, p. 31-32, (papers originally presented at the PFI, Delhi Conference).

³⁶ Joshua Daniel, *Victory over Demons and Fear*, Madras: LEF, 1995, p. 9, 25, 39. Dhinakaran was greatly influenced by the views of the LEF, where he worshipped when transferred to Bangalore.

exorcisms are a key factor in leading people to Christ.³⁷ His public casting out of devils ‘in Jesus’ name’ manifestly proves that the Spirit’s power is greater than Satan. He teaches that ‘when the gifts are in action’, irrespective of the cause for disease, ‘the compassion of Christ shatters all those causes and heals us ultimately’.³⁸ Nevertheless, he is acutely mindful of Satan as the first cause for all diseases and calls him the enemy, tempter, roaring lion and seducing spirit, who ‘gains easy access into a heart emptied of Jesus and causes immense pain, utter gloom and confusion all the time’.³⁹

Dhinakaran does not accept that a compassionate God could deliberately inflict people with sickness as punishment, as the CPM would, but he agrees that, ‘at times the Lord permits diseases in the lives of his servants to make them comprehend exalted spiritual truths’.⁴⁰ He recognizes sickness can be a direct result of a person’s moral sin and folly as in ‘breaking the laws of nature and overworking’.⁴¹ He does not view ‘medication as contrary to biblical truth’ and cites verses where God encourages the use of medicine. He acknowledges that *natural* causes like ‘viruses and bacteria are often the culprits for sicknesses’, but notes, ‘they are not the only ones’. He pays undue attention to ‘powerful, unclean evil spirits that cause fear, anxiety and depression in our hearts and havoc in our lives’. He discusses the *modus operandi* of *peeys* as ‘evil forces that surround us, stand beside us, stir up evil thoughts in us and if we give room they come in. But if Jesus were to come into our hearts they dare not approach us’.⁴²

Along with an excessive interest in the demonic, some of Dhinakaran’s teachings are unsettling and questionable by the gospel and biblical standards. For instance, he sees sickness today as part of the curse on humanity, a result of the fall and teaches that ‘the sins of the parents are visited upon the children’.⁴³ He maintains a demonological framework that includes the belief in roaming spirits of people who commit suicide and of the untimely dead, which he uncritically incorporated in his biblical account of Satan, the fall and sickness-afflicting demons.⁴⁴ He identifies some harmful practices

³⁷ Doris Wagner, *How to Cast Out Demons*, Colorado Springs: Wagner Ministries, 1999, p. 37-49.

³⁸ Dhinakaran, *Gifts*, p. 306.

³⁹ Dhinakaran, *Be Not Dismayed*, p. 62; *Gifts*, p. 227.

⁴⁰ Dhinakaran, *Gifts*, p. 324.

⁴¹ Dhinakaran, *Gifts*, p. 306. Psa. 38: 3,5,7; 104:20-23; Prov. 11:17. In Psa. 38:3 it does say, ‘because of Your (God’s) wrath there is no health in my body’, but Dhinakaran does not comment on this fact.

⁴² Dhinakaran, *Voice of Love*, p. 48.

⁴³ Dhinakaran, *Healing Stripes*, p. 17.

⁴⁴ Dhinakaran, ‘Story of the Devil’, teaches ‘suicidal spirits roam the earth until the time appointed’, *Healing Stripes*, p. 30-39; He tells of his out-of-the-body experiences to Satan’s kingdom where an angel shows him ‘the unredeemed spirits of people who died unrepentantly’, *Gifts*, p. 226-233.

by some manthiravadis to be ‘the devil’s black magic, sorcery, witchcraft, wizardry and necromancy’ then, quite simplistically declares: ‘When Jesus, who triumphed over all dwells in us, there is no doubt the devil will flee in terror’.⁴⁵ Though often psychological issues are involved, for him the central question is one of spiritual power with pastoral and missiological ramifications.⁴⁶ In all this, he reiterates the need for a human mediator; a charismatic figure with exceptional powers to deal with the spirit world using his authority to exorcise demons and gifts of healings (*kunamakukum varum*).⁴⁷ In this way, Dhinakaran as a Pentecostal exorcist and the native manthiravadi have striking similarities and some notable differences.

4. The Manthiravadi and Pentecostal Exorcist Compared

Both Dhinakaran and the manthiravadi, as contemporary counterparts, are socially recognized for their charismata, which pragmatically validate the effectiveness of their agency and cut a path for their vocation/business. As Caplan, Hiebert and Bergunder point out, there are phenomenological parallels between the two that not only threaten their respective religious establishments but also create a competitive spirit and become a cause for professional rivalry between them.⁴⁸ The images of the ‘warrior healer’ and ‘wounded healer’ are suitable to draw out their important roles and show that the theological basis and faith outcomes of their services are not the same.

Dhinakaran’s praxis of deliverance is based on his divine ‘call’ and is a part of his repertoire for charismatic healing. But, unlike *healing* prayers that are accompanied by the laying-on-of-hands and anointing with oil, his *exorcisms* are emotionally-charged events with a dramatized process involving: prolonged fasting, discerning, calling out and rebuking spirits, binding them, breaking associated curses or ancestral bonds, claiming the power of Jesus’ blood and commanding spirits to leave in ‘Jesus name’.

4.1 On Being Warrior Healers:

There are several literal and cultural metaphors of warrior-ship from the legendary Japanese samurai to British knights.⁴⁹ The manthiravadi depicts an Indian spiritual

⁴⁵ Dhinakaran, *I Am that I Am*, p. 35-36.

⁴⁶ Hiebert, ‘Spiritual Warfare and Worldview’, *ERT*, 2000, p. 240-256.

⁴⁷ Caplan, ‘Miracles of Fundamentalism’, *Class and Culture*, p. 225-228.

⁴⁸ Caplan, *Class and Culture*, p. 213, 226; Hiebert, *Understanding Folk Religions*, p. 323-329; Bergunder, ‘Miracle Healing’, *ICGQ*, p. 8.

⁴⁹ Sirku Hiltunen’s ‘Warrior Mothers as Heroines and Other Healing Imagery’, *Journal of Poetic Therapy*, 15/1, Fall 2001, p. 7f.; Burnett, ‘Shamanism: Warrior Healers’, *World of Spirits*, p. 174-191.

warrior who without tangible weapons but with fearlessness goes out to battle for the cause of the sick. He defends them against black magic and fights malevolent spirits that cause illnesses. Like the Polar shaman who girds himself 'with bows, lances and swords in their rites',⁵⁰ the manthiravadi may dress up and makes facial gestures to frighten the *peeys*. His ritual is an enactment of battle and conquest; the cunning capturing and casting out of evil spirits, hence the imagery of a warrior who heals.

Dhinakaran also operates with a heightened awareness of spiritual warfare and during power encounters, evil spirits often manifest themselves.⁵¹ His invocatory prayers are no longer a 'pious occupation in quiet solitude' but 'sterner'. He encourages his prayer warriors to use Spirit-filled prayers as 'weapons' against evil principalities and as 'shields' to vouchsafe human wellbeing. Along with fasting, his three 'tools' that add to the believer's authority are the use of Bible promises, Jesus' name and invoking the Spirit's presence, which are his unfailing resources or equipment for exorcism.⁵² In contrast to the manthiravadi's rituals, Dhinakaran's services are simpler and less violent, which he describes as 'a glorious ministry of casting out evil spirits and releasing human beings from the bondage of such spirits by the power of Christ'.⁵³

Anyone could aspire to be a manthiravadi and qualifications range from the bizarre to the arbitrary. Beyond a natural aptitude for ecstasy, manthiravadis possess healing gifts that when exercised increase their competence and fame. It takes discipline to be a powerful warrior against demons and determination to be wounded in body and spirit for the sake of others. A potential candidate is initiated in three ways: by receiving a special 'call' in a vision, by hereditary transmission of shamanic powers or the healing gifts, and by personal initiative. Burnett notes: 'Individuals who of their freewill choose to become shamans are rare and considered less powerful than those who are called or inherit the profession'.⁵⁴ The initiation process like military training is informative and formative: it equips him with essential virtues for his healing task and accredits him as a health mediator on behalf of his society.⁵⁵ The manthiravadi, for

⁵⁰ Burnett, *World of Spirits*, p. 189.

⁵¹ The author has observed that as Dhinakaran enters, it triggers demonic or disruptive manifestations in the crowd and at times during his preaching counselors are needed for ministry. A woman believed to be possessed by the goddess *kali*, kept jumping and rotating her head, eye balls rolled back, with tongue out and frothing at the mouth. Interviews, Evangeline Auditorium, Coimbatore, 7, May 2002.

⁵² Dhinakaran, *Prayer Brings Victory*, p. 25.

⁵³ Dhinakaran, *Healing Stripes*, p. 33; R. Phillips, *Vanquishing the Enemy*, Cleveland: Pathway, 1997.

⁵⁴ Burnett, *World of Spirits*, p. 176.

⁵⁵ 'Shamanism', Sikala in Eliade (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Religions*, 13, Macmillan, 1987. p. 201-215.

his own benefit, seeks out an initiatory experience or tutelage from a renowned healer since he will be required to deal with mental and physical illnesses.

Dhinakaran's 'divine call', which he regularly narrates in public, plays a crucial role in accrediting his personal ministry of deliverance. He does not see the need for the Church's authorisation nor mention the use of the sacraments.⁵⁶ He teaches that the Lord who knows 'his chosen ministers' before birth, directly endows them with the gifts they need. Second, authority comes by the laying-on-of-hands of 'a holy servant of God'. His 'anointing', he says, occurred when: 'A saint and chosen vessel urged God to give me his gifts and use me'. Third, power to administer the gifts he believes comes through prophetic utterance. For instance, on 2nd October 1994, during 'fasting and prayer' by 300 prayer warriors, a 'word of prophecy' announced that his son Paul would be gifted in 'double measure' of power to continue Dhinakaran's ministry.⁵⁷

By way of preparation, the manthiravadi needs to be ritually pure before engaging in the agony of warfare and is possessed by a stronger spirit as his ally. He struggles with pain and counters the effect of sorcery or break curses that are on the sick victim. There is more drumming, dancing and chanting of mantras to ward off the bad spirits as he purifies himself and confronts them. He then fills the place with 'holy smoke' and may consume intoxicating drinks. All these rituals are believed to arm him, put him in a trance, and usher him into the 'world of spirits' to disarm their evil powers.

In comparison, Dhinakaran is convinced that sanctification and empowerment belong together and a 'sinless life approved of God keeps believers away from the snares of the devil'.⁵⁸ Fasting is a 'weapon that moves the mighty hand of God' and combined with 'prayers and tears... openly shatter the power of evil spirits'.⁵⁹ Dhinakaran by habit sets himself apart prior to campaigns for a week to fast and pray. Pentecostals believe that spiritual power is increased by celibacy or abstinence from sex. Purity is power and personal holiness enhances one's ability to despatch unclean spirits.

⁵⁶ See, 'Deliverance from Evil', *A Time to Heal*, London: Church House Pub., 2000.

⁵⁷ Dhinakaran, *Gifts of the Spirit*, p. 29. Interestingly, on the contrary, many whom I interviewed felt that Paul did not have the high level of 'anointing' that his father, Dhinakaran functioned with.

⁵⁸ Dhinakaran, *Blessed Are Ye*, p. 63.

⁵⁹ Dhinakaran, 'Sanctify a Fast', *Prayer Brings Victory*, p. 31, 37.

With regard to discerning the spirits, the manthiravadi is able to confirm whether a sickness, claimed to be medically incurable, is related to spirit possession. Healing is transactional and involves usually counter-transference – the afflicting spirit leaves the sick person's body through the manthiravadi's body and is believed to move into objects that are then carefully discarded. For this therapeutic process, the manthiravadi requires the sufferer's cooperation as he chants mantras and engages in battle-mode to ritually confront, cajole, appease and eventually vent-off the disease-afflicting spirits.

In contrast, Dhinakaran does not spend time 'dialoguing with demons' but with his gift of discernment, identifies and commands evil spirits to permanently depart. Although the repetition of the phrase 'in Jesus name' and the countless 'hallelujahs' sound like mantras, for him, it is Jesus' presence and virtue where 'the power lies to drive Satan out!'⁶⁰ He is known to bind tormenting spirits in a crowd and use his prophetic gifts to pronounce someone 'delivered from Satan'. He prays over bottles of blest-oil that people apply on their foreheads, confident that demons henceforth will not touch them.

The manthiravadi's journey, known as his 'flight' into the spirit world is a universal rite of passage - a shamanic experience that needs to be publicly attested to endorse his ability to communicate with and control spirits. Here, he is gifted with an enduement of power for the beneficial use to heal and guide humans. Apart from attestation, the experience has deep *pastoral* significance since his newly acquired powers are used socially to resist, fend off and overcome forces that ruin the community's welfare.

Dhinakaran is known for his out-of-the-body experiences and his book *Gifts of the Spirit* and *IPM* training are practical guides to 'heavenly visitations and supernatural experiences'. He refers to incidents when he 'wrestled with evil spirits on his knees' and notes how when 'Jesus appears, the evil spirits would bow down and disappear'.⁶¹ He records: 'On 10.10.'62, the Lord appeared to me in a vision and filled me with his Holy Spirit' and talks about being mentored by pastors like G. Sundaram who had visions and inspired by 'world renowned' evangelists like T.L Osborn.⁶² It is crucial to note that Dhinakaran's deliverance ministry is not empowered by human influence or another stronger spirit as in the case of the shaman's power, but claims to be the direct

⁶⁰ Dhinakaran, *Voice of Love*, p. 49.

⁶¹ Dhinakaran, *Gifts*, p. 269.

⁶² Dhinakaran, *Gifts*, p. 105, 106, (photographs are these and other leaders are in the book's centerfold).

power and supreme authority of Christ himself. It is also important to note that strenuous exorcism is usually followed up by personal care and his team's counselling.

4.2 On Being Wounded Healers: ⁶³

Having triumphed over assaulting spirits in their trancelike 'flight-fight' experience, the warrior healers emerge with a new identity and unique relationship on one hand with the spirits, in Dhinakaran's case the Holy Spirit, and on the other hand with their community. Their struggle with evil spirits results in a type of wounding that produces within them a unique empowerment to serve. Such initiatory experiences endow them with the capacity to heal. In other words, subsequently, they are wounded healers.

Exorcisms or deliverance are not merely transactional, i.e. the objectifying and outsourcing of disease from a sufferer through the healer's body. In the case of the manthiravadi and Dhinakaran they are profoundly relational as trust is built between the sufferers and healer to enable counter-transference. They seek to demonstrate on behalf of the sufferer a healing, that Percy calls, 'the taking on of affliction'.⁶⁴ Thereby they exhibit genuine compassion; a rich pastoral and active phrase involving the heart.⁶⁵ Both charismatic healers experientially know suffering hence they can act with compassion. The sufferer and his/her family come with expectant faith that the healer will ritually bear away the weight of pain. As an archetype, the wounded healer uses his affliction to provide inspiration, hope and healing to others, his own wounds being important to the healing process.⁶⁶ Thus the manthiravadi and Dhinakaran are effective wounded healers, not just in spite of their wounds, but precisely because of them.

It is in experiencing intense *sufferings* at initiation that the manthiravadi develops a compassion that moves him from pity to sympathy. His acquaintance with illness paradoxically generates for him a *spiritual power* that can bring about wholeness.⁶⁷ This is the key to his *pastoral formation* as it subtly empowers him with the essential virtue of empathy in order to be a genuine caregiver. Now he is able to understand human pain and from this vantage point, he undertakes cure. Though he is given social

⁶³ I have shared and taught this concept at mission conferences to Indian pastors who felt incompetent to serve due to personal weaknesses or past failures. Chris Gnanakan, 'Wounded Healers: A Theology of Ministerial Suffering', *Indian Missions*, Oct-Dec. 2002, p. 19-23.

⁶⁴ Martyn Percy, 'Modern Healing Movements' *Theology*, XCIX/793, 1997, p. 14.

⁶⁵ *Manadhurukkam*, Tamil for the melting of the heart with love (*Anbu*) and sympathy (*Anudhabam*).

⁶⁶ Morton Kelsey *Prophetic Ministry*, Dorset: Element Books, 1982, p. 90-91.

⁶⁷ Csordas, 'The Raging and the Healing', *The Sacred Self*, Berkeley: UCLA, 1997, p. 228-275.

prestige, the manthiravadi still humbly acknowledges his struggles and feelings of weakness. He is known as a vulnerable servant of society and is respected for this.

Dhinakaran also espouses a theology of suffering. However, its basis lies outside his own sufferings and is in the life and death of Jesus, which has implications for radical discipleship and being a true 'servant of Christ'. For Dhinakaran, Jesus is the 'wounded healer' *par excellence* who: 'To atone for man[kind]'s spiritual disease - that is sin - himself was made sin on the cross. He experienced in his body the weaknesses and the diseases we suffer from'. Dhinakaran also marks 10th October 1962 as 'the turning point in his life' when he was filled with the Spirit and since then began 'to feel a great compassion for the sick [as] the love of Christ urges him to pray in agony for them'.⁶⁸ He strongly recommends a similar charismatic experience as a key qualification for those who join his 'prayer tower' ministry as 'prayer warriors'.

People treat the manthiravadi leniently since he is like a pastor who shows solidarity with them and looks out for their wellbeing. It was interesting as Kapur observes, that though the manthiravadi at times is 'wrong in his announcement of the complaint, the clients did not seem to mind and prompted him with their real complaints'.⁶⁹ I found it significant that while medical doctors usually think of him as a clairvoyant or sham, the manthiravadi considers doctors complementary to and not in competition with him. Beyond his function toward social integration, he often referred his clients for further or even better treatment to hospitals. In this way, he plays a valuable role in bridging traditional treatment and modern medical sciences within the Indian community.⁷⁰

Several Indian church leaders and theological scholars have a similar understanding of Dhinakaran's ministry. Many were appreciative of the personal struggles he has had to undergo in order to establish the Karunya university, hospital and other social projects. Most believe his ultimate goal is harmless and it is to present the gospel. Some are well aware that the source of his power to heal is spiritual but also socially determined by the masses.⁷¹ A few church officials seriously questioned his direct access to God

⁶⁸ Dhinakaran, *Love So Amazing*, p. 46.

⁶⁹ R.L. Kapur, 'The Role of the Traditional Healers in Mental Health care in Rural India', *Social Science and Medicine*, Vol. 13 B, 1979, p. 29.

⁷⁰ Brockman, 'Possession and Medicine in South Central India', *JAPS*, 2/3, 2000.

⁷¹ Cultural norms tend to dictate where exactly the loci of power reside and how it may be tapped and used and medicine is treated as an ethnographical category', S.M. Channa (ed.) *Health and the Supernatural: Disease and Cure in Tribal Societies*, Delhi: Cosmos, 2002, p. 59.

through personal revelations, but others were encouraged by his leadership, ability to address existential needs and initiative to bring spiritual renewal to the Christian community. His Jesus Calls counselling service ensures people's gradual and total restoration to health and affirms the honourable work of doctors.⁷² The concept of 'aftercare' is a 'spiritual affair' in the healing process and is carried out with prayer. Dhinakaran understands human personality, and people accept his human weaknesses.

Normally, the manthiravadi does not financially charge his clients but is happy to accept generous offerings and gifts in cash or kind. Compared to the Brahman priests at the temple, I found the average manthiravadi rather weak, anxious and materially poor. This is precisely what is winsome about him. His limitations and personal needs are not necessarily handicaps with regard to healing, but assets when comforting others. His *real* gifts are his charismata, which give him his true identity and earn him respect in society. His true honour rests in how he utilises his curative powers in compassionate service. His sickness-bearing experience helps him get in touch with the source of his healing power and gain the means by which he can tap into it. In this sense it is a helpful 'spirit-possession' that proves good value spiritually and socially.

The Jesus Calls organisation claims to be 'fully supported by Indian nationals who have listened to the gospel through the various ministries of the Dhinakarans. All offerings are accounted for in the Jesus Calls trust and audited and Dhinakaran never takes a penny for prayers or preaching'.⁷³ However, in stark contrast to the manthiravadi, the Dhinakarans enjoy social prestige, are TV celebrities, considerably wealthy and treated as royalty in some Pentecostal circles. Bergunder notes how 'the gift of healing and the exalted status fall automatically on him' and warns that 'personality cults and abuses are inevitable'.⁷⁴ Some serious issues with Dhinakaran's compassionate ministry and prosperity teachings will be discussed in the next chapter.

In sum, folk religiosity enables Indians to understand the forces of evil in the world and Christian ideas like Satan and hell, Christ's death, heaven and the Holy Spirit's power. It provides the precondition that makes Pentecostalism attractive. Dhinakaran and the traditional manthiravadi are both *pastoral* leaders in their community

⁷² Dhinakaran stopped twice in between my 4-hour interviews to take his medicines with a prayer.

⁷³ Dhinakaran, *Jesus Calls Campaign Manual*, p. 5, 6.

⁷⁴ Bergunder, 'Miracle Healing and Exorcism', p. 9.

insomuch as their social role is to heal, guide and protect. Both possess *powerful* charismata that demonstrate their authority over *peeys* and induce confidence in the people whom they serve and who follow their advice. They are equally seers or *prophetic* figures who divine causes for misfortune and offer wellbeing. Their ritual ministrations help clients to experience relief from various forms of oppression. Both are approachable, empathetic and minister *care* to humans thereby affecting *cure* to their *dispirited* beings, hence, they are wounded healers as much as warrior healers.

Alongside similarities there are major differences. A form of shamanism that seeks protection from evil spirits and longs for family and material blessings seems to underlie Indian religious consciousness. There are external phenomenological parallels and similar social role-play between the manthiravadi and the Pentecostal exorcist. But, theologically, Dhinakaran can not be equated with the Hindu manthiravadi since the foundational truth claims, significance and goals of 'Christian' deliverance are radically different. On the whole, his theology is based on the Bible as God's revealed word and deliverance is intentionally evangelistic - a pathway to wholeness through Christ. While the manthiravadi uses a greater spirit to block or expel lesser spirits and is concerned with this-worldly blessings, Dhinakaran's message primarily and clearly concerns spiritual salvation and evil spirits are cast out 'in Jesus' name', i.e. because of Jesus' victory on the cross and by the Holy Spirit's power. The issue of 'power' is at the core of charismatic healing and differences must be pointed out in this area.

5. The Healing Power of Charismata: Miraculous or Magical?

Forms of shamanism and magic have a long history and the latter has always created a strain on Christian belief in miraculous healing. According to Sak, magic 'comes closest to being classified as religious when it is believed that divine intervention occurs – as in the case of certain forms of faith healing based on marshalling the energies of the patient and involving the transmission of energies from the healer to the patient'.⁷⁵ Indian cosmology entertains magic, a human endeavour for wholeness that breaks our dependence on divine grace. It is an influence, though not physical, is deemed to exert 'supernatural' force to control future events. I will clarify how for Pastoral Pentecostalism, a 'Christian' as against a 'magical' understanding of the power that heals is sovereign, distinctly christological and paradoxical in nature.

⁷⁵ Mike Sak, 'Beyond the Frontiers of Science? Religious Aspects of Alternative Medicine', (eds.) John Hinnells and Porter, *Religion, Health and Suffering*, London: Kegan Paul, 1999, p. 387.

Magical powers tend to be impersonal and mechanistic. They are trans-empirical and believed to reside in and act through mediums, human or inanimate, infused with its powers. The force of magic can be managed, so much so, the manthiravadi as a 'power broker' can manipulate *it* by his expert knowledge of *its* outworking. He can control, channel or wield magical powers either for good or bad. Hiebert has diagrammed some 'magical charms, which when properly used in a South Indian village, will automatically bring about the desired results'.⁷⁶ Interestingly, most magic is 'white magic' used positively to cause success or bring wellbeing. However, 'black magic' is notoriously assertive and a destructive force when used specifically to harm. The value in magic is socially defined and can be activated for personal and private use.

On the contrary, in Christian deliverance God the Holy Spirit as a person dispels demons by his sovereign will and miraculous power, which is God-centred not self-serving. Healing power cannot be bought, merited or manipulated in any way by the evangelists. Jesus gave his followers *authority* to heal in his name. Therefore the central issue concerns *Christ's* person and work not mere demonstrations of power.⁷⁷ This does not mean that non-Christian prodigies are always diabolic, but rather that paranormal encounters in themselves are not proofs for or helps to build Christian faith.⁷⁸ While the Christian God is all powerful, all the powers at work do not necessarily reflect his nature or fulfil his kingdom's purpose. It is difficult to distinguish the nature of the spiritual powers in the midst of the healing procedures, but biblical faith calls for discernment and believers are to test the spirits against the Lordship of Christ to see whether they are truly from God (1John 4:1).⁷⁹

Second, with the issue of sovereignty is the question of christology. The Spirit's gifts of power bestowed at his will are meant to be administered in a way that reflects their source: God's character revealed in Christ (the fruit of the Spirit). They achieve the intended goal to conform believers to Christ's image. Kraft correctly notes, in 'power encounters' and charismatic healings, the Christian understanding of power correlates to a biblical view of *truth* that leads to a particular *allegiance*: a relationship (not

⁷⁶ Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries*, Baker, 1994, (Fig 24), p. 173. See Rick Love, *Muslims, Magic and the Kingdom of God*, Pasadena, CA: William Carey, 2000, p.140-141.

⁷⁷ Hiebert, 'Spiritual Warfare and Worldview', *ERT*, 24/3, 2000, p. 251

⁷⁸ John Martinetti, 'Miracles', *Reasons to Believe in Christ Today*, Bangalore: IJA Pub., 1996, p. 200.

⁷⁹ Amos Young, *Discerning the Spirit(s)*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000.

ritual) with and commitment to Jesus as Saviour and Lord.⁸⁰ In short, Christian healing offers *shalom*, a total reconciliation to God through Christ. The Spirit's gifts of power in exorcisms bear the marks of Jesus' redemptive mission. Unlike magic, it has ethical orientations in which Christian morality is important. They are not for private use, personal gain or to draw attention to Satan. The power and glory in deliverance belong to God, they extend Christ's kingdom on earth and build his body, the Church. These traits correspond with the power that accompanied the Spirit at Pentecost. Christian ministries miss this critical point when they are preoccupied with techniques and focus on territorial spirits or 'strategic-level spiritual warfare and intercession'.⁸¹

Third, the divine power in compassionate healing must be understood in terms of divine paradox not procedural outcomes. Theological explanations for afflictions that simply blame or lay guilt trips on the sufferer reveal a lack of compassion and pastoral support.⁸² Against native shamanic activities with its propaganda and competitive milieu, Christian deliverance empowers people to cope. Administered in the context of the hope of the gospel, it gives meaning to people's lives on account of their authentic experience of God's compassionate presence. There is a *mystery* in the dark problem of evil and the wonder of Christ being the wounded healer, but no magic is involved. Rather than deny the reality of God's power or assert that it is always God's will to deliver, recognising the 'healing paradox' it is best, as Woolmer submits, 'to accept that there is a mystery and see healing as a sign of God's gracious activity in our world rather than our right'.⁸³ Paradoxically, as in the story of the healing at the Bethesda Pool, the least expected and personally incapable often receive miraculous help.

Research in South India has shown a positive correlation between power encounters and growth in Christianity, particularly during pre-evangelism and revivals.⁸⁴ But one cannot presume the former will ensure the latter. Dhinakaran's deliverance ministry shows that the gospel can be communicated by words and in power.⁸⁵ Encounters with the life-giving Spirit produce a dynamism that enlivens the Indian church. His focus on God's Fatherhood and theology of compassion compensate for his stress on

⁸⁰ C. Kraft, 'Three Encounters in Christian Witness', *Perspectives*, Carlisle: Paternoster, 1999, p. 408. Hiebert, 'Values and Culture' shows why the religious masses seek after healers, p. 374-383.

⁸¹ Peter Wagner (ed.), *Territorial Spirit: Insights into SLSWT*, Secunderabad: Ben Pub., 2002.

⁸² H. Bussell, *Unholy Devotion: Why Cults Lure Christians*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983, p. 91.

⁸³ John Woolmer, *Healing and Deliverance*, London: Monarch, 1999, p. 20.

⁸⁴ About 81% of the converts Chellaiah Zechariah's contacted in his research became Christians as a direct result of 'signs and wonders'. D.Miss. Dissertation, Fuller Seminary, 2000

⁸⁵ See Mark Stibbe, *Prophetic Evangelism*, Milton Keynes: Authentic Media, 2004, p. 55.

Christus Victor which can be a threatening triumphalism in the Hindu pluralistic context. Hindu notions of healing entail creating harmony and balancing out good and bad forces. However Dhinakaran correctly reminds believers: 'The very name of Jesus has the power to drive Satan out' without competition. He assures the Christian that, 'No evil spirit can touch him and black magic or any wicked design cannot affect him'.⁸⁶ His view of wholeness resonates with the Hindu view that sees power in terms of elevating a person to be more humane, and promotes social peace and prosperity.⁸⁷ However, there are intrinsic weaknesses and some serious concerns with his ministry.

Some healing methods and means that Dhinakaran uses like the anointing with oil, seven Stations of the Cross and statues of angels at his Bethesda Prayer Centre raise concern among some Protestants and Pentecostals. He distributes free bottles of oil that read: 'Oil blessed by Dhinakaran's prayer' which people believe have special healing power. He produces posters of Jesus' face and photographs of his family that people use in their prayers. While these may serve as 'focal points' to build faith or as sacraments, i.e. means of grace or 'channels' for God's power to flow, magic would contend that impersonal powers reside within them that can be harnessed from such objects. When interviewed, Dhinakaran denied that any power was in such items, but he nowhere teaches that these objects have no innate powers in themselves.⁸⁸

Wherever Dhinakaran travels, he usually has body-guards to protect him from devotees who throng to touch him or his clothes hoping to receive healing or blessing. One of his friends testified saying: 'The moment [Dhinakaran] stepped into my room some strange power hit my body. At that moment, I was completely healed'. Dhinakaran records how Bishop E. Nasser of Delhi sent a handkerchief that had been pressed against his back to a demon-possessed girl who was delivered upon contact.⁸⁹ Through such stories, Dhinakaran seems to self-certify his 'apostolic' powers, but these incidences have more in common with shamanism and magic than any pattern in New Testament church. Sadly, he does not comment on James 5:14-16, which was a procedure the early church used and significant guide for the church's healing praxis.⁹⁰ For Brown, 'the mere supernaturalness of the sign or wonder is sufficient in itself to

⁸⁶ Dhinakaran, *Voice of Love*, p. 48-49.

⁸⁷ A. E. Purushothama, 'The Hindu Concept of Power', *Wajibu*, 14/3, 1999, p. 3.

⁸⁸ I had joined Jesus Calls oil distribution teams at their healing centres at Coimbatore and Bangalore where the leaders did understand the significance of what was printed on the bottles.

⁸⁹ Dhinakaran, *Gifts*, p. 299-300. Comparing himself to Paul healing with handkerchiefs (Acts 19:12).

⁹⁰ J. C. Thomas, *The Devil, Disease and Deliverance*, Sheffield Academic Press, 1998, p. 17-18.

accredit the one who performs it'. He notes: 'It is characteristic of the magician and false prophet to draw attention to himself. It is characteristic of Jesus' works that they point people to the Father'.⁹¹ Hence, Dhinakaran's powers place him in grave danger.

Ajith Fernando rightly finds the need to maintain a balance between demon-mania and demon-phobia.⁹² Dhinakaran has positively reclaimed for Indian Christians something of the decisive victory that Christ has won over Satan and his sickness-afflicting demons.⁹³ He has shown that Christ's compassion still sets people free from Satan's powers. Yet, warfare implies potential dangers and Dhinakaran pays far too much attention and detail to *devils* and seems to accuse them for more than they are directly responsible. While he does not 'negotiate with demons' but discerns and deals with evil forces at work, he fails to stress that believers continue to live within a fallen *world*, an evil, unjust system where sins against innocent people often cause all kinds of pain. Human weakness or *the flesh* is prone to temptation and sins that often cause spiritual oppression and forms of bondage. Christians need to avoid the extremes, i.e. flippantly dismissing the demonic or demonizing dysfunctional human behaviour.⁹⁴

Risk is always involved in contextualising the gospel into Hindu culture that is eclectic and subtly accommodates dissimilar ideas and practices. The manthiravadi provides a potent archetype for the imagination; of a saviour-figure whom clients trust and whose services bring them some relief. His 'taking on another's affliction' results in deliverance and the sufferer's re-enfranchisement. Could his shamanic role point to a greater atonement and dimly reflect the ultimate human need for meaningful relationships and a wholeness that comes through Christ? Christian healing must guard against the 'trap of syncretism' that lends itself to a universalism which dilutes or distorts the gospel of grace. For this, it must take Christ's uniqueness and lordship seriously and base its praxis on biblical truth rather than supernaturalism or pragmatism. Charismatic ministries can avoid being seen as consumerist by being intentionally evangelistic and mission-centred, which is the best protection against harmful syncretism,⁹⁵ and why Dhinakaran's ministry of compassion remains fruitful.

⁹¹ Colin Brown, *That You May Believe*, p. 168.

⁹² Ajith Fernando, *Jesus Driven Ministry*, Leicester: IVP, 2002, p. 190.

⁹³ S. D. Ponraj, *Missionary Anthropology: Principles and Practices in Communicating the Gospel in Cross-Cultural Contexts of India*, Chennai: Mission Education Books, 1983. See Chapter Six.

⁹⁴ Peter Horrobin, *Healing through Deliverance*, Kent: Sovereign World, 1992.

⁹⁵ Bruce Nicholls, *The Bible & Theology in Asian Contexts*, Taichung: ATA, 1984, p. 249.

Chapter Ten

Dhinakaran's Theology of Blessing and the Prosperity Gospel

Dhinakaran espouses a doctrine of divine prosperity that has impacted Charismatic Christianity in India. He writes: 'God wishes to bless you in this worldly life also. It is not his intention to torment you with poverty. For a certain period he may allow poverty and misery to dominate your life. But his will is to make you prosper'.¹ Dhinakaran's indigenous brand of prosperity is spread via the modern media into contemporary society and churches with their emerging economies.² His view on financial success in his 'blessing theology' has not been critically analysed with reference to the 'prosperity gospel'. Hence, I will explore its theological emphases, pastoral tools and fundraising techniques within its cultural and the global context.

Dhinakaran's contextual theology contains aspects of health and prosperity that make his message enigmatic and controversial. Hedlund has 'reservations and doubts' about his ministry against the back drop of 'healing gurus, dispensers of health, wealth, wisdom, guidance, good luck and power to the faithful'.³ J.M. George, in the *Asian Biblical Expositor*, posits three hallmarks of the global faith movement: charismatic healing, prosperity theology and positive thinking. He notes as its representatives, Hagin and Copeland in the US, Yongi Cho in Korea and D.G.S. Dhinakaran in India.⁴ While it is incontrovertible that the 'blessing' of prosperity is amalgamated into Dhinakaran's message, it is unfortunate that his teachings, widely acceptable within Indian culture, are quickly caricatured as a 'prosperity gospel' without any detailed examination. It is arguable whether, in Fee's words, it is a mutation of 'the disease of the health and wealth gospel', and needs investigation.⁵

A globalised form of Christian prosperity incorporates a success theology identified as the 'health and wealth gospel'.⁶ In essence, it advocates that together with miracle healings, material gain can be obtained automatically by exercising a special faith that

¹ Dhinakaran, 'Blessings in the Lives of Young Partners', *Jesus Calls*, July, 2003, p. 8.

² Cable TV in India broadcast Miracle Network and TBN alongside Dhinakaran's Jesus Calls programs which are heard daily in Tamil and English on the popular *Raj TV* and *Vijay TV*.

³ Hedlund, *Quest for Identity: India's Churches of Indigenous Origin*, Delhi: ISPCK, 2000, p. 246.

⁴ Joy George, 'Prosperity Theology and the Faith Movement', *ABE*, 1/2, p. 2.

⁵ Gordon Fee, *Disease of the Health & Wealth Gospel*, Costa Mesa: Word for Today, 1979, p. 2.

⁶ Bruce Barron, *The Health and Wealth Gospel*, Downers Grove: IVP, 1987; Gordon Fee, *The Disease of the Health-Wealth Gospels*, Costa Mesa, CA: Word for Today, 1979.

claims promises in God's word. Due to its emphasis on the necessity of human faith that is made to determine God's response, the 'prosperity gospel' is known in academic circles as 'the faith movement'. Two distinct offers characterise the 'word-faith theology' and prosperity gospel within the global Christian movement:⁷

- i) Physical healing claimed as a right and guaranteed in the atonement.
- ii) Material prosperity procreated by a positive confession of faith.

Throughout my research on Dhinakaran, the subject of 'prosperity' or 'success' was a recurring issue that raised serious concerns among Indian Christian leaders who wondered how exactly a valuable ministry like Christian healing gets connected to aberrant forms of prosperity cults. I want to clarify Dhinakaran's stance and assess his views particularly on *faith* and *prosperity* thereby warning of dangerous pitfalls that could make charismatic spiritualities, pastorally damaging and dispassionate.

1. 'Prosperity' Gospels: Some Critical Clarifications

First, by way of definition, within the Asian context there are fine yet significant differences between *the* 'prosperity gospel' and relevant 'teachings on prosperity' based on the Bible.⁸ Advocates of the former make God obliged to materially bless people who exercise a positive faith to name-and-claim personal desires. Spiritual laws govern their theories that promote an 'instantism' and guarantee favourable outcomes based on human faith.⁹ In contrast, exponents of the latter, highlight biblical passages that reveal God's desire to bless people in wholistic ways including materially, yet equally stress the need for persistent prayer, industriousness and stewardship, with the responsible use of wealth for the upliftment of the poor and God's glory.¹⁰ Here, testimonies seek to build faith in a God who supplies all our needs (not greed) yet who will not be cajoled into delivering whatever the Christian wants. To merge these two teachings, has not been without reservations in the Asian church.¹¹

Second, global Pentecostal scholarship recognises emerging non-western indigenous theologies of divine providence with distinct prosperity teachings. Although these

⁷ Andrew Perriman (ed.) *Faith, Health and Prosperity*, Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2003; Robert Jackson, 'Prosperity Theology and the Faith Movement', *Themelios*, October 1989, p. 16-24.

⁸ Statement on Prosperity Theology and Theology of Suffering, *ERT*, 20/1, 1996, p. 5.

⁹ These topics become plain from the titles of Hagin's books: *Godliness if Profitable*, *How to be Successful in Life* and Copeland's classic work is called *Laws of Prosperity*. Most of the exponents of this Prosperity Gospel were trained or associated with Hagin's Rhema Bible College in Tulsa, USA.

¹⁰ Young Hoon Lee, 'The Case for Prosperity'. *ERT*, 1996, p. 31.

¹¹ Kee Hwang, 'Response to Ward Gasque', *ERT*, 1996, p. 47-48.

were informed by US-based faith ministries, Hunt notes, 'a different emphasis and a localised cultural prediction, which bring variations in terms of form, substance, and style across the world'.¹² Variant forms of the same theme of prosperity proclaim a theology of divine blessing that enable human success. It is unhelpful that these typically utilise modern media, high-tech communication networks as techniques for propaganda and elaborate fundraising. For these reasons, a wide spectrum and a variety of the so-called prosperity gospels, from the benign to proven unorthodox forms, are all marketed along with a gospel of perfect health.¹³

Third, Dhinakaran's *Jesus Calls* ministry reveals a 'glocalisation', in which a global prosperity message is appropriated in biblically viable and culturally useful ways into local contexts, which can, in turn, inform global trends.¹⁴ His blessing theology is bible-based and for 40 years has inspired Christian faith for what he calls 'all round prosperity'.¹⁵ It is crucial that his message is assessed first for its value within the predominately Hindu culture. A gospel of prosperity to be relevant and adequately understood must be discussed in relation to the guru movement as the chief 'missionary enterprise'.¹⁶ I will re-present Dhinakaran theology as one of the many, although in the west lesser-known, increasingly valuable 'voices from the margins',¹⁷ which will enable his message to be heard in its context before it is criticised.

2. The Cultural Context of Dhinakaran's Prosperity Message¹⁸

Dhinakaran has carefully yet imaginatively developed an Indian pastoral theology, in which he assures believers as well as non-believers of God's providential care. He encourages Christians in particular to give for the cause of evangelism. This makes one enquire into the socio-religious appeal of his message both within India's situation of poverty and against the crass materialism of the hegemonic American-style health-wealth gospel. Any theology for prosperity will have complex psychological, politico-economic issues for developing countries, which are not my primary concern. I want

¹² Stephen Hunt, 'Winning ways': Globalisation and the Impact of the Health and Wealth Gospel', *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, Vol. 15, No. 3, 2000, p. 335.

¹³ D. Moo, 'Divine Healing in the Health and Wealth Gospel', *Trinity Journal*, 9, 1988, p. 191-209. Fee discusses: The 'Gospel' of Prosperity and of Perfect Health, *The Health & Wealth Gospels*, 1979.

¹⁴ John Hall and Neitz, *Culture: Sociological Perspectives*, Englewood Cliff, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1993.

¹⁵ Dhinakaran, *Love so Amazing*, Madras: Jesus Calls Pub., 1978, p. 81.

¹⁶ Gregory Denysschen, *Hinduism: Thought and Practice*, Kwa Zulu Natal: Jivannadi Mission, 2000.

¹⁷ D. Vreeland, in response to Allan Anderson's call to reclaim indigenous Pentecostal 'Voices from the Margins', 'P.G. Vargis and the Indian Prosperity Gospel', *Paper*, SPS Conference, 2002.

¹⁸ A large part of this section has been published as: 'The Prosperity Gospel in South India', *SHAP: Journal of World Religions in Education*, (Issue on Wealth and Poverty), London, 2003/4, p. 39-44.

to assess Dhinakaran's 'gospel' to the poor in India and his evangelical-charismatic claims and biblical conditions for material success.

2.1 Indian Culture: Poverty and Religiosity

Globalisation as a secularising process reflects on a range of social issues, always bearing in mind the global context. However, as M.M. Thomas argued, in India, 'secular' does not mean opposed to religion but rather without considering any particular religion as 'established'.¹⁹ So, lived realities and mission experiences have defining beliefs and specific behavioural patterns that distinguish one society from another. Socio-anthropologists like Hiebert have shown this is so because different sets of assumptions, values and commitments lie at the core of what different social groups perceive as reality.²⁰ Understanding one's worldview is a determinative key.

Poverty in India, also in Dhinakaran's thought, is defined in relation to basic human needs, i.e. nutrition, housing and clothing as minimal essentials for human life and survival. F.C. Jonathan observes that there is also what he calls 'collective poverty, which involves relative insufficiency of means to secure basic needs'.²¹ Rajendran estimates that 35 % of India lives below the poverty line.²² The efforts made against poverty in the control of India's population seem unending and futile.²³ At least two critical considerations are needed for a valid response to India's poverty.

First, as Peiris underlines, there is not one, but 'two great realities' in Asia: poverty and religiosity.²⁴ Having to encounter abject poverty and inexplicable pain, Indians are bewildered trying to understand *God's role* and where exactly *human faith* responsibly fits into all this. This 'sense of the sacred', as I agree with Fox, is 'a gift' India has to offer to the west. Dhinakaran's charismatic piety has unique ways of *being* and *doing*

¹⁹ M.M. Thomas, Barry Till (ed.) *Changing Frontiers in the Mission of the Church*, London: SPCK, 1965, p.64. In the west, 'secularisation' takes on another meaning, i.e. life organised without reference to Christian or a religious framework, often deliberately not recognising biblical ideals and ethics.

²⁰ Underlying assumptions prompt overt/covert patterns of behaviour referred to as culture or customs. C. Kraft, *Christianity with Power*, 1989, p. 56f; *Anthropology for Christian Witness*, Unpublished manuscript, Pasadena, 1994; Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights*, Baker Books, 1985, p. 48-49.

²¹ F.C. Jonathan, *Millennium Mission*, Delhi: ISPCK, 2001, p. 207.

²² K. Rajendran, *Which Way Forward Indian Missions?* Bangalore: SAIACS Pub., 1998, p. 35. The 'poverty line' is the minimum expenditure per head per month in terms of existing prices which in 1987-88 for rural areas was Rs 131.8 and for urban, Rs 152.13 (i.e. less than US\$ 4 per head / month).

²³ 1.1 billion, projected 1.3 billion by 2020; The 2001 National Census was 1028 million with 2.3 % (24 million) as Christian. India will overtake China by 2040. For more details: www.censusindia.net.

²⁴ Antony Peiris, 'Toward an Asian Theology of Liberation: Religio-Cultural', *Dialogue*, n.s. 6, 1979.

church among the poor.²⁵ If the problem is perceived purely in socio-economic terms, development and political revolutions may be strategies toward a solution. But, since Indians see a spiritual root cause to the problem, Dhinakaran's spiritual approach to prosperity that incorporates social action to solve poverty becomes incredibly potent.

Second, a major cause for economic deprivation is health-related problems. Realities such as unemployment, malnutrition and illness, exacerbated by corruption, make up a vicious cycle.²⁶ In this way, health becomes the start and finish point for poverty, and faith bears on everyday life, peaceful relations and family matters. Health is wealth. The human cry is for blessings that intertwine spirituality with the promise of socio-economic welfare. With this operant faith, poverty is dealt with as spiritual disease even as a curse, so much so, that any health-wealth gospel is appealing and finds relevance for the Indian masses. This socio-economic condition and outlook provide the fertile soil and the climate in which Dhinakaran's teachings on prayer, faith and prosperity thrive, and his Karunya social welfare schemes become significant.

Poverty is multi-dimensional yet is regarded as a human ailment, and efforts to curb it tend to be the search for a cure. Solutions need to be existential and spiritual. In India autonomous religious mass movements have been a major force for socio-political change.²⁷ Dhinakaran's Jesus Calls ministry is one which 'prophetically' speaks into the situation of poverty taking the religio-cultural attitudes seriously and promising social upliftment. Its message is warmly received and accommodated as the general public listen to its programs, send in their prayer requests and choose to financially partner with the various evangelistic and social activities.

2.2 Spiritual *Guruism* and Financial *Dakshina*

Popular Indian piety, Pentecostal or Hindu, maintains symbolic and ritualistic acts of worship that are powerful expressions of faith and devotion (*bhakti*) to God. Among these is the petitioning for 'all round blessings' that corresponds to appeals to fulfil religious duty (*dharma*) in the form of donations. Such a response of human gratitude for God's gifts is ingrained in the religious psyche and native to the socio-cultural

²⁵ Chris Gnanakan, Review, Thomas Fox, 'Pentecost in Asia', *Pneuma*, 25/2, 2003, p. 314-316.

²⁶ A.K. Tharien, 'Health and Human Development' in Gomez's (ed.) *Toward a Theology of Human Development*, Chennai: ISPCCK, Gurukul, 1998, p. 316-328.

²⁷ See various approaches to create socio-economic, feminist and ecological change in Desrochers et.al., *Social Movements: Towards a Perspective*, Bangalore: Centre for Social Action, 1991.

ethos of worship in India. There is a double-edged issue with the prosperity gospel: Should Christian leaders promote a give-in-order-to-receive practice in their worship? Do Christian believers have the right to claim divine material blessing?

It is vital to query why Indian worshippers offer gifts to religious specialists and how these functionaries justify profiting from them. Weightman has shown the role priests play in affirming personal purity and social prestige.²⁸ To be able to welcome priests or go to the temple is something prestigious. It is an acquisition of merit believed to bring about prosperity, a good name, and 'benefits in this world' or as Dhinakaran puts it 'worldly blessings'. The presence of a holy priest (*purohit*) or spiritual guide (*guru*) or god-man in one's house, signals that the household is pure and of acceptable status. Hence gurus are sought to perform domestic rites. The ancient guru movement (guruism) today is a missionary enterprise and Denysshchen explains the indispensability and mode in which this phenomenon operates:

Gurus are active propagators of Hindu philosophy. They gather a number of disciples around them impressing these seekers with their occult and psychic abilities. A guru must have disciples, so they actively canvas as many as they can reach. Offering shorter paths to self-realisation, they are regarded as 'masters', absolutely necessary to lead the disciples to enlightenment.²⁹

Mangalwadi discusses four socio-cultural factors that create the demand and thereby determines the core functions of modern gurus: The need for a thought system, to foster religious experience, for community fellowship and to sanction lifestyle, morals and social codes.³⁰ A guru fulfils these aspirations as a teacher-guide directing faith though life's pursuits, enigmas and challenges. Hence gurus are often founders of sects and mentor *shishyas* (learner-devotees) irrespective of caste or creed, who in turn served them in residential centres (*ashrams*). Brent in his analysis identified authoritarianism and puritanism as two psychological motives that bind devotee to guru,³¹ which also creates unquestionable respect and dependency.

Guruism revolted against brahminical dominance and by the 15th century, gurus took charge in offering the priestly service and addressing the existential needs of the masses. In the non-availability of a Brahmin priest, a particular family, caste, or

²⁸ Simon Weightman, *Hinduism in the Village Setting*, Milton Keynes: Open Univ., 1978, p. 52-54.

²⁹ Gregory H. Denysshchen, *Hinduism: Thought and Practice*, p. 13-14.

³⁰ Vishal Mangalwadi, *The World of Gurus*, Mumbai: GLS, 1999, p. 38-39.

³¹ Peter Brent, *Godmen of India*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973, p. 70 ff.

community could appoint a patron guru from among its own numbers. When this was the case, as Weightman points out, the gurus-*purohita*s would expect to be paid in a customary way and granted the following:³²

- The due respect for his person, charismata and gifts of appreciation including
- Annual payment in two forms: grain [*siddha*] to feed the priest, and monies.
- *Dakshina* - a sum of money nearly always paid at the end of each ceremony.
- Traditional amounts when certain rites in a longer ceremony are completed.

There are only a few guru movements that are ascetic, exclusivist and reject this-worldliness. Modern forms of guruism are world-affirming, emphasize 'success' and develop human potential. World-accommodating schools adjust their beliefs to benefit from material goods and enjoy the comforts of practical living.³³ In this manner, western forms of materialism are justified and reconcilable with eastern spiritualities. Since the 1960s, famous gurus who affirmed, accommodated and amassed material wealth in the west, were Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, the guru of the Beatles, who marketed TM as a scientific package, and Bhagawan Sri Rajneesh, notorious for his 50 Rolls Royces and 100 square mile ranch in Oregon, USA. With globalisation, this spiritual-material miscibility within folk religiosity has particularly become characteristic of upwardly mobile Indian Christians and churches, modelled, sustained and encouraged by the charismatic guru's preaching and own lifestyle.

Planalp observes in popular Hinduism, the 'demand for money and the passing coins back and forth are frequent and continuous in a ceremony and appears to be its most characteristic feature'. Donations (*siddha*) in cash or kind symbolise 'feeding priests' or caring for the welfare of divine agents who represent and mediate blessings - 'an act extolled in the Hindu religious literature as meritorious'.³⁴ Thus, *giving-to-receive* divine blessings, is a distinct Hindu ideological practice that lies at the heart of one's religious duty. Put otherwise, it is part of *dharma*; one of 'the four dutiful aims in life' along with wealth, pleasure and *moksha*. It is important to note with regard to money and services rendered, that both parties benefit in this patron-client system since the act effects an increase in each party's merit and social value.

³² Weightman, *Hinduism*, p. 49, 53.

³³ Roy Wallis makes these three distinctions and explains the categories in, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, London: Routledge, 1983, p. 8-39.

³⁴ J. Planalp, *Religious Life and Values in a North Indian Village*, Cornell Univ (USA). Unpublished thesis, 1956, quoted in Weightman, p. 53.

The priestly guru elaborately uses sacred texts to conduct rituals, but also performs two initiatory rites; one prophetic and the other, benedictory. With his *charismata*, he is expected to observe horoscopes to forecast future events and determine auspicious times for his clients to succeed in business. He objectifies divine blessing by writing mantras on armlets (*jantras*) that are believed to have innate powers to protect and bring good fortune. The rural masses crave for these tokens of blessing and, of course, a small price is attached. Practices like *dakshina* make priestly gurus indispensable and they position themselves within this conceptual framework. Weightman shows three underlying *quests*, he calls ‘modes of motivations’, which generate and sustain Hindu religious life. Each lodged within a complex, or set of beliefs and practices, is directed toward a particular religious goal and presented as follows:³⁵

- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| 1. Transcendental Complex | = for liberation and salvation |
| 2. Dharmik Complex | = for acquisition of merit and a good re-birth |
| 3. Pragmatic Complex | = for survival and betterment in this life |

The financial donations, I will refer to as *dakshina*, that Dhinakaran receives toward his ‘faith ministry’ lie within the *pragmatic* complex. These gifts are voluntary and as he assures people, are designated for social projects and evangelistic purposes. Thus, in affirming cultural values he creates opportunity for Indians to fulfil a Christian duty. He certainly does not place such acts of giving in the *transcendental* complex, i.e. to attain Christian salvation, which make it similar to the sale of indulgences in Catholicism criticised by the protestant Reformation. Next, it is crucial to hear the content of his message as a biblical mandate and note how Indians perceive it within a *dharmik* complex, i.e. as *religious duty* that produces merit or divine favour and ensures prosperity. This will have serious implications for a biblical understanding of prosperity, a ‘Christian’ view of faith, and the nature of the gospel of grace.

3. Dhinakaran’s Practical Theology of Blessing and Prosperity

There can be no doubt that divine ‘blessing’ based on divine compassion is the focus and central thrust in all Dhinakaran’s writings and programs. A few titles show this emphasis and reveal the content of his message: *Hundredfold Perfect Blessing*, *Blessing by the Lord who Anoints*, *Faith Fetches Blessings*, and *Blessings in the Lives of Young Partners*. It is worth noting that he also speaks of *The Blessing of Long*

³⁵ Weightman, *Hinduism*, Table 2: Quest-Complex, p. 44.

Suffering. In 1987, he published *Blessed Are You* on the beatitudes and his son Paul, wrote *Blessing on the Beloved* on the values of the Christian home in 1999.³⁶

Dhinakaran's teaching on prosperity is based on selected portions of Scriptures. It is substantiated with his own experiences and 'rags to riches' story. His past struggle with sickness, injustice, unemployment, poverty and the death of a child, make his approach pastoral and relevant to a wide range of sufferers. At conversion, since he found hope in the cross, he has made God's compassion the source of all blessings and a tangible reality in his social gospel. His message is inclusive for all irrespective of caste or creed not just for rich Christians to get richer. It offers meaning, helps people to make sense out of their situation, induces hope, mechanisms to cope, and challenges people to accept what God in Christ has done to solve their misfortunes.

3.1 Theological Foundations

Dhinakaran advocates a *threefold blessing*: (1) Remission of sins, (2) the Spirit's fullness and subsequently, (3) 'perfect blessings', all three being 'Blessings through Christ'.³⁷ The first two categories, spiritual salvation and empowerment for mission, we have noted as part of his Charismatic theology, and on this he builds a third 'material' component to complete it. The 'perfect blessings' he believes are because 'God honours faith', so he assures believers: 'Misfortune and poverty may come in your lives but do not be unduly worried... Jesus already trod the path of poverty and has overcome it. Through our petition the Lord will fulfil all our needs and make us happy'.³⁸ These blessings are 'all round' and experiential; they derive from a sense of God's presence which is life abundant and unleashes compassionate service.

Dhinakaran identifies God as the source of all good gifts and therefore reckons God's standard will is for everyone to prosper: 'Our gracious Lord does not want us to struggle in poverty. He wants us to have sufficiency in all things. The blessing of the Lord maketh rich (Prov. 10:22). He can relieve you from all financial difficulties and lift all your burdens of debt'.³⁹ He presses the need for a relationship with God whom

³⁶ 'Paul Annan' as the kids call him, dedicated this to his parent who 'made many sacrifices... to transform me into a humble servant of God and crowned me with blessedness'.

³⁷ Similar to Paul Yongi Cho's *Salvation, Health and Prosperity*, Altamonte: Creation House, 1987.

³⁸ Dhinakaran, 'Blessings through Christ', *Jesus Calls*, December 2002, p. 4-9.

³⁹ Dhinakaran, *Be Not Dismayed*, 1987, p. 19. This is a compilation of a series he preached at the 1985 *Festival of Faith*, and the teaching is based on the text from 2Cor. 9:8.

he pictures as a 'caring mother'.⁴⁰ His premise for prosperity is God's generosity, intense desire and commitment to supply the needs of all who trust in him.

Dhinakaran reverses the classic approach to hermeneutic. Instead of interpreting the Old Testament in the light of the New Testament, he directly and personally claims the covenantal promises God made to Israel's patriarchs: 'He who increased the possessions of Abraham and Isaac will shower enough temporal and spiritual blessings on us as well'.⁴¹ He is convinced that as long as 'we are in this world it is imperative that worldly blessings and good things are essential for us'.⁴² All the blessings that God gave to his people through Moses and the removal of the curse, Dhinakaran teaches are available to Christians since they have received the 'Spirit of adoption'.⁴³ Thus, he sees the increase in wealth as an integral part of covenantal blessings and a 'sure sign' of God's favour and election. He underlines the faith and importance of obedience exemplified by the many bible heroes who obtained various blessings.

As in the case of divine healing, the cross is the focus of Dhinakaran's teachings on prosperity that is available to Christians because of what Jesus Christ accomplished (2Cor. 9:8). The cross is his focal point for faith. It is the nexus where divine mercy triumphed over all sins and Satan's ploys and importantly, the curse and every form of injustice that contributes to all kinds of poverty thus allowing 'perfect blessings' to flow. Unlike western word-faith teachers, Dhinakaran has no name-it-and-claim-it or 'positive confession' theory for material gain. His teaching on *confession* is about forsaking sin (Prov. 28:13) to *receive* mercy on account of Christ's atonement.⁴⁴ He does not present a 'rich Jesus' but highlights Jesus' life of poverty and undeserved death from which he develops a type of substitutionary theory for prosperity:

[Jesus] came into the world to lift away our poverty... He went through the path of penury and poverty just for our sakes! He who was constrained thus, traversed this path only to put an end to your grief and poverty. He will definitely embrace you and give you rest banishing your constraints.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Dhinakaran refers to 'God who loves like a Mother' to stress divine comfort, protection and supply with Psalm 27:10 assuring orphans that God will not forsake them, *Jesus Calls*, June 2004, p. 6-10.

⁴¹ Dhinakaran, *I Am that I Am*, p. 18.

⁴² Dhinakaran, 'Blessing Offered by the Lord who Anoints', *Jesus Calls*, October 2003, p. 18

⁴³ Dhinakaran, 'Open Your Mouth Wide', *Jesus Calls*, Feb., 2002, p. 4 (Deut. 33:1, Rom. 8:15- 29).

⁴⁴ Dhinakaran, *Blessed Are Ye*, Madras: Jesus Calls, p. 42.

⁴⁵ Dhinakaran, 'Eternal Rest in Oppression' *Jesus Calls*, May 2002, p. 5. A picture of the crucifixion describes how: '[Jesus] became poor, that you through his poverty might become rich' (2Cor.8:9).

Dhinakaran is an exponent of a gospel of prosperity that is a mixture of special revelations, cultural values and selected Bible verses. From personal experience, he recognises sin can cause poverty which in turn brings destruction. He illustrates this by showing how within the Indian culture, people incur debt and resort to immorality and suicide. He tells of a man who was arrested for stealing money to pay the *dowry* for his sister's marriage.⁴⁶ Dhinakaran does not presume wealth is the answer to poverty. While he admits there is a form of security in having resources, he also warns of the material 'blessings' that bring much sorrow with it (Proverbs 10:15, 22).⁴⁷ His prosperity teachings are based on proverbial or practical wisdom. It relates to both the materially poor and the rich who are spiritually impoverished. Similar to healing, prosperity is offered within his theology of the cross and Spirit. The cross is a sign of divine *providence* and it brings the blessing of prosperity insofar as it has dealt with the original, spiritual cause behind poverty and enables a fruitful life in the Spirit.

Yet, a closer look at Dhinakaran's pragmatic approach reveals that he tends to confuse divine *providence* with *prosperity*. What academics refer to as providence he discerns as no less 'miraculous', and rightly so, since God's governance over nature and history should not be separated from his marvellous grace.⁴⁸ The 'mystery of providence' Chan notes, 'always involves the right spiritual attitude - watchfulness, which is not very different from praying'.⁴⁹ But unlike the traditional approach which accepts that God simply controls everything, for Dhinakaran, prayer is the means that releases God's gracious action and provision. Therefore, God not only knows future events but has already considered every exigency and decided what he will do.⁵⁰ For Dhinakaran this involves exercising a faith that seeks to please God which can be problematic when it seems to obligate God. Thus, 'providence' is not magic, but an experiential reality for God's people that may be discerned from the Spirit's ways in God's world.

3.2 Charismatic Praxis

I have discussed Dhinakaran's biblical theory on how prosperity works in relation to God the Father's promises and Jesus' atonement. Yet, the real impact of his practical theology relates to the Spirit's work in his public ministry. Healing-cum-prosperity is

⁴⁶ Dhinakaran, *Be Not Dismayed*, Madras: Jesus Calls, p. 53-54.

⁴⁷ Dhinakaran, 'His Blessing Presence', Tape from Kolapur Festival, 18 October, 1998.

⁴⁸ Roger Olson, 'Providence', *Evangelical Theology*, London: SCM, 2005, p. 244-247.

⁴⁹ Simon Chan, *Spiritual Theology: Systematic Study of Christian Life*, Leicester: IVP, 1998, p. 213.

⁵⁰ Within the context of divine omnipotence, Dhinakaran presents providence, 'to see before hand', in relation to *Jehovah-Jereh* – 'the Lord who sees to it'. *Prayer Brings Victory*, p. 12,18.

offered in a culture that is Pentecostal with outbursts of praise to Jesus, clapping, praying in tongues and manifestations. This collective enactment indicates a positive response to the Spirit's presence. The atmosphere: crowds, music, exhortation, all play a crucial role to 'dramatise' prosperity as good news and allow its 'blessings' to be experienced.⁵¹ The following transcript of Dhinakaran's exhortations from one such proceeding will clarify the content and show the effects of his writings:⁵²

- Beloved, on the cross, every curse was put on Him. Curses from the devil and witchcraft. Jesus said, 'let me be cursed and let my people be blest'.
- How many of you want deliverance from *bedies* [cigarettes] alcohol and drugs? Christ wants to set you free! (*Hands are being raised all over the crowds*).
- I'm going to ask the Spirit to come and fill all of you and consume every sin.
- Yes, great joy is filling your hearts now. Say 'hallelujah', 'thank you Jesus'. Christ is moving in our midst, filling us with his Spirit. See, marvellous light around you. Many are having visions. You are a new person! (*Loud clapping*).
- Now, open your heart, cry out to God, 'Jesus, I want prosperity, I want my debts and financial problems to go. Help me! Bless my income. Come hold my hand, come into and bless my home' (*People with tears repeating this prayer*).
- Your home is going to be a blessed home from today in every way. You will see the difference! (*Groans are replaced with smiles, hallelujahs and thank you's*).
- There is a young man Benjamin! Benjamin, God's mighty power is falling on you to prosper you. Some day you will be a mighty servant of God and shake the world. Come to the platform I want to lay my hands on you and bless you.

At the end, testimonies of how God 'blessed and prospered' are screened and shared as 'success stories'. At such corporate celebrations, Dhinakaran affirms the faith community's beliefs in miracles and 'sanctions' their materialistic values and invites seekers, among the thousands present, to experience 'all round prosperity'.

Having participated in Dhinakaran's rallies and IPM where, as he puts it, the Spirit's 'blessing presence' is manifested there is cause for concern. The assurance of healing and prosperity take place under a 'sacred canopy' and at a 'sacred time' when the

⁵¹ Stephen Hunt, 'Dramatising the 'Health and Wealth Gospel': belief and practice of the neo-Pentecostal 'Faith' ministry', *Journal of Beliefs and Values*, 21/1, 2000, p. 73-86.

⁵² Dhinakaran, 'His Blessing Presence', Tape from Kolapur Festival, 18th October, 1998.

Spirit is invoked and believed to become an experiential reality.⁵³ This divine-human encounter is somewhat ‘managed’ by Dhinakaran as the anointed preacher who pronounces prosperity using prophetic gifts. During such times there appears to be what Hunt terms ‘magical moments’ when attempts are made by supernatural means to assure people, like Benjamin above, of divine prosperity.⁵⁴ This is when I found the boundaries between the symbolic and factual, the metaphysical and real, are blurred and seem to disappear. The dramatisation above, effects what Baker describes as ‘charismatisation - the social production of an ethos propitious to the mobilisation of sentiments’.⁵⁵ So, I wanted to find out from those ‘blessed’ what exactly was appropriated as ‘prosperity’. Not counting bodily healings, the list below contains six main types of blessings from the first hundred people I interviewed at random.⁵⁶

Table: 7: Categories of blessing and ‘prosperity as a ‘result of Dhinakaran’s prayers’:

NB: Since many gave multiple responses the percentages do not add up to 100%.

1. A family member getting a well-paid job (often overseas)	= 42 %
2. Safe delivery of a baby (after or in spite of medical problems)	= 38 %
3. Cancellation of financial debt (at times through a loan)	= 35 %
4. Child’s marriage into a well-to-do Christian home	= 27 %
5. Buying land or being able to build one’s own house	= 22 %
6. Obtaining high marks toward a seat in a college	= 21 %

The above categories do not differ much from the monthly reports in his *Jesus Calls* magazine. What I found significant was the way aspects of family matters and future wellbeing were being casually equated with the theme of prosperity, as well as the outcome of Dhinakaran’s prayers although natural causes and human endeavour were also involved. For instance, most of these people had studied diligently, worked hard, taken loans and consulted other resources. Dhinakaran’s response to poverty has a spiritual edge since prayer and faith are employed. It takes on a socio-political stance in mobilising the public to rally together to intercede for national peace and prosperity.

⁵³ Mercer Elaide, *The Sacred and the Profane*, New York: Harper & Row, 1975.

⁵⁴ Stephen Hunt, ‘Magical Moments: An Intellectual Approach to the Neo-Pentecostal Faith Ministries’, *Religion*, No. 28, 1998, p. 271-280.

⁵⁵ E. Baker et. al., *Secularisation: Rational and Sectarian*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1993. p. 181-201.

⁵⁶ These categories were compiled as feedback from a random questioning of organisers/participants at the Prayer Festivals held at Coimbatore, Chennai, Trichy and Tuticorin (2001-2003).

3.3 Pastoral Tools and Marketing Techniques

For Dhinakaran, being 'blessed' enables people to 'give as the Lord leads',⁵⁷ since they have received 'good gifts and all of life's requirements'.⁵⁸ I will briefly discuss the practical outworking of such contentious teaching where the revelatory gifts, utilise *pastoral* mechanisms as fundraising techniques to meet the financial needs of 'faith ministries'. His 'Young Partner' scheme invites parents to register children for prayer by paying Rs. 2,000 or more, avowing that God's blessings would then:⁵⁹

- i) Provide them all round prosperity and the means to gain wealth;
- ii) Protect them from the evil forces that cause poverty;
- iii) Guide the believer in how to have a trouble-free future.

Dhinakaran thereafter advertised: 'We need 120,000 partners to contribute Rs. 1,000 each to build the Karunya Institute of Technology'. This project was a great success and the Karunya Institute now a 'deemed' University, was inaugurated in 1985. Interestingly, the plan is still in place with over 14,837 enrolled. The Jesus Calls 2001 annual report claimed: 'Several thousand children from 66 countries across the world are benefiting from this project shielded and blessed by the hands of God'.⁶⁰

Such a pragmatic spirituality with which Dhinakaran promotes a 'pay-for-prayer' deal or what J. George calls a 'giving-to-get' approach makes his faith ministry and views on divine prosperity problematic and highly questionable.⁶¹ Yet, it is striking, that in spite of this direct connection between money and prayers of faith, that clearly sets his practice apart from pentecostal churches, Bergunder noted, 'his enormous popularity was not at all affected'.⁶² Yet, this is less surprising when understood within the *guru-dakshina* system and culture of obligation. V.M Spurgeon makes an additional point as he observes a 'psychosis of fear and comfort' in the people:

In India such a psychosis has become a standing feature in the lives of millions due to frustrations that have been part of their lives for a long time. It is at times like this that religion comes to the rescue... Charismatic leaders have a few fundamentalist propositions to solve the problem. The prosperity gospel is the most comforting doctrine, many preachers use at it times when people are tormented by phobia and diffidence.⁶³

⁵⁷ Dhinakaran, 'God's Blessing Presence', Kolapur campaign, audio tape, October 1998.

⁵⁸ Dhinakaran, 'God's Own Indescribable Gift', *Jesus Calls*, December 2001, p. 4-10.

⁵⁹ Dhinakaran, *Blessed Are Ye*, p. 64.

⁶⁰ *Jesus Calls*, 'Yearly Report' January, 2001, p.17.

⁶¹ J. George, 'Prosperity Theology', p. 3.

⁶² Bergunder, *Christianity is Indian*, p. 169.

⁶³ V.M. Spurgeon, 'Charismatic Spirituality of Indian Christians', *The Third Shift*, p. 128.

Obligation and fear are compelling motives for people to subscribe to prayers for blessings. However, it is important to note that the 'magical moments' that inspire faith in God's providence are indeed, momentary. Dhinakaran does not see them as an end in themselves but a beginning. Faith is fostered pastorally in practical ways by his Jesus Calls charismatic community. For him, prosperity is not something instant but related to the Spirit's transforming power, which is gradually and corporately discovered in fuller measure by holy living and industriousness. Hence, prayers for pregnancy are offered in his Esther Prayer groups, referrals are made for loans, job opportunities shared and even seats are reserved for some at his Karunya Institute. This is precisely how the 20 facets of his 'ministry of *compassion*' supplement and sustains these *charismatic* encounters. Without the practical follow-up and pastoral care, there could be reasons to believe Dhinakaran operates with a brand of faith theology that is typical of a hegemonic North American (US) prosperity gospel.

4. Dhinakaran and the 'American' Prosperity Gospel

According to Appleby: 'The most important US export, in the long run may not be its weapons, its diplomacy or its manufactured goods, but its culture and especially, its indigenous religious culture, the ultimate carrier of values and worldviews'.⁶⁴ This may be arguable, but the US is typified as a 'cultural site' with socio-economic and political appetites that accommodate a consumerist and materialistic lifestyle. Here three ideals: health, wealth and a positive faith have been 'commodified' for a global market and are made the salient theological ingredients of a global prosperity gospel.

Obviously, not every gospel from US is a 'prosperity gospel'. The latter refers to the development of certain beliefs and a value system within a secularising socio-economic culture worldwide, which for various reasons flourishes in the American soil and climate. There is a particular form or *American-style* of packaging and presenting Christianity that delivers faith as a commodity: in abundance with an efficiency that seems instant. At the consumer's end, this creates expectancy and generates, in Drane's words, the 'McDonaldization of the Church'.⁶⁵ There is a need to analyse the

⁶⁴ Brouwer, S., Gifford, P. & Rose, S.D., *Exporting the American Gospel*, London: Routledge, 1996. Quote by Scott Appleby on the back cover.

⁶⁵ The sociologist George Ritzer coined the phrase and identified four traits of the process: efficiency, calculability, predictability and control, *The McDonaldization of Society: the Changing Character of Contemporary Social Life*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge, 1993. John Drane, discerns similar trends in some modern ways of 'being' and 'doing' Church. *The McDonaldization of the Church, Spirituality, Creativity and the Future of the Church*, London: DLT, 2000.

theological *substance* and ethical *content* of this materialistic gospel that continues to inundate India from US, keeping in mind its global appeal or market is there because there are global customer demands.

The prosperity gospel is a conglomeration of three main streams of thought: (1) Neo pentecostal/charismatic spiritualities, (2) The power of positive thinking and (3) New metaphysical thought of Christian Science.⁶⁶ These ideas, selectively blended in different proportions were fostered by America's post-World War II economic boon and promoted by US evangelists as a pragmatic theology.⁶⁷ Thus, its leading proponents submit that a positive faith is a spiritual means for the reification of material wants. Here, I examine only those representatives who found inroads to India and influenced Dhinakaran.

4.1 American Pentecostal Healing Evangelists

A segment of US holiness preachers and Pentecostal healing evangelists contributed to what became known as the 'prosperity gospel'. Finny advocated that God's blessings came through prayer offered with a special 'faith that always obtains its objects'.⁶⁸ In the 19th century, A.J. Gordon, A.B. Simpson and Charles Cullis were representatives of those who performed faith-cures by associating a gospel of health to Christ's atonement.⁶⁹ Their teachings impacted key figures such as Dowie, the 'father of healing revivalism in America', Parham and Seymour, who gathered other faith enthusiasts and spread the Pentecostal message.

From Azusa the Pentecostal 'full' or 'everlasting' gospel became globalised. While it propounded 'Spirit baptism' for empowerment, in the light of Christ's return it also promised a wholistic 'en-rich-ment', i.e. both spiritual and physical blessings for this present life.⁷⁰ This accounts for Pentecostalism's tendency toward an over-realised eschatology but it also explains why it took root and blossomed among the poor, disinherited, and marginalized. Anderson underlines the nature of global Pentecostal missions as it relates to the existential needs and offers common people prosperity:

⁶⁶ David Kim, 'A Bed of Roses or a Bed of Thorns', *ERT*, 20/1, 1996, p. 14-25.

⁶⁷ Coleman, 'The Faith Movement: A Global Religious Culture?', *Religion & Culture*, #3, May 2002.

⁶⁸ Quoted by David Smith, 'Theologies of Success', p. 189.

⁶⁹ Nancy Hardesty, *Faith Cures: Divine Healing in the Holiness and Pentecostal Movement*, outlines further details and the process, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003.

⁷⁰ Burgess, 'Healing Movements', *DPCM*, p. 358- 373.

Pentecostalism proclaims a pragmatic gospel and seeks to address practical needs like sickness, poverty, unemployment, loneliness, evil spirits and sorcery... Healing, guidance, protection from evil and success and prosperity are some of the practical benefits offered to faithful member of Pentecostal and Charismatic churches.⁷¹

The faith movement has been traced back to the post-war, independent, itinerant, healing evangelists with their extravagant crusades. Harrell records how in the 1950s the prosperity gospel emerged as *the* important 'new ideology' from the Neo-pentecostal revivals, which sought to override the stress on faith healing.⁷² A.A. Allen, the tent revivalist and miracle healer, was a trendsetter whose gospel included material prosperity. Maria Woodworth-Etter, Wigglesworth and F.F. Bosworth, whom Dhinakaran refers to, professionally organised mass healing campaigns.

T.L. Osborn's visit to Madurai, in February 1961, was a defining moment when Dhinakaran dedicated his life to a public healing ministry to reach India, which in Osborn's words, was 'ready for the harvest'.⁷³ Healing evangelists were prosperity exponents who on one hand, fervently ministered prayers, and on the other, skilfully raised public donations for their 'faith ministries'. Osborn in 1970 produced a 'Pact of Plenty' to promote divine-human reciprocity promising multiple returns for money given to the Lord. The next generation of evangelists were far more effective carriers of this 'culture of faith' for prosperity in their international ministries. Radio and televangelism enabled a highly organised communication system to raise funds, which apparently in turn accredited their gospel of prosperity. Dhinakaran gleaned from US evangelists with international links how to represent, promote, follow-up a message on prosperity with techniques that became central to spreading the gospel.

Branham and Roberts frequently visited India, who Dhinakaran considers as 'great ministers... able to raise dying people through their prayer of faith'. Craving for such power, he asked: 'Why not in our country, Lord?' and claims he heard God's voice: 'You are the man!'⁷⁴ While Branham radically shaped Paulaseer Lawrie's theology,⁷⁵ Roberts influenced Dhinakaran's social projects and fund-raising strategies. There are

⁷¹ Allan Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, Cambridge: CUP, 2004, p. 223.

⁷² David Harrell, *All Things are Possible*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975, p. 229.

⁷³ Dhinakaran records details of this incident in *Gifts of the Holy Spirit*, p. 105.

⁷⁴ Dhinakaran, *Gifts of the Holy Spirit*, p. 43.

⁷⁵ See Bergunder, 'From Pentecostal Healing Evangelist to *Kalki* Avatar: The remarkable Life of Paulaseer Lawrie', in *Christians and Missionaries in India*, Eerdmans, 2003, p. 357-375.

obvious similarities between their prayer towers, universities and hospitals. Yet, Dhinakaran selectively contextualises his methods while being open to partnership. On 8, September 2003, Richard Roberts and Paul Dhinakaran signed an agreement between their educational enterprises, ORU and *Karunya*, for research and exchange of faculty and students.⁷⁶ Today, tables have turned as Dhinakaran, a leader among equals, is needed by US evangelists like Benny Hinn for their global networks.

4.2 The Power of Positive Thinking

The second tributary of thought that fed a theology of prosperity, subtly but certainly merged into it with vital consequences. Pragmatism in America was a reaction to a purely intellectualised form of faith that had little practical everyday benefit. One can expect truth from God to be relevant and help humans in desperate need. A basic question behind Christian pragmatism asks: What good value or use is there for truth if it does not make its faithful followers productive? Pragmatic theories maintaining the test of truth as its practicality have pastoral value in pious and poorer societies.

Pragmatic theories for faith were attractive to American philosophers like William James and John Dewey (1859-1952), who defended their worth during fluctuating economic periods in the US. They insisted that ‘the usefulness of believing a particular proposition will depend on what we think the consequences of that belief might be’.⁷⁷ A similar reasoning lies behind word-faith teachers with their gospel of health and wealth for the here and now. James showed how in religious experiences, ‘the power of belief can produce pragmatic results’.⁷⁸ In this way, a Christian pragmatism nurtured an experiential spirituality with a ‘positive faith’.

In the mid 20th century, a reversal of fortune caused a dip in US economy and the average earnings. Protestant liberals found it difficult to cope with the widening gap between social classes and depreciating money. At this juncture, a spirit-enterprising faith was introduced with an inherent ‘power of positive thinking’ and a prosperity philosophy. James’ groundbreaking results from *Religious Experiences* was baptised into Christianity, which opened ‘possibility thinking’ and left Christians with the task of finding biblical bases. Making positive mental attitudes (PMA) the key, new

⁷⁶ Photographs and details ‘Pray for America Special’, *Jesus Calls* (back cover) November, 2003.

⁷⁷ See: Linwood Urban, *History of Christian Thought*, Oxford: OUP, 1986, p. 244ff.

⁷⁸ William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experiences*, NY: Macmillan, 1961 [1902] also see comments in James L. Christian’s, *The Ways of Philosophy*, Rhiehart Press, p. 36.

success theologies were popularised by leaders like Vincent Peale, Robert Schuller and Pat Robertson and of the three Dhinakaran admitted he knew the third best.⁷⁹

Robertson epitomises the American TV talk show host who addresses socio-economic problems, family values, religious liberty and politics.⁸⁰ In 1986, he donated Rs 6 lakhs [600,000] toward faculty housing for *Karunya* University when Dhinakaran was Rs. 2.3 million in debt.⁸¹ In 2001, Dhinakaran was featured on Robertson's TV network,⁸² and increasingly has been involved in Indian politics with a conservative social agenda.⁸³ After the 9-11 twin tower tragedy, he mobilised prayer for the US and in September 2004, he was part of the 'Pray for America Conference' at Washington Sheraton Hotel, with Robertson, Shakarian, Daughterty and other businessmen.⁸⁴ With these Americans, Dhinakaran believes that through revival prayer and biblical principles for success any nation can rise economically.

4.3 Cultic Mind Sciences and Positive Confession

Essek W. Kenyon (1869-1948) is generally accepted as the 'true' father and prophet of the prosperity gospel. Kenyon was not a Pentecostal and opposed the movement in his early ministry.⁸⁵ His views were framed at *Emerson*, the Christian Science College in Boston and developed into a theological system akin to the *New Thought* religions of his day. Human thoughts and spoken words were believed to be potent and used mystically to control, change or create reality. Mary Baker Eddy's teaching on Christian Science, posited that God exists as 'All-in-all, and is good, and good is mind, and nothing is matter' so, 'Life, God, omnipotent good, deny the reality of death, evil, sin and disease'.⁸⁶ Other Mind Sciences commonly maintained that:⁸⁷

- God is a cosmic or universal law with 'faith' as the mental power that regulates perception to bring about spiritual success.
- Spiritualistic revelations are needed to 'confirm' the Mind Science worldview that *divine* consciousness is the only true reality and true nature of humans.

⁷⁹ Interview, Dhinakaran, 4 March 2002, *Jesus Calls* HQ, Madras.

⁸⁰ John Donovan, *Pat Robertson, The Authorised Biography*, McMillan, 1986 and *Dates with Destiny*, Nashville, TN: Nelson, 1986. In 1986, his name was proposed for the US presidential candidacy.

⁸¹ Dhinakaran, 'Lord of Wondrous Counsel and Great Works', *Jesus Calls*, October 2004, p. 8.

⁸² Dhinakaran, *Jesus Calls*, p. 23. Robertson is photographed and an appeal is made for financial support to be sent to *Jesus Calls* International office: P.O. Box 1725 in Tulsa OK, (USA).

⁸³ David Harrell, *Pat Robertson: A Personal, Religious and Political Portrait*, Harper & Row, 1987.

⁸⁴ Dhinakaran, 'Prayer for America' *Jesus Calls*, November 2003, p. 16-19.

⁸⁵ Smith, 'Theologies of Success', p. 190.

⁸⁶ Mary Baker Eddy, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, Boston, 1971, p.113.

⁸⁷ Ankerberg & Weldon, *The Mind Sciences*, Eugene OR: Theological Research Institute, 1993, p. 8.

- The manifestations of the divine life are in the personal accumulation of power, wealth, success, health, happiness, etc.

Kenyon adopted a dualistic, deterministic worldview where faith operated within a closed system to derive what he called 'great spiritual laws that govern the unseen forces of life'.⁸⁸ His view of reality had two mutually exclusive spheres: the spiritual and material. The goal was to act in the spiritual realm with 'revelatory knowledge' as its superior source over against 'sense knowledge' that is normally used in rational sciences and technology. The problem was compounded when he asserted that, 'real faith is acting upon the Word independent of any sense evidence'.⁸⁹ Thus, Kenyon incorporated metaphysical concepts to varying degree from Mind Sciences to teach that health or wealth can be pro-created by exercising one's mind-over-matter.⁹⁰

Kenyon's radical views were made into a 'dangerous' faith theology by Kenneth Erwon Hagin, who is singularly responsible for conceptualizing and formulating the 'name-it-and-claim-it' gospel. Hagin propagated this doctrine through his booklets, which were transcripts of his popular radio program 'Church of the Air', since 1931. He claimed he received messages directly from Jesus during personal visits, yet McDonnell uncovered evidence that conclusively demonstrated the bulk of his views were plagiarized word-for-word from portions of Kenyon's unpublished works.⁹¹ It is worth noting that Kenyon's teachings were widely circulated and the post-war healing evangelists, Branham and Osborn in particular, quoted him regularly.⁹²

Hagin, known as 'dad' within the faith movement, mentored the majority of the US prosperity preachers: Kenneth and Gloria Copeland, Charles Capps, Fredrick Price, Robert Tilton, etc. He established the *Rhema* School in Tulsa and indoctrinated enrollees with his word-of-faith theology. On January 1, 1934, Hagin had an out-of-the-body experience and through revelatory interpretation of texts like Mark 11:23-24, developed 'the principle of faith' wherein he reckoned 'the *having* comes after the *believing*'.⁹³ With his followers he then made the act of 'positive confession' a sure means to achieve prosperity, something quite alien to Pentecostalism. Kenyon came

⁸⁸ Kenyon, *Hidden Man*. Cited by McConnell, *A Different Gospel*, Hendrickson, 1988, p. 44.

⁸⁹ E.W. Kenyon, *The Two Kinds of Knowledge*, Seattle: Kenyon's Gospel publishing House, p. 34.

⁹⁰ Detailed aspects in McConnell, *A Different Gospel*, Peabody: Hendrickson, 1988.

⁹¹ McConnell, *Different Gospel*, blatantly exposes word-faith and name-it-claim-it activities.

⁹² McConnell's *Different Gospel*, p.23, Hanegraaff, *Christianity in Crisis*, p. 332.

⁹³ Quoted by D. Smith, 'Success Theologies', p. 191.

up with the slogan: 'What I confess, I possess',⁹⁴ and Hagin outlined the dogma in four simple steps: (1) Say it, (2) Do it, (3) Receive it, and (4) Tell it.⁹⁵

Copeland, one of Hagin's students, based on Deut. 28:11-12 and Phil 4:19, taught that since poverty is not a blessing and prosperity is always God's will, believers are in a position to 'claim' divine promises as a 'right' and get their need met on demand.⁹⁶ In 'positive confession' no mention is made of disease or financial debt itself, as this would make it 'negative'. Whether for healing or a new car, believers were instructed not to doubt God's ability, which is 'negative confession', but, in spite of persisting symptoms, begin to act 'in faith' as if they had already received it.

Consequently, healing and prosperity become a cause-and-effect phenomenon; the product of the right kind or sufficient amount of faith. Careless application of this view leads to three common 'fatal flaws' about faith. Hanegraaff summarises:⁹⁷

1. *The force of faith*: Faith is a force and words are the containers of the force. Thus through the power of the mind or words, you create your own reality.
2. *The formula of faith*: Formulas are the name of the game in faith theology.
3. *The faith of God*: The god of faith theology is not sovereign. He is merely a faith being who has to operate in accordance to universal laws of faith.

I found it highly significant that in all Dhinakaran's tapes or writings, there is no mention of 'positive confession' or its advocates viz., Kenyon, Hagin, Copeland, Capps, Crouch or Tilton. When interviewed in March 2002, Dhinakaran denied any link with this group. He was shocked that 'mere mortals' could think they were God, and he exclaimed: 'We are beggars, we cannot demand or command anything from a merciful God'.⁹⁸ He conscientiously distances himself from word-faith teachers.

5. A Critical Evaluation of Faith in the Prosperity Gospel

Having identified Dhinakaran's faith ministry within indigenous movements and shown its links with US televangelists I now evaluate his teaching on prosperity: within the cultural context of guru-dakshina and in relation to the US prosperity gospel. I will highlight features that are theologically flawed with pastoral pitfalls. Both these could be compared with the significance of Jesus' lifestyle, death and

⁹⁴ E.W. Kenyon, *The Hidden Man*, Lynnwood, WA: Kenyon GPS, 1970, p. 98.

⁹⁵ K. Hagin, *How to Write Your Own Ticket with God*, p. 20-21, 32.

⁹⁶ Kenneth Copeland, *The Laws of Prosperity*, Tulsa, OK: Harrison House Pub., p. 27, 39 and 43.

⁹⁷ Hank Hanegraaff, *Christianity in Crisis*, Eugene, Oregon: Harvest Pub., 1993, p.52.

⁹⁸ Interview, *Jesus Calls* HQ., Madras 4 March 2002. Word-faith books are not stocked in his stores.

resurrection which would then judge the message, ministry methods and motives. But, I will limit my discussion to a faith theology that relates to Dhinakaran status as a charismatic leader (*guru*) and the practice of financial giving (*dakshina*).

5.1 The Jesus Calls Ministry as a Guru Movement

Indian culture nurtures a relationship between the guru and devotees as the vital key for successful living and subsequently a prosperity gospel is inadvertently spawned.⁹⁹ Jesus is 'the ideal Guru' and discipleship takes place as mentoring.¹⁰⁰ For Jebaraj, the director of Hindustan Bible College and Dhinakaran's associate, India is a multi-religious nation 'on a pilgrimage to a source of peace with some knowledge of the Prince of peace; Guru of the Orient - Jesus'.¹⁰¹ Indian Christian theology reflects on God, humanity and the world in the light of Jesus, whom Thangaraj usefully calls, *the Crucified Guru*.¹⁰² Therefore, I propose that Dhinakaran's or any Christian ministry that advocates a gospel of wealth be assessed against the backdrop of a biblical christology that can be shown to become distorted by prosperity themes.

Indian Christians are reluctant to label Dhinakaran a prosperity preacher, yet they view him as a spiritual guide and Christian guru whose prayers allegedly have caused people to prosper materially. Customarily, divine blessings are mediated through charismatic agents, so when Dhinakaran appears in public, crowds who watched his TV programs throng to touch him, politicians seek his prayers to be elected and Charismatics fast and pray for this-worldly blessings.¹⁰³ Thousands of poor people pay a fee to enrol in his Partner Plans that promise divine protection and prosperity. While this is a tangible way his wholistic mission 'includes a theology of divine guidance, provision and healing',¹⁰⁴ Dhinakaran promotes an 'Indianised', inevitably 'syncretic' but dangerous form of prosperity. The direction of prayer has shifted from God to the charismatic agent and its focus moved from seeking God's will to getting one's own needs or wants. Divine sovereignty appears to be turned over to agency.

The concept of faith in the word-faith theology is in formulae that release innate forces to materialise wants; all things are possible by the right kind of faith. Since the mind

⁹⁹ Hoerschelmann, *Christian Gurus*, p. 30, 31, 57ff; Brent, *Godmen of India*; Lee, *ERT*, 1998, p. 26 ff.

¹⁰⁰ G.R. Crow, *The Guru: Jesus Christ and His Teachings*, Bombay: G.L.S. Pub., 1972

¹⁰¹ Jebaraj Samuel, 'Evangelism and the Charismatic Movement', *Third Shift*, ISPCCK, 2000, p. 251

¹⁰² Thomas Thangaraj, *The Crucified Guru: Cross-Cultural Christology*, Nashville: Abingdon, 1994.

¹⁰³ Interview, M. Bergunder, 'Indian prosperity gospel', Fircroft College, Birmingham, 18.09.2001.

¹⁰⁴ Paul Hiebert, 'Flaw of the Excluded Middle', *Missionalia*, 1982, p. 46.

[*psyche*] and words [*rhema*] could create anything out of nothing [*ex-nihili*], God's sovereign will is no longer an issue and prayer is unnecessary. Believers could use their 'divine rights' to manipulate God into doing their will. Further, such faith teachers use biblical texts out of context to reinforce their pretexts convincing themselves and their followers of a faith theology that downplays human reason. In this extreme version of the prosperity gospel, the faith-filled individual in effect becomes *a god*, possessing all the powers and divine status equal to Jesus Christ.

Kenyon writes: 'When God imparts to us his nature, there comes with it all the attributes of [God] himself. They are undeveloped but they are there lying latent in our human spirits'.¹⁰⁵ Copeland teaches: 'As a born again believer, you have the same spiritual capacity Jesus has. Believers are not to be led by logic. We are not even to be led by good sense. The ministry of Jesus was never governed by logic or reason'.¹⁰⁶ Tilton declares: 'You are wall to wall Jesus... the miraculous should be common place in every church... Jesus [in John 15:7] was talking about demanding your rights having restored back to you what the devil stole from man in the fall'.¹⁰⁷ So, word-faith theology advocates that humans are, and have to act as 'little gods'. They have the same power as Jesus, and 'by faith' can procreate their own health and wealth. Hanegraaff points out how such thinking ultimately demotes God and Jesus and simultaneously deifies human beings who can exercise god-like powers.¹⁰⁸

Philosophically this resonates with the transcendental complex on how salvation (*moksha*) is attained. The guru can achieve a stage in his enlightenment to become 'one with' or merge into ultimate reality (*Brahman*). This ontological oneness between one's innermost self (*atman*) and the non-dualistic impersonal god (*advaita*) dissolves human individuality, personality and a creator-creature divide. In Hindu thought 'there is no clear dividing line between human and the divine, as a witness not just to the multiplicity of the avatars e.g. Rama or Krishna, but also a tendency to treat gurus and holy people as divine'.¹⁰⁹ Thus Dhinakaran's Hindu counterparts like Sai Baba are

¹⁰⁵ E.W. Kenyon, *The Hidden Man: The Unveiling of the Sub-conscious Mind*, Tulsa, p. 50.

¹⁰⁶ Kenneth Copeland, *The Force of Faith*, Fort Worth Texas: KC Pub., n.d. p. 10.

¹⁰⁷ Robert Tilton, *To Catch a Thief*, p. 88, 89.

¹⁰⁸ Hank Hanegraaff, *Christianity in Crisis*, Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House, 1993. p. 53-54.

¹⁰⁹ N. Smart & S. Constantine, *Christian Systematic Theology in a World Context*, Marshall Pickering, 1991, p. 255. *Avatar*, from the prefix *ava* 'down' and the verb *tr* 'to come over', refers to a deity appearing on earth. *Avatars* are many, usually of the god Vishnu and not the same as the *incarnation*

regarded as divine incarnation (*avatara*) and accept worship from devotees who in turn, expect them to have powers to 'bless' and cause prosperity.

In contrast, Dhinakaran is a communicant member of the CSI and subscribes to the historical apostolic creeds of Christianity. No one would disagree he has made a valuable contribution to Indian evangelical faith in terms of the Charismatic renewal. He preaches the God of the Bible as creator separate from his creation who has in Jesus Christ 'revealed himself to people'. All humans are sinful creatures in need of the gospel and conversion.¹¹⁰ He presents Christ as Lord and 'only saviour, the way to reach God's presence'.¹¹¹ For this, he stresses repentance and confession of sin, not 'positive faith'. Christians are indwelt by the Spirit and need to be regularly filled or controlled by the Spirit to be effective human witnesses. Hence the question of the *deification* of humans and the *humanisation* of God does not arise in his theology.

Nevertheless, in practice, whenever Dhinakaran's prayers are answered, there is automatically and inevitably a reverence ascribed to him within the Indian patron-client system. Although he claims to be 'a humble servant of God' and vocally gives 'all glory to God', cultural conformity makes him anything from a hero to an *avatar*. Swamy, a Hindu convert, after studying Dhinakaran's charismatic and prayer ministry that solicits funds, believes it actually encourages a 'paganistic faith that has no place in the biblical teachings'. He correctly notes:

God grants gifts to his servants and uses them but those servants should not become the hero and take the place of God. The ultimate goal of those servants should be to lead the people to God and guide them to become God's instruments like them, and to become one among them.¹¹²

Voices like that of Swamy's need to be heard by charismatic agents and evangelists like Dhinakaran. Because, in spite of their well-meaning 'orthodox' theologies, since they do not take drastic measures to let the gospel transform culture, by default, they foster a culture of devotees and create a dependency that impoverishes the gospel. The practice of esteeming miracle workers as gods is not new or confined to any one culture. The crowds in Lystra and Derbe mistook Paul and Barnabas as 'gods come

that is a once and for all putting on of flesh by the second person in the Trinity which determined God's redemptive purposes and decisively transformed the relationship between God and humans.

¹¹⁰ Dhinakaran, *Be Not Dismayed*, p. 15, 33-42

¹¹¹ Dhinakaran, *I Am That I Am*, p.42-50.

¹¹² Anthoni Swamy, 'An Evaluation of Mass Media Evangelism', M.Div. Thesis, AGST, 1996, p. 33.

down in human form'. The apostles' reaction is exemplary and a good starting point for all who minister in hero-worshipping cultures: They tore their clothes shouting, 'We too are only humans like you. We bring you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God who made heaven and earth' (Acts 13:8-20).

There is a credibility gap in Dhinakaran's theology and practical lifestyle. In Swamy's words, he does not 'become one among' the common people especially the poor. As founder-director of a multi-million dollar Jesus Calls enterprise with its expansive properties, and as a TV celebrity, his special charisma has distanced him from Jesus' incarnational model. Dhinakaran uses 'unrighteous mammon' as a means to make friends, but fails to reconcile this with Jesus' other statement that we cannot serve both God and mammon, which gives the impression that he affirms economic values above certain human value. His family property and extravagant lifestyle does not exemplify a Christlike simplicity that, in Foster's words, 'gives us the perspective and courage to stand against greed'.¹¹³ God may allow material prosperity and comfort and on occasions gives it to people in answer to prayer, or as a consequence of faithfulness. But, what requires justification is Dhinakaran's view that prosperity is God's will for everyone and a commercial network that promises it to those who finance his work.

5.2 *Dakshina*, Divine Economy, and a 'Pentecostal' Work Ethic

Having considered issues with *charismata*, agency and prosperity, I will discuss problems related to funds, poverty and Dhinakaran's 'ministry of *compassion*'. His idea of 'blessing' adapts religious orientations that mirror Hindu notions of worship, offering and ethics of wealth. *Dakshina* is a welcomed practice and functions as a fee rendered for services,¹¹⁴ similar to honouring ministers as the Bible proverbially states: 'A worker is worthy of his wages'. So, financial gifts to Dhinakaran's priestly-prophetic ministry role do not raise ethical issues in the predominately Hindu society, and a large section of the charismatic community that are his financial 'partners'.

But, conforming to such religious practice is disconcerting as it has cruel implications for the poor and can lead to a capitalistic spirit that defames biblical truth. Both the manner and the ends toward which *dakshina* is given need to be understood alongside

¹¹³ Richard Foster, *Money, Sex and Power*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1985, p. 65.

¹¹⁴ Mark Nichter, 'Paying for What Ails You: Socio-cultural Issues Influencing the Ways and Means of the Therapy Payment in South India', *Social, Science & Medicine*, 17/14, 1983, p. 957-965.

the role of the charismatic guru as a mediator of material blessing. Within the *transcendental* complex of Weightman's three-tiers, Dhinakaran does not advocate that donations in any form will merit favour or manipulate God to deliver a request. However, the people who 'pay-for-prayer' expect that this act of commitment (*dharmik*) by virtue of the agent's faith and piety will make things happen, which validates the *pragmatic* aspect. This expectation becomes clear from the testimonies in Dhinakaran's meetings and how his critics have adjudged his Young Partner plan.¹¹⁵

Dhinakaran has not taken the initiative to clarify expressly what the donations in response to his promises of blessings and schemes cannot do, which if he does, will of course affect his funds. Some Indian pastors feel that apart from 'sheep-stealing' hundreds of volunteers, his ministry also 'milks the monies' that belong to the local churches.¹¹⁶ More importantly, one never hears of the countless names of non-believers and new Christians, who after prayer or sending their money are not healed, do not pass exams, remain jobless, are still in debt, or never have children. Although some Indians seemed resilient in their faith and continued to attend and support Dhinakaran's ministry, many others feel misled and even deceived. In this way there is a disservice, which at worst amounts to cruelty to the suffering poor.

Moreover, Dhinakaran's four schemes of involving 'partners' who subscribe and donate funds (Jesus Calls partners, Young partners, TV club members and Karunya projects) positively resemble typical American televangelist fund raising techniques. Here, Oral Robert's 'blessing pact', 'seed faith' principle and use of items like a prayer cloth as a 'point of contact' to express faith,¹¹⁷ have parallels in Dhinakaran's fund raising methods. The pledge form for his New Prayer Tower claims: '*Build the Prayer Tower and the Lord will Build your House*'. Several options are given to send money (in rupees or dollars) and to raise portions of the tower in the donor's name. Many take vows, for instance, Mrs. Vedanayagam agreed that if God provided her work she would send her first month's salary, and upon getting a nursing job in the UK, she promptly did so.¹¹⁸ Strikingly, such bargains with God that Dhinakaran advertises easily turn God's grace into 'a gospel of greed'.¹¹⁹ He deploys marketing

¹¹⁵ Bergunder, 'Ministry of Compassion', *Christianity is Indian*, p. 171.

¹¹⁶ The author agreed not to disclose specific names but has listed the interviewees (see appendix).

¹¹⁷ Details and critique in Hanegraaff, *Christianity in Crisis*, p. 193-209.

¹¹⁸ The details of P. Vedanayagam Dalmaida's testimony are in *Jesus Calls*, July 2004, p. 33.

¹¹⁹ David Larsen, 'The Gospel of Greed versus the Grace of God' *TrinJ*, No. 9, 1988, p. 211-220.

strategies with an efficient built-in system of reminders, receipts and rewards. All this makes one wonder whether the kingdom that Jesus is building is 'of this world'.

Dhinakaran views prosperity as reward within a *divine-human economy*. From his experience in banking he has developed the investment principle of 'sowing and reaping' as he preaches the gospel in a wholistic way. He writes: 'Our Lord is not one who blesses just our wealth and properties. He also multiplies our descendants like the stars. It is his holy wish that we must prosper... Only when we sow in tears we could harvest with joy'¹²⁰ Prosperity is related to shalom in all areas of life. He believes God's blessings are manifest in what he 'builds' spiritually and materially and that blessing can be hindered, removed and lost by evil spirits and curses.¹²¹ This makes way for his prayer and deliverance ministry but serious problems arise as the blessings are also directed somewhat selfishly toward the facets of his own ministry:

So also we sow the word of God in the hearts of our children. When we pray for the sick, through TV and radio programmes, and through the magazines too we sow the word of God in the hearts of countless people. The Lord tells us that these words of God that we sow shall not return void.¹²²

Here, the principle of divine multiplication is made to correspond to grateful giving and the two reciprocal blessings are put forth together. Dhinakaran believes one form of blessing is 'transmuted' to another by a 'Rewarding Lord' who mixes the spiritual with material. Such fluidity in thinking requires an appropriation by faith that also creates anticipation for nuanced blessings, which often confuse more than comfort.

Further, Dhinakaran considers material prosperity as a *sign of divine favour*. He teaches that God 'calls' people and 'blesses' them in order that he may prosper the 'labour of their hands' for his name's sake.¹²³ This notion echoes the Calvinistic idea of 'election' and its corresponding Protestant work ethic. Here, material success was counted as a *sign*, i.e. it indicated being chosen of God, which in turn pointed to the source that caused prosperity. The resultant material blessing acquired from this divine-human cooperation mysteriously took on a *sacramental* character and at once sanctified and sanctioned wealth. The increase of material goods therefore becomes an outward, visible sign of an inward spiritual grace, i.e. sacred enabling. In the same

¹²⁰ Dhinakaran, 'Hundredfold Blessings, *Jesus Calls*, January 2004, p. 2-5.

¹²¹ Dhinakaran, *Jesus Calls*, July 2002, p. 9.

¹²² Dhinakaran, 'Hundredfold Blessings, *Jesus Calls*, January 2004, p. 4.

¹²³ Dhinakaran, Chapter Two: 'I AM: The Lord who Calls and Blesses', *I Am that I Am*, p. 11.

vein, Weber's theory of capitalism can be applied to explain the thrust of materialism that soon develops its profit into a prosperity gospel.¹²⁴ Which raises the question: Do Pentecostals subscribe to a work ethic and a new 'capitalistic spirit' that justifies their affluent lifestyles? Dhinakaran's strong ties with the US seem to suggest this. If this is so, then his views that sanction the 'American Dream' inevitably provide a justificatory rationale for the economic disparity of the marginalised poor in India.¹²⁵

For Dhinakaran, prosperity is a direct result of God's compassionate favour. Wealth related to such divine enabling bears a God-ward stewardship and has responsible value toward forwarding his gospel. From Scripture, he notes that this includes the increase in the believer's strength, peace, love, trust, faith and the 'grace of giving'. He then encourages believers who are blest to give financially in return and reminds them: 'God accepts our offerings and desires that fruit should abound to our account'. He talks about a God 'who compensates richly' for the believer's 'sacrifices and losses'.¹²⁶ Divine prosperity is made dependent on human free will and in his view necessitates diligent hard work. He conceptualises what I would call, a 'pentecostal work ethic' where the deep sense being 'called, anointed and set apart' unto good works and, by the empowering Spirit, produces an impetus to succeed. Such a view is borne out in the following statement from Dhinakaran's experience:

The blessed *Lord* was merciful! He helped *me* study, gave me a degree and a job. He blessed me *step by step*. My poverty *vanished*.¹²⁷ [Emphases mine].

It appears that for Dhinakaran, overcoming poverty and becoming prosperous is something Spirit-motivated; a miracle of grace and not magical. His blessing theology entails a Christian pragmatism where biblical and moral encouragement on the one hand help believers to relinquish or overcome habits that cause poverty and on the other hand develops in them responsible virtues and talents that in themselves, spell success. Dhinakaran gives his Young Partners the following advice:

No matter where you work, there are always possibilities for you to come up in your career. Your future is in your hands. You should always analyse the possibilities of getting more and more promotion wherever you work, and

¹²⁴ Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, New York: Scribner & Sons, 1950; James Tinny, 'The Prosperity Doctrine: An Accretion to Black Pentecostalism', *ERT*, 4, 2000, p. 1.

¹²⁵ George Cherian, 'Globalisation – A Conspiracy of the Rich against the Poor', Gandhi & Cherian (eds.), *Globalisation: A Challenge to the Church*, Chennai: Institute for Social Concerns, 1998, p. 63.

¹²⁶ Dhinakaran, *I Am that I Am*, p. 19. (2Cor. 8:7; Phil. 4:17).

¹²⁷ Dhinakaran, 'Blessings of Long Sufferings', *Jesus Calls*, March 2004, p. 5.

work hard accordingly. Write the necessary exams to obtain the promotions, do all the work that is entrusted to you with the best of your efforts.¹²⁸

Thus a 'pentecostal work ethic' with distinct Christian virtues is foundational to Dhinakaran's teaching on faith for prosperity. He deems industriousness in the professional world as a spiritual gifting and a sacred trust, which God's grace makes possible toward socio-economic progress. Stewardship functions as 'a metaphor for development'¹²⁹ and philanthropy, particularly charity or compassionate evangelism, is a Christian discipline and expected witness. Consequently, he stresses giving of oneself to the Spirit for service before the giving of one's money for missions.

6. A Brief Analysis and Remarks

Dhinakaran's prosperity message in his blessing theology is a complementary component of his evangelical-charismatic theology. As with his hybrid healing, I have demonstrated this also to be adaptive, syncretic and pragmatic for Christian mission in the Indian context of poverty. His prosperity teachings depict a *syncretic* phenomenon where a christianised version of guruism emphasises giving (*dakshina*) out of devotional duty (*bhakti dharma*), as necessary symbolic acts for the devotee and manifold rewards are promised for donating to the guru's priestly services. In this indigenous context, Dhinakaran invites Christians to give to his *Jesus Calls* ministry and participate in the cause of compassionate evangelism. I have offered Weightman's conceptual framework (transcendental, dharmik and pragmatic) as an intellectualist approach, within which moral judgement on receiving monetary gifts for spiritual services within India can be understood and theologically critiqued.

Regarding globalisation and the spread of the prosperity gospel, Coleman notes: 'A theology whose origins lie predominately in the United States is reproduced, sometimes selectively appropriated, in new contexts'.¹³⁰ After identifying prosperity components in Dhinakaran's teachings, I have shown how it is *adaptive* due to its affinity to a US brand of Pentecostal revivalism, where faith for physical and material wellbeing is encouraged as a providential benefit of the atonement.

¹²⁸ Ecc. 9:10; Dhinakaran, 'Blessings in the Lives of Young Partners', *Jesus Calls*, July 2003, p. 8-9.

¹²⁹ D. Miller & S. Guthrie, *Discipling the Nations: The Power of Truth to Transform Cultures*, Seattle: YWAM, 1998, p. 227.

¹³⁰ Simon Coleman, *The Globalisation of Charismatic Christianity: Spreading the Gospel of Prosperity*, Cambridge: CUP, 2000, p. 36.

Among the imprecise definitions and the many versions of the prosperity gospel exported from the US, Dhinakaran's teachings slowly moved from the 'pentecostal healing evangelist' more toward the 'positive thinking' stream that sought to show that strong faith in God and biblical principles achieves human success. Motivational talks from biblical texts challenge people to develop a positive attitude for desired results. This type of prosperity was spread in socio-liberal circles by businessmen like Robertson in the lead and others as Peale and Schuller used the psychology of self-reinforcement with sales techniques for efficiency. What is clear is that Dhinakaran does not subscribe to Hagin's 'positive confession' or word-faith theology that blossomed in fundamentalist camps. Yet, it must be said that any combination of these streams produces a synergy that can twist the gospel of Christ and that 'the consumer way of life fosters a number of virtues at loggerheads with many Christian virtues'.¹³¹

The *pragmatic* nature of Dhinakaran's prosperity teaching is derived largely from a combination of possibility thinking and what I called a new 'pentecostal work ethic'. Here charismatic empowerment and an industrious spirit are put into effective use to produce practical, measurable outcomes noted as blessings. Prosperity takes on many forms - bodily healing, financial breakthroughs, employment, promotion, protection and also posterity: children born, marriages arranged and families in harmony. Dhinakaran's prosperity message works and needs to be 'worked out' not merely by spiritual means but also by developing Christian virtues and talent toward a wealth creation that is responsibly used for the community's good and to spread the gospel.

Dhinakaran's charismatic apologetics seamlessly transits into a pragmatic theology for prosperity when it is market-driven. It is a theological conundrum that embraces a culturally attuned faith for blessings, uses biblical language that promotes an American capitalist ethos and principles that resonate with aspects of the health-wealth gospel of the Faith movement. His 'Young Partner scheme' and 'New Prayer Tower project' exemplify this. Spiritual experiences and prophetic revelations that are made the basis for fundraising generally give his prosperity teachings a bad press. Further, a 'pentecostal passion for more' soon becomes, as Brunner puts it, 'the desire for more than usual obedience and faith and is evidenced by a more than usual experience'.¹³²

¹³¹ Rodney Clapp (ed.), *Consuming Passion: Christianity and Consumer Culture*, IVP, 1998, p. 193.

¹³² Fredrick Brunner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970, p. 129-130.

This creates a spiritual elitism and as it enters the material realm, can become a 'capitalist spirit' that covertly demands more *things* from God.

The prosperity gospel with its positive and negative elements is transforming and is being transformed as it is critically adapted trans-culturally. It is not without a reciprocity that usefully informs and theologically re-shapes its American versions. Dhinakaran's theology of blessing and suffering and *Jesus Calls* ministry in India is one such case, which I have critiqued for its promises and compromises. The 'prosperity gospel' has been severely criticised by many western, evangelical and Pentecostal scholars. It has been labelled: 'Cut-Rate Grace', 'Alternate Gospel' and 'A Different Gospel'.¹³³ In spite of confronting its errors, exposing damnable tenets and condemning its variant forms, the prosperity gospel in some form continues to appeal to people and spread. Perhaps one can infer that the 'American dream' is to a great measure the basic human craving to enjoy what God's good world has on offer.

How then do we rate Dhinakaran's gospel for prosperity? At the risk of adding another label, I would call it a 'precarious gospel' since it stresses 'prayers of faith' for prosperity and involves money that warrant caution, yet it has sufficient tenets of orthodoxy in its theology of the cross and Christian work ethic that locate it within the historic confession of faith as a tenable evangelical theology, however, with a theory-practice credibility gap. It is ideal to describe Dhinakaran's teaching as 'precarious' since the word is derived from the Latin *precarius* meaning, 'obtained by asking or praying', originally 'a legal term, meaning dependent on another's will or favour', which in an uncertain situation came to mean 'chancy' and gradually 'risky'.¹³⁴

It is true that a faith for prosperity is something that has been underplayed in some Indian churches even in modern times, and that suffering can be elevated beyond its station as the only way to sanctification. Certainly there is a demand and market for Dhinakaran's prosperity teachings. Nevertheless, orienting people's minds to success with which the prosperity gospel thrives, and accommodating materialistic values typified by the 'American gospel', makes one wonder, if the Indians who remain ill, poor and destitute due to injustices in the systems would feel worthy of this 'gospel'. Some wondered if Dhinakaran's prosperity message was there to justify his affluence.

¹³³ See: McConnell (1988), Horton (1990), MacArthur (1992), Hanegraaff (1997) and Coleman (2000).

¹³⁴ *Heinemann English Dictionary*, Oxford: Heinemann Educational Publishers, 1995, p. 802.

Dhinakaran's over-focus on success and material gain in the here-and-now warrants caution. Though mainly drawn out of Old Testament promises it fails to sound the prophetic word that riches can open doors to oppressive ideologies, unquenchable thirst for power and corruption on the path of which other people are dehumanised. The prayer of the wise who want 'neither poverty nor riches' but contentment is absent (Proverbs 30:8). His teaching on 'this-worldly' prosperity distorts Jesus' gospel that shows solidarity with the poor and calls disciples to 'follow in his steps'. Bartholomew shows how, as a way of life, consumerism has religious overtones that compete for Christ's Lordship. He writes: 'It is as the church recovers this huge view of Jesus and pursues this clue in all areas of life that we will successfully resist consumerism and the other idols that compete with Christ's rightful claim upon our lives'.¹³⁵ Jesus lived in simplicity, warned against the deceitfulness of riches, addressed woes to the rich and juxtaposes the rich and poor in his parables. He reminds Christian *bhaktas*: 'the *shishya* is not above his *guru* and it is enough for the servant to be like his master'.¹³⁶

Dhinakaran's prosperity teaching has a sacralizing affect on wealth for Charismatics in India, more so in the production than the consumption of a capital that is directed toward proclaiming the gospel and what seems like marketing prayers of blessing. However, in teaching Christian stewardship and generosity, economic individualism and a 'capitalistic spirit' are guarded against. Still worldly wealth is deemed a spiritual blessing and thereby sanctified and sanctioned. His *Jesus Calls* movement is effecting a paradigm shift in the Indian missionary enterprise as the poor and socially upward mobile Charismatics experience 'all round prosperity' and finance Dhinakaran's message of divine healing and prosperity for a wholistic mission worldwide.

¹³⁵ Craig Bartholomew & Moritz (eds.), *Christ and Consumerism*, Carlisle: Paternoster, 2000, p. 97.

¹³⁶ Isa. 10:1-2; Amos 2: 6-7; Mic. 6:12; Matt. 13:22; Luke 6:24-26, 16:19-31; Matt. 10:34.

Chapter Eleven

Conclusions: Dhinakaran and Pastoral Pentecostalism

This research has explored the nature and impact of charismatic healings in South India with special reference to Dhinakaran's teachings and the Jesus Calls movement. While the 'Dhinakaran phenomenon' is acknowledged in many academic works, this is the first dissertation that offers a full account of his life events, maps the contours of his praxis and analyses his theology from his original writings. The study has revealed the highly *pragmatic*, culturally *adaptive* and *syncretic* nature of Pentecostalism in India epitomised in Dhinakaran's 'ministry of compassion'. This thesis contends that 'charismata and compassion' belong together in Dhinakaran's view of mission where pastoral care complements and enhances power evangelism. I have investigated grounds for this dialectic approach that I termed as 'Pastoral Pentecostalism'. Several concluding observations can be drawn on the Charismatic healing movement in India, Dhinakaran's Jesus Calls ministry and for a viable contextual theology of healing.

1. Pentecostal Healings: the Marvel and Method of a Religious Movement

My research began by asking what is intrinsic to Pentecostal-Charismatic spirituality that has made it a dominant evangelistic force in India. The study has shown that its appeal and dynamism are much more than the sum of doctrines. The key to its dramatic development were experiences of the Spirit that reinforced Jesus' presence, which renewed believers with 'Pentecostal' *power* to overcome human barriers and differences, and be witnesses of the whole gospel in word, signs and by deeds. Thus in India a Pentecostal faith paved the way for the charismatic movement. Here, the Spirit's work was bound up with the Spirit's healing charismata when at special times divine *grace* intervened in miraculous ways to show compassion in terms of the power of pastoral care. The church led charismatically advances Christian mission in India.

1.1 Distinctiveness of Indian Pentecostal-Charismatic Spirituality

As early as 1860 at Aroolappen's church, and in the 20th century at Ramabai Mukti mission and Carmichael's Dohnavur fellowship, Spirit-manifestations such as tongues, fire and wind, give historical credence that Pentecostalism arose out of visitations of the Spirit which originated in India itself. Its experiential spirituality is spontaneous, radical, gives voice to the poor and creates space for the marginalised. Here, I argued, charismata with compassion exemplified a faith that made ministry culturally relevant.

The fresh surge of power received by these early Indian Pentecostals was directed to their social responsibility. Unearthing the roots of Indian Pentecostalism we found, typical of Dhinakaran's ministry, a *bhakti* piety, apostolic *guru* leadership and philanthropic *dharma* (service). These features in the 'Indian root' account for the rise of Pentecostalism and as such contribute to the nature of global Pentecostalism.

Indian Pentecostalism is a product chiefly of the 19th century missionary endeavours and later Azusa missionaries like Berg and Cook since the 1907. Belief in divine healing and prayers of faith that were at the core of the movement from the start, gave it momentum and wove a charismatic spirituality into the texture of the daily lives of its adherents by meeting existential needs. However, Pentecostal churches continue to thrive mainly because of what Jones described as, 'the greatest characteristic of the Hindu upon that (Indian) Road – a characteristic that stands out among all others – God hunger'.¹ The gifts of the Spirit operate where such longings are coupled with an obedient faith to the imperatives of the gospel. Further, when responsibility, i.e. the 'Pentecostal task' is given confidently to local volunteer service, mission is enhanced. This thesis has shown this to be the 'open secret' of Dhinakaran's success.

The main contribution of the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement in India, as globally, is its zeal and thrust for mission possible only 'through the power of the *mystery* and *miracle* of God'.² This 'Third Shift' toward a charismatic community summons churches to spiritual warfare, ministries of healing *and* reconciliation, as Dhinakaran puts it, 'irrespective of caste, class or creed'. Oddly enough, when traditional Christian thought forms and worship structures become too formal or alien to the majority of Indian Christians and marginal for their spiritual lives, what seems like unusual beliefs and practices are appreciated and gradually absorbed into the mainstream.³

1.2 Mission in the Spirit and Pentecostal Healing Theologies

Theologically, what sets the Pentecostal-Charismatic faith and ministries apart are new orientations to the supernatural realm that stress faith and the advocacy of power for miraculous ministry. Therefore, definitions must consider the obvious reversal of the traditional order of truth followed by access to power. For Pentecostals, experiences of

¹ E. Stanley Jones, *Along the Indian Road*, Nashville: Abingdon, 1939, p. 14.

² Sebastian Kim, 'Understanding Conversion', *Missiology for the 21st Century*, ISPCK, 2004, p. 544.

³ A similar shift is happening in the west with the rise of new spiritualities. C. Partridge, 'Alternative Spiritualities: Occulture and Re-enchantment of the West', *Bible in Transmission*, Summer 2005, p. 4.

the gifts as divine manifestations of power are important, if not a primary way of applying truth. Subsequently, a significant shift has been created in leadership roles from the sacramental to the charismatic. Here, the Spirit's power is mediated through anointed ministers via prophetic prayers and power healing.⁴ The pneumatological focus and dynamics of revivalism have allowed radical changes in the perception of the Church's spirituality and mission. New patterns of ministry to contextualize faith in relevant forms have emerged that cultivate *bhakti*-like worship and restore an apostolic model, one which resonates with the *guruism* and simultaneously, empowers and releases lay women and men within a democratised and decentralised ministry.

Charismatic healing theologies, like Pentecostalism, do not lend themselves to any kind of systematising. In India, they pay close attention to people's concerns and answer culturally relevant questions. However, with regard to divine healing, this research found a core charismatic spirituality in line with the Azusa Street mission's 'full gospel' that is recognised in Indian Pentecostal colleges. The full gospel offers India a valuable framework to understand wider implications of healing in terms of wholistic mission and the eschatological kingdom. It facilitates contextual theologies for healing, worldwide. Reckoning that 'the central miracle of Azusa Street was the erasure of the racial and colour line' bears directly on the eradication of caste and economic lines in India.⁵ As a corollary, India, in Garr's feedback, demonstrated to Azusa a better way to interpret the gift of tongues and underlined the relevance and scope for the 'wonderful' healing gifts that now flourish in Dhinakaran's ministry.

Pentecostal spirituality with its full gospel embodies a Pastoral Pentecostalism that in India has enhanced charismatic ministry and healing in five dimensions: First, its experiential faith, apostolic leadership and lay ministry brought spiritual renewal that challenged the structures of the traditional (Syrian, Catholic and CSI) churches and introduced the healing gifts for mission. Second, it established its own denominational churches like the SIAG, CGI and TPM with healing theologies, that I have compared, the outworking of which has helped them become the fastest growing segment of Christianity in India. Third, its stress on exorcisms has addressed a neglected area of the Indian church's pastoral service care for those dispossessed in this way. Fourth, the

⁴ Arthur Glasser and McGavaran, *Contemporary Theologies of Mission*, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983, p. 119-120; C. Peter Wagner, *The New Apostolic Churches*, Ventura, CA: Regal, 1998, p. 25.

⁵ Isaac Matthew, 'Neglected Elements', *FRT*, p. 49.

association of the gifts with the outreach of the gospel and care for the needy has fostered a new ecumenism for the Indian church's healing ministry. Fifth, marked by compassion for the sick especially outside the established churches, it has spawned independent evangelistic healing initiatives like Dhinakaran's Jesus Calls ministry.

2. Dhinakaran and the Jesus Calls Healing Movement

Over 35 years, Dhinakaran has advanced the healing ministry alongside his Jesus Calls organisation which exhibits a model of *pastoral care* which shapes his *charismatic praxis*. I have shown ways how his '20 facets' of ministry are 'pastoral mechanisms' for wholeness that correspond with Jesus' 'ministry of compassion'. They reflect a threefold power of love: *Preaching* and training (IPM) demonstrate a compassion that communicates pardon from guilt and practically equips other Christians to do likewise. Compassion for the sick and broken-hearted offers experiences of God's mercy and power in miracle *healings*. And, a compassion for the poor and powerless provides basic care, social *justice*, administrative guidance and the strength of community.

2.1 Cultivating Pastoral Pentecostalism: Growing Healing Communities

Dhinakaran's ministry intentionally relates the gospel to people's existential, domestic, socio-cultural and economic needs seeking to transform communities and build the nation. It is socially engaged with a sacrificial love that Gandhi admitted was 'the greatest thing in the world' and a Christlike compassion, which Brunner describes as 'the most important virtue of our Lord'.⁶ It promotes attitudinal and inter-relational changes with the ethic of practical love for neighbours. I have argued that his kaleidoscopic ministry that presents the gospel with words, signs and social action is 'wholistic', authentically Indian and seeks to exemplify Pastoral Pentecostalism.

Dhinakaran's integrated model has facilitated three missiological encounters:⁷ *Truth encounters* seek to answer ultimate questions of the purpose of life within a biblical plan for cosmic history. *Power encounters* respond to existential needs by offering meaning to experiences such as illness, misfortune and death within human history and deal with future concerns. *Empirical encounters* associated with natural science, social order and public relationships adopt a 'secular' process and a social gospel.

⁶ Dhinakaran, *Gifts*, p. 11; W. Emilson, 'Gandhi and the Greatest Thing in the World', *The Expository Times*, 113/4, 2002, p. 118-119. Vincent Brunner, *The Model of Love*, Cambridge: CUP, 1993.

⁷ Kraft, 'What Kind of Encounters do we Need in Christian Witness', C.71-78; Hiebert, 'Cross-Cultural Differences', C.9-23, *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, Carey Library, 1993.

Dhinakaran's genius lies in how he manages change and allows a combination of all three encounters through which people commit their lives to Christ's lordship and mission in the Spirit.⁸ He creates the space and proactively assists growth in faith and witness. Indians are finding new energies both to cope with sufferings and to hope for wellbeing. Dhinakaran's comprehensive ministry places him in a win-win situation.

This analysis of Dhinakaran's healing praxis from his popular writings, which has not been previously undertaken, has at least three levels for consideration. First, his praxis emerges out of a Neo-Pentecostalism that on one side resonates with the Hindu subculture and on the other, mirrors an exported form of US revivalism. Second, his approach uses traditional Christian means, e.g. prayer, anointing with oil, prophetic gifts, alongside the use of modern technology like televangelism and the Internet. Third, there is *glocality*, which is the interplay between the particular or local ministry and the global Charismatic movement. Dhinakaran has set the pace for others in selectively adapting a variety of themes and methods from the traditional culture and out of US-based televangelism for their local application and global relevance. Such a *hybridity* has its own dynamic and is taking healing evangelism in India in new directions. Therefore missiologists will need to move beyond indigenous categories, important and foundational as they are, to develop contemporary theories of radical change that recognise that cultures and people's worldviews really do change.

Dhinakaran's contribution to Pastoral Pentecostalism reveals an integrated approach that enhances evangelism. There is a direct link between his services and the lay initiatives of the local churches that creates potential for ecumenism. The common biblical mandate and Spirit-empowering for healing has produced an understanding and appreciation between the various denominational churches. Lay participation has made charismatic healing a populist expression of New Testament witness and generated what elsewhere is referred to as 'the mysticism of the masses'.⁹ Here, as in the Bible, the prophet rather than the philosopher is the one defining meaning, which, Dryness points out, 'is appropriated as one responds to Jesus' call to discipleship – that is to continue the project of redemption God began'.¹⁰ Such a movement challenges aspects of western thought where eternal truth is found merely in 'ideas'.

⁸ Dhinakaran, *Gifts of the Holy Spirit*, p. 21-22 (Rom. 5:5).

⁹ M.J. Field, *Search for Security*, London: Faber and Faber, 1960.

¹⁰ W. Dryness, *Learning Theology from the Third World*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990, p. 89.

Dhinakaran's praxis is transformative, prophetic and liberative. It speaks biblical truth into people's situations of need, and bears the marks of a radical pastoral theology that perceives healing as 'releasing human beings from the bondage of sin, sickness and other physical ailments'.¹¹ His Karunya educational, medical and social projects address justice and socio-economic issues and relate them to what it means to be truly and fully human. He is committed to 'politics', but essentially to the politics of prayer and of compassion. He takes a particular evangelical stance that believes political involvement in and of itself, does not necessarily provide the solutions for all social problems, since not all problems are social or political but are fundamentally spiritual in nature. Therefore his praxis is an action-reflection 'in the Spirit' that contributes to what is being recognised in India as 'moving forms of theology' where 'to love God passionately and sensibly lies not in its coherence and systematic structure, rather in its power to promote love and solidarity with the innocent and suffering'.¹²

Dhinakaran's Jesus Calls movement manifests a Pastoral Pentecostalism with a double-edge: 'power evangelism' and 'pastoral praxis' that are active in public life and within the churches. Such a combinational approach, Bergunder discovered within Indian Pentecostalism and Wahrish-Oblau found to be the case within the Chinese and African immigrant churches.¹³ Although manifestations of miraculous power take the limelight, Dhinakaran's achievements, to a greater degree, must be attributed to his communication and inculturation of the gospel in India's globalising culture, and his rigorous prayer and pastoral care mechanisms. The 20 facets of his ministry nurture and transform communities by recapturing for the Indian church her 'dynamic empowering dimension with gifts, miracles and evangelism (along with fruits and growth) as a normal part of their expectation and experience'.¹⁴

In sum, Dhinakaran has significantly contributed to the normalisation of the 'pentecostal' experience, the democratisation of charismata and the routinisation of healing prayer. These, in turn, are greatly contributing to the charismatisation of Christianity in India where he remains the chief catalyst and foremost Christian Guru

¹¹ Dhinakaran, 'Healing Signs', *Mission Mandate*, p. 126.

¹² Israel Selvanayagam (ed.), *Moving Forms of Theology*, Delhi: ISPCCK, 2002, p. 9.

¹³ Bergunder, 'Miracle Healing', (p. 108-111), Claudia Wahrish-Oblau, 'God Can Make Us Healthy', (p. 92-96), *IRM*, 356/357, 2001.

¹⁴ G. Fee, *Gospel and Spirit: Issues in New Testament Hermeneutics*, Hendrickson, 1991, p. 118.

for 'all round blessing'. His Jesus Calls ministry must be seen as a movement toward wholeness. While non-believers who experience healing miracles encounter something of Christ's forgiving love, many Christians who have a special encounter with the Spirit, find it a 'rite of passage' into the charismatic life. Thus Dhinakaran's ministry is a powerful agent for change whose purpose is to allow the interiorisation of a distinctly charismatic state of affairs that demonstrates compassionate care and thereby exhibits the phenomenon, Pastoral Pentecostalism.

2.2 Indian Charismatic Healing Ministries: Forecasting Trends

Dhinakaran is a trendsetter, and his charismatic ministry is a catalyst for change within the modern Indian religious culture and evangelical churches. His 'Institutes of Power Ministries' are moving the bulk of charismatic healing from the cathedrals to the IT 'call centres', i.e. out of the worship place and into the workplace. Second, his inclusive and egalitarian approach is bringing the socio-economically marginalised into the mainstream. Third, his healing mission is gender empowering. Indian women, as modelled by Stella and Evangeline, are no longer spectators or the 'back-bones' to ministries, but are public preachers, magazine editors and directors of ministry.

This study of Dhinakaran's Jesus Calls ministry has shown several general trends in the ministry of healing, evangelism and pastoral care in South India. It reveals important factors about the nature and texture of the Charismatic mission in the Indian pluralistic context. The following broad statements outline my findings:

- i) Divine healing has increasingly become a charismatic experience, something not just to be understood but felt and shared. Charismatic worship and evangelism pastorally build faith communities or, as Tidball rightly discerned: 'A sense of belonging grows as people experience the church at worship'.¹⁵ My research reveals that often belonging comes before believing.
- ii) There has been a shift from static, institutionalised, pastoral approaches of healing to the formation of non-ecclesiastical, healing communities where the spiritual gifts are intrinsically tied to the gospel and its mission in society.
- iii) Itinerant evangelists as a way forward are equipping lay trainers, which is actually causing the exponential growth of Charismatics.

¹⁵ Derek Tidball, *Discerning the Spirit of the Age*, Eastbourne: Kingsway, 2002, p. 142.

- iv) The democratisation of charismata does not altogether take away a desire for or dependence on the gifted healer's services in India. A competitive spirit exists between agents, but appears less since the need is great and number of Christians fewer. Charismatic healers will find India a field 'white to harvest'.
- v) As people travel, a pattern is set in which the gospel of health moves beyond the local and national to become a global commodity. With success, its primary focus has moved from people to programs and mass-production, yet, to keep supporters and the family involved, it is customised and personalised.
- vi) The revolutionary development of the TV and electronic media are enabling Indian televangelists to reach far more people than the 'mystical' Pentecostal preachers who, in the 1960s, dispensed healing through public crusades.
- vii) Organisational skills have become as important as spiritual gifts to the evangelist's survival, ironically success easily makes Charismatic Christianity, that at one time opposed the institutional (e.g. CSI), institutionalised itself.

Megatrends ASIA, in analysing global change noted the paradigm shift from *villages to consumer driven cities*.¹⁶ Dhinakaran's success story from rural Cuddalore to Madras city illustrates how urbanisation creates opportunities for social upliftment. Yet these 'hubs of hope' foster a consumerist philosophy as the new cultural lifestyle. M.P. Paul describes the attitude of Indian youth, who desire 'the good life' for the here-and-now:

This is the land of *karma*, where everything is worked out for you, your destiny, your *kismet* [fate]. But the new generation feel, 'The hell with waiting for reincarnation!' They are deciding that what they want is a better life now, and if they have any money, they want to spend it now.¹⁷

Dhinakaran has recovered a wholistic gospel that empowers local ministry but faces the great temptation in globalisation to cater to the above demands. His partnership with American capitalistic expressions of faith and lifestyles demonstrate, with many other charismatic ministries in India, what Harper has called 'the ironies of indigenisation'.¹⁸ As global market economies threaten to replace traditional ideas, politics and biblical values, Dhinakaran's ministry will have to face up to and deal with the consequences of this paradigm shift from *nation states to global networks*.

¹⁶ Naisbitt & Aburdene, *Megatrends ASIA*, London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 1995.

¹⁷ M.P. Paul, 'Tiger and Lamb: Megatrends', *Mission and Evangelism*, Delhi: ISPCK, p. 166.

¹⁸ Susan Harper, 'Ironies of Indigenization: Some Cultural Repercussions of Mission in South India', *IBMR*, 19, 1995, p. 13-16.

Social changes have negative and positive impact. Hybridity in Dhinakaran ministry also typifies the paradigm shift from western influence to practical Indian ways. The rise of Asian economy, with China as the 'workshop' of the world and India as its IT 'back office' has shown that the west is not necessarily the best. The modernisation of India at one time equated with Americanisation is now an internal struggle to reshape Indian life in every field. The Jesus Calls revival movement, in spite of technological advancement, repudiates a blind faith in science. Nehru rightly adjudged that the genius of Indian culture, 'is not some secret doctrine or esoteric knowledge that has kept India vital and going through these long ages, but a tender humanity, a varied and tolerant culture and a deep understanding for life and its mysterious ways'.¹⁹ Pothen has pointed out a disparity in the advancement of India's material modern culture against a 'culture lag' in the non-material, e.g. family and faith institutions that must catch up for a well adjusted society.²⁰ Dhinakaran's stress on compassion, wholeness and economic mobility is creating a common socio-cultural outlook with tolerance and respect for all faiths. His social concerns bridge cultural gaps between church and society,²¹ and his charismatic ministry is a catalyst that is speeding up its cultural lag.

The egalitarian gospel, social cohesion and missional power of Indian Charismatics has gathered believers from high and low status, educated and illiterate and those with and without means, to form an apostolic community that is committed to bring healing and reconciliation. Yet, important theological issues are at stake. My thesis findings raise some questions that might lead to further research, but call for a brief synthesis:

Charismatic Christianity in India has become a vivid reality and major missionary agent, but is its revivalism here to stay? What new challenges will Pentecostal healings, once spontaneous and culturally adaptable, now rather structured and predictable have to face to stay credible? Charismatic faith in the Indian church was not simply a counterculture, and surely not anti-culture, but how much of a counterculture is it against the pervading consumerist culture that intimidates and is uprooting native culture? Pentecostal churches which once held forth the gospel to the poor, weak and marginalised, today proffer prosperity gospels with capitalistic

¹⁹ Quoted by K.M. Panikkar, *Essential Features of the Indian Culture*, Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1964, p. 22.

²⁰ K. P. Pothen, 'Changing Society', *Church in India: Mission Tomorrow*, Delhi: ISPCK, 1999, p. 5.

²¹ Roger Hedlund, 'Social Concern, Social Justice, Social Action', *Evangelization and Church Growth, Issues from an Asian Perspective*, Madras: CGRC, 1992, p. 146.

tendencies and are guided by affluent ‘celebrities’. Where are the wounded healers? How far can pragmatism and biblical truth go together, and when does syncretism endanger the uniqueness of the Christian gospel? To what extent must personal holiness engage deliberately in social justice or ‘this-worldly’ concerns? An understanding of what the concept Pastoral Pentecostalism advocates shows how some of these questions may be addressed and points a way forward. In this way, what Dhinakaran strives to emulate also judges the integrity of his healing praxis.

3. Charismatic Theology and Pastoral Pentecostalism

While Dhinakaran’s ministry and the Indian Charismatic movement are experiencing spiritual awakenings and missional success, it is appropriate to gain greater insights into the dynamics and dangers of charismatic healing. Both a theology of power for evangelism and suffering are central to the Bible and the experiences of Indian Christians. This thesis offers Pastoral Pentecostalism as a theological praxis that enhances ministries such as Dhinakaran’s. But it also revealed some warning signs to be heeded if it is to remain true to the gospel in Indian culture. Pastoral Pentecostalism resolves to hold charismata and compassion in creative tension and submits that if God is to be truly made known, then there must be a cooperation and meaningful dialogue between the following concepts that have been at the heart of this study:

3.1 The Word and the Spirit

Dhinakaran’s presentation of the gospel involves verbal proclamation of biblical truth as well as visible demonstration of the Spirit’s power, both point to God’s desire and ability, on account of the work of Christ, to bring salvation, healing and deliverance. In his meetings believers appropriate both Word and Spirit in their prayers and lived-experiences being assured that the Spirit of the unchanging Jesus universalises the availability of his power to transform lives and communities. Dhinakaran preaches by healing and miracles serve as a kerygmatic tool. He allows mind and emotion to know God experientially and in doing so brings the best of the evangelical and charismatic traditions together. In India, such differences are perceived largely because of an overemphasis on one over the other. Separating God’s *objective* revelation from his Spirit’s *subjective* experiences is a divorce the Bible does not entertain and the church must not either. Most of Dhinakaran’s public projects are birthed and expedited out of his visionary experiences. However, since he regards the Bible as God’s authoritative

word, such subjective revelations need to be made subordinate to it, and further tested by its more certain and objective truths, which God's Spirit will not go against.

Healing is one way to declare the kingdom, a method Jesus used. But, people need to understand and believe the truth about Jesus to enter the kingdom. Miracle healings often occur especially in the context of pioneer evangelism. Experience has helped shape Dhinakaran's theology and has shown him that 'miracles enthrall and draw people to God'. He rightly recognises healings as enacted parables that announce God's compassion but he fails to teach that they are not a necessary preliminary to evangelism and cannot produce faith in those who reject God's Word that declares Jesus as the truth whether we experience him or not. Christian experience and truth belong together. A changed life as a result of a healing is not to be despised but, in pluralistic India, Christianity does not have a monopoly on miracles; so, pragmatism without biblical theology does not help to discern Christian experience from the false.

3.2 The Cross and the Eschatological Kingdom

A comparative analysis of key tenets in doctrinal statements on healing of the major Indian Pentecostal churches (SIAG, CGI and TPM), is a first of its kind, and showed each denomination's distinct emphases, although in practice views intermingle. Here, two theological shifts in healing with regard to the full gospel are striking: The accent on the atonement seemed to have eclipsed 'not yet' aspects of the kingdom. This, in turn, endorses an over-realised eschatology that gradually moves the emphasis from personal holiness to this-worldly power and the benefits made available due to the finished work of Christ. As a result, anthropocentric theologies develop for the 'here and now' that inevitably stress miracles, exorcisms and prosperity gospels. Here 'Pentecostal' healing motifs such as prayer, faith, power and the gifts take the limelight in ways that can be pastorally damaging to the unhealed and poor. Inadvertently, imbalances occur if divine *sovereignty* and the *mystery* of the kingdom are not sufficiently stressed. Dhinakaran has gone down this dispassionate path with some of his teachings and fund raising projects which have been critically assessed.

Dhinakaran believes that God has called him to evangelise the Indian masses by sharing Christ's compassion via miracle healings. He does not distinguish Jesus' ministry from his passion, hence for him, Jesus' death on 'the cross' is the ultimate expression of divine compassion. Further, he sees his own healing ministry not only in

obedience to Jesus' commission but as the continuity of Christ's messianic ministry. However, he does not show the dynamic link between the cross and the kingdom and further fails to establish the interrelation between the Spirit's role and gifts and the church's healing ministry as a *sign* of Christ's inaugurated kingdom.

Dhinakaran links healing to the atonement and presents Christ's redeeming love as 'the reservoir of God's power'.²² He rightly teaches that there are more blessings from the cross than the forgiveness of sins. But, he is in danger of extending bodily healing to all believers, in the same way and with the same degree of certainty as salvation. The Bible promises pardon and reconciliation as the *primary* blessing of the cross, but does not guarantee healing as an automatic or immediate blessing that belongs to believers because of what Jesus accomplished on the cross. This makes healings, however 'miraculous', a *secondary* blessing the Spirit sovereignly bestows and in a provisional sense compared to what believers can expect at the *eschaton*. Stott puts it succinctly:

To expect the sick to be healed and the dead raised as regularly as we expect sinners to be forgiven, is to stress the 'already' at the expense of the 'not yet', for it is to anticipate the resurrection. Not till then will our bodies be entirely rid of disease and death.²³

There is value in relating healing to the presence of the Spirit and the kingdom of God. The kingdom is a prevailing theological theme in the gospels. Jesus' preaching, prayers and person centred on the kingdom, which was the point of his parables and meaning of his miracles. Healings and exorcisms are easily understood in terms of kingdom theology, which provides biblical foundations and practical tools to minister among Hindus. While Dhinakaran recognises that there is a *mystery* about healing, he makes a fundamental flaw in discounting the eschatological kingdom as an interpretative key. Today, one could say, healing occurs whenever the power of the coming kingdom intervenes. Of course, the mystery is that no one can determine when, how often, and on what basis this happens. However, one could also say that healing does not always take place because the kingdom has not yet arrived in all its fullness. Where sincere prayer or the healer's powerful gifts are stressed rather than acknowledging the mystery of the kingdom, injuries occur. Undue focus on faith or on testimonies of 'blessings received' often leads to a 'name-it-and-claim-it' or word-faith theology. It is

²² Dhinakaran, *Healing Stripes*, p. 51.

²³ John R. W. Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, Bombay: GLS, 1986, p. 246.

a difficult balance, yet Pastoral Pentecostalism is adamant that Christian healing uphold a theology of the cross alongside a theology of the soon-coming kingdom.

3.3 A Theology for Suffering within Theologies of Healing

Dhinakaran's healing model stems out of his Trinitarian theology and is re-presented with three main concepts: compassion, the wounded healer and healing evangelism. I have illustrated how these three ideas correlate to each other within a theological apparatus that makes interpretative sense of his praxis and exhibits Pastoral Pentecostalism. The themes of prayer, faith, power and agency are incorporated in a diagram to show their place in the model's practical outworking. Due to the limits of this thesis, more research on these four motifs from my fieldwork findings is planned for later. However, sufficient material and theological issues have been gleaned for me to develop a course on Charismatic studies and Indian Christian theologies of healing.

A major strength of Dhinakaran's pastoral theology for healing is that it entertains a theology of personhood and of suffering. The Bible and his Christian experience has taught him that God can and does use suffering, both to deepen faith in Christ and to reach out with empathy and be a 'blessing' to others. For Dhinakaran, in Jesus' incarnation and death (the Crush) God suffers, therefore Christ's faithful followers are not exempt. This gives Christian suffering both meaning and value not just as a part of being human in a fallen world, but as being 'gifted' to care like Christ.²⁴ In making 'compassion' his motto, Dhinakaran seeks to alleviate human suffering. More research needs to be done that compares 'Pentecostal affections' especially compassion with the practical outworking of the Hindu understanding of *bhakti*. Beyond the scope of this thesis is the consideration of concepts of human suffering (*dukka*) and the value of compassion in other eastern religions such as Buddhism.

In Dhinakaran's view, the cross is a mystery that holds a profound *paradox* that affirms the world that only a suffering God can help. He sees the Spirit who led God's suffering servant to the cross as the one who releases healing power (the Fire). Hence, I have offered the 'wounded healer' as a potent archetype that brings healing. As an anthropological corollary, Dhinakaran portrays himself as one and encourages Spirit-

²⁴ The power of Christlike care for the sick is incalculable. Secular historians, Inglis asserted no other prophet of any religion bore this quality like Jesus of Nazareth nor had a greater impact on health care than Jesus did. Brain Inglis, *A History of Medicine*, Cleveland, OH: Word, 1965, p. 56-57.

filled Christians to allow their own sufferings to become a source of healing for others. In this way, the apparent 'weakness of God is greater than human strength' and those who live within the *pathos* of the crucified God, his Spirit makes capable of compassion: empathetic to the pain of others and a means of God's grace.

The bold confession that Christians at best are wounded healers can serve as a corrective to the preoccupation with and misuse of 'power encounters', both in Dhinakaran's public meetings and reports, and other Pentecostal 'faith healings'. This rich pastoral image teaches that we are called to heal in Jesus' name and also to suffer for that name's sake. Carmichael of Dohnavur, in her poem, *No Scar?* wrote:²⁵

As the master shall the servant be, and pierced are the feet that follow me;
But thine are whole: can he have travelled far who has no wound nor scar?

3.4 Inculturation and Syncretism: Inevitable and Responsible?

Harvey Cox, with no particular reference to India, noted how Pentecostal spirituality possessed the uncanny ability 'to root itself in almost any culture' and predicted this phenomenon would reshape global religion in the 21st century.²⁶ This study, in a way has tested this hypothesis for Indian Pentecostalism with Dhinakaran's charismatic healing as a case in point. The common danger in trying to make the Christian gospel culturally relevant within traditional Hinduism is that the two become inseparable. Pentecostal healing practices mirror and strongly connect with folk beliefs such as in sickness-afflicting spirits (*peeys*). There is the need to inculturate the gospel, as a Syrian bishop from Tamilnadu once remarked, 'God became a human being; God didn't become a Christian'.²⁷ Yet, the discussion on the popular Hindu worldview and meanings ascribed to healing rituals showed some to be incompatible with biblical truth. Often power, not truth is the main concern. Syncretism in some form is unavoidable, but if theologically responsible, it can be used creatively in mission.

Dhinakaran's deliverance ministry can be compared with the shamanic *manthiravadi* who exorcises evil spirits, by considering the aetiology of affliction that calls for the services of these 'charismatic' healers. This thesis has argued that both are 'wounded healers' as much as 'warrior healers' since they each possess *powerful* gifts with which

²⁵ Amy W. Carmichael, 'No Scar?', *Towards Jerusalem*, London: SPCK, (first ed. 1936) 1987, p. 85.

²⁶ Cox, *Fire from Heaven*, 1994, p. 83.

²⁷ Quoted in, Horst Pohlmann, *Encounters with Hinduism*, London: SCM, 1996, p. 20.

they are able to divine causes for misfortune and offer wellbeing. They are also *pastoral* leaders within their community insomuch as their role is to influence, guide and protect. However there are important contrasts and distinct truth claims with regard to 'Christian' deliverance. Without denying God's power to deliver, radical differences between the nature of power in miracle healing and magic, warn against a preoccupation with the evil spirits, which Dhinakaran is inclined toward. To me, by perceiving most problems as demonic, the pendulum for him seems to have swung from the 'flaw of the excluded middle' to another flaw – 'the exaggerated middle'.

Dhinakaran's theology of miracles was determined from field work conducted at his Healing Festival in Tuticorin (2004) and his writings. His use of 'miracles' reveals the pastoral side of his 'signs and wonders' ministry where spiritual power is perceived as 'miracles of grace'. Dhinakaran teaches through paradoxes and Pastoral Pentecostalism is featured as he meets a host of felt needs within Indian culture. But, a closer look at his argument for miracles and his public reports reveals a credibility gap in his praxis due his fixation on the miraculous and demonic. There are symptoms of charismania in his practice that can ruin compassionate ministry. The examination of the role of the *guru as a miracle worker*, helped to derive some criteria for 'Christian' healing and show theological pitfalls in the desire to be a healing agent.

Dhinakaran can be located in the lineage of Hoerschelmann's Christian gurus some of whom have shaped his theology. Previous studies such as that of Caplan and J. Augustine examined the sociological impact of Pentecostal healers that gave rise to a Christian fundamentalism. This study with Dhinakaran in the vanguard demonstrates how his Charismatic theology brings a needed ecumenism within Indian churches and has taken an Indian brand of 'power evangelism' into the global arena. However, the investigation has shed light on the *hybridity* in Dhinakaran's praxis, which refers principally to a dynamic admixture between indigenous healing practices and global trends culture, typified by US-based evangelists. Having heeded the warnings above, there is promise in Dhinakaran's dialectic use of the gifts of power and the virtue of compassion ministering at both ends of India's globalising culture, where poverty and religiosity sit casually alongside the booming economy and need for wholeness.

3.5 The Mission of Healing and Issues with Money

Major problems in Dhinakaran's theology arise when the *power of love* becomes, or is perceived as, the *love of power*, most acute when it comes to mission and money. Regarding globalisation and the spread of the prosperity gospel, Coleman observed: 'A theology whose origins lie predominately in the United States is sometimes reproduced, sometimes selectively appropriated, in new contexts'.²⁸ Dhinakaran's teaching on prosperity based on the Bible and as reflected in his 'faith ministry' significantly differs from the 'prosperity gospel' that guarantees health and wealth based on the power of faith. Dhinakaran's 'gospel to the rich' promotes personal achievement and this-worldly advancement that appears congruent with Hindu socio-religious values. Therefore his teachings on prosperity are best assessed within a conceptual framework that interprets symbolic acts of giving (*dakshina*, in cash or kind). Here, the reciprocal relationship between people and the priest, i.e. devotee-*guru*, sanctions materialistic orientations that culturally allow agents to gain wealth.

Further, Dhinakaran has a strong affinity to a US brand of Pentecostal revivalism that encourages faith for physical, and by extension, material wellbeing. Of the many versions with imprecise definitions of the prosperity gospel from the US, Dhinakaran leans toward the 'positive attitude' within the televangelist stream that shows through motivational talks how biblical principles and strong faith in God can achieve success. This kind of teaching was spread by itinerant healers like Roberts and by businessmen like Robertson both of whom influenced Dhinakaran, the banker turned evangelist, in his fund-raising techniques. This study has explicitly clarified that Dhinakaran does not subscribe to Hagin's 'positive confession' or the word-faith theology. Nevertheless, it must be stated that any combination of these streams produces a synergy that distorts the gospel of God's sovereign grace that is undeserving and unconditional.

The trap set up in an 'economic syncretism' between faith for miracles and money for ministry is almost irresistible. Hedlund had noted that: 'Popularity is no guarantee of sound doctrine' and warned that Dhinakaran's praxis 'can be challenged as a sub-biblical distortion of Christian belief'.²⁹ Taking up this challenge, I have categorically shown how his 'all round prosperity' that is presented as a benefit of the atonement and also involves paying-for-prayers of blessing, is indeed a 'precarious gospel'.

²⁸ Simon Coleman, *The Globalisation of Charismatic Christianity*, CUP, 2000, p. 36.

²⁹ Hedlund, *Quest for Identity*, 2000, p. 246.

The faith movement from the US today has roots globally with a fairly standardised form and ingredients for success that make the adjective 'American' gospel suitable. Yet, there are serious limitations if one is to construct a US-based hegemonic model.³⁰ Faith ministries around the world and their corresponding prosperity message vary significantly in nature, theological content and emphasis, as in Dhinakaran's case. Success theologies are adapted not arbitrarily but appropriately to meet specific local needs. The prosperity gospel with its charismatic and pragmatic components appeals differently to different socio-economic cultures with an entrepreneurial spirit and ethic of consumerism. However, a *syncretism* that does not challenge the gods of capitalism that create surpluses particularly in the west and poverty in other parts is irresponsible. Dhinakaran's Jesus Calls evangelistic ministry maintains a patriotic alliance with rich countries like the US, but his international branches have little work in poorer nations. This being the case, Mangalwadi puts it bluntly: 'Jesus did not belong to the school of thought which would put priority on adding souls to the kingdom rather than calling sins of economic exploitation by their name and demanding repentance for these'.³¹

The *pragmatic* nature of Dhinakaran's prosperity teaching demonstrates what I have referred to as a 'pentecostal work ethic'. Here, charismatic empowerment and an industrious spirit are put into effective use to produce outcomes that are testified to as 'blessings'. Prosperity takes on many forms such as bodily healing, employment, protection at child birth, marriage arrangements and family harmony. Dhinakaran's prosperity message is meant to be 'worked out' not merely by spiritual means (faith) but by teaching Christian virtues and stewardship. Faith communities are encouraged to be a generous kingdom people by recognising divine providence and utilising their material gifts toward social projects and evangelism. This has a sacralising effect on wealth for Charismatics in India. Worldly wealth is deemed as a spiritual blessing and thereby at once, sanctified and sanctioned, which can readily foster a capitalistic spirit.

Dhinakaran fits into what Robert Webber caricatures as 'pragmatic evangelicals', known for 'the use of new technological and communication media to spread the gospel whose energies are directed toward the new science of marketing'.³² In this

³⁰ S. Hunt, 'Winning Ways: Globalisation and Health-Wealth', *Religion*, 15/3, 2000. p. 334-336.

³¹ Vishal Mangalwadi, 'The Economic Gospel of Jesus', *ERT*, 3/2, 1979, p. 258.

³² Robert Webber, *Younger Evangelicals: Challenges of a New World*, Baker, 2002, p. 67-70.

role, Dhinakaran does not find propositional truth and historio-grammatical hermeneutics particularly helpful and reduces theology to the basics: the gospel and evangelism, to make them understandable and applicable to the seeker. However, he does not fall into the opposite group that rejects signs, imagination and atmosphere, since he values and incorporates such symbolic power. He stays contemporary and is not afraid to be vulnerable in embracing new styles of communication such as DVDs and the Internet. His 20 facet ministry shows how information, imagination and embodiment work together and he demonstrates a conservative Christianity that preaches the word, expects miracles as a response and nurtures faith in communities.

4. Pastoral Pentecostalism: Truths at Both Ends and in Tension

This study of Dhinakaran's healing ministry in India has revealed both the need and some inevitable tensions in developing a theology of miraculous *power* as well as of human *suffering*. There is tension in the realisation of what is good for believers 'now' because of what Jesus did on the *cross*, and what is ultimately good in relation to the *kingdom* 'not yet' come in its fullness. Christian hope maintains a creative tension between God's *sovereignty* or freedom to heal or not to heal, and his *faithfulness* or promise to heal because of his compassion and in response to fervent prayers.

Pastoral Pentecostalism manifests itself in a creative tension that helps us understand ourselves, faith for healing and the needs of the world that we live in. Christian healing seeks to be biblically faithful and culturally relevant. It recognises 'tension is not merely a fact of life; in many ways tension is the joy of life. Through dealing adequately with tension we become the whole persons God intended us to be'.³³ Pastoral Pentecostalism warns against dangers of reducing truth to power or vice-versa, or alternatively, reducing the two to mere service. With biblical truth and charismatic power in proper relationship to each other, one is able to offer a genuine service of communion and love, bereft of which truth and power will be blind and empty.

There is an inherent *mystery* in charismatic healing much of which remains a puzzle that will not be fully solved, not until the *eschaton*. Yet, the resurrection of Christ and *the gift of the Spirit* are crucial factors that indicate the age to come has already dawned on believers. The Spirit's presence in believers makes real the things that

³³ Klyne Snodgrass, *Between Two Truths*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990, p. 25.

belong to God's end time. Dhinakaran's ministry of healing has shed light on the Christian's task to make the new age a reality in the midst of the old and transient. In India, where the temptation to seek after miracles is great, the fact that the Spirit also speaks in silence and acts in ordinary life situations needs constant reaffirmation. Being compassionate means esteeming others better than self and using the gifts for social justice, looking beyond the agenda of one's organisation and confronting global structures within which mass poverty is set and by which it is perpetuated. In this regard, at times, one wonders to what extent aspects of Dhinakaran's ministry can be referred to, in Elliott's words, as 'comfortable compassion' in promoting a theology and techniques that 'brings great individual benefits – but even greater social costs'.³⁴

Problems arise not in experiences of healing through prayers of faith but in the use of those experiences in ways that promote personal power, prosperity or an elitism that divides the faith community. When *miracles* are used for either self-advancement, as a means for gain or are associated with money, the *mystery* dimension of the Spirit's work is lost and they cease to reflect the purpose of the cross of Christ or the values of his eternal kingdom. Therefore healing must remain a gift of the Spirit within the community and not merchandise that is made available through a person's ministry. Further, Buxton notes that, while pragmatism has its place in mission, it needs to be protected or redeemed from ungodly influences and made subservient to theology, not vice versa. He rightly submits: 'A biblical theology of mission cannot dispense with incarnation, involvement, suffering and prayer as first order prerequisites.'³⁵

Within the mystery of healing lies another *paradox*, a seemingly self-contradictory even absurd proposition that expresses a truth. Practical experience shows how many remarkable healings have an unlikely combination of factors, and a likely combination of factors such as sincere prayers by gifted healers on behalf of godly people, often do not produce healing. However, exploring the concepts of the wounded healer and compassion wherein empathetic suffering love heals, there seems to be a profound *paradox* concerning the person and method God chooses to use in healing. Here, when the agent's ability or righteousness is no longer seen as a source or reason for healing in itself, it qualifies as the means God uses to reveal his healing grace. Besides, God

³⁴ Charles Elliott, *Comfortable Compassion? - Poverty, Power and the Church*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1987, p. 115.

³⁵ Graham Buxton, *Dancing in the Dark*, Carlisle: Paternoster, 2001, p. 270.

has chosen to reveal his glorious power in and through the weaknesses and limitations of his servants who long to fulfil his purposes (1Cor. 1:29).

In sum, this thesis has elucidated the twin themes of charismata and compassion that propel Dhinakaran's healing ministry. These two cannot be left at two extremes since the potential is in their interplay as they are guided as well as critiqued by a sound Pastoral Pentecostalism. There will be tension in holding both together in ministry, but as Snodgrass points out, 'this is precisely what allows us to live as whole persons and to do justice to all the gospel'.³⁶ Hollis, the moderator of the CSI (1947), recognising the importance of the charismatic community amidst struggles for ecumenicity and empowerment, submitted: 'What matters is that, at every level, the life of the church is the life of the Holy Spirit, and that in the Spirit, Christians discover through prayer and consultation, what God wants to be done and how he wants them to do it'.³⁷

The rise of Indian charismatic spirituality cautions against a formalism that can be more deadly than fanaticism. Dhinakaran's ministry of compassion has been kept from the latter and importantly from the mediocrity of the middle of the road. It dislodges myths that suggest Christianity stifles personal freedom, is a crutch for the weak or is irrelevant to modern life. It assures Spirit-filled believers, as Ramabai proved for herself, that: 'A life totally committed to God has nothing to fear, nothing to lose and nothing to regret'. It challenges Christians to live with passion nourished by a dynamic faith in a God who keeps promises and does miracles beyond imagination, but this, as Dhinakaran asserts, is 'according to *the power* that is at work in us'.³⁸ When Indian Christians develop compassion and do not let charismatic issues divide the church, leaders like Dhinakaran with his Jesus Calls healing movement show us that the Holy Spirit is real and available in all his fullness not simply as a guaranteed possession without effect; but he is indispensable to the Church's life and mission of compassion, as the bestower of varied charismata - gifts of power to endure and grace to lead.

³⁶ Klyne Snodgrass, *Between Two Truths*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990, p. 190.

³⁷ Michael Hollis, *The Significance of South India*, London: Lutterworth, 1966, p. 34.

³⁸ Dhinakaran, 'Healing, Signs', *Mission Mandate*, p. 130, (Quoting Eph. 3:20).

Appendix 1: Questionnaire - Indian Notions of Healing

Name: _____ Vocation: _____ Date: _____

The researcher, Chris Gnanakan is a teacher at the South Asia Institute for Advanced Christian Studies (SAIACS, Bangalore) doing a study on divine or miraculous healing. The purpose is to theologically assess the nature of Christian healing and try to determine its value for and role in evangelism, ministry and church growth. The following is a primary schedule of **20 questions** the respondent is requested to answer on behalf of the ministry group you represent. The researcher appreciates your time, contribution and trusts this study serves to enhance the cause of Christ in South India.

A. South Indian Understandings of illness: causative factors and remedies

1. What are some causes for bodily illnesses and health related problems in South India for which people religiously seek after physical healing?
2. What role can evil spirits (*peey, pissacu*) play in the illness of humans and how exactly may these forces be counteracted?
3. When can illness be seen as divine affliction or punishment for wrongdoing?
4. How are individuals responsible for their sickness? (Ignorance, immoral habits, etc.), and to what extent can witchcraft or black magicians be a cause?
5. In what ways are evil and unjust structures (socio-ethnic-political) as wider problems, a cause for ill health in India?
6. When sick, what is your first reaction, and by what means do you seek relief?
7. How should one respond to illness that is possibly leading to death?
8. How does an inexplicable 'miracle' healing affect a person's life and future?

B. Personal Beliefs and Encounters:

1. Have you felt some spiritual process other than medical treatment that healed you? Describe what happened (any other notable example or case?)
2. What does it feel like when you are 'healed' and how do you know when the healing (event or process) you desired or prayed for has actually occurred?
3. What are different kinds of healings and which type do you prefer? e.g. homeopathy, TV Miracle/Faith-Healing, TM, Reiki/Pranic healing...
4. In your opinion, what is the source/s of healing power and describe how it is channelled or released to be effective where it is needed?
5. What specifically do people need to believe or do in order to be healed?
6. Who are gifted to do healings and what are some special qualities required?
7. In what ways can pain and illness be seen as good or of some necessary value?
8. Why do you think healings work sometime for some and not for the others? Can it possibly work all the time for everyone?

C. Medical Science, Complementary and Alternative therapies:

1. In what ways is the medical profession positively meeting people's health needs in South India, and what are some shortcomings and negative factors?
2. Name some non-medical healing groups, movements or spiritual healers you found useful to recommend to others? (e.g. Dhinkaran's *Jesus Calls* ministry?)
3. If there were conflicts between medical advice for cure and any non-medical therapy or religious healing, which would you go for, after how long and why?
4. How can medical doctors work with the Church's healing ministry in general and in what particular ways can the itinerant healing evangelists help?

Kindly complete & email to: chrisgnanakan@hotmail.com or post to: Gnanakan.
C/o SAIACS, Box 7747, Doddagubi Cross, Kothanur, Bangalore- 560077.

Appendix 2: Cover Letter for Personal Interviews

Re: Dhinakaran's Jesus Calls Ministry; Major Themes in Charismatic Healing

From: Chris Gnanakan, (SAIACS, Bangalore)

dated: _____

Dear _____,

Greetings. I am grateful for the short time we had together and would value your ongoing contact and input for my study on divine healing in South India. Thanks for being willing to share your theological perspectives and ministerial experiences.

1. The Big Question:

In your view, how does a miracle healing (signs and wonders) ministry like Dhinakaran's contribute to growth of Christianity in India?

2. Would you comment on these four sub-questions /themes my work focuses on?

2.1 What is the correlation between PRAYER and healing?

2.2 What important role does human FAITH play in divine healing?

2.3 What is distinctive of the source and nature of POWER in 'Christian' healing?

2.4 What is the appeal and valuable contribution that itinerant evangelists like Dhinakaran make as AGENTS with 'gifts of healings' to the church's healing ministry at large? What are some problems and challenges?

3. Kindly provide an example of a remarkable case of 'miracle healing' with the details of how it happened to help me put together a practical healing theology.

I trust that your contribution and my study will be a blessing and useful resource for missionaries and pastors in India. Please make copies of the above enquiry and detailed 20 questions [attached] for those interested in contributing to this research. I look forward to hearing from you or meeting you in person.

Yours Sincerely,

- Chris Gnanakan

(H.o.D. of Pastoral Theology, SAIACS, Bangalore)

List of Interviews and Fieldwork

Between December 2003 and January 2004, I travelled and conducted interviews on Dhinakaran's ministry at four centres where his healing ministry is concentrated:

A. Interviews at: Madras/Chennai Tamil Nadu:

Madras is Dhinakaran's *Jesus Calls* Head Office and the developmental hub for his ministry in South India. I also visited his *Karunya* College and rural hospital, *Bethesda* Prayer Centre and *Angel* Housing Gardens in Coimbatore. It was a privilege to be personally invited by Dhinakaran to be an observer-participant at his 27th batch *Power Ministry* held at the Karunyanagar.

1. Thomas Raj, Pastor, The Apostolic Christian Assembly (ACA), 06.01.2004
2. Pastor Kumar, Youth Pastor and TV Producer, (ACA), 07.01.2004
3. Patrick Joshua and Friends Missionary Prayer Band (FMPB) staff, Chennai Head Office, 06.01.2004
4. Sara Navaroji (celestial singer-cum-healer who inspires Dhinakaran), House of Prayer, Chennai, 06.01.2004
5. Matthew Verghese, General Secretary of the Union of Evangelical Students of India (UESI), 06.01.2004
6. Papa Shankar (woman miracle healer-exorcist before Dhinakaran), 06.01.2004
7. Idicheria Ninan and visit to the IPC, Chennai, 07.01.2004
8. Vasantharaj Albert, Director, Church Growth Association of India (CGAI), 07.01.2004
9. D. Jeyakumar, Principal, Madras Theological Bible College/Seminary of the Evangelical Church of India (ECI), 07.01.2004
10. N. J. Manokaran, Church Development Analyst, Madras residence, 07.01.2004
11. D. Mohan, Senior Pastor, *New Life* AG, Chennai, 07.01.2004
12. J. Rajah and P. Daniel, *New Life* Church Administrators, 07.01.2004
13. Sam Sundaram, Chief pastor of the ACA, Madras residence, 07.01.2004
14. R. Sudhakar, Director of *Life Focus* Ministries and Apologetics, 08.01.2004
15. Jebaraj Samuel, *Jesus Calls* Co-ordinator and Outreach Director of the Hindustan Bible Institute (HBI), Madras, 08.01.2004
16. Paul Gupta, Principal of HBI, Madras, 08.01.2004
17. Shanmugam, Pastor, Tribal Hindus for Christ, Chennai, 08.01.2004
18. Bromwell Samuel Kumar, Presbyter-in-charge, Church of the Victorious Cross (CSI) Director of Department of City Mission, 09.01.2004
19. Matthew Finny, National Director of *World Vision*, IPC member, 08.01.2004
20. Ravi Fredrick, *Jesus Calls* Campaigns, Officer-In-Charge, Madras, 08.01.2004
21. Henry Joseph, Founder, *Maranatha* Full Gospel Churches, 08.01.2004

B. Interviews at: Tuticorin (Tamil Nadu)

The following people were interviewed during the Tuticorin Healing Festival, 14-18 January 2004 in the evenings. Over 25,000 attended these meetings in

spite of protest from the Hindu fundamentalists (BJP). The Young Partner and the Women's Esther Prayer Partner 'get-togethers' took place in the afternoons and the following key leaders were interviewed:

22. Sam Manickam, CSI, Presbyterian Church of the Divine Resurrection, 15.01.2004
23. Sannaci Veranna Thomas, Former Hindu pujari, now Pentecostal pastor and leader in Dhinakaran's Campaign Organisational Committee, 16.01.2004
24. Ravi Frederick, Jesus Calls Campaign Manager, 17.01.2004
25. S.J. Kingsley, Professor Loyola College, Chennai, Translator, 17.01.2004

C. Interviews at Vellore (Tamil Nadu)

This is the place where Dhinakaran made his public debut in healing. It is famous for the Christian Medical College (CMC) where Ida Scudder served. I was invited by the Director George Chandy to discuss relevant issues with the chaplains, staff and others who were Jesus Calls prayer-warriors.

26. George M. Chandy, Director of the Christian Medical College, 27.01.2004
27. Aruldas, Chaplain and NT lecturer, 27.01.2004
28. Kochamma Mary George, Assistant Chaplain who worked with Bishop Sunder Clarke, Ananda Rao, George Isaac, A.C. Oomen and Joseph Patt, 27.01.2004
29. Anderson Harris Mithra, Chaplain, Clinical Pastoral Care Lecturer, 27.01.2004
30. Miss Sarama, Chaplain and woman's wing social worker, 28.01.2004
31. Shantanu Negi, Chaplain and CNI Presbyterian, 28.01.2004
32. Graham Nicholls, Australian Chaplain, 28.01.2004
33. Hephzibha Thomas, Secretary to CMC Director, lay evangelist with Jesus Calls and prayer-warrior at the Madras Tower, 28.01.2004
34. R.P. Durai Jasper, radiographer and leader of 'Thursday Charismatic Healing Service' on the CMC premises, 28.01.2004
35. P. Zechariah, (retired) Associate Director, CMC, 27.01.2004

D. Interviews at Bangalore, Karnataka:

Dhinakaran was posted here as a State Bank of India officer and mentored by K.R. Paul at the *AG Gospel Prayer Hall*. I am a native of this cosmopolitan city, which has been a hub for foreign missionaries and an IT centre. I have watched the development of Dhinakaran's 'Prayer Tower' and was invited to preach and minister at their first English New Year Healing Service, 2004.

36. Paul Thangiah, Senior Pastor Full Gospel AG, Bangalore, 01.12.2003
37. Albert Manuel, Manager of the Prayer Tower, Karchakanahalli, 02.12.2003
38. Paulraj, Mrs Verghese, Bernard, Joyce Devasitham CMAI (Christian Medical Association of India), Queen's Road, Regional Staff, 05.12.2003
39. Rufus Peter (father linked with Jesus Calls Chennai property) at the Domlur Brethren Assembly, 07.12.2003

40. Berber Byma, (University of Amsterdam, student of A. Droogers) researching Attraction of Indian Pentecostalism, UTC, Miller's Road, 08.12.2003
41. Albert and Joyce Davis, Missionaries with Indian Evangelical Missions (IEM) in the Kulu Valley, Manali and pastor of Banaswadi Bible Church, 08.12.2003
42. Paul C. Dass, Physiotherapist, YWAM teacher, 15.12.2003
43. Thomas Samuel, Director, India Prayer Mobile and Quiet Corner Ministries, 16.12.2003
44. K. Kumarswamy, Operation Mobilization (OM) leader-in-charge, 17.12.2003
45. John Thannikal, Director of Nava Jeeva Ashram, Senior (for 40 years) AG leader and author of *The Holy Spirit: An Appeal for Maturity*, 18.12.2003
46. Edward David, Coordinator of the All India Prayer Movement, 18.12.2003
47. Sigamani Samuel, rural pastor with power ministry, T. Block, 23.12.2003
48. Peter Potham, Dean of The Association For Theological Education by Extension (TAFEE), at Vasanthanagar Head Office, 23.12.2003
49. George Ninan, Director Campus Crusade for Christ, India, 27.12.2003
50. Venu Ingle, Superintendent and Dr. Sheela Gupta, Mukti Mission, 28.12.2003
51. J. Augustine, lecturer and author of *Christian Fundamentalism*, 29.12.2003
52. Pastor K. Jasper, The Pentecostal Mission (TPM), Hennur Road, 29.12.2003
53. Pastor Chinnaswamy Sekar, IMA Prayer Network, 30.12.2003
54. A.C. George, former Principal, Southern Asia Bible College (SABC), author of *Trailblazer for God*, a History of the AG in South India, 31.12.2003
55. Theodore Williams, Founder of Indian Evangelical Mission (IEM), 31.12.2003
56. Mana Mohan Dass, Jesus Calls evangelist and IPM Co-ordinator, 02.01.2004
57. K. Vasudevan, pastor and counsellor at Emmanuel Baptist Church, 03.01.2004
58. Albert Manuel, Director of (new) Prayer Tower, Karchakanahalli, 04.01.2004
59. D. Jebaraj, editor, Asian Theological Association, SAIACS, 12.01.2004
60. Peter Francis, the pastor of Indranagar Methodist Church, 18.01.2004
61. Gladson Anchan, IEM Secretary and Chairman of Mukti Mission, 19.01.2004
62. Zac Poonen, Founder, Christian Fellowship Centre (CFC), 20.01.2004
63. Subong Aier, Naga Christian Fellowship, SAIACS, 20.01.2004
64. Pastors Y. Johnson and P. Ebenezer, Yeshvanthapur AG Church, 21.01.2004
65. Ken Pinto, Pastor, Assembly of Zion, President of the Bangalore Pentecostal Fellowship, 21.01.2004
66. Arun Andrew, Koramangala Methodist Church, 22.01.2004
67. Daniel Paul, son of K.R. Paul one of Dhinakaran's mentors, 22.01.2004
68. T.C. George, General Superintendent of the South India AG, 26.01.2004
69. Paul Hiebert, author and missionary anthropologist, SAIACS, 31.01.2004
70. S.R. Manohar, 'Rays of Love' ministry, Pentecostal healer with the CSI, discipled by Dhinakaran at the first Institute of Power Ministry, 30.01.2004

Photo Album: Dhinakaran, his Family and Jesus Calls Ministry



P3: DGS Dhinakaran (20 years old) rescued from suicide and just after his conversion

P4: Conferred his Bachelor's Degree **P5:** With Stella at their wedding in 1959.



P6: In 1972, with his boss Mr R.P. Goyal, Secretary of State Bank of India, Madras

P7: Media ministry started in 1973 with Far East Broadcasting Association (FEBA)



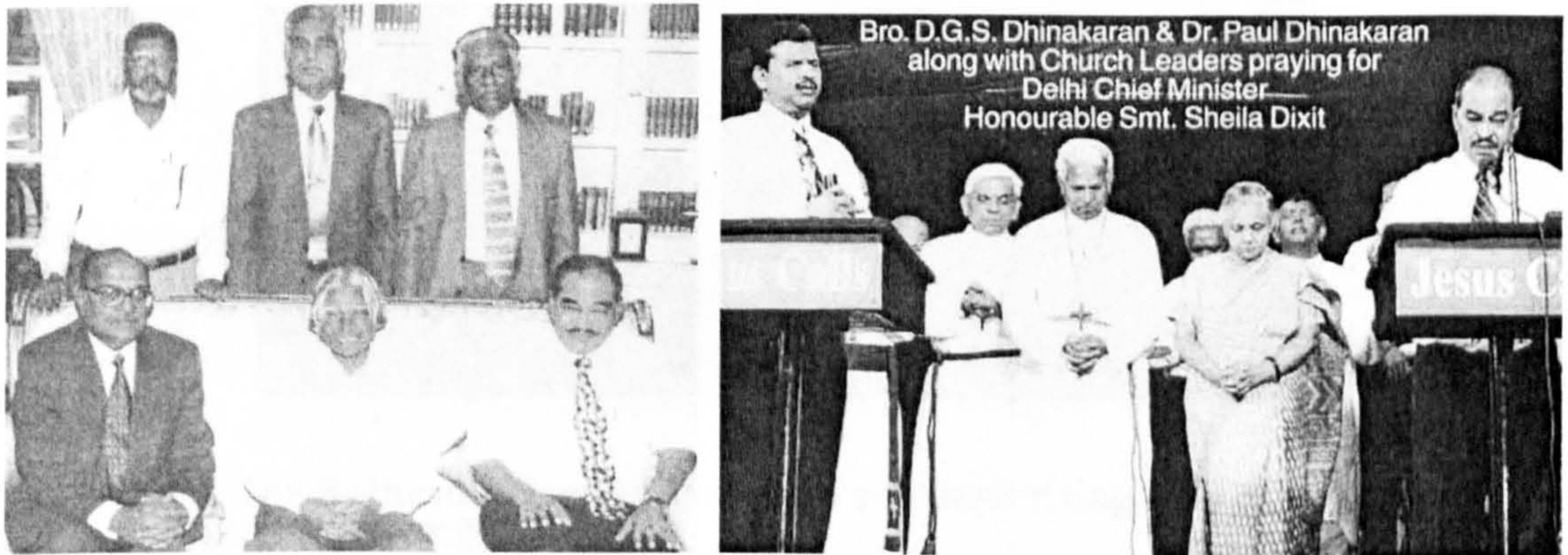
P8: Three generations of 'family' blessing **P9:** With father, wife, son and daughter

P10: East Meets West: Dhinakaran with associates M. **Sam Sundaram** (chief pastor, Apostolic Christian Assembly); **D. Mohan** (pastor of 22,000-member New Life AG) and healing evangelists **T.L. Osborn, John Osteen, Oral Roberts** and **Benny Hinn**

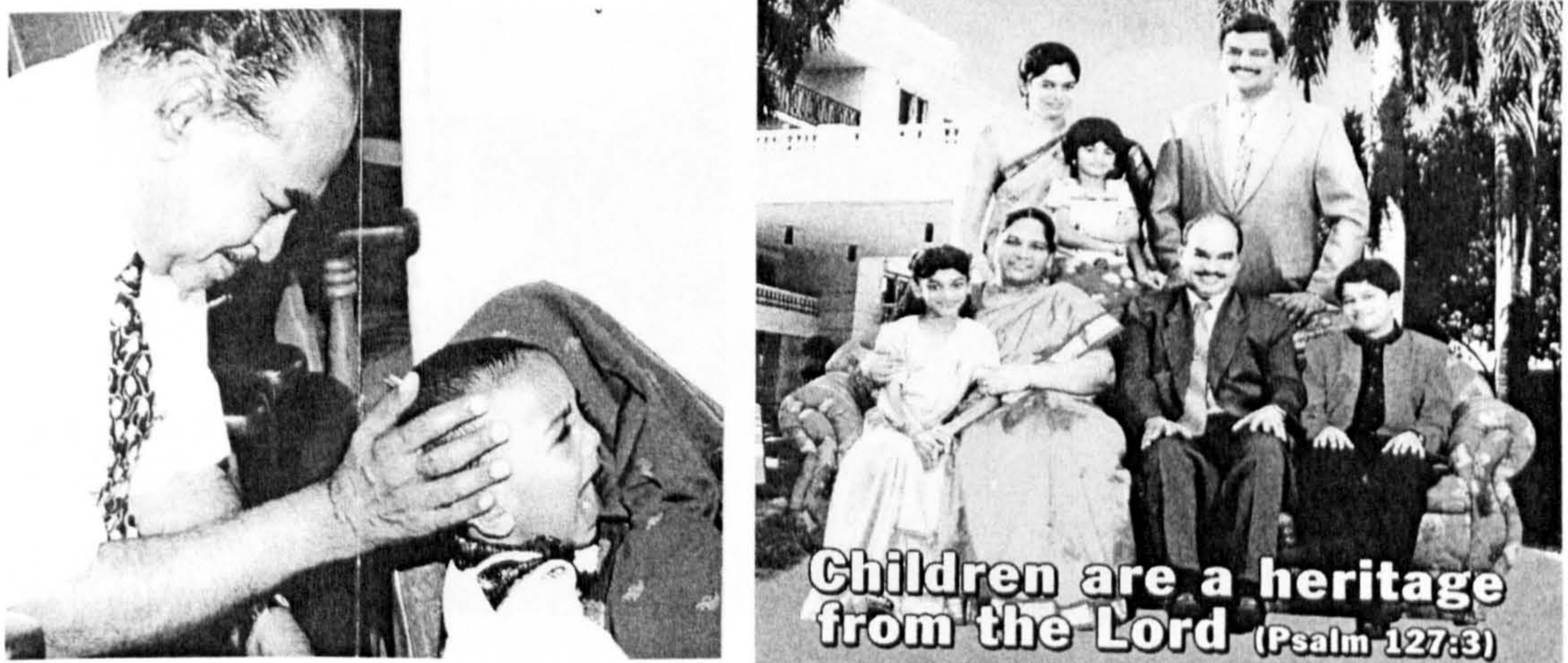


P11: Seated next his Excellency **the President of India**, Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam

P12: with Paul (his son/successor) and chief minister Smt. Sheila Dixit, inaugurating the **National Prayer Alliance** at New Delhi on behalf of the Indian church leaders



P13: Laying hands to bless a child with 'all round prosperity' to be kept from sickness, poverty, dangers the enemy may bring; **P14:** Poster: 'The Family that Prays for You'



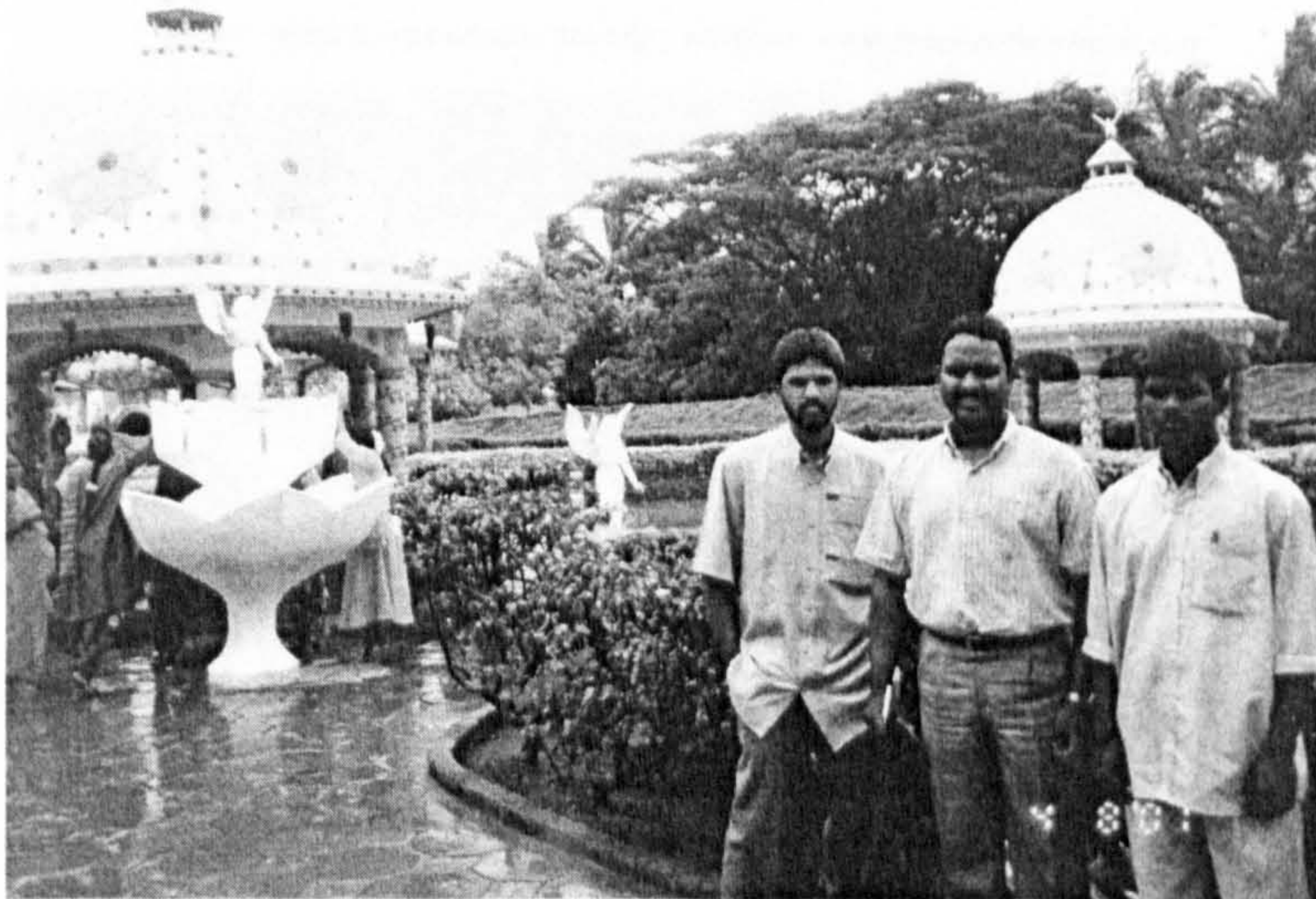
P 15: The Bethesda Healing Centre



P 16: A Station of the Cross



P 17: The Bethesda Healing Pool with an Angel rising out of the waters





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Jesus speaks to him and through him.

He will speak to you



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CHANNEL	NAME OF PROGRAMME	DAY / TIME (GMT)	LANGUAGE	REPEAT TELECAST
GOD DIGITAL	PRAYER TIME	6.00 - 6.30 PM EVERY SUNDAY	ENGLISH	5.00 - 5.30 AM EVERY THURSDAY
CEE (I) TV	PRARTHANAI NAERAM	9.00 - 9.30 AM EVERY SUNDAY	TAMIL	1.00 - 1.30 PM EVERY TUESDAY

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Ealing W5 4UB, UNITED KINGDOM. Tel: 44(0)845 650 6400

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Tel: 44(0)129 658 3500. Fax: 44(0)129 643 2732

Week after week, millions of people view them...
Derive Benefits... Adore them... You too!
WATCH THESE PROGRAMMES AND REAP RICH REWARDS!

Says...

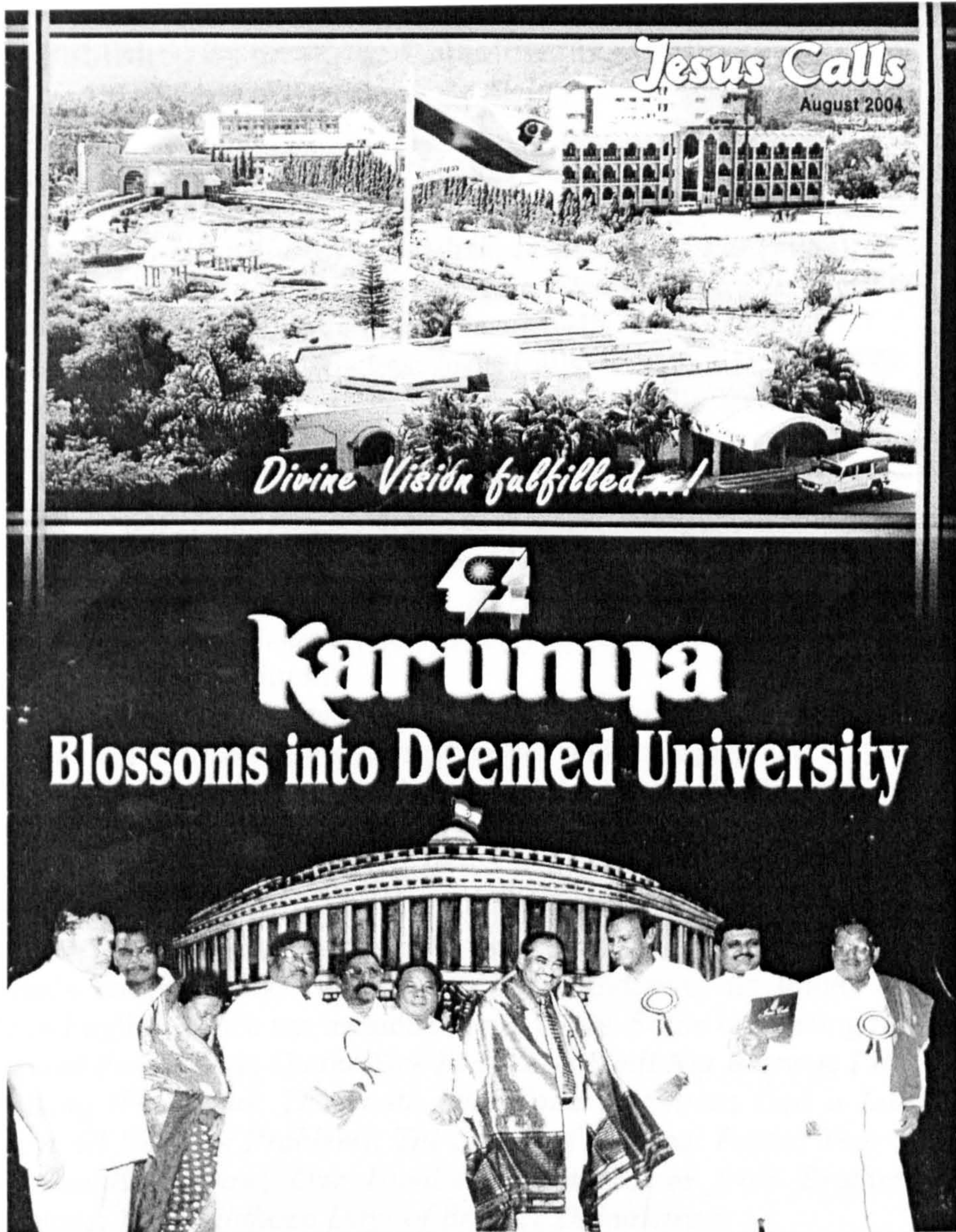
I've Known him since 1995 and to me he is like Paul the Apostle. He has touched my life deeply. If he gives you a word from Heaven, stake your life on it. Very few people on earth have the anointing he has. He stands in my sight as high as the Old Testament Prophets.



Email: info@jesuscallseurope.org / website: www.jesuscallseurope.org



P 18: A sample poster advertising miracle healings. The **media ministry** happens to be one of the important facets of the Jesus Calls ministry and involves raising **monetary support** through: (i) Young partner, (ii) TV Club partner, (iii) Jesus Calls partner and (iv) the Karunya partner schemes. Dhinakaran teaches that those who 'sow bountifully will also reap bountifully' (2Cor 9:6), *Jesus Calls*, January 2003, p. 26.



P19: Karunya Institute in 2004 made the first Christian Deemed University in India,
P 20: Bethesda Prayer Dome at Karunyanagar is a major healing pilgrimage centre



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3. *The Priceless Pearl* (for Women): articles by Stella and Evangeline

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2. Dhinakaran, Jesus Calls. Monday 4, March 2002.
3. Dhinakaran, 'Festival of Joy' (*Perinba Peruvizha*), Marina Beach, Madras, 4-6 May 2002.
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